Practicing leadership in harmony: organizational citizenship behaviors and the emergence of direction, alignment, and commitment in a collegiate choir

by

Megan Michelle Zeman

B.S., Kansas State University, 2019
M.P.S., Fort Hays State University, 2022

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submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

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Manhattan, Kansas

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Abstract

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Data were collected over one semester in a university choir through rehearsal observations, participant journals, researcher reflexive journaling, and rehearsal artifacts. Analysis used iterative coding and attended to individual behaviors, collective practices and interactions, and the ensemble as a system.

Findings show how individual behaviors and contributions took on significance through interaction, shaped collective practices, and related to the emergence and maintenance of direction, alignment, and commitment at the ensemble level. These dynamics operated recursively, as collective activity provided feedback that shaped subsequent participation, coordination, and musical decision-making. Within this case, leadership emerged through informal peer interactions and shared activity rather than being confined to positional authority.

The study illustrates how OCB, LAP, and DAC can be used together to examine leadership processes within this collegiate choir. It offers case-specific insights into peer-generated leadership during collaborative musical activity and may inform further inquiry into leadership in similar settings.

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Approved by:

Major Professor
Kerry L. Priest

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Dedication

To Gloria Blackwell and Johnny Matlock—the teachers who fostered my love of music, helped me find my voice, and inspired me to choose music again and again.

Chapter 1 - Allegro Con Brio: Setting the Theme

Introduction

Collegiate choirs provide a rich and complex setting for observing how leadership emerges through shared action. In ensemble settings, leadership is rarely only a matter of positional authority but instead develops through the relationships between the musicians. Members contribute to the success of the group through discretionary actions–small but significant behaviors that help create shared direction, maintain alignment, and sustain commitment to collective artistry. These behaviors then shape and are shaped by collective practices, creating a continuous, iterative cycle through which leadership emerges and evolves.

Leadership in choirs exemplifies how relational, practice-based, and systemic dimensions are intertwined. Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB), Leadership as Practice (LAP), and Direction, Alignment, and Commitment (DAC) frameworks provide complementary lenses for capturing this complexity. Rather than functioning linearly, these frameworks interact recursively: OCB behaviors influence ensemble practices (LAP), which contribute to DAC outcomes, and these outcomes feed back into subsequent behaviors and practices. This iterative process occurs across nested levels of interaction–from individual singers, to sections, to the full ensemble–highlighting the relational and emergent nature of leadership within collaborative artistic contexts.

By combining OCB, LAP, and DAC frameworks, this research positions leadership as something that is enacted rather than possessed, shared rather than solely centralized, and observable through everyday acts of participation. These dynamics, while essential to ensemble success, are rarely examined together in research. Studies of collegiate choirs often focus on conductors or formal leadership roles, leaving peer-to-peer leadership, reciprocal influence, and

emergent practices underexplored. This gap highlights the need for a study that investigates how leadership is co-constructed, sustained, and observed within collaborative, arts-based contexts.

Significance of the Study

This study works to advance both leadership scholarship and music ensemble research by examining how leadership arises through everyday behaviors and practices within collegiate choirs. By integrating OCB, LAP, and DAC, this research provides a holistic, multilevel perspective that captures leadership as enacted, shared, and emergent. Understanding these dynamics will advance leadership theory by showing how individual behaviors and collective practices co-produce systemic outcomes in an iterative, recursive process that works alongside the conductor's formal authority.

For music scholarship, this study offers a framework for articulating the social and relational dynamics of ensemble participation, positioning peer-to-peer leadership as a meaningful site for developing collaboration, mutual influence, and collective artistry. By identifying which behaviors and practices will most strongly contribute to DAC outcomes, the research can inform educators, conductors, and ensemble members about how leadership can be fostered intentionally within collaborative musical contexts.

Finally, this study contributes to broader community-engaged scholarship (CES) by examining how emergent leadership practices support individual growth, ensemble cohesion, and community impact. In doing so, it underscores the value of participatory, arts-based settings as living laboratories for understanding leadership processes that are relational, practice-based, and systemic.

Statement of the Problem

Collegiate choirs provide a complex and dynamic context to observe the ways that leadership develops through everyday behaviors and collective practices. While conductors hold formal authority, leadership among ensemble members is distributed, relational, and enacted through discretionary behaviors that support shared direction, alignment, and commitment. Despite the critical role of these peer-to-peer leadership processes, existing research fails to examine how behaviors, practices, and systemic outcomes interact recursively to sustain ensemble functionality.

Existing scholarship primarily focuses on conductors or formal leadership roles, leaving emergent, practice-based leadership largely unexplored in artistic contexts. Studies seldom capture how individual contributions coalesce into collective outcomes or how these outcomes go on to shape subsequent behaviors and practices. This lack of multilevel understanding limits both music education and leadership theory, constraining the ability of educators, conductors, and ensemble members to intentionally foster collaboration, mutual influence, and collective artistry. By investigating leadership as an enacted, shared, and recursive process across nested levels of interaction, this study addresses a critical gap and provides a framework for understanding how informal leadership can co-produce systemic outcomes within collegiate ensembles.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine how leadership is enacted, shared, and sustained through individual behaviors and collective practices within collegiate choirs. By integrating OCB, LAP, and DAC, the study explored the recursive interactions between

behaviors, practices, and systemic outcomes across nested levels of ensemble participation—from individual singers, to sections, to the full choir.

This study investigated how discretionary acts among ensemble members contribute to collective direction, alignment, and commitment, and how these emergent practices co-produce observable outcomes that support ensemble functionality. By focusing on peer-to-peer leadership and recursive interactions, the research provides a framework for understanding leadership as an ongoing, participatory process that complements formal authority and fosters collaboration, mutual influence, and collective artistry.

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

This study draws on three complementary frameworks—Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), Leadership as Practice (LAP), and Direction, Alignment, and Commitment (DAC)—to examine how leadership emerges through interactions and collective activity within a collegiate choir. Each framework provides a distinct perspective on leadership processes. Together, they support an analysis across different levels: individual behaviors, collective practices and interactions, and the ensemble as a system. For the purposes of this study, the macro level refers to the system level, with the collegiate choir understood as the system under examination. These levels of analysis are related but not mutually exclusive; leadership practices may occur at both meso and macro levels, while DAC is used to examine collective outcomes at the macro level.

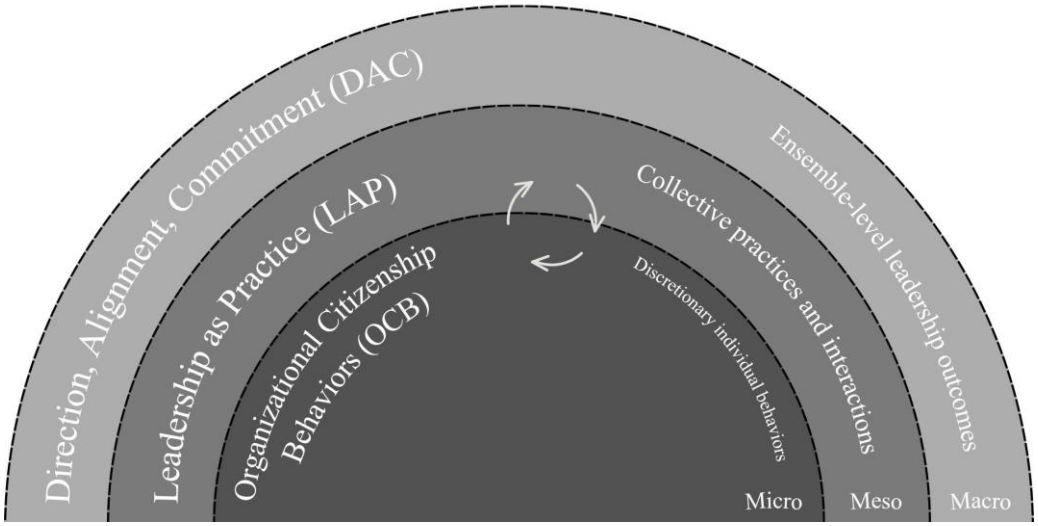
This study draws on OCB, LAP, and DAC to examine how leadership emerges through interactions and collective activity within a collegiate choir. These concepts serve distinct but related purposes. OCB, a construct developed within organizational behavior scholarship, provided an initial set of sensitizing concepts for identifying discretionary behaviors that may

contribute to collective functioning (Organ, 1988; Podsakoff et al., 2000). Rather than treating OCB as a comprehensive account of leadership or assuming that all observed leadership behaviors are discretionary, this study used OCB to inform observational attention while remaining open to behaviors that extended beyond its categories.

LAP provides the primary perspective for interpreting how leadership is enacted through everyday interactions and collective practices (Carroll et al., 2008; Crevani et al., 2010; Raelin, 2011). Whereas OCB helped orient attention toward particular types of individual behavior, LAP directs attention to how people interact, respond to one another, and participate in practices through which leadership may emerge. This distinction is important in a collegiate choir, where leadership may be enacted through ordinary musical and social interactions rather than only through discretionary acts or formally assigned roles.

DAC provides a framework for examining collective direction, alignment, and commitment as outcomes associated with leadership within a system (Drath et al., 2008). Considered together, OCB, LAP, and DAC support an analysis that attends to individual behaviors, the interactions and practices in which those behaviors take on meaning, and the collective outcomes associated with ensemble functioning. The frameworks informed the study without predetermining what the data would show. Figure 1.1 illustrates the conceptual model of how OCB, LAP, and DAC interact within collegiate choirs.

Figure 1.1. Theoretical Framework



Research Paradigm, Ontology, and Epistemology

This study is situated within a socially constructed and interpretive paradigm, which assumes that reality develops collectively through interaction and that knowledge is co-created between participants and the researcher (Berger et al., 2017; Burr, 2015; Phillips, 2023; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2020). From this perspective, leadership is understood as an emergent and enacted process, shaped by the behaviors and practices of ensemble members. The study also adopts a transformative lens, recognizing that collaborative leadership processes support both individual and collective growth within collegiate choirs (Carroll et al., 2008; McNamee & Hosking, 2012; Raelin, 2011; Uhl-Bien, 2006).

The study adopts a social constructionist ontology, in which reality is not fixed but is co-constructed through interaction and shared meaning-making (Berger et al., 2017; Burr, 2015; Dombrowski, 2020; Gergen, 2015). Leadership is treated not as an individual's traits but as a pattern of actions, practices, and interactions that will co-produce observable outcomes. Within

this context, the study examines how micro-level behaviors and meso-level practices collectively generate systemic outcomes, consistent with the DAC framework.

Epistemologically, the study aligns with interpretivist traditions, assuming that knowledge is generated through observation, interpretation, and co-construction of meaning between researcher and participants (Ryan, 2018; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2020; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2015). This study generates an understanding of leadership through engagement with the ensemble, reflection on observed behaviors and practices, and iterative analysis of how these actions shape DAC outcomes across nested levels of engagement.

Justification for Qualitative Research

Because this study investigates how leadership emerges, is enacted, and is sustained within a collegiate choir, qualitative inquiry provides the most appropriate methodological approach. Qualitative methods are designed to capture the complexity, context, and nuance of social phenomena, allowing researchers to explore not only what occurs but how and why it occurs (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; van Manen, 2016). By engaging in qualitative observation, interviews, journaling, and artifact analysis, this study generates rich, contextually grounded data that reveal the interplay between individual behaviors, collective practices, and systemic outcomes.

This research takes the form of an arts-informed case study focused on a single collegiate choir. Case study methodology enables detailed, holistic examination of a bounded system, allowing the capturing of leadership as it unfolds within its natural context (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 2010; Yin & Campbell, 2018). Through the case study, the research observes multiple levels of interaction—individual singers, sections, and the full ensemble—aligning closely with the recursive, multilevel conceptual model that guides this study.

Justification for Arts-Informed Case Study

An arts-informed approach allows the study to attend to the aesthetic, embodied, and performative dimensions of leadership within the ensemble. Leadership in choirs is not solely cognitive or social; it is enacted through gesture, musical expression, rhythm, and emotional attunement (Alvehus & Crevani, 2022; De Caro & Palazzolo, 2024; Tahirbegi, 2023). By applying arts-informed principles, this study illuminates leadership as both an artistic and social practice, capturing the subtle ways in which behaviors and practices contribute to DAC outcomes.

By combining the bounded focus of a case study with the interpretive and expressive sensibilities of arts-informed research, this study captures leadership in its full aesthetic, social, and systemic complexity. My dual position as scholar and musician provides access, empathy, and insight within the field setting, enabling close observation of interactions, emergent practices, and the iterative processes through which leadership is co-constructed.
This methodology aligns directly with the study's research questions, supporting analysis of individual behaviors (RQ1), ensemble practices (RQ2), and DAC outcomes (RQ3) across nested levels of interaction.

Delimitations and Limitations

This study focuses on a single collegiate choir at a large, midwestern university, limiting the scope to auditioned ensembles in higher education. The research does not examine non-auditioned, community, or non-collegiate ensembles, as these contexts differ in structure, expectations, and participant experience. Additionally, the study does not prioritize individual knowledge, skill level, or musical ability as primary variables, nor does it focus on conductor–singer interactions, as the director is not the main unit of analysis. These boundaries allow the

research to concentrate on emergent, peer-to-peer leadership behaviors and collective practices within a specific, bounded system.

My prior experience as a singer in this ensemble may have influenced data collection and interpretation. However, steps were taken to mitigate potential bias; these will be described in detail in Chapter 3. Additionally, the university and choir are relatively homogenous, reflecting limited racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity, which may constrain the applicability of insights to more diverse ensembles. The temporal scope provides another limitation, as observations and reflections occurred over one semester, potentially missing longer-term patterns of leader and leadership development.

Overview of Methods

This study uses a qualitative, arts-informed case study design to explore how leadership develops through behaviors, practices, and DAC outcomes in a collegiate choir. A single, auditioned ensemble serves as the bounded system, allowing for in-depth exploration of interactions across nested levels. Participants included all choir members who consented to participate, capturing peer-to-peer leadership dynamics while excluding the conductor as the primary unit of analysis.

Data were collected through multiple sources and at multiple levels to enable triangulation and capture interactions across nested contexts, consistent with the multilevel focus of the research questions. These sources included:

- Direct observations of rehearsals and performances to capture leadership behaviors and practices as they occurred;
- Participant journaling, which allowed singers to reflect on their own actions, interactions, and perceptions of leadership;

- Researcher journaling, which documented reflections, contextual observations, and emerging interpretations throughout data collection;
- Field notes maintained by the researcher to record contextual details, interactions, and patterns that may not have been captured in journals or observations;
- Artifacts, such as scores and performance programs, to contextualize practices and decision-making.

Data were analyzed using thematic (Butler-Kisber, 2010) and iterative (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Neale, 2016) coding procedures, guided by the conceptual framework integrating OCB, LAP, and DAC. Analysis examined how micro-level behaviors contribute to meso-level practices and systemic outcomes, with attention to recursive interactions across nested levels of the ensemble. Strategies such as member checking and reflective journaling by the researcher were used to enhance trustworthiness and mitigate potential bias (Ahmed, 2024; Butler-Kisber, 2010; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This methodological approach directly aligns with the research questions, supporting exploration of which behaviors contribute to DAC outcomes (RQ1), how collective practices emerge and sustain leadership (RQ2), and how systemic DAC outcomes are observed across the ensemble (RQ3). The study's design, data collection, and analytic approach are explored in further detail in Chapter 3.

Table 1.1 provides an overview of this study's research questions and corresponding study design. For each research question, the table identifies the primary data sources, analytic approach, and contribution to the overall study, illustrating how the research questions guided the collection and analysis of data.

Table 1.1. Research Questions and Study Design

Research Question	Primary Data Sources	Analytic Approach	Contribution to Study
RQ1: What specific discretionary behaviors (OCB) do ensemble members engage in that contribute to shared leadership and the collective functioning of collegiate choirs?	Observations of rehearsals and performances, field notes, participant journals, researcher journaling, rehearsal recordings	Thematic coding to identify recurring behaviors and link them to DAC dimensions	Identifies the specific micro-level behaviors through which leadership is enacted, connecting individual actions to systemic outcomes
RQ2: How do ensemble practices (LAP) emerge from, reinforce, and interact with individual behaviors to support collective direction, alignment, and commitment?	Observations, field notes, participant journals, artifacts (e.g., rehearsal schedules, scores)	Iterative coding and pattern analysis to trace connections between individual behaviors and meso-level practices	Illuminates how leadership is co-constructed through ensemble practices, demonstrating recursive, emergent processes
RQ3: What observable evidence	Observations, field notes,	Cross-level analysis coding for alignment,	Reveals systemic outcomes of shared leadership, showing how

Research Question	Primary Data Sources	Analytic Approach	Contribution to Study
of DAC is present in collegiate choirs, and how does it manifest across nested levels of interaction (individual, sectional, full ensemble)?	rehearsal recordings, researcher journaling, artifacts	commitment, and direction; synthesis across nested levels	micro- and meso-level processes co-produce collective effects
RQ4: How do these recursive interactions between behaviors, practices, and outcomes shape leadership processes and inform strategies for fostering collaboration, mutual influence, and collective artistry in ensemble settings?	Observations, field notes, participant journals, researcher journaling, artifacts, rehearsal recordings	Integrative synthesis of data from RQs 1–3; pattern mapping across behaviors, practices, and DAC outcomes	Supports practical and theoretical implications, informing strategies to intentionally foster leadership and collaboration in ensemble contexts

Research Questions

This study investigated how leadership is enacted, shared, and sustained through individual behaviors and collective practices in collegiate choirs. The research questions were designed to explore the recursive interactions among micro-level behaviors, meso-level practices, and systemic outcomes, with attention to evidence of Direction, Alignment, and Commitment (DAC).

1. What specific discretionary behaviors (OCB) do ensemble members engage in that contribute to shared leadership and the collective functioning of collegiate choirs?
2. How do ensemble practices (LAP) emerge from, reinforce, and interact with individual behaviors to support collective direction, alignment, and commitment?
3. What observable evidence of DAC is present in collegiate choirs, and how does it manifest across nested levels of interaction (individual, sectional, full ensemble)?
4. How do these recursive interactions between behaviors, practices, and outcomes shape leadership processes and inform strategies for fostering collaboration, mutual influence, and collective artistry in ensemble settings?

Definition of Terms

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB). Discretionary, extra-role behaviors that contribute to the effective functioning of a group (Organ, 1988, 2006, 2008; Podsakoff et al., 2000).

Leadership as Practice (LAP). A perspective that views leadership as an emergent, relational, and socially constructed process that occurs through interaction (Crevani et al., 2010; Raelin, 2011).

Direction, Alignment, and Commitment (DAC). Collective outcomes that indicate the presence of leadership within a system (Drath et al., 2008; McCauley & Fick-Cooper, 2024).

Community-Engaged Scholarship (CES). Research conducted in equitable partnership with communities to generate knowledge that benefits both scholarship and practice (Beaulieu et al., 2018; Boyer, 1996).

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 introduced the focus and rationale for this study, situating collegiate choirs as rich, dynamic contexts in which leadership emerges through everyday behaviors and collective practices. Despite the importance of these peer-to-peer processes, research has previously failed to examine how micro-level behaviors, meso-level practices, and systemic outcomes interact recursively to sustain ensemble functionality.

The chapter outlined the purpose of the study, which was to investigate leadership as an enacted, shared, and recursive process across nested levels of interaction within a collegiate choir. Theoretical and conceptual frameworks–Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), Leadership as Practice (LAP), and Direction, Alignment, and Commitment (DAC)–provide complementary lenses for understanding leadership as emergent and practice-based. The study's research paradigm, ontology, and epistemology were articulated, emphasizing social constructionism and interpretivist approaches, along with a transformative lens to highlight potential for individual and collective growth.

This chapter also justified a qualitative, arts-informed case study methodology, highlighting the benefits of in-depth engagement, multilevel data collection, and attention to the aesthetic, embodied, and relational dimensions of ensemble leadership. Limitations and

delimitations were acknowledged, clarifying the study's bounded focus and potential constraints while emphasizing the richness and depth of insight that this approach provides.

The chapter provided an overview of methods, including multilevel data collection from observations, participant and researcher journaling, rehearsal recordings, artifacts, and field notes, and an initial outline of the analytic approach. The research questions were presented, and the stage has been set for Chapters 2 and 3, which will provide a detailed review of the literature and a full description of the study's methodology, respectively. Together, this chapter established the foundation for examining how leadership emerges, is enacted, and is sustained within collegiate ensembles, positioning the study to contribute meaningfully to leadership theory, music scholarship, and community-engaged research.

Chapter 2 - Andante Cantabile: Theoretical and Conceptual Grounding

Introduction

Contemporary theories of leadership suggest that influence does not reside solely within formal roles but develops through interaction, shared meaning-making, and patterned participation within social systems. This shift has allowed space for examining leadership as something people do together, rather than something individuals possess, particularly within collaborative and interdependent contexts. However, despite this growing body of work, leadership research often remains fragmented across levels of analysis, with limited integration between individual behaviors, collective practices, and systemic outcomes (Carroll et al., 2008; Drath et al., 2008; Raelin, 2011).

This chapter examines three related frameworks—OCB, LAP, and DAC—to investigate how leadership emerges through interaction and collective activity within a collegiate choir. The frameworks serve distinct but complementary purposes in this study. OCB, a construct developed within organizational behavior scholarship, provides an initial set of concepts for identifying discretionary behaviors that may support collective functioning. LAP provides the primary perspective for examining how leadership is enacted through everyday interactions and collective practices, rather than being understood solely through formal roles or individual actions. DAC provides a framework for examining direction, alignment, and commitment as collective outcomes associated with leadership processes. Together, these frameworks support an analysis of individual behaviors, the practices through which people interact and coordinate their activity, and the collective outcomes associated with ensemble functioning.

Rather than presenting these frameworks as a linear progression or competing explanations, this study considers them as recursively interconnected. Individual behaviors may shape collective practices, while those practices may also influence how individuals act in subsequent interactions. These practices can contribute to collective outcomes, including direction, alignment, and commitment, which may in turn shape future participation and interaction. LAP provides the primary perspective for interpreting these ongoing processes, while OCB informs attention to particular discretionary behaviors and DAC supports examination of collective outcomes. These relationships are not assumed to follow a fixed sequence; instead, they provide a conceptual basis for examining how leadership emerges and develops through activity within collegiate choirs.

Collegiate choirs provide a particularly rich context for examining these dynamics. As collaborative, time-bound, and performance-oriented systems, choirs require high levels of coordination, mutual responsiveness, and shared responsibility (Sutherland & Cartwright, 2022; Tahirbegi, 2023). While conductors hold formal authority, much of the work required to sustain ensemble functioning occurs through peer-to-peer interaction, informal leadership, and leadership among ensemble members (Ryan et al., 2025). Existing research in music education and ensemble leadership has tended to privilege the role of the conductor or focus on musical outcomes, leaving the processes through which leadership emerges among ensemble members underexamined (Sutherland & Cartwright, 2022). By situating the proposed study within this context, this chapter lays the groundwork for understanding how leadership processes operate within arts-based, participatory settings.

This chapter first reviews literature on OCB, LAP, and DAC, highlighting their theoretical foundations, key contributions, and limitations. It then synthesizes these frameworks

into a multilevel conceptual model for examining leadership as enacted, shared, and emergent. The chapter then situates collegiate choirs within leadership and music scholarship, articulating why ensemble settings are well suited for studying recursive leadership processes. The chapter concludes by identifying gaps in the literature that motivate the present study.

Leadership as Discretionary Behaviors: Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) refers to discretionary behaviors that extend beyond formal role requirements and contribute to the effective functioning of a group or organization (Organ, 2008; Podsakoff et al., 2000). Examples include helping others, voluntarily taking on additional responsibilities, maintaining a positive attitude, and supporting group norms (Organ, 1988; Organ et al., 2006). Developed within organizational behavior scholarship, OCB offers a way to identify behaviors through which individuals may support collective functioning. In this study, OCB served as an initial framework for directing observational attention toward such behaviors, rather than as a comprehensive explanation of leadership.

Scholars have identified multiple dimensions of OCB, including altruism, conscientiousness, civic virtue, courtesy, and sportsmanship (Organ, 1988; Organ et al., 2006). These dimensions provided starting categories for identifying potentially relevant behaviors in the choir setting. However, not all behaviors that contribute to leadership are necessarily discretionary, and not every instance of OCB constitutes leadership. Accordingly, these categories informed initial observation and coding without limiting the analysis to behaviors that fit the OCB framework. The study also attended to interactions and practices that could not be adequately described by these categories, allowing leadership to be examined primarily through the perspective of Leadership as Practice (LAP).

OCB has been critiqued for its tendency to isolate behaviors from the broader social practices in which they occur (Deery et al., 2016; Fan et al., 2023; Lavelle, 2010). Although OCB scholarship has expanded to include team- and group-level conceptualizations (Eliyahu & Somech, 2023; Zhang et al., 2023), recent reviews indicate that OCB research remains predominantly quantitative and cross-sectional, with substantial attention to the antecedents of citizenship behavior (Worku & Debela, 2024). These approaches provide important insight into the factors associated with OCB and its occurrence across levels but offer less insight into the ongoing interactional processes through which discretionary behaviors are taken up, patterned, and sustained in collective activity. While OCB provides a useful framework for identifying discretionary behaviors at individual and collective levels, a practice-based perspective is needed to examine how those behaviors become part of ongoing leadership activity.

This limitation points to the need to examine OCB in relation to a broader, practice-based understanding of leadership. Discretionary behaviors do not operate in isolation; their significance depends in part on the interactions and social contexts in which they occur. A behavior that supports another singer or helps maintain ensemble functioning may contribute to collaborative practice, but the behavior itself does not necessarily constitute leadership. Leadership as Practice provides a way to examine how people respond to one another, coordinate activity, and develop patterns of interaction through which leadership may emerge. In this study, OCB therefore serves as an initial guide for identifying certain behaviors, while LAP supports analysis of how behaviors acquire meaning within collective activity.

Within the present study, OCB is used as an initial framework for identifying discretionary behaviors that may contribute to collective functioning, rather than as a comprehensive explanation of leadership. This use recognizes a potential tension between OCB's

traditional emphasis on discretionary, extra-role behaviors and LAP's focus on everyday interactions and practices. In a collegiate choir, behaviors that initially appear exceptional or voluntary may, through repetition and incorporation into ensemble activity, become part of ordinary practice. LAP provides a perspective for examining this possibility by attending to how behaviors are taken up, repeated, and given meaning through interaction. The findings explore how this relationship appears in the choir context, while recognizing that the relationship between discretionary behavior and everyday leadership practice may require further study.

Emergent and Relational Perspectives: Leadership as Practice (LAP)

LAP emerged in response to leader-centric and trait-based approaches that locate leadership primarily in individual characteristics, competencies, or formal authority (Carroll et al., 2008; Raelin, 2011). Rather than asking only who leads, LAP shifts analytical attention to how leadership happens through interaction. It conceptualizes leadership as a collective, situated, and emergent process shaped by relationships and activity in context (Raelin, 2011, 2023; Raelin & Robinson, 2022). This perspective is particularly relevant to collegiate choirs, where leadership may be enacted through interactions among ensemble members as they respond to musical and social needs, alongside the conductor’s formal authority.

Drawing on practice theory, social constructionism, and phenomenology, LAP understands leadership as something people accomplish together rather than something an individual simply possesses (Carroll et al., 2008; Crevani et al., 2010). Practice theory foregrounds everyday activity as a site where social reality is produced and sustained, emphasizing interaction, repetition, embodiment, and materiality (Carroll et al., 2008; Crevani et al., 2010). From this perspective, leadership cannot be reduced to a list of individual behaviors or isolated moments of influence; it is understood through patterns of interaction that develop over

time. LAP therefore provides the primary perspective for interpreting leadership in this study, complementing OCB's role in directing attention toward particular discretionary behaviors and DAC's focus on collective outcomes.

Defining Leadership as Practice

Within this study, a practice-based perspective directs attention to how leadership is accomplished during ensemble activity. During rehearsals, leadership may be visible in how singers respond to one another, negotiate musical interpretations, coordinate their actions, and adapt to changing needs. These interactions are not automatically leadership simply because they occur; their significance depends on how they contribute to collective activity. Examining patterns of interaction over time makes it possible to consider how leadership emerges through participation without assuming that every helpful behavior or moment of influence constitutes leadership (Crevani et al., 2010; Raelin, 2011).

From an LAP perspective, formal authority remains relevant, but it does not fully determine how leadership is enacted. Conductors' roles and decisions shape the conditions in which ensemble members participate, while leadership may also emerge through singers' dialogue, embodied action, and mutual responsiveness (Crevani et al., 2010; Raelin, 2011; Sabharwal et al., 2024). This perspective makes it possible to examine how formal direction and collaborative activity interact, without assuming that leadership resides exclusively with the conductor or is equally distributed among all ensemble members.

Choir rehearsals provide a context for examining how leadership may emerge through musical and social interaction. Singers coordinate through shared listening, timing, gesture, and interpretive negotiation (Jansson et al., 2019; Sutherland & Cartwright, 2022). Practices such as breath preparation, posture, eye contact, and musical responsiveness can contribute to this

coordination (Jansson et al., 2019; Sutherland & Cartwright, 2022; Tahirbegi, 2023). From an LAP perspective, the significance of these practices lies not simply in their occurrence, but in how ensemble members use and respond to them as they develop shared understandings, coordinate action, and sustain engagement. This focus allows the study to examine how leadership may be enacted through embodied musical activity as well as verbal direction.

Core Ontological Commitments

Leadership as Practice rests on several interrelated ontological commitments that distinguish it from traditional leadership theories. First, leadership is understood as processual rather than static (Carroll et al., 2008; Raelin, 2011, 2023). It is something that unfolds over time through repeated interaction, not a fixed attribute that individuals carry across contexts. Second, leadership is relational, arising in the spaces between people rather than residing within them (Raelin, 2011, 2023; Uhl-Bien, 2006). Third, leadership is situated, meaning it is inseparable from the social, material, and historical conditions in which it occurs (Raelin, 2011, 2023; Raelin & Robinson, 2022; Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Materiality plays a crucial role in LAP. Leadership practices are mediated by tools, artifacts, and embodied action (Carroll et al., 2008; Alvehus & Crevani, 2022; Crevani et al., 2010). In choral ensembles, the score provides a material point of reference that can shape interaction by structuring attention, pacing rehearsal, and anchoring shared interpretation (Jansson et al., 2019; Sabharwal et al., 2024). Leadership, therefore, is not only communicative but also material and embodied, enacted through the interplay of people, artifacts, and activity.

Power and agency are also important considerations within LAP. Rather than treating power solely as an attribute held by individuals, this perspective examines how power operates through practices that enable and constrain action in context (Raelin, 2011; Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Agency may emerge through collective engagement, although opportunities to influence activity are not necessarily distributed equally among participants. This view supports an examination of how leadership is negotiated through participation while remaining attentive to the ways formal roles and contextual conditions shape whose contributions influence collective activity.

Sites and Practices of Leadership

A key contribution of LAP is its emphasis on sites of practice—the settings and moments in which leadership may be enacted and examined (Carroll et al., 2008; Raelin, 2011). Rather than abstracting leadership from context, LAP directs attention to everyday activity in settings such as meetings, workshops, rehearsals, and informal interactions (Carroll et al., 2008; Crevani et al., 2010; Raelin, 2011). In collegiate choirs, rehearsals and interactions among ensemble members provide opportunities to examine how participants respond to one another, coordinate activity, and negotiate musical and social needs. These interactions offer potential evidence of leadership in practice, rather than establishing that every interaction is itself an instance of leadership.

Studying Leadership as Practice

LAP has been studied through qualitative and interpretive approaches that examine leadership in the context of lived interaction (Crevani et al., 2010; Raelin, 2011, 2019). Rather than prescribing a single method, LAP scholarship draws on a range of approaches, including discursive, narrative, ethnographic, aesthetic, and multimodal methods (Raelin, 2019). These approaches can direct attention to the processes through which leadership may emerge, including verbal exchanges, embodied action, material engagement, and the influence of context and power (Alvehus & Crevani, 2022; Crevani et al., 2010; Raelin, 2019).

The primary analytic focus in LAP research shifts from the individual leader or follower to leadership practice itself (Carroll et al., 2008; Raelin, 2011, 2019, 2023). Researchers examine how leadership is enacted through patterns of interaction over time, attending to how meaning, coordination, and influence are produced through collective activity. This focus also has connections to arts-informed inquiry, which recognizes embodiment, process, and aesthetic experience as important dimensions of human activity (Crevani et al., 2010; Raelin, 2011). In the context of collegiate choirs, this perspective supports attention to the interactional and embodied dimensions of ensemble activity without assuming that the study itself constitutes arts-informed research.

LAP emphasizes the emergent nature of leadership practices. Rather than assuming in advance which interactions constitute leadership, researchers can remain attentive to how leadership may unfold within particular situations and how practices develop over time (Crevani et al., 2010; Latham, 2014; Raelin, 2011). This openness is relevant to dynamic environments such as choir rehearsals, where interactions respond to changing musical and social needs. In the present study, this perspective complemented the use of theoretically informed initial coding by supporting continued attention to behaviors, interactions, and patterns that were not fully captured by the initial categories.

Leadership as Practice in Artistic and Educational Contexts

LAP has been discussed in relation to educational, community, and artistic contexts, extending its application beyond corporate and managerial settings (Carroll et al., 2008; Raelin, 2011). In educational environments, a practice-based perspective can frame leadership in relation to shared inquiry, co-learning, and reflective engagement. From this perspective, teachers and

students may participate in practices that shape learning environments through interaction, while formal authority remains relevant to how those interactions unfold.

The performing arts provide a useful context for examining leadership as a relational and embodied process. Artistic collaboration involves interdependence, trust, and responsiveness, creating opportunities to examine how participants coordinate their activity and respond to one another (Sabharwal et al., 2024; Sutherland & Cartwright, 2022; Tahirbegi, 2023). Musicians continually attend to one another and adapt in real time to sustain cohesion and expressivity. From an LAP perspective, these moments of coordination and adaptation are potential sites for examining leadership in practice. Their significance depends on how participants engage with one another and how their interactions contribute to collective activity, rather than on coordination alone.

Situating Leadership as Practice Within the Integrated Framework

Within this study, Leadership as Practice provides the primary perspective for examining how individual behaviors and collective activity relate to leadership. OCB offers an initial set of concepts for identifying discretionary, prosocial behaviors, while LAP directs attention to how behaviors acquire significance through interaction and ongoing practice. This distinction recognizes that leadership does not emerge simply because behaviors occur, but may emerge as participants take up, respond to, and incorporate actions into collective activity.

LAP also informs the study's use of the Direction, Alignment, and Commitment (DAC) framework by directing attention to the practices through which these collective outcomes may develop. DAC provides a framework for examining direction, alignment, and commitment as outcomes associated with leadership processes (Drath et al., 2008). From this perspective, LAP and DAC serve related but distinct purposes: LAP supports the interpretation of leadership as it

is enacted through practice, while DAC supports examination of collective outcomes associated with those practices.

Together, these frameworks support an examination of leadership as an emergent process grounded in practice and situated within the collective activity of collegiate choirs. OCB helps orient attention toward individual behaviors, LAP provides the primary perspective for interpreting interactions and practices, and DAC offers a way to examine collective outcomes. This integrated approach allows the study to consider individual contributions and collective processes without assuming in advance that a particular behavior constitutes leadership or produces a specific outcome.

Direction, Alignment, and Commitment (DAC) as Systemic Outcomes

The Direction, Alignment, and Commitment (DAC) framework was developed by Drath et al. (2008) as part of an effort to reconceptualize leadership beyond individual traits, competencies, or formal roles. Rather than defining leadership solely through the actions of an individual, DAC directs attention to collective outcomes associated with leadership: shared direction, coordinated effort, and mutual commitment (Drath et al., 2008; McCauley & Fick-Cooper, 2024).

Direction refers to a shared understanding of the group's goals and what it seeks to accomplish. Alignment concerns the coordination and integration of work in service of those goals, while commitment reflects members' mutual investment in the group and its collective purposes (Drath et al., 2008; McCauley & Fick-Cooper, 2024). Together, these dimensions provide a way to examine how a group functions collectively without assuming that leadership resides exclusively in a single individual or formal role.

From this perspective, DAC can be understood as a set of collective outcomes produced through the interactions and exchanges by which group members accomplish leadership together (Drath et al., 2008; McCauley & Fick-Cooper, 2024). Rather than locating leadership exclusively in the actions of formal leaders, the framework directs attention to whether shared direction, coordinated work, and mutual commitment are being produced within the collective.

Several group dynamics may support the development of direction, alignment, and commitment. Recent research examining DAC in more than 480 senior leadership teams identified relationships among collective identity, relationship conflict, task conflict, psychological safety, and DAC, with psychological safety particularly important to alignment and commitment (Loignon et al., 2025). In artistic groups, additional relational and embodied conditions—including attentiveness, mutual responsiveness, and sensitivity to the expressive contributions of others—may similarly support collective coordination (Sabharwal et al., 2024; Sutherland & Cartwright, 2022; Tahirbegi, 2023). Together, these conditions provide a context within which direction, alignment, and commitment can be collectively produced.

In this study, DAC complements Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) and Leadership as Practice (LAP) by providing a framework for examining collective outcomes associated with leadership. OCB informed initial attention to discretionary behaviors, while LAP provided the primary perspective for interpreting interactions and collective practices. DAC, in turn, supported examination of how direction, alignment, and commitment were expressed in the ensemble's activity. Considered together, the frameworks allow the analysis to attend to individual behaviors, the practices through which participants coordinate their activity, and collective outcomes without assuming that these relationships follow a fixed or automatic sequence.

Linking OCB, LAP, and DAC: A Multilevel Conceptual Synthesis

The three frameworks offer complementary perspectives for examining leadership within collegiate choirs. Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) provides an initial behavioral lens, drawing attention to discretionary actions that may support group functioning. Leadership as Practice (LAP) provides the primary perspective for interpreting how people interact, respond to one another, and participate in practices through which leadership may emerge. Direction, Alignment, and Commitment (DAC) provides a framework for examining collective outcomes associated with leadership processes. Each framework therefore serves a distinct purpose within the study rather than offering a competing or interchangeable definition of leadership.

The relationships among these frameworks are not assumed to follow a simple cause-and-effect sequence. Individual behaviors may contribute to collective activity, but their significance depends partly on how others respond to them and how they become incorporated into ongoing practices. Collective outcomes may also provide context for subsequent interactions. This conceptual synthesis therefore attends to individual behaviors, interactional practices, and collective outcomes as related but analytically distinct dimensions of leadership within collegiate choirs.

The relationship between OCB and LAP is particularly important to this study. OCB informed initial attention to discretionary behaviors, while LAP supported examination of how actions acquire significance through interaction and participation. For example, a singer might model a phrasing choice or provide a cue to other singers. Such an action does not necessarily constitute leadership on its own. Examining how others respond, adjust their performance, or incorporate the contribution into subsequent activity makes it possible to investigate whether and how leadership emerges through the interaction.

LAP and DAC also serve related but distinct purposes. LAP directs attention to the practices through which participants coordinate activity and negotiate shared understandings, while DAC provides a way to examine collective direction, alignment, and commitment. Considering these frameworks together allows the study to explore relationships between leadership practices and ensemble functioning without presuming that particular practices necessarily produce specific outcomes. The integrated framework thus supports an examination of leadership as a situated, relational process, attending to individual contributions, collective practices, and group-level outcomes within the collaborative context of collegiate choirs.

Collegiate Choirs as Complex Leadership Systems

Collegiate choirs offer a unique lens for studying leadership because they function as dynamic, semi-structured systems in which authority, initiative, and collaboration are continuously negotiated. While more traditional organizations have rigid hierarchies, choirs rely on both formal and informal mechanisms to sustain cohesion and achieve collective goals. The conductor provides interpretive guidance and sets artistic expectations, but leadership is distributed across singers, section leaders, and peers (Jansson et al., 2019; Sutherland & Cartwright, 2022; Tahirbegi, 2023). Moment to moment coordination emerges from the interplay of individual contributions, relational practices, and shared commitments. These interactions illustrate leadership as an ongoing, co-created process, rather than a fixed property of a single individual.

Rehearsals, sectionals, warm-ups, and informal peer interactions serve as primary sites where leadership is enacted. Within these contexts, singers engage in prosocial, discretionary behaviors (OCB) that support others, contribute to the ensemble's collective functioning, and help sustain a positive rehearsal climate (Jansson et al., 2019; Organ, 1988; Sutherland &

Cartwright, 2022). These behaviors may be subtle–a glance signaling an entrance, modeling tone or breath support, offering guidance to a peer–but they cumulatively influence the ensemble's direction, alignment, and commitment. By situating these behaviors within LAP, the study can examine how individual actions become meaningful through relational and situational processes and how leadership may emerge through shared interpretation and coordinated action.

The outcomes of these interactions are observable at multiple levels. Direction emerges as a shared understanding of musical and expressive goals; alignment manifests when individual contributions fit seamlessly into the ensemble's collective sound; and commitment is evident in singers' dedication to the group, persistence through challenges, and investment in communal success. These outcomes, framed through DAC, provide a lens for seeing how leadership is produced systemically, arising from the interweaving of behavioral and practice-based mechanisms. In this way, collegiate choirs exemplify leadership systems where micro-level actions, relational processes, and macro-level results are inseparable and mutually reinforcing.

Importantly, the complexity of these systems underscores that leadership cannot be fully understood by examining formal roles alone. Peer-to-peer influence, tacit communication, and informal coordination are integral to ensemble functionality (Jansson et al., 2019; Sutherland & Cartwright, 2022; Tahirbegi, 2023). By observing these processes in collegiate choirs, this study captures the ways leadership emerges organically, reflecting the ensemble's social, musical, and emotional dynamics. This perspective positions the choir not merely as a site of musical training, but as a living laboratory for studying distributed, emergent leadership in real time.

Leadership in Musical Ensembles and Arts-Based Contexts

Leadership in musical ensembles is inherently collaborative, emergent, and context-dependent. Traditional conductor-centered models, often framed around the "maestro" archetype,

position the conductor as the primary authority responsible for interpreting the score and directing the ensemble's performance (De Caro & Palazzolo, 2024; Jansson et al., 2019; Sutherland & Cartwright, 2022). This top-down approach emphasizes technical precision, control, and hierarchical coordination, often leaving ensemble members in largely receptive or follower roles. While this structure can yield artistic excellence, it also limits opportunities for shared interpretation, peer-to-peer leadership, and distributed problem-solving within the ensemble.

Emerging perspectives in music education and arts leadership reconceptualize ensembles as adaptive systems in which leadership continuously shifts and evolves in response to musical, social, and situational cues (Raelin, 2011; Sutherland & Cartwright, 2022; Tahirbegi, 2023). In this view, leadership is not a static role but a relational and practice-based phenomenon that emerges through interaction, coordination, and mutual responsiveness. Peer influence plays a critical role: ensemble members guide one another's musical and expressive engagement through attentiveness, modeling, and feedback, fostering an environment in which leadership is distributed rather than concentrated (Jansson et al., 2019; Sutherland & Cartwright, 2022). Some of these actions may fit OCB's focus on discretionary, prosocial behavior, while others may fall outside those categories. LAP provides a broader perspective for examining how such actions and interactions relate to leadership in practice.

Arts-based ensembles also highlight the processual, embodied nature of leadership captured by LAP. Leadership occurs in rehearsal interactions, informal sectionals, warm-ups, and spontaneous musical decisions, often manifesting in subtle gestures, shared breaths, or interpretive cues rather than explicit instructions (Raelin, 2011; Sutherland & Cartwright, 2022; Tahirbegi, 2023).

At the collective level, ensemble functionality mirrors the outcomes described by DAC. Successful ensembles demonstrate shared direction through interpretive vision, alignment through synchronized performance and coordinated effort, and commitment through mutual investment in artistic and social goals (Drath et al., 2008; Raelin, 2011). These outcomes are co-produced through interactions that are relational, behavioral, and systemic, exemplifying the multilevel nature of leadership in arts contexts.

By situating leadership within musical and arts-based settings, research highlights the importance of relational, distributed, and contextually grounded approaches. Collegiate ensembles, with their semi-structured yet highly interactive nature, provide a particularly rich example of how individual behaviors, collective practices, and systemic outcomes interweave to sustain performance excellence, social cohesion, and shared agency in this study. This perspective not only advances leadership theory but also provides a conceptual bridge between organizational research and the lived realities of artistic collaboration.

Literature Gaps and Need for the Present Study

Despite growing interest in distributed and relational leadership, gaps remain in the existing literature. Although OCB, LAP, and DAC have each been examined in leadership-related research, their integration within a single framework for studying leadership in collegiate choirs appears to be underexplored.Most research treats these frameworks independently–OCB within organizational psychology, LAP within critical leadership studies, and DAC within systems leadership–leaving limited guidance on how individual behaviors, relational practices, and collective outcomes interact to produce emergent leadership (Drath et al., 2008; Organ, 1988; Raelin, 2011).

Artistic and performance-based contexts also remain underexplored. Much of leadership research prioritizes corporate, educational, or political environments, yet ensembles offer unique insights into collaboration, tacit coordination, and peer-to-peer leadership (Jansson et al., 2019; Sutherland & Cartwright, 2022). Within these settings, leadership emerges in real time through nonverbal cues, musical negotiation, and embodied interactions–dimensions that conventional leadership studies have often overlooked.

Peer-to-peer leadership within ensembles receives minimal attention. Even in music education and performing arts research, studies typically focus on conductors or formally designated leaders, neglecting how ensemble members influence one another and co-produce direction, alignment, and commitment (Jansson et al., 2019; Ryan et al., 2025; Sutherland & Cartwright, 2022). This gap is particularly salient in collegiate choirs, where leadership is often distributed, emergent, and embedded in everyday practice rather than centralized in authority figures.

Finally, methodological gaps exist in capturing leadership as it naturally unfolds. LAP and OCB perspectives emphasize relational and situational dynamics, yet most studies rely on surveys or static observations that fail to account for the nuanced, real-time processes occurring in ensemble contexts (Organ et al., 2006; Raelin, 2011). Arts-informed, qualitative, and practice-based methods are necessary to fully understand these complex systems of interaction and emergent leadership.

Together, these gaps highlight the need for a study that integrates behavioral, practice-based, and systems perspectives in a performance-based, peer-driven environment. Collegiate choirs provide a particularly rich site for examining these dynamics, offering practical relevance

and an opportunity to explore relationships among individual behaviors, leadership practices, and collective outcomes in a performance-based, peer-driven environment.

Chapter Summary

This chapter synthesized literature on leadership from behavioral, relational, and systems perspectives to establish a foundation for studying leadership emergence in collegiate choirs. Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) highlights discretionary, prosocial actions that may support group functioning; Leadership as Practice (LAP) provides a perspective for examining how leadership may emerge through interactions and collective practices; and Direction, Alignment, and Commitment (DAC) provides a framework for examining collective outcomes associated with leadership processes. Together, these frameworks support an examination of individual behaviors, social interactions, and collective outcomes while preserving the distinct purpose each serves within the study.

The chapter also examined collegiate choirs as complex leadership systems, illustrating how rehearsals, sectionals, and informal interactions can serve as sites where leadership is enacted through interactions among ensemble members. Choirs provide contexts in which formal and informal leadership, peer interaction, nonverbal communication, and collective musical activity occur simultaneously. Despite this richness, the literature reveals gaps in multilevel integration, arts-based contexts, peer-to-peer leadership, and methods capable of capturing leadership as it occurs in practice. These gaps underscore the need for a study that examines leadership in action in a setting where individual actions, relational practices, and collective outcomes coalesce in observable ways.

This chapter established the theoretical, conceptual, and contextual groundwork for the study. By combining behavioral, practice-based, and systems approaches, it positions collegiate

choirs as fertile sites for understanding emergent leadership, providing both the rationale and conceptual framework for the methodological design outlined in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 - Giocoso: Methodology

Introduction to Methodology

This chapter details the research design, methodology, and procedures that guided this dissertation. The study adopted a qualitative, arts-informed case study approach to examine how leadership emerges through individual behaviors, collective practices, and systemic outcomes. Collegiate choirs provide a rich context for observing leadership as an enacted, shared, and recursive process, where members' discretionary actions (OCB) interact with ensemble practices (LAP) to produce collective direction, alignment, and commitment (DAC). These interactions occur across nested levels of analysis–micro-level behaviors, meso-level ensemble practices, and macro-level systemic outcomes–and the iterative relationships among them are central to understanding how leadership is co-constructed within the ensemble.

A qualitative approach was well-suited for this study because it allowed for in-depth engagement with the nuanced, relational, and contextually situated processes through which leadership emerges. Unlike quantitative methods, which often isolate variables, qualitative inquiry can capture the complex interactions, embodied behaviors, and communicative practices that shape leadership in collaborative artistic settings (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By prioritizing observation, interpretation, and co-construction of meaning between the researcher and participants, this study generated rich, contextually grounded insights into leadership as it was enacted in real time.

The case study design provided a bounded and holistic framework for investigating leadership within a single collegiate choir. This approach allowed for detailed examination of the ensemble as a system, including interactions at individual, sectional, and full-ensemble levels. The bounded nature of the case study ensured that emergent patterns of behavior and practice

could be observed, analyzed, and contextualized within the unique social and musical environment of the choir.

An arts-informed research perspective was particularly appropriate for this study because leadership in a choir is not only cognitive or relational but also aesthetic and embodied. Musical ensembles are dynamic, multimodal environments where leadership manifests through gesture, vocal coordination, timing, and expressive communication. Arts-informed methods allowed me to attend to these qualities, capturing leadership processes that might otherwise remain invisible in other methods of qualitative research (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Leavy, 2025). By integrating arts-informed approaches with case study methodology, this research illuminated leadership as a complex, relational, and iterative phenomenon embedded within collective artistic practice.

This chapter provides an overview of the study's design and procedures. It details the research site and participants, outlines data collection methods across multiple levels, describes data management and analytic procedures, and explains measures taken to ensure trustworthiness, rigor, and ethical conduct. By situating the study within this methodological framework, the chapter establishes the foundation for a systematic and transparent investigation of leadership as it emerges, evolves, and is enacted within collegiate choirs.

Community-Engaged Scholarship (CES)

This study was grounded within the principles of community-engaged scholarship (CES), which emphasizes collaboration, reciprocity, and mutual benefit between researchers and the communities they work with (Beaulieu et al., 2018; Boyer, 1996). Collegiate choirs function as both social and artistic communities where participants collectively contribute to shared outcomes. By embedding the study within a CES framework, the research worked to honor the

knowledge, expertise, and perspectives of ensemble members while generating findings that are meaningful and actionable for the choir.

CES informed the study in several ways. First, participants' experiences and insights guided interpretation of leadership processes, ensuring that the analysis reflects the ensemble's lived realities rather than my perspective alone. Second, the study's design prioritized mutual benefit, including sharing findings that can help conductors and singers better understand and intentionally foster collaborative leadership within the ensemble. Third, the research adopted arts-informed methods, such as participant journaling and observation, to engage participants actively in documenting and reflecting on leadership dynamics (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Leavy, 2015). These approaches reinforced the participatory ethos of CES by creating space for multiple voices to contribute to knowledge production.

By framing the study within CES, the research aligned with broader commitments to ethical, participatory, and socially responsive scholarship (Beaulieu et al., 2018; Boyer, 1996). Leadership in collegiate choirs is not only a theoretical construct but also a lived, social process with real-world implications for ensemble functioning, individual growth, and community impact. Using CES principles ensured that this research attended to both scholarly inquiry and the practical, relational needs of the choir community, supporting outcomes that are academically rigorous and socially meaningful.

Research Site and Participants

This study was conducted at large midwestern university within an ensemble referred to hereafter as University Choir; an auditioned SATB ensemble that included 46 singers in the Spring 2026 semester. It was composed of both music majors and non-music majors across undergraduate and graduate levels. Rehearsals for this ensemble are held three times per

week (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday) for fifty minutes each session, culminating in a performance at the end of the semester which took place on May 4, 2026. The ensemble is led by a conductor who has directed the choir for the past three years, as well as student section leaders that support each voice part by assisting with attendance and sectional rehearsals when necessary. These section leaders, totaling 16 students, include both music majors and non-majors who apply for the role and are selected by the director.

An important contextual factor during the semester this study took place involved unusual organizational changes within the choral program. Traditionally, the university's premier chamber ensemble (hereafter referred to as Chamber Singers) is viewed by many students as a culminating opportunity earned through sustained musical achievement throughout their time at the university. Because the ensemble is typically composed of returning singers with extensive experience, accommodations have historically been made for some members whose academic schedules conflict with rehearsals. During the semester of this study, however, the faculty member who normally directed Chamber Singers departed unexpectedly, resulting in substantial scheduling and instructional changes across the choral program. The director of University Choir assumed responsibility for both ensembles, and previous attendance accommodations associated with Chamber Singers were no longer available.

As a result of these changes, several students who had expected to participate in Chamber Singers were instead placed in University Choir because of scheduling conflicts. For some students, this represented a significant departure from expectations and longstanding traditions within the program. Informal conversations and observations which took place independently from this study suggested that some singers experienced frustration, disappointment, or resentment related to these circumstances. Additionally, these students were adjusting to a

conductor whose teaching style and expectations differed from those of the director they assumed they would be singing for. While these dynamics were not the focus of the study, they formed part of the social and organizational context in which leadership behaviors, interactions, and ensemble practices developed and therefore may have influenced participant experiences throughout the semester.

The ensemble was led by the director henceforth referred to as Dr. Melody, whose approach to choral instruction emphasizes inclusivity, belonging, and psychological safety within the rehearsal environment. Prior to the study, conversations with the conductor combined with my own experiences as a former ensemble member, indicated that she intentionally cultivates a culture in which singers feel welcomed, valued, and supported by her and their peers. This philosophy reflects the belief that meaningful musical growth requires participants to take creative and interpersonal risks, including making mistakes, contributing ideas, and engaging actively in the learning process. Within this framework, rehearsal is understood not only as a space for musical development but also as a community in which trust, participation, and mutual support are essential. This emphasis on inclusivity and collaborative learning provided important context for interpreting leadership behaviors and ensemble interactions throughout the study.

All choir members were invited to participate in the study, but inclusion was voluntary. I cast a wide net with the hope that I would end up with a research pool that reflected a range of demographic characteristics, including age, academic major, and musical experience. I acted as a silent observer during rehearsals to capture interactions and behaviors naturally, without interfering in the rehearsal process. I have prior experience singing in this ensemble and previously held a section leader position, providing me familiarity with the ensemble's culture and structure, but I did not sing in the ensemble this semester in order to maintain an

observational and research-focused stance. While I did know some current members from previous semesters, most of the participants were unfamiliar to me, allowing for both insider perspective and fresh observation.

Recruitment occurred at the start of the semester when I introduced the study to the ensemble and provided informed consent forms via QR code. Participation was voluntary–no incentives were provided, nor were there penalties incurred for non-participation. Consent was obtained prior to any data collection, ensuring that participants were aware of the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights.

This site offered a rich and bounded context for examining leadership as an enacted, shared, and emergent process, allowing the study to capture micro-level behaviors, meso-level practices, and system-level outcomes across nested levels of interaction. The University Choir provided a setting where emergent leadership can be observed in real time, including peer-to-peer interactions, section-level dynamics, and full ensemble coordination, making it an ideal site for an arts-informed, qualitative case study.

Table 3.1 provides an overview of the study's participants, including their self-selected pseudonyms, voice parts, returning singer status, and the number of journals completed. This information offers context for understanding the participants represented in the study and their contributions to the data collection process.

Table 3.1. Individual Participant Information

Pseudonym (self-selected)	Voice Part	Returning Singer?	Number of Journals Completed
Mara	Alto	Yes	3
Harper	Soprano	Yes	4

Pseudonym (self-selected)	Voice Part	Returning Singer?	Number of Journals Completed
Charlotte	Alto	No	2
Aardvark	Tenor	No	4
Penelope	Alto	Yes	2

Positionality and Reflexivity

I brought both an insider and observer perspective to this study, having previously sung in the University Choir and serving as a section leader in the ensemble. This prior experience provided deep familiarity with ensemble culture, rehearsal norms, and musical practices, allowing me to recognize subtle leadership behaviors and emergent practices that may have been less apparent to an outside observer. However, this insider perspective introduced potential bias, as preconceptions about leadership dynamics or relationships with current or former ensemble members could have influenced data interpretation.

To address these considerations, I engaged in ongoing reflexive practices throughout data collection and analysis (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Leavy, 2025; McNiff, 2008; McNiff, 2012). These practices included maintaining a detailed researcher journal to document observations, interpretations, and potential biases; reflecting on the ways prior experiences may have shaped perception; and differentiating between personal assumptions and patterns emerging from the data. I also triangulated the findings across multiple data sources–including participant journaling, rehearsal observations, field notes, and artifacts–to ensure that interpretations were grounded in the ensemble's current practices rather than my prior experiences.

Reflexive journaling served as a primary strategy for monitoring my role within the research process. Following each observation, I completed a reflexive journal entry as soon as possible after rehearsal in order to document immediate impressions while events remained fresh in my memory. These entries functioned as a structured debriefing process through which I examined both the rehearsal itself and my reactions to it. Each journal entry addressed a consistent set of guiding questions:

1. What happened that stood out?
2. How did my prior experience shape what I noticed?
3. Did I feel like an insider or outsider today, and why?
4. What assumptions might I be making?
5. What should I re-examine in the data later?

These reflections helped distinguish between observations grounded in the data and interpretations influenced by prior experiences within the ensemble.

Beyond documenting positionality, reflexive journaling also informed ongoing data collection and analysis. Reviewing these entries helped identify emerging patterns, areas requiring further observation, and assumptions that warranted additional scrutiny. Because analysis occurred concurrently with data collection as per arts-informed practices, the journals supported a recursive process of reflection, observation, and interpretation that encouraged continual self-examination and helped maintain analytic transparency throughout the study.

Acknowledging positionality also includes transparency regarding relationships with participants. While I knew some current ensemble members from previous semesters, most participants were unfamiliar to me, reducing the risk of undue influence. All interactions with participants prioritized neutrality, informed consent, and voluntary participation. By integrating

reflexivity into the research process, the study aimed to produce findings that were both trustworthy and socially situated, capturing the ensemble's emergent leadership dynamics while responsibly accounting for my insider status.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to established ethical guidelines for research involving human participants and received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to data collection. Ethical considerations were particularly important given my prior relationship with the ensemble and the collaborative nature of the research setting and were addressed with careful attention throughout the study.

Participants were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits, as well as their right to decline participation or withdraw at any time without penalty or impact on their standing in the ensemble. Because I previously sung in the ensemble and served as a section leader, attention was given to power dynamics and role clarity. I did not hold any instructional or evaluative authority over participants during the study and functioned solely as a silent observer and researcher. The conductor did not have access to individual-level data, journals, or identifiable findings, and participation (or non-participation) was not disclosed to ensemble leadership.

Confidentiality was prioritized throughout the study. Self-selected pseudonyms were used for participants, and identifying details were removed from transcripts, journals, and written reports. While complete anonymity could not be guaranteed in a group setting where observations occurred in shared rehearsals, steps were taken to minimize identifiability in dissemination. Specific references to individual singers' names and solo assignments were

generalized or omitted, and potentially identifying contextual details were either removed or described in broader terms to reduce the likelihood of recognition.

The arts-informed, observational nature of the study presented minimal risk to participants. Potential risks included mild discomfort associated with reflection on leadership behaviors or awareness of being observed. These risks were mitigated through transparent communication, voluntary participation, and the option to skip journaling prompts or withdraw from the study at any time. Additionally, my prior participation in the ensemble served as a potential mitigating factor rather than a source of increased risk over time. As rehearsals progressed, my presence became normalized within the ensemble environment, and participants often appeared to experience my role less as that of an external observer and more as "Megan is in the room again". This familiarity helped reduce perceptions of surveillance or external scrutiny, contributing to a more naturalistic rehearsal environment while still maintaining ethical attention to power dynamics and participant comfort.

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected using multiple qualitative sources to enable triangulation, or the convergence of evidence from multiple sources to strengthen the credibility of the findings (Tracy, 2010), and capture leadership as an emergent, enacted, and recursive process within the University Choir. Data collection occurred at multiple levels of interaction–individual singers, sectional groups, and the full ensemble–to reflect the nested, multilevel nature of leadership processes explored in the research questions.

- Rehearsal Observations. The primary data source was direct observations of rehearsals and performances. Observations focused on discretionary behaviors (OCB), the emergence of ensemble practices (LAP), and manifestations of

direction, alignment, and commitment (DAC) across nested levels. I took detailed field notes, noting patterns of interaction, collaboration, leadership behaviors, and contextual factors. Rehearsals were observed in their natural setting, allowing leadership to be captured as it naturally unfolded.

- Participant Journaling. Singers were invited to engage in participant journaling, reflecting on their own behaviors, interactions, and perceptions of leadership within the ensemble. Journals captured singers' perspectives on how their actions contributed to collective outcomes, section-level practices, and ensemble-wide direction and alignment. This approach provided insider insight into emergent leadership practices while complementing my observations.
- Researcher Journaling. In addition to field notes, I maintained a personal research journal to document reflexive observations, emergent patterns, and analytic insights. This journal served as a tool for reflexivity, helping to identify and bracket potential biases arising from my prior membership in the ensemble.
- Field Notes. I maintained detailed field notes during rehearsals. These notes documented contextual details, interactions, emergent behaviors, and patterns that could not be fully captured in participant journals. Field notes supported triangulation by complementing participant journaling and artifacts and provided a rich record for iterative analysis.
- Artifacts. Relevant artifacts–including singer scores and the final concert program–were collected to contextualize practices, decision-making, and interactions. They provided a structural and temporal frame for interpreting observed behaviors and practices.

Together, these multiple sources of data provided a rich, multilevel view of leadership as it emerges in collegiate choral contexts. Data were collected continuously across the semester (from March 11 to the concert on May 4) to capture iterative and recursive processes, ensuring that individual behaviors, ensemble practices, and systemic outcomes were documented comprehensively and in context.

Participation in reflective journaling varied across the duration of the study. Although all consenting participants were invited to submit journal responses throughout the data collection period, not all participants completed every prompt. One participant submitted journal responses during every week of the study, one participant submitted responses only during the first week, two participants submitted three journal entries, and one participant submitted two entries. This variability reflects differences in participant availability, engagement, and interest over time. Rather than treating missing entries as deficiencies, all submitted journals were considered valuable sources of insight and were analyzed alongside observations, field notes, researcher journaling, and artifacts.

These processes were guided by established dimensions of OCB (Fan et al., 2023; Organ, 1988; Organ et al., 2006; Podsakoff et al., 2000), which served as grounding concepts to support systematic attention to prosocial, extra-role behaviors within rehearsals. These dimensions were not treated as fixed coding categories during data collection, but as orienting lenses for noticing patterns of interaction and participation across individual, relational, and ensemble levels.

All ensemble members were invited to participate in reflective journaling and other individual-level data collection on March 2. Those who opted in provided informed consent, while those who did not were still observed in rehearsals for aggregate-level behaviors and

ensemble-level dynamics without identifying individual contributions. Students were informed that, although classroom observations would occur at the group level as part of the study, they could choose not to participate in the research by notifying me and opting out without any academic or personal consequences. No students elected to opt out. This aggregate-level observation had the approval of the ensemble instructor and was integrated into the course structure, ensuring that all ethical standards of autonomy, transparency, and confidentiality were maintained.

During observations, I adopted a consistent and minimally intrusive presence within the rehearsal environment. I arrived to each rehearsal early to ensure that my entry did not disrupt warm-up activities or early ensemble interactions. I typically positioned myself behind the ensemble during rehearsals in order to reduce visual distraction and support a more naturalistic rehearsal setting. In keeping with the observational role, I remained silent and still throughout data collection to minimize my influence on ensemble behavior. At the same time, I varied my seating position behind the group across rehearsals to capture different auditory and visual perspectives of the ensemble, allowing for more comprehensive documentation of interactions occurring across sections and within different areas of the rehearsal space.

There were 16 designated section leaders within the ensemble; however, their identities were not disclosed to me during the observation process, and they remained unknown throughout data collection and analysis. As a result, observations were conducted without awareness of formal leadership roles within sections, allowing for attention to naturally occurring leadership behaviors across all members of the ensemble.

Data Management and Security

All data collected for this study were managed and stored in accordance with IRB requirements and institutional data security policies. Data were stored in secure, password-protected digital environments accessible only to the researcher, and will be destroyed in accordance with IRB regulations at the end of my work on this project.

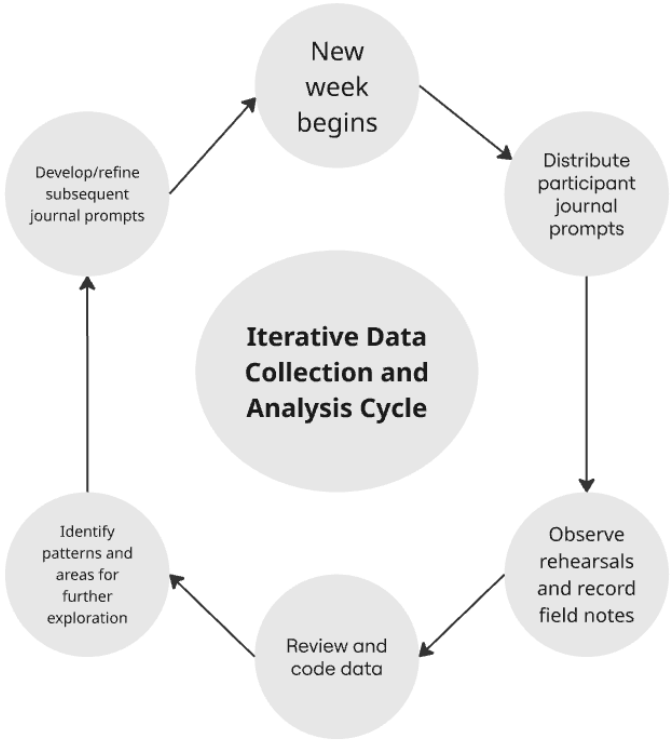
Participant journals, researcher journals, field notes, and artifacts were stored on secure cloud-based platforms approved by the university, unless publicly available on the university's website. Identifying information was stored separately from research data, and all files were labeled using pseudonyms.

To support transparency and rigor, analytic memos, coding decisions, and reflexive notes were maintained as part of the study's audit trail. These materials remained confidential and were not shared outside of the research process.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using an iterative, theoretically informed thematic analysis, drawing on Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework for identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning across qualitative data. Thematic analysis provided a flexible means of examining patterned relationships across the data while allowing the study's theoretical frameworks to inform, but not predetermine, the analysis. Consistent with the iterative nature of thematic analysis, this study's analysis involved repeated movement among data familiarization, coding, the development and refinement of themes, and interpretation of those themes in relation to the study's research questions and theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Figure 3.1. Iterative Data Collection and Analysis Cycle



All data sources were systematically organized and prepared for analysis. Participant journals, researcher reflexive journals, and observational notes were coded to capture behaviors, interactions, and practices across the data set, while artifacts were cataloged and cross-referenced to provide contextual evidence. Because I served as both the primary data collector and analyst, familiarization occurred throughout the data collection process and continued through repeated review of the collected materials.

Initial coding used a theoretically informed framework organized across micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of ensemble activity. At the micro level, codes reflected the five dimensions of OCB identified by Organ (1988): altruism, courtesy, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, and civic virtue. Meso-level codes attended to peer coordination, collective problem-solving, and section leadership, while macro-level codes focused on the DAC outcomes of direction, alignment, and

commitment. An additional emergent category was maintained for behaviors, interactions, or patterns that were not adequately represented by the initial framework. This structure allowed the theoretical frameworks of OCB, LAP, and DAC to guide analytic attention without requiring all observations to conform to predetermined theoretical categories.

Table 3.2 presents the initial coding framework used to identify organizational citizenship behaviors within this study. The table organizes OCB categories by level (micro, meso, or macro) and provides the operational definitions that were used to guide the coding process.

Table 3.2. Initial Coding Framework for Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

Level	OCB Category	Operational Definition for This Study
Micro	Altruism	Helping another individual with a task or problem related to choir
Micro	Courtesy	Small behaviors that prevent conflict or maintain smooth interaction
Micro	Conscientiousness	Going above and beyond role requirements
Micro	Sportsmanship	Staying positive despite challenges
Micro	Civic Virtue	Demonstrates interest in the life of the choir
Meso	Peer Coordination	Collaborative behaviors within a small group
Meso	Collective Problem Solving	Group decision-making or troubleshooting
Meso	Section Leadership	Behaviors that help a voice part function effectively
Macro	Direction	Ensemble shows shared understanding of musical goals
Macro	Alignment	Group acts in coordinated ways without explicit instruction
Macro	Commitment	Ensemble-wide dedication to shared outcomes
Other	Emergent	Any new behaviors or patterns noticed

Coding was iterative and involved reading each data item, considering its relationship to the coding framework, and categorizing it according to the level and concept that most closely represented the behavior or interaction. The framework therefore functioned as an analytic starting point rather than an exhaustive account of the data. Material that did not fit the initial categories remained available for further interpretation rather than being excluded from analysis. This combination of theoretically informed and open coding allowed analysis to remain grounded in the study's conceptual framework while also attending to unanticipated patterns within participants' reflections and observed ensemble activity (Neale, 2016).

The OCB dimensions identified by Organ (1988) were particularly important to this study as sensitizing concepts for identifying discretionary prosocial behaviors (Organ, 1988). Although these dimensions provided categories for initial coding, their presence did not determine their eventual analytic significance or the themes developed from the data. Individual behaviors also did not need to occur frequently to be considered analytically meaningful. Singular or infrequent actions were retained when they provided insight into how individual behavior shaped interaction, influenced collective practice, or contributed to ensemble-level outcomes.

Following initial coding, I examined relationships among codes across the data set to identify broader patterns of meaning. Rather than treating individual codes as findings in themselves, I considered how coded behaviors and interactions related to one another and what larger patterns they collectively suggested about leadership within the ensemble. This process required moving iteratively between individual coded instances and a broader view of the data, grouping related codes around central organizing ideas and considering the larger analytic story represented by those relationships (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Themes were developed from these relationships and subsequently refined through continued comparison with coded data, the study's nested micro–meso–macro levels, and the research questions. During this process, I considered whether each theme represented a coherent and analytically meaningful pattern, how themes related to or differed from one another, and how together they explained the interaction among individual behaviors, collective practices, and ensemble-level outcomes. Theme boundaries and names were refined as these relationships became clearer, resulting in the seven themes presented in Chapter 4.

Analysis occurred concurrently with data collection, which allowed developing insights to inform subsequent observations, journaling prompts, and data collection strategies. The arts-informed nature of the study allowed for adaptability throughout the research process, enabling me to follow the flow of ensemble dynamics and adjust analytic focus as new behaviors, interactions, or patterns of leadership were identified (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Leavy, 2015). This flexibility ensured that the study remained responsive to the natural, developing qualities of leadership within the choir.

Student journals were reviewed weekly after submission, and recurring themes, questions, and areas of interest informed the development of subsequent journaling prompts. Specifically, I reviewed each week's responses for topics that participants returned to across entries, experiences that appeared particularly salient to singers, and ideas that warranted further exploration. These patterns were then used to develop or refine prompts for the following week, allowing participants to elaborate on issues raised in earlier reflections. This allowed the journaling process to be iterative rather than predetermined; participants' reflections not only served as data but also shaped the ongoing direction of data collection.

By attending to the topics singers appeared most curious about or invested in, I was able to explore developing aspects of their experiences while remaining responsive to their meaning-making processes. Additionally, all journaling prompts included opportunities for open-ended reflection, allowing participants to write freely about experiences, observations, or concerns that felt significant to them, regardless of whether those topics aligned with the prompt provided. This balance between guided and open reflection helped ensure that participant voices remained central to the research process. The complete set of journal prompts used is included in Appendix F.

The journaling prompts evolved throughout the study in response to developing themes and observations. Early prompts invited participants to describe significant rehearsal moments, influential individuals, and experiences of tension or collaboration within the ensemble. Later prompts encouraged reflection on leadership behaviors, coordination processes, personal contributions, and the effects of contextual factors such as breaks in the rehearsal schedule. In one instance, participants were also invited to review examples of organizational citizenship behaviors and consider whether those concepts shaped what they noticed during rehearsals. This iterative approach aligned with the emergent design of the study and supported deeper exploration of leadership processes as they unfolded over time.

Special attention was given to recursive relationships among micro-level behaviors, meso-level practices, and DAC outcomes, tracing how individual contributions coalesced into collective practices and systemic effects, and how these outcomes shaped subsequent actions. Arts-informed interpretation extended the analysis beyond verbal accounts to include aesthetic, emotional, embodied, and expressive dimensions of experience (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Leavy,

2015; McNiff, 2008). Within the ensemble, this included attention to gesture, posture, musical expression, and other nonverbal cues as potential evidence of leadership processes.

Through this multilevel, iterative, and arts-informed analytic process, the study identified how discretionary behaviors, collective practices, and systemic outcomes interacted recursively to sustain shared leadership in collegiate choirs. This approach addressed all research questions while providing a rich, contextually grounded understanding of leadership in collaborative musical settings.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

This study employed multiple strategies to establish trustworthiness and methodological rigor appropriate to qualitative, arts-informed case study research. Rather than emphasizing generalizability or replication, rigor was demonstrated through credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Ahmed, 2024).

Credibility was supported through prolonged engagement in the field, triangulation of data sources, and iterative analysis (Ahmed, 2024; Creswell, 2013). Data were collected across multiple levels of interaction using observations, participant journals, researcher journals, field notes, and artifacts. Comparing these sources allowed patterns of leadership behaviors and practices to be examined from multiple perspectives and reduce reliance on any single account.

Reflexivity and positional transparency further supported credibility. My prior experience as a singer and former section leader in the ensemble was acknowledged and critically examined through ongoing researcher journaling. Reflexive memos documented analytic decisions, emerging assumptions, and interpretive shifts throughout the study, allowing me to interrogate how prior experience shaped data collection and analysis.

Member checking, in which participants are invited to review findings or interpretations to assess whether they accurately reflect their experiences (Tracy, 2010), further supported credibility by providing participants opportunities to respond to emerging interpretations and findings. Throughout the study, I maintained ongoing informal contact with participants, many of whom periodically visited my office or engaged in casual conversations about their experiences in the ensemble. While these interactions were not treated as primary data sources, they provided opportunities to clarify understanding, discuss participant experiences, and remain attentive to how singers perceived the evolving ensemble environment. Following completion of data collection and preliminary analysis, additional conversations occurred both in person and virtually with participants who wished to discuss the study and its findings.

As findings were developed, participants were provided opportunities to review portions of the emerging analysis and offer feedback regarding whether the interpretations accurately reflected their experiences within the ensemble. Feedback from these exchanges was used to clarify descriptions, refine interpretations, and identify areas requiring additional contextualization. The purpose of this process was not to seek consensus among participants, but rather to ensure that findings remained grounded in participant experiences and that interpretations reasonably represented the realities of ensemble life as understood by those who participated in it.

Dependability was addressed through the use of a clearly articulated analytic process and consistent documentation of procedures. Coding strategies, analytic memos, and decision points were recorded to create an audit trail demonstrating how interpretations are developed over time (Ahmed, 2024, Creswell, 2013).

Confirmability was supported by grounding interpretations in multiple forms of evidence and by explicitly linking findings to observed behaviors, participant reflections, and ensemble practices (Ahmed, 2024). Attention was given to discrepant or contradictory data, which was examined rather than excluded, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of leadership processes within the group.

Transferability was addressed through description of the research context, ensemble structure, and rehearsal practices. While this study did not aim for statistical generalization, providing detailed contextual information may allow readers to assess the applicability of findings to other collegiate ensembles or collaborative, arts-based settings.

Taken together, these strategies ensured that the study's findings were credible, transparent, and grounded in the lived realities of ensemble participation, while remaining consistent with the interpretive and emergent commitments of arts-informed qualitative research.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 of this dissertation detailed the research design and methodological approach for examining emergent, multilevel leadership within a collegiate choir. This study adopted a qualitative, arts-informed case study design to capture the complex interactions between individual discretionary behaviors (OCB), collective practices (LAP), and systemic outcomes of direction, alignment, and commitment (DAC). The research site provided a bounded, auditioned SATB ensemble with 46 singers, allowing for the study of nested levels of interaction from individual to sectional to full ensemble.

Data were collected through multiple sources–direct rehearsal observations, reflective journaling by consenting participants, field notes, and relevant artifacts–to enable triangulation

and capture both micro- and meso-level processes. Participation in journaling and other individual-level activities was voluntary, with informed consent obtained from all participants. Aggregate-level rehearsal observations occurred with the instructor's permission and as part of standard ensemble practice, ensuring transparency and ethical compliance.

This chapter also addressed my positionality and reflexivity, acknowledging prior experience as a singer and section leader in the ensemble, and outlining strategies to mitigate potential bias. Data analysis was iterative and interpretive, combining coding, thematic analysis, and pattern recognition across nested levels, while maintaining flexibility consistent with arts-informed principles. Trustworthiness and rigor were established through triangulation, member checking, audit trails, reflexive journaling, and transparent documentation of analytic decisions. These procedures ensure that the study will systematically examine how leadership emerges as an enacted, shared, and recursive process, while maintaining ethical integrity, methodological transparency, and scholarly rigor.

Chapter 4 - Con Moto: Findings

Introduction to Findings

This chapter presents the findings of this qualitative, arts-informed case study examining how leadership emerged and was enacted among members of a collegiate choral ensemble. The study approached leadership not solely as the behavior of individuals in formal leadership positions but as a collective process emerging through the everyday interactions and practices of ensemble members. Particular attention was given to how singers' behaviors and interactions contributed to collective leadership processes across individual, sectional, and ensemble levels.

The findings were developed through analysis of multiple sources of data collected throughout the rehearsal and performance period, including researcher observations and field notes, participant journal reflections, researcher reflexive journal entries, and artifacts associated with the ensemble and rehearsal process. Examining these sources together allowed patterns to be considered across multiple forms of evidence and provided different perspectives on how leadership emerged within the ensemble. Through an iterative process of coding, comparison, and refinement, patterns within and across these data sources were organized into categories and broader themes that captured recurring practices and interactions within the ensemble.

The findings are organized thematically to illustrate how leadership developed through the repeated behaviors, interactions, and practices of ensemble members. Although the themes are presented separately for clarity, they frequently overlapped in practice. Behaviors occurring at the individual or sectional level contributed to broader ensemble processes, while collective patterns simultaneously shaped subsequent individual interactions. This recursive relationship reflects the Leadership as Practice perspective underpinning the study and provides important context for understanding the findings that follow.

The themes also intersect with the study's research questions rather than corresponding exclusively to a single question. Some themes primarily illuminate particular research questions, while others operate across multiple questions and levels of analysis. The sections that follow present each theme alongside evidence drawn from multiple data sources, illustrating how everyday actions and interactions among ensemble members contributed to the emergence of leadership and to the development of direction, alignment, and commitment within the ensemble.

Before presenting the findings, an overview of the data set provides context for the scope and sources of evidence included in the analysis. Data were drawn from field observations, researcher reflexive journals, participant journals, the study codebook, and collected artifacts. The following table summarizes the quantity and analytic purpose of each data source.

Table 4.1 provides an overview of the study's data set, identifying each data source, the corresponding metric, the total yield, and its purpose within the study. This summary provides context for the full range of data collected and how each source contributed to addressing the research questions.

Table 4.1. Overview of the Data Set

Data Source	Metric	Total Yield	Purpose
Field Observations	Number of formally observed rehearsals	13 observations (including the final, non-rehearsal concert observation)	Documented behaviors, interactions, and rehearsal practices as they occurred

Data Source	Metric	Total Yield	Purpose
Researcher Reflexive Journals	Total page count	14 pages	Documented researcher reflections, assumptions, interpretations, and positionality throughout data collection and analysis
Participant Journals	Number of individual responses including emails, screenshots of notes apps, and physical journal pages	15 responses over the course of 4 weeks	Captured participants' perspectives and experiences and informed ongoing data collection and thematic analysis
Codebook	Number of unique coded entries	226 lines	Organized coded data and supported the identification and development of patterns, categories, and themes
Artifacts	Number of documents collected	26 documents	Provided contextual and supplementary evidence regarding the ensemble, rehearsal processes, and study setting

Together, these data sources provided complementary perspectives on ensemble activity, including observed behaviors and interactions, participant experiences, researcher reflections,

and contextual evidence. Analysis across these materials supported the development and refinement of the themes presented in the following sections.

Overview of Findings

Thematic analysis resulted in seven interconnected themes that illustrate how leadership operated across individual, sectional, and ensemble levels. Collectively, the themes trace a progression from discretionary individual behaviors (OCB), through distributed leadership practices (LAP), to collective leadership outcomes represented by direction, alignment, and commitment (DAC). The later themes extend this progression by examining how these processes interacted recursively across levels and contributed to ensemble-level functioning. Because the themes frequently intersected, they were not treated as discrete or mutually exclusive categories. The following table provides an overview of each theme and its relationship to the research questions and theoretical framework.

Table 4.2 summarizes the themes identified through the analysis, including the central finding associated with each theme, the research question(s) it addresses, and its connection to the study's theoretical frameworks. This overview illustrates how the findings relate to the research questions and broader theoretical perspectives guiding the study.

Table 4.2. Summary of Themes and Theoretical Connections

Theme	Central Finding	RQ(s)	Theoretical Connection
1. OCB as Social Infrastructure for Ensemble Functioning	Discretionary prosocial behaviors supported peer assistance, relational	RQ1, RQ2	OCB → LAP: Individual discretionary behaviors created

Theme	Central Finding	RQ(s)	Theoretical Connection
	stability, and investment in collective functioning		conditions that supported shared leadership practices
2. Distributed and Emergent Leadership as Practice (LAP)	Leadership shifted among ensemble members according to context, expertise, confidence, and immediate musical needs rather than remaining solely attached to formal roles	RQ2	LAP: Leadership was enacted through distributed participation and interaction
3. Co-Constructed Musical Cognition and Direction in Ensemble Practice	Ensemble members collectively interpreted, tested, adjusted, and solved musical problems through interaction	RQ2, RQ3	LAP → DAC: Distributed cognitive practices provided a mechanism through which individual contributions became collective musical action

Theme	Central Finding	RQ(s)	Theoretical Connection
4. Direction as Co-Constructed Musical Agreement	Shared musical direction developed through iterative interpretation and increasing agreement around musical goals	RQ3	DAC—Direction: Collective practices produced shared understanding of what the ensemble was attempting to accomplish
5. Ensemble Alignment Through Embodied and Nonverbal Coordination	Singers coordinated musical action through posture, visual cues, listening, physical synchronization, and rapid adjustment	RQ3	DAC—Alignment: Shared understanding became coordinated collective action through embodied and nonverbal processes
6. Systemic Integration of DAC Through Recursive Feedback Loops	Direction, alignment, and commitment operated as mutually reinforcing outcomes sustained through ongoing ensemble participation.	RQ2, RQ3, RQ4	OCB ↔ LAP ↔ DAC: Direction, alignment, and commitment functioned together rather than as isolated outcomes, while

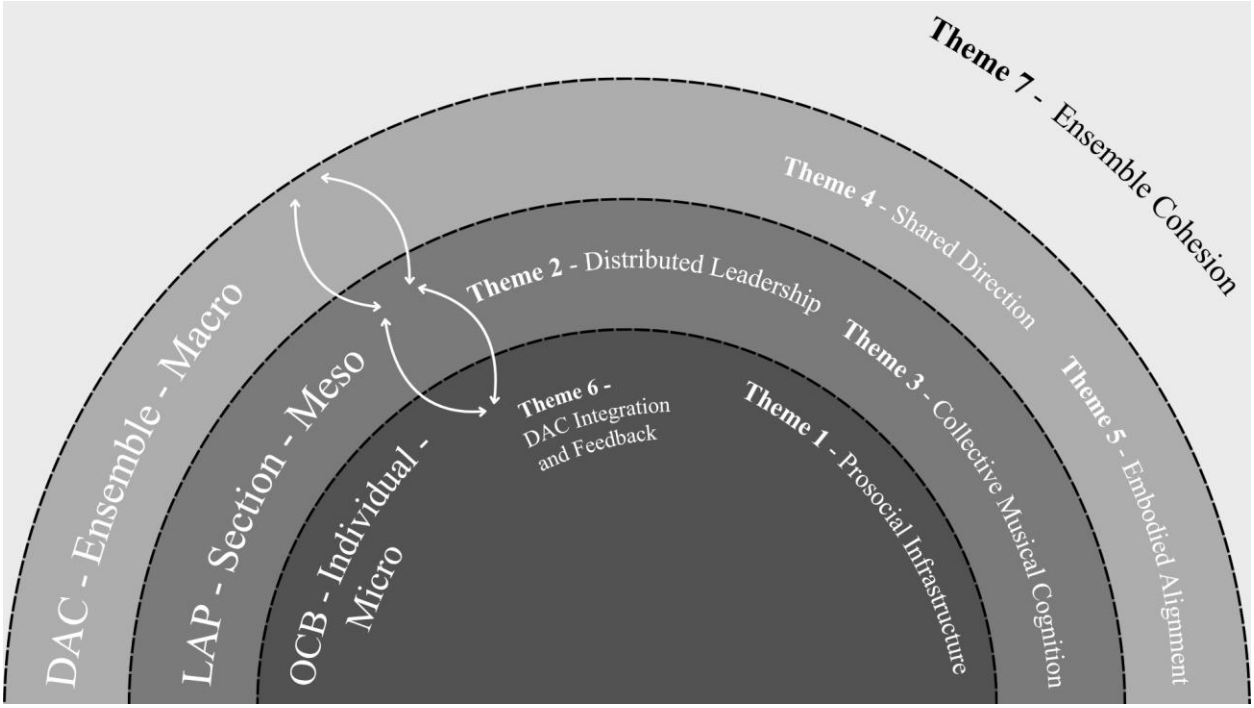
Theme	Central Finding	RQ(s)	Theoretical Connection
	Behaviors, practices, and outcomes influenced one another across individual, sectional, and full-ensemble activity		recursive interactions connected individual behaviors, collective practices, and system-level outcomes
7. Emergence of Ensemble Cohesion as a System State (Adaptive Musical Organism)	Repeated interaction among individual behaviors, shared practices, and collective outcomes contributed to ensemble-level cohesion and coordinated functioning through disruption	RQ4	Integrated framework: Interactions among OCB, LAP, and DAC contributed to system-level ensemble functioning

Although the themes are presented sequentially for clarity, the processes they represent frequently occurred simultaneously and influenced one another across levels of ensemble

activity. The findings begin with the discretionary behaviors that provided a social foundation for collective functioning before examining how those behaviors became embedded in broader leadership practices and collective outcomes.

Figure 4.1 illustrates how the seven themes were situated within and across the multilevel theoretical framework guiding the study. Themes 1 through 5 reflect the primary analytic locations of the findings across OCB, LAP, and DAC. Theme 6 represents the systemic integration of DAC through recursive feedback, while Theme 7 represents ensemble cohesion as a system-level state.

Figure 4.1. Integration of Findings Across the Multilevel Theoretical Framework



Note: Theme labels are abbreviated for visual clarity. Themes 1–5 are positioned according to their primary theoretical and analytic locations. Theme 6 represents the systemic integration of DAC through recursive feedback loops across individual, sectional, and ensemble activity. Theme 7 represents ensemble cohesion as an integrated system-level state.

Theme 1: OCB as Social Infrastructure for Ensemble Functioning

Overview of Prosocial Organizational Citizenship Behavior in the Ensemble

Prosocial Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB) within the ensemble refers to voluntary, non-prescribed actions that supported peers, sustained rehearsal processes, and contributed to the overall functioning of the choir. These behaviors were not formally required or evaluated, yet they consistently shaped how students interacted, solved problems, and maintained both musical and social continuity.

Across observational and journal data, OCB appeared as a stable and embedded feature of ensemble participation rather than as isolated acts of goodwill. Students routinely engaged in helping behaviors, relational maintenance, proactive preparation, and emotional regulation in ways that collectively sustained rehearsal efficiency and group cohesion. Importantly, these behaviors were distributed across participants and contexts, suggesting that prosocial engagement was normalized as part of 'how the ensemble works'.

For analytic clarity, these behaviors are organized into three interrelated dimensions: (1) altruism as immediate peer support, (2) courtesy and sportsmanship as relational stability, and (3) conscientiousness and civic virtue as organizational investment. While distinguished here for interpretation, these dimensions frequently overlapped in practice, forming an integrated social infrastructure that supported ensemble functioning. Taken together, OCB functioned as the foundational layer of ensemble life, shaping the conditions under which musical interaction, coordination, and leadership processes could occur.

1.1 Altruism as Immediate Peer Support

Altruism in the ensemble was most visible through rapid, situated peer support that addressed musical, procedural, and logistical needs in real time. These behaviors were typically

spontaneous, low-friction, and embedded within rehearsal flow, requiring no formal prompting from the conductor.

Students frequently assisted one another with interpreting rehearsal instructions, locating measures, confirming rhythms, and navigating entrances during complex passages. This support often occurred through subtle interactions such as pointing at scores, leaning toward neighbors to clarify information, or quietly reinforcing rhythmic or solfège understanding. During one rehearsal, for example, a student pointed to a rhythm in the score for a neighboring singer who appeared uncertain; the assistance then spread down the row as singers helped one another locate and interpret the same passage (Observation 10). Such interactions allowed students to address moments of confusion through immediate peer support without interrupting the larger rehearsal process.

Altruism also extended beyond musical interpretation into material and logistical support. Students shared scores when copies were missing (Observation 2 and 5), coordinated access to rehearsal materials (Observation 5, 6, and 8), and assisted with organizational tasks without being asked (Observation 1, 3, 4, and 9). During one rehearsal, while Dr. Melody took attendance and informally asked students whether they had spent more of spring break having fun or taking naps, a student independently began tracking the responses so that the group could compare the totals afterward (Observation 3). Although minor, the action demonstrated attentiveness to an immediate ensemble need beyond the student's own participation and required no request or formal assignment.

Collectively, these behaviors functioned as immediate peer support that reduced friction in rehearsal processes and enabled continuity of musical activity. Rather than isolated acts of

assistance, altruism operated as a distributed mechanism for maintaining shared understanding and minimizing breakdowns in ensemble functioning.

1.2 Courtesy and Sportsmanship as Relational Stability

Courtesy and sportsmanship functioned together as a relational and emotional stabilizing system that preserved interpersonal cohesion and sustained engagement during rehearsal challenges. While altruism focused on immediate task support, this dimension operated at the level of interactional tone, emotional regulation, and behavioral stability.

Courtesy appeared in subtle but consistent practices that prevented disruption and preserved peer dignity. Students provided quiet corrections during moments of confusion, offered non-confrontational reminders about rehearsal norms, and used minimal, respectful communication to address uncertainty. These interactions were brief and non-confrontational, allowing peer regulation to occur without publicly drawing attention to individual singers.

For example, when one singer hummed a starting pitch aloud rather than audiating it silently, a neighboring singer leaned over and quietly reminded them of the ensemble norm—audiating as a form of ear training rather than humming the starting pitch out loud (Observation 1). Similarly, singers occasionally shushed peers quietly during transitions when conversation continued after Dr. Melody had begun speaking (Observation 7, 8, and 9). In both instances, rehearsal norms were reinforced through brief peer intervention without requiring the conductor to stop and address the behavior.

Nonverbal relational signals—such as nods, glances, or brief acknowledgments following passages—also contributed to a sense of mutual awareness and cohesion without interrupting rehearsal flow. After the basses successfully performed a passage they had attempted several times, singers all across the ensemble responded with nods, smiles, and snaps of

acknowledgment (Observation 2). Even corrective interventions among peers tended to be brief, understated, and focused on preserving ongoing participation.

Sportsmanship emerged as the emotional counterpart to these relational practices. Students consistently demonstrated the ability to continue engagement through repetition, error correction, and uncertainty without visible frustration or withdrawal. Mistakes were typically treated as part of the learning process rather than as failures (Charlotte journal entry 2, Mara journal entry 3, and Observation 6), and singers quickly returned to task-focused behavior after acknowledging errors (Observation 4 and 10).

Even in moments of heightened challenge—such as difficult sight-reading or unstable pitches—the ensemble maintained forward motion. Students adapted collectively, tolerated temporary instability, and re-centered quickly after disruption. Emotional responses such as brief laughter or neutral acknowledgment were often used to reset affect and maintain continuity rather than disrupt focus.

> *The sounds of fluttering paper and clicking styli fill the room as the ensemble prepares to venture into uncharted territory. At the conductor's cue, they enter with confidence, attending not only to pitches and rhythms but articulation. Then they stumble. What was clean and precise becomes garbled, and the volume falls as singers realize something has gone wrong. Bodies fold toward scores, eyes searching the page for a way back in. Seconds pass, but the music continues to unravel. The train is slipping off the rails, and the conductor is not stopping. Suddenly, motion ripples through the room. Fingertips tap against collarbones. Heads nod deliberately to the beat. Palms slap against thighs. One by one, singers find their place and jump back onto the moving train.*

With each person who rejoins, the sound grows more certain, making space for another to follow. Together, they press on. (Observation 2)

Although students generally maintained outward engagement during moments of difficulty, participant reflections indicated that this persistence did not necessarily mean an absence of frustration. Reflecting on a sectional rehearsal in which the sopranos repeatedly worked on the same passage, Harper wrote, "I could tell that some of the sopranos (including myself) were getting annoyed" after reviewing the same passage multiple times (Journal 3). Despite this frustration, the singers continued working through repeated attempts before ultimately moving on. Sportsmanship, therefore, was evident not in the absence of frustration, but in the ability to experience and manage frustration without allowing it to develop into interpersonal conflict or broader disengagement from the rehearsal process. During Observation 4, after a particularly rough pass, an alto leaned over to another and laughed, "I guess we'll just have to struggle a little bit better next time!"

Together, courtesy and sportsmanship created a relational climate characterized by low conflict, rapid recovery from disruption, and sustained emotional stability. This allowed rehearsal processes to proceed without relational breakdowns interfering with musical work.

1.3 Conscientiousness and Civic Virtue as Organizational Investment

Conscientiousness and civic virtue reflected deeper forms of engagement in which students invested in both their individual preparation and the broader organizational life of the ensemble. These behaviors extended beyond immediate interaction and contributed to the structural and temporal continuity of the choir.

Conscientiousness was evident in consistent patterns of preparation, attentiveness, and self-directed musical work. Students regularly arrived early and used their pre-rehearsal time

productively. During rehearsals, they actively annotated scores, recorded interpretive guidance, and maintained sustained engagement with the musical material (Observations 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 11). For example, during Observation 5, one singer opened their score and began independently marking it before the rehearsal downbeat. In other rehearsals, singers arrived already holding pencils, marked dynamics during conductor explanations, or increased their score marking during pauses in instruction (Observations 6 and 7). Early arrival was similarly routine across the observation period; during the first observation, well over half of the ensemble arrived more than five minutes before rehearsal, and no singers arrived late (Observation 1). These behaviors demonstrated preparation and engagement that extended beyond minimum participation requirements.

Civic virtue extended these individual commitments into broader organizational participation. Students contributed to communication structures and informal organizational activities that supported the ensemble beyond scheduled rehearsal. For example, one soprano independently created a section group chat so that singers could coordinate sectional rehearsals more easily (Observation 1). The action extended organizational responsibility beyond formal leadership roles and facilitated continued sectional coordination outside rehearsal.

Students also demonstrated investment in the social continuity and identity of the ensemble. Later in the semester, students organized an end-of-semester banquet, described as a formal social gathering with food and formal attire, that they hoped would become an annual ensemble tradition (Observation 8). Unlike social activities initiated by choral staff, the banquet represented student-led investment in sustaining the ensemble's community and traditions beyond its immediate musical work.

Together, conscientiousness and civic virtue functioned as forms of organizational investment. Conscientious behaviors supported individual readiness and rehearsal efficiency, while civic virtue extended student initiative into the ensemble's organizational and social life. In both cases, students engaged in discretionary behaviors that contributed to the continuity and functioning of the ensemble beyond the minimum requirements of participation.

Synthesis of Theme 1

Across altruism, courtesy and sportsmanship, and conscientiousness and civic virtue, Organizational Citizenship Behaviors functioned as a distributed social infrastructure that supported the ensemble's musical, relational, and organizational functioning. At the immediate interactional level, altruism ensured rapid peer-to-peer support that stabilized musical understanding and reduced breakdowns in rehearsal flow. Courtesy and sportsmanship maintained relational and emotional stability, allowing the ensemble to navigate correction, uncertainty, and repetition without interpersonal disruption or disengagement.

At a broader organizational level, conscientiousness and civic virtue reflected sustained student investment in preparation, communication, and ensemble community life. These behaviors extended participation beyond rehearsal time and reinforced the ensemble as an ongoing social and organizational system.

Taken together, these dimensions demonstrate that OCB was not peripheral or exceptional within the ensemble, but essential to how the group functioned on a daily basis. Prosocial behavior operated as a shared infrastructure through which musical work, social cohesion, and organizational continuity were continuously produced. This foundational layer of behavior sets the conditions for the distributed leadership as practice processes explored in subsequent themes, where these prosocial actions become organized into shared coordination

structures and ultimately contribute to system-level outcomes of Direction, Alignment, and Commitment.

Theme 2: Distributed and Emergent Leadership as Practice (LAP)

Overview of Informal Leadership Structures

Within the ensemble, leadership operated as a distributed and emergent practice rather than a fixed set of roles or a stable hierarchy. While formal section leaders were assigned administrative and organizational responsibilities such as attendance tracking, communication with the director, and sectional coordination, these roles did not fully account for how leadership functioned in practice during rehearsal.

Instead, leadership was enacted through everyday interaction, shifting dynamically among students based on situational needs, musical demands, and momentary expertise. At any given time, multiple singers participated in leadership behaviors such as initiating cues, clarifying instructions, modeling musical execution, supporting peers through difficult passages, or coordinating sectional decisions in real time. These actions were not consistently tied to a small group of singers and were frequently redistributed depending on context.

From a Leadership as Practice (LAP) perspective, leadership in this ensemble is best understood not as something individuals possess, but as something that is continuously produced through interaction. The following sections illustrate how this practice unfolded through (1) sectional leadership fluidity and role ambiguity, (2) peer modeling and behavioral cascades, and (3) contextual emergence of informal leadership roles.

2.1 Sectional Leadership Fluidity and Role Ambiguity

Although formal section leaders existed within each vocal section, their leadership presence was not distinguishable in rehearsal practice. Instead, functions such as initiating

musical cues, resolving uncertainty, organizing rehearsal focus, and supporting peer understanding were distributed across multiple singers. Participant journals similarly described peer leadership as occurring through musical preparation and participation rather than formal designation and noted increasing instances of informal leadership behavior across rehearsals (Journals 2 and 3).

This reflected role ambiguity in practice: formal leadership structures existed, but they were not the exclusive mechanism through which sectional coordination was achieved. During sight-reading, for example, singers who were more familiar with solfège took the lead in guiding the group, while returning singers modeled confident entrances for less certain members of their section (Observations 1 and 2). During a later sectional rehearsal, one singer identified a passage they were struggling with, prompting others to identify additional problem areas and collectively establishing priorities for the remainder of the sectional. When deciding whether to repeat another passage or move on, several singers responded and reached a consensus to perform it once more (Observation 4).

Leadership within sections also shifted fluidly according to the immediate context. This was particularly visible when a high school student, a prospective choir member, joined the altos during one rehearsal. An alto singer immediately made space, shared her music, explained where the ensemble was in the score, and clarified how the rhythmic pattern was being performed as the group was not yet singing on words (Observation 3). Although the collegiate singer was herself relatively new to the ensemble, she possessed greater situational knowledge than the prospective student and temporarily assumed a guiding role. The interaction demonstrated how leadership could arise from relative expertise within a particular moment rather than from formal designation or established seniority.

Across these instances, singers moved between leading and following as musical and interpersonal needs changed. Leadership was therefore not exclusively anchored to formal roles but enacted through participation, situational knowledge, and contributions to immediate collective needs.

2.2 Peer Modeling and Behavioral Cascades

A central mechanism through which distributed leadership emerged was peer modeling, in which individual behaviors became visible cues that shaped collective action. Leadership in these moments was enacted not through explicit instruction, but through demonstration that others subsequently adopted.

In musical contexts, this occurred when an individual singer introduced a physical or musical strategy that was subsequently mirrored by surrounding peers. During one rehearsal, for example, a tenor began moving his body to the beat while the section worked through a difficult rhythm. The behavior spread through the section until the tenors were collectively using the movement, at which point the previously unstable rhythm became more coordinated (Observation 2). Similar patterns occurred when singers adopted gestures, posture changes, or other physical strategies initially demonstrated by individual peers.

These behaviors created behavioral cascades in which small individual actions propagated outward through imitation and adaptation. In several observed instances, these cascades occurred without verbal explanation, with visible behaviors producing rapid collective uptake. Leadership in these moments therefore functioned through modeling: an individual's behavior provided a possible strategy that others could observe, adopt, and adapt in real time.

> *The sopranos know that section is coming. The same major sixth appears again and again in quick succession over several measures, giving them only seconds between*

attempts. They never quite get there, and the whole section knows it. This time, one veteran singer tries something different. As the interval approaches, she points upward and presses up onto her toes, reaching for the note with her whole body. She hits it. No one stops, no one says a word. The line continues. When the interval returns, several singers point upward and rise with her. More voices find the note. By the third pass, the gesture has rippled through the section. Nearly every hand points toward the ceiling; they're pulling each other up to the note. It looks a little silly, but no one seems to mind. For the first time, the line rings true. At the end of the passage, the singers glance at one another, and, just as the gesture rippled through the section moments before, smiles begin to spread from face to face. (Observation 7)

Peer modeling was not limited to veteran singers. While returning students sometimes initiated effective behaviors, leadership through modeling was context-dependent and distributed among ensemble members. As demonstrated in these observations, a singer who identified an effective strategy could temporarily influence the actions of surrounding peers without assuming a formal leadership role.

These patterns demonstrate that leadership frequently operated laterally within the ensemble rather than solely through vertical, directive authority. Influence occurred through observation, imitation, and rapid synchronization in addition to formal instruction.

2.3 Contextual Emergence of Informal Leadership Roles

Beyond fluidity in formal and informal roles and leadership through peer modeling, leadership also emerged in highly situational and context-specific ways, particularly when the ensemble encountered uncertainty or a problem requiring resolution. In these moments, individuals temporarily performed leadership functions based on knowledge, confidence, or

experience relevant to the immediate situation. These functions included clarifying musical material, identifying problems, proposing strategies, and helping orient the group's subsequent work.

This pattern was particularly visible during sectional rehearsals where Dr. Melody was not present. During one sectional, a singer identified a passage they had been consistently struggling with, prompting other singers to identify additional problem areas and effectively establishing a set of priorities for the group's remaining rehearsal time (Observation 4). Later, another singer offered a personal strategy for counting irregular meters, framing it as an approach that had helped them and might help others. A different singer drew on independent listening outside rehearsal to suggest a stylistic approach heard in a recording, which the group agreed to try (Observation 4). Rather than relying on a single individual to direct the sectional, different singers contributed leadership according to the problem being addressed.

These moments demonstrate the temporary and situational character of informal leadership within the ensemble. The individual who identified a rehearsal priority was not necessarily the same person who contributed rhythmic knowledge or interpretive insight. Leadership functions shifted as the group's immediate needs changed, allowing relevant knowledge and experience to enter the rehearsal process from multiple participants.

Across rehearsals, similar patterns occurred during rhythmic instability, unclear entrances, sight-reading, and interpretive uncertainty, as different students contributed when they possessed knowledge or confidence relevant to the immediate problem. Leadership therefore functioned as a context-responsive practice distributed across participants rather than as a function concentrated exclusively in formally designated individuals.

Synthesis of Theme 2

Theme 2 demonstrates that leadership within the ensemble is best understood as a distributed and emergent practice enacted through ongoing interaction rather than formal role assignment. Although section leaders were structurally present, leadership in practice was fluid, shared, and continually reconstituted through rehearsal activity.

Three interrelated mechanisms illustrate this system. First, sectional leadership fluidity and role ambiguity show that formal leadership roles did not consistently structure real-time coordination. Instead, leadership functions were distributed across multiple participants and shifted depending on musical and social needs.

Second, peer modeling and behavioral cascades reveal how leadership emerged through visibility and imitation. Individual actions—whether musical, physical, or organizational—frequently spread across sections without verbal instruction, producing rapid collective alignment through distributed influence.

Third, contextual emergence of informal leadership roles highlights how leadership was activated situationally in response to uncertainty or expertise. Individuals temporarily assumed leadership functions when conditions required stabilization, then returned to follower roles without structural disruption.

Together, these mechanisms show that leadership within the ensemble was not a fixed hierarchy but a dynamic practice embedded in interaction. From a LAP perspective, leadership is not located in individuals or roles but is continuously produced through coordinated action, mutual responsiveness, and situational adaptation. Theme 2 illustrates that leadership in the ensemble is an emergent process that circulates across participants, enabling real-time coordination through distributed agency rather than centralized authority.

Theme 3: Co-Constructed Musical Cognition and Direction in Ensemble Practice

Overview of Co-Constructed Musical Cognition

Across rehearsals, the ensemble consistently functioned as a distributed cognitive system in which musical interpretation and problem-solving were accomplished through interaction among singers rather than through conductor instruction alone. While the conductor provided critical structural and interpretive input, singers actively processed that input through peer-to-peer exchange, mutual listening, modeling, and iterative adjustment within and across sections.

In this sense, cognition within the ensemble was not localized in any single individual but distributed across participants who contributed to the interpretation and refinement of musical material. Students continuously sensed, interpreted, tested, and adjusted musical ideas in real time, often without formally interrupting the rehearsal process. These interactions allowed the ensemble to address musical problems collectively and translate individual contributions into coordinated musical action.

Importantly, distributed cognition operated as a core mechanism of ensemble functioning rather than as an occasional or supplemental feature. Leadership behaviors frequently took the form of cognitive contribution rather than directive authority: singers offered information, modeled possibilities, responded to others, and modified their own actions as musical problems were worked through collectively. The following sections examine this process through peer-to-peer problem-solving, conductor-mediated interpretive orientation, and collective decision-making within performance contexts.

3.1 Peer-to-Peer Musical Problem-Solving (Distributed Cognition)

Peer-to-peer problem-solving was a recurring mechanism through which musical uncertainty was identified, interpreted, and resolved within the ensemble. Rather than deferring immediately to the conductor when challenges arose, students frequently engaged one another in real-time processes of clarification, correction, and mutual adjustment. Participant journals similarly described increased reliance on student-to-student correction when instructions were unclear and characterized "figuring it out together" as a recurring response to moments of confusion (Journal 2).

When rhythmic instability, tuning discrepancies, diction uncertainty, or sectional imbalance emerged, singers often responded through lateral communication, including whispered exchanges, visual cues, score referencing, and auditory adjustment. Small pitch and tuning discrepancies, for example, were resolved through mutual listening without stopping the rehearsal process (Observations 5 and 8). Participant reflections also described peer correction and teaching as routine responses to uncertainty involving rhythm and foreign-language diction, including instances in which multiple singers contributed assistance simultaneously (Journals 3 and 4). These interactions allowed musical problems to be addressed within the ongoing rehearsal process without always requiring conductor intervention.

Peer-based problem-solving was also visible in sight-reading and language-intensive contexts. Participants described relying on one another to resolve pronunciation, counting, and rhythmic uncertainty, with knowledge distributed among multiple singers rather than consistently supplied by a single individual (Journals 3 and 4). In these moments, different singers contributed pieces of information or possible strategies, allowing the group to construct a workable solution collectively.

Rehearsal has not yet begun when a singer quietly hums through a troublesome passage. Nearby, someone recognizes it immediately. "I've never gotten that part right in my entire life." A few voices join in, commiserating over the same stubborn entrance. Then, from just outside the conversation, another singer leans in. He points to a marking in his own score. "It helps me to listen to the altos—they have our note an octave up the measure before. See here?" Heads bend toward the page. "Oh!" Pencils and styli move as singers add the discovery to their own scores. Another voice offers a different route. "I think about it like we're moving up a fourth from where we were before. So I hold that note in my head and think of 'Here Comes the Bride' for the interval." More heads nod. More notes appear on the page. In the few minutes before rehearsal begins, one singer's quiet uncertainty becomes a shared problem, and then a small collection of solutions—passed from singer to singer and tucked into scores for later. (Observation 10)

Peer correction was also normalized within the ensemble rather than treated as an exceptional intervention. Participant reflections described peer correction as expected and routine when confusion arose, particularly around diction and rhythm (Journal 4). Observationally, corrections and suggestions were often incorporated through brief acknowledgments, score markings, or immediate musical adjustment rather than requiring extended discussion. This pattern enabled musical knowledge to circulate among singers and distributed responsibility for ensemble accuracy across participants.

Together, these patterns indicate that peer-to-peer problem-solving operated as an expression of distributed cognition, allowing musical understanding to be generated and refined through interaction among singers rather than residing solely with a formal leader.

3.2 Conductor Gestures as Catalysts for Interpretive Orientation

Within the ensemble's distributed cognitive system, the conductor functioned as an important source of musical and interpretive direction without serving as the sole site of musical interpretation. Conductorial gestures, verbal instructions, and rehearsal interventions frequently provided cues that singers then translated into collective musical action.

At times, Dr. Melody explicitly directed singers' attention toward one another as sources of musical information. During one rehearsal, she told the ensemble, “The person next to you is the most important” and instructed singers to “sing into each other.” At the same time, she cautioned, “Don't wait for your neighbor to give you permission, and don’t wait for me to give you permission, either” (Observation 3). Together, these instructions emphasized both peer awareness and individual agency: singers were expected to attend closely to surrounding voices while continuing to contribute independently to the collective sound.

Conductor gestures also provided focal points for immediate collective adjustment. Across multiple rehearsals, dynamic changes followed Dr. Melody's gestures without additional verbal instruction (Observations 5, 7, 8, 10 and 12). During another rehearsal, a gesture indicating musical shape prompted simultaneous responses across multiple sections, while a subsequent hint regarding vowel production was followed by an adjustment that spread across the ensemble during the phrase (Observation 7). In these instances, conductor input initiated the adjustment, but singers still had to translate that input into coordinated musical action in relation to one another.

This process was particularly visible when conductor intervention identified a problem without explicitly providing its solution. During one rehearsal, the ensemble's initial breath before an entrance was shallow and overly audible. Rather than explaining what had gone wrong,

Dr. Melody stopped the ensemble and allowed them to begin again. On the second attempt, the breath improved without additional verbal correction (Observation 8). The intervention provided information—that the first attempt required adjustment—while the singers collectively identified and enacted the necessary change.

These moments demonstrate that conductor input and distributed cognition operated alongside one another rather than as opposing processes. Dr. Melody's gestures, verbal instructions, and rehearsal interventions provided interpretive orientation, while ensemble members remained responsible for perceiving those cues, adjusting their own contributions, and coordinating those adjustments with others. The conductor therefore provided focal points around which collective interpretation and coordinated musical action could organize.

3.3 Emergent Stylistic and Temporal Decision-Making

Beyond responding to conductor input, the ensemble also engaged in collective decision-making regarding style, timing, and execution during performance preparation. These decisions were not always established through explicit directive instruction but developed through rehearsal, peer interaction, mutual listening, and real-time adjustment.

Stylistic choices sometimes developed through singers' responses to the sound produced around them. During one rehearsal, singers on the right side of the ensemble, including altos and tenors, adjusted their mouth space after hearing the sound produced by singers on the opposite side of the room. The resulting chord became more open and balanced without an explicit verbal exchange among the singers (Observation 3). In other instances, individual singers introduced possible interpretive approaches for collective consideration. During a sectional, for example, a singer who had listened independently to a recording suggested adopting a stylistic feature they had noticed in that performance. The other singers agreed to try the approach (Observation 4).

Collective musical decisions could also develop through repeated attempts and evaluation rather than through a single directive. During the same sectional, one singer responded to an attempted passage by asking, “We can do a better crescendo than that, yeah?” The other singers agreed and repeated the passage, refining the crescendo in subsequent attempts (Observation 4). Such interactions illustrate how individual evaluations could enter the group, receive collective uptake, and shape subsequent musical action.

Distributed decision-making was not always efficient. During pod rehearsals, wherein each section takes over a corner of the rehearsal space for a few minutes, Dr. Melody instructed singers that “no one’s in charge” and encouraged them to just begin singing rather than waiting for an assigned leader (Observation 1). While the sopranos began immediately, the basses experienced greater difficulty initiating the task as multiple singers attempted to contribute simultaneously, requiring Dr. Melody to remind them to begin rather than continue discussing possible approaches (Observation 1). This contrast demonstrated that distributing participation could facilitate rapid collective action in some contexts while producing temporary ambiguity in others.

The ensemble also encountered problems for which peer interaction did not immediately produce sufficient agreement. When singers discovered conflicting markings for the pronunciation of “befall,” they briefly discussed the discrepancy but were unable to resolve it before moving on, deciding instead to ask Dr. Melody later (Observation 4). Distributed cognition therefore did not eliminate the role of formal expertise; singers could recognize when their collective knowledge was insufficient and defer a decision rather than force consensus.

Taken together, these instances demonstrate that stylistic and temporal decisions could develop through distributed cognitive processes involving listening, suggestion, experimentation,

and collective evaluation. These processes sometimes produced rapid convergence and at other times exposed the limits of peer-based decision-making, with formal conductor input remaining available when collective knowledge or agreement was insufficient.

Synthesis of Theme 3

Theme 3 demonstrates that musical cognition within the ensemble functioned as a distributed, interactional system in which understanding was continuously co-constructed through participation. Rather than relying solely on conductor instruction or individually held expertise, singers collectively engaged in processes of interpretation, correction, and refinement that enabled the ensemble to think musically as a group.

Peer-to-peer problem-solving illustrated how musical challenges were routinely addressed at the interpersonal level, with singers sharing responsibility for identifying and resolving uncertainty. Conductor gestures as catalysts for interpretive orientation demonstrated that leadership input functioned primarily as an initiating force that structured, rather than replaced, collective cognition. Emergent stylistic and temporal decision-making further showed that ensemble coherence often developed through iterative interaction among singers rather than centralized decision-making.

Across these mechanisms, cognition was not confined to individual minds but distributed across the ensemble through embodied action, auditory perception, and social interaction. Musical understanding emerged through the aggregation of partial contributions, the circulation of interpretive cues, and the continuous adjustment of individual performance in relation to others.

In sum, Theme 3 illustrates that the ensemble did not simply execute music under direction; it actively constructed musical understanding through shared cognitive processes. This

distributed cognition provided the interpretive foundation upon which higher-order processes of direction, alignment, and commitment were able to emerge and stabilize within the ensemble system.

Theme 4: Direction as Co-Constructed Musical Agreement

Overview of Direction as Co-Constructed Musical Leadership

The collective processes described in Theme 3 also contributed to an observable leadership outcome: direction. Within the ensemble, direction took the form of shared agreement about what the group was attempting to accomplish musically at a given moment. Rather than functioning only as an interpretive endpoint communicated by the conductor, shared direction was produced as singers interpreted conductor input, responded to one another, and coordinated their musical choices around a common understanding of the desired outcome.

Across rehearsals, conductor gestures, verbal instruction, and modeling provided important initiating cues, but ensemble members still had to translate those cues into coordinated musical action. Singers worked collectively to align phrasing, articulation, tone, timing, and other aesthetic choices until their individual contributions reflected a sufficiently shared understanding of the musical goal. In this way, the distributed cognitive practices identified in Theme 3 provided a mechanism through which collective direction became observable in performance.

This process was iterative rather than linear. Shared direction was developed and reinforced through repeated cycles of enactment, evaluation, and adjustment as the ensemble worked toward increasingly consistent interpretations. The following sections examine how shared musical direction was constructed through iterative agreement, conductor-initiated interpretive cues, and stylistic and temporal decision-making within the ensemble.

4.1 Iterative Formation of Shared Musical Agreement

Direction within the ensemble developed through repeated cycles of musical enactment and adjustment rather than requiring complete agreement before singing began. Singers often entered a passage with a developing understanding of its stylistic or interpretive goal and refined that understanding as they heard and responded to the collective result.

This was visible even when technical accuracy had not yet been established. During an early sight-reading rehearsal, pitches and rhythms remained unstable, yet singers maintained consistent articulation, dynamic shaping, and other stylistic features associated with the piece (Observation 1). The ensemble therefore demonstrated a degree of shared interpretive direction even while other musical elements were still being learned. Shared direction did not depend on technical uniformity across every dimension of performance but could become apparent through common stylistic intentions.

In other instances, shared musical direction became increasingly coordinated through performance itself. During one rehearsal, Dr. Melody told singers that “shape is your responsibility” while focusing her own conducting primarily on entrances in a new piece. Singers nevertheless shaped phrases collectively, building toward cadence points and relaxing into their cadence points without receiving continuous direction for each phrase (Observation 2). During another rehearsal, an initially staggered ensemble entrance became coordinated as singers listened and adjusted to one another (Observation 6). These moments demonstrated how a general musical goal could become increasingly shared through enactment and mutual adjustment.

The ensemble also sometimes established common orientation before producing sound. During Observation 3, singers were asked to visualize the same musical idea silently before

singing, creating a shared point of reference that could then be enacted collectively. Such moments further demonstrated that direction involved a common understanding of the intended musical outcome, even though individual singers remained responsible for translating that understanding into their own performance.

Across these instances, shared musical agreement was not necessarily a discrete decision reached through verbal consensus. Instead, direction became observable when individual contributions increasingly reflected a common understanding of the musical goal. Repeated performance, listening, and adjustment allowed that understanding to be enacted and refined collectively.

4.2 Conductor Gestures as Catalysts for Interpretive Alignment

Within this system of co-construction, conductor gestures provided shared interpretive reference points around which ensemble direction could organize. Rather than requiring verbal explanation of every musical decision, Dr. Melody frequently communicated information about dynamics, phrasing, and musical shape through facial expressions and physical gestures that singers translated into collective musical responses.

This process was particularly visible in dynamic shaping. Across multiple rehearsals, changes in Dr. Melody's facial expressions or hand gestures were followed by rapid ensemble-wide adjustments in dynamics (Observations 2, 10, and 12). In Observations 10 and 12, dynamic shifts followed conductor gestures almost immediately, demonstrating that singers shared sufficient understanding of the cues to translate them into coordinated musical action without additional verbal instruction.

Conductor cues also provided points around which the ensemble could coordinate beginnings and endings. During one rehearsal, Dr. Melody gave a cutoff and the ensemble

stopped together quickly, a change from earlier rehearsals in which inattentiveness had sometimes resulted in sound continuing beyond the cutoff (Observation 5). The increasingly coordinated response demonstrated not simply attention to the conductor but a shared understanding of the cue and the musical action it required.

These patterns demonstrate that conductor leadership and co-constructed direction operated simultaneously within the ensemble. Dr. Melody provided interpretive cues, but their realization depended on singers perceiving those cues and translating them into coordinated individual actions. Direction therefore did not require the absence of conductor leadership; rather, conductor input could provide a common interpretive reference point that ensemble members collectively enacted.

4.3 Emergent Stylistic and Temporal Agreement

Stylistic and temporal aspects of direction were also shaped through gradual convergence across the ensemble. Decisions regarding articulation, vowel shape, rhythm, dynamics, and other interpretive features were not always established through explicit instruction but sometimes became shared through repeated rehearsal, mutual listening, and singers' responses to the developing ensemble sound.

> *This cadence is familiar. First on solfège, then scat singing, they approach it with confidence, carrying the sound forward with energy. Pitches settle into place, rhythms align, articulations match. Each time, the cadence arrives full and strong. Then they add the text. For the first time, the singers are no longer looking only at notes and rhythms. Their eyes move across the text, and the familiar cadence point takes on a different meaning. As they approach it, something changes. The sound begins to soften. All across the room, voices pull back as one, shaping a decrescendo that has never been there*

before. No one has asked for it. No one has demonstrated it. There has been no discussion of dynamics or what the words might require at this moment. Yet, on the first pass with text, the entire ensemble makes the same choice at the same moment. Forty-six singers read the same words, hear the same implication, and respond as one.

(Dramatization of Aardvark's second reflective journal)

This moment demonstrated shared musical direction developing without an explicit directive. The singers' simultaneous decrescendo reflected a common interpretation of the relationship between text and musical expression. Although no verbal consensus preceded the change, their individual musical choices converged on the same interpretive outcome, making shared direction audible in performance.

Similar convergence occurred when interpretive choices introduced within one part of the ensemble spread to others. For example, one section mirrored an articulation style established by another section, extending a localized musical choice into a more consistent ensemble approach (Observation 6). These interactions demonstrated how musical ideas could circulate laterally among singers and contribute to increasingly shared stylistic expectations.

Across these instances, agreement did not necessarily require an explicit verbal decision. Shared direction became observable when singers increasingly enacted compatible interpretations of how the music should sound and unfold. Stylistic agreement therefore developed through a combination of individual interpretation, mutual listening, peer influence, and repeated participation in the collective musical work.

4.4 Direction as Emergent Musical Agreement

These patterns indicate that musical direction within the ensemble functioned as a developing system of shared agreement. Although the conductor provided important interpretive

cues and musical guidance, direction was not produced through conductor input alone. It was continually constructed as singers interpreted those cues, responded to one another, and translated shared musical intentions into performance.

This process allowed the ensemble to develop a flexible yet coherent interpretive stance in which musical intent could be initiated by the conductor, introduced by individual singers, or developed through collective interaction. Across these processes, direction became observable when individual musical choices increasingly reflected a common understanding of what the ensemble was attempting to accomplish. Shared musical agreement therefore represented a collective outcome of ongoing interaction among conductor input, individual interpretation, peer influence, and ensemble participation.

Synthesis of Theme 4

Theme 4 demonstrates that musical direction within the ensemble was produced through co-constructed processes of interpretive alignment. Rather than being transmitted intact from conductor to singers, direction developed through cycles of initiation, response, and convergence involving both conductor input and peer interaction.

Within this framework, conductor gestures functioned as catalysts for alignment, initiating interpretive processes that were refined through ensemble participation. Stylistic and temporal agreement developed through repeated rehearsal interactions in which singers adjusted to one another and gradually stabilized shared musical decisions.

Across these processes, direction is best understood as a form of collective agreement regarding musical intent. This agreement was not static but continuously maintained and revised through interaction, allowing the ensemble to function as a coherent yet adaptive interpretive system.

Theme 5: Ensemble Alignment Through Embodied and Nonverbal Coordination

Overview of Embodied and Nonverbal Coordination

Within the ensemble, coordination was frequently achieved through embodied and nonverbal processes that structured how singers entered, sustained, and adjusted musical performance in real time. Rather than relying primarily on verbal instruction or extended explanation, ensemble alignment often emerged through physical readiness, visual attention, gesture interpretation, and mutual listening. These forms of coordination operated continuously throughout rehearsals, shaping both musical execution and group responsiveness.

Embodied and nonverbal coordination was evident in the ways singers prepared for entrances, adjusted posture and breath, responded to conductor gestures, and monitored one another during rehearsal. In many instances, alignment occurred without verbal mediation, as singers collectively interpreted cues from the conductor, peers, and the evolving musical texture. This allowed the ensemble to maintain continuity of sound while simultaneously making fine-grained adjustments to timing, dynamics, articulation, and tone.

Importantly, these coordination practices were not supplemental to verbal instruction but functioned as a primary mode of ensemble organization. Musical decisions and corrections frequently emerged through shared physical and visual awareness rather than explicit discussion. As a result, coordination was distributed across multiple sensory and interactional channels, enabling rapid response to musical demands without interrupting rehearsal flow.

Taken together, embodied and nonverbal coordination provided a foundational framework for ensemble functioning. The following sections examine how these processes manifested in postural alignment, visual and gestural communication, verbal minimization, and

rapid recovery, illustrating how the ensemble achieved coherence through continuous, multi-channel interaction.

5.1 Postural and Physical Coordination

A defining feature of ensemble alignment was the extent to which coordination occurred through shared physical and embodied behaviors rather than verbal instruction alone. Across rehearsals, singers aligned posture, breathing, preparatory movements, and other physical behaviors in ways that supported collective readiness and musical synchronization (Observations 3, 5, 6, and 9).

One recurring pattern involved collective physical preparation before singing. Singers adjusted posture and visual focus as rehearsal activity shifted toward performance, with individual movements sometimes spreading quickly to surrounding ensemble members (Observations 3 and 5). During one rehearsal, for example, basses leaned forward together in preparation for a shared entrance (Observation 5). Such behaviors provided visible indications of collective readiness before sound was produced.

Physical movement also supported coordination during musical activity. Singers used bodily movement and subdivision tapping to reinforce articulation and rhythmic organization, with behaviors initiated by individual singers sometimes spreading to others (Observations 1 and 6). In Observation 1, bodily movements used to support articulation were initially demonstrated by returning singers and subsequently adopted by other ensemble members. Physical strategies therefore became shared resources through which singers could coordinate aspects of musical execution.

Taken together, these observations demonstrate that alignment was enacted not only through audible musical outcomes but through the physical behaviors that preceded and

supported them. Posture, breath, movement, and rhythmic embodiment provided mechanisms through which individual singers coordinated their actions with those of the larger ensemble, allowing collective musical activity to proceed with relatively little verbal communication.

5.2 Visual Cues and Gesture-Based Coordination

In addition to postural alignment, ensemble coordination was supported through visual cues and gesture-based communication that allowed singers to synchronize and adjust musical actions in real time. These cues came from both the conductor and other singers, creating multiple visual sources of information that could be interpreted without interrupting rehearsal for verbal clarification.

Visual coordination also occurred laterally among singers. Students used pointing, nodding, score indication, and physical gestures to communicate musical information during rehearsal. Singers pointed out measure locations, rhythms, or solfège information to nearby peers, who could respond or adjust without interrupting the larger rehearsal process (Observations 1 and 2). In one instance, a singer pointed to a rhythm for a neighboring singer, and the gesture subsequently spread down the row as other singers recognized and addressed the same uncertainty. These small visual exchanges allowed localized coordination to occur alongside the full-ensemble rehearsal.

Together, these observations demonstrate that visual communication operated through both vertical and lateral pathways within the ensemble. Conductor gestures provided common signals around which large-scale coordination could organize, while peer gestures allowed singers to exchange information and adjust locally in real time. Alignment therefore depended not only on what ensemble members heard, but also on their ongoing visual attention to the actions of the conductor and one another.

5.3 Unity Without Verbal Instruction

A striking feature of ensemble alignment was the extent to which coordinated musical action occurred without verbal instruction during rehearsal flow. Across observations, singers adjusted timing, dynamics, entrances, and other aspects of performance through mutual listening, visual attention, and embodied awareness, allowing coordination to occur without interrupting the musical process for verbal clarification.

Musical adjustments also occurred within ongoing performance. Small pitch and tuning discrepancies were corrected through mutual listening without stopping the rehearsal process (Observations 5 and 8), while rhythmic instability was similarly corrected as singers adjusted to one another during performance (Observation 7). In these instances, alignment became observable through the ensemble's ability to recognize a discrepancy and modify individual contributions while maintaining the larger musical activity.

Nonverbal unity extended beyond sound to transitional behaviors. During one rehearsal, page turns occurred in synchrony across the ensemble even though Dr. Melody had not instructed singers to coordinate them (Observation 7). Although seemingly minor, the behavior demonstrated singers' awareness of shared timing and of one another's actions beyond explicitly rehearsed musical decisions.

Together, these observations demonstrate that the absence of verbal instruction did not represent an absence of communication or coordination. Singers used auditory, visual, and embodied information to adjust their actions in relation to the ensemble, allowing alignment to be maintained or restored without requiring every change to be verbally articulated. These nonverbal processes provided one mechanism through which individual musical actions became coordinated collective performance.

5.4 Rapid Recovery as a Marker of Alignment

Across rehearsals, one of the clearest indicators of ensemble alignment was the speed with which singers recovered from errors, disruptions, or momentary instability. Rather than requiring extended verbal correction, the ensemble often realigned through collective listening and immediate adjustment. These recoveries demonstrated that alignment was not dependent on uninterrupted accuracy but could be restored when coordination temporarily broke down.

This pattern was visible in rhythmic and tuning instability during rehearsal. Rhythmic drift was corrected through shared listening as singers adjusted within the ongoing passage, while tuning discrepancies were similarly resolved through mutual adjustment without requiring the ensemble to stop (Observations 5, 7, and 8). In these moments, singers modified their individual contributions in response to the developing ensemble sound, allowing coordinated performance to be re-established within the musical flow.

Participant reflections also identified recovery as a feature of ensemble functioning. Following a break from regular rehearsal, participants described repertoire knowledge returning more quickly than expected and characterized the ensemble as adjusting rapidly despite initially forgetting aspects of song structure or the established ensemble sound (Journal 2). The return to rehearsal was similarly described as becoming “quickly re-centered” rather than remaining chaotic or disorganized (Journal 2). These reflections reinforced the observational pattern that temporary disruption did not necessarily produce prolonged loss of coordination.

The ensemble's capacity for rapid recovery was particularly visible when minimal conductor feedback preceded substantial collective adjustment:

> *The ensemble reaches the end of the passage. Dr. Melody cuts them off. Some people sigh, some people shake their heads. There is no diagnosis, no list of corrections,*

no rehearsal of individual parts. Instead, she looks at the ensemble and offers only three words: "Do it better." Then she raises her hands and cues them in again. In the brief silence between attempts, the singers take inventory. They don't require more direction than that. Each singer seems to recognize the problem and quietly considers their own place within it—the note that needs more certainty, the rhythm that needs more precision, the tone that needs to be rounded. They breathe together and begin again. The difference is immediate. What had been unsettled moments before locks into place. Pitches center, rhythms sharpen, voices balance, and the passage moves forward with new clarity. Nothing has been explained aloud, yet everything has changed. In the space between "do it better" and the next breath, forty-six individual adjustments become one collective correction. (Observation 9)

This episode demonstrated that collective correction did not always require the problem to be isolated or verbally diagnosed. Following a minimal prompt, individual singers adjusted their contributions sufficiently for the subsequent attempt to become more coordinated (Observation 9). The resulting improvement made alignment visible not through the absence of error, but through the ensemble's capacity to reorganize after error occurred.

Rapid recovery therefore functioned as a marker of dynamic alignment rather than uninterrupted synchronization. Errors and moments of instability temporarily disrupted coordination, but singers repeatedly demonstrated the capacity to adjust their individual actions in relation to the larger ensemble and restore coordinated performance. Alignment, in this sense, was not a fixed state but an ongoing accomplishment maintained through cycles of disruption, adjustment, and recovery.

Synthesis of Theme 5

Across rehearsals, ensemble alignment was consistently achieved through embodied, visual, and largely nonverbal systems of coordination that enabled singers to function as a unified musical entity. Rather than relying primarily on verbal instruction or explicit explanation, the ensemble demonstrated a high degree of synchronization through posture, gesture, timing, mutual listening, and rapid adjustment. These patterns suggest that coordination was not only communicated but also physically enacted and continuously negotiated in real time through shared attention.

The first three subthemes—postural and physical coordination, visual cues and gesture-based coordination, and unity without verbal instruction—illustrate the foundational mechanisms through which this alignment was established. Singers frequently aligned bodily posture, breathing, and preparatory movements in anticipation of musical entrances, creating a shared physical readiness that supported synchronized performance. Visual cues from both conductor and peers further structured ensemble timing and interpretation, allowing singers to adjust dynamics, diction, and phrasing with minimal disruption. Across these interactions, verbal instruction was notably reduced, as singers relied instead on embodied understanding and accumulated rehearsal experience to interpret and execute musical intent.

The final subtheme, rapid recovery as a marker of alignment, highlights the outcome of these coordinated systems in practice. The ensemble's ability to quickly stabilize after errors, correct tuning discrepancies, and re-align rhythmic structure without extended interruption demonstrates the strength of its underlying nonverbal coordination mechanisms. Recovery was not treated as a separate corrective event but occurred seamlessly within ongoing musical flow, indicating that alignment was continuously maintained rather than intermittently restored.

Taken together, these findings suggest that ensemble coordination was fundamentally embodied and distributed across multiple channels of interaction. Alignment emerged through a combination of physical readiness, visual attentiveness, and shared auditory awareness, allowing singers to synchronize musical action without extensive verbal mediation. This system enabled the ensemble to respond fluidly to musical challenges while maintaining continuity of performance and rehearsal flow.

Theme 5 demonstrates that ensemble unity was not primarily constructed through spoken instruction or hierarchical direction, but through a dense network of nonverbal, embodied, and visually mediated coordination practices. Through these mechanisms, singers collectively produced a state of continuous alignment in which musical understanding was enacted through the body as much as through sound, enabling the ensemble to function as an integrated and responsive performing organism.

Theme 6: Systemic Integration of Direction, Alignment, and Commitment Through Recursive Feedback Loops

Across the ensemble, Direction, Alignment, and Commitment (DAC) operated as interconnected leadership outcomes produced and sustained through ongoing interaction among prosocial behavior, distributed leadership, collective cognition, conductor input, and embodied coordination. Although analytically distinguishable, the three dimensions frequently operated simultaneously in rehearsal practice, with changes in one dimension supporting or affecting the others.

Direction was not fixed in advance but co-constructed through iterative interpretive processes involving conductor cues, peer adjustment, and ensemble responsiveness (as

established in Theme 4). Alignment emerged through embodied, visual, and auditory synchronization practices that enabled coordinated musical execution (Theme 5).

Commitment was expressed somewhat differently. Rather than appearing primarily through a distinct set of practices, commitment was distributed across the behaviors and interactions documented throughout the preceding themes. Persistent engagement, resilience in the face of error, continued participation during uncertainty, and ongoing peer reinforcement demonstrated singers' investment in sustaining the collective musical work. These behaviors were particularly evident in the OCB and problem-solving processes described in Themes 1 and 3. While direction and alignment became visible through identifiable processes of interpretive agreement and embodied coordination, commitment was reflected in ensemble members' continued willingness to participate, adjust, recover, and remain engaged in the collective task.

Commitment was particularly visible when participation required persistence, vulnerability, or continued effort despite difficulty. During one rehearsal, singers willingly engaged in exaggerated or playful vocal and physical behaviors associated with the musical task, including an emphatic "Ja!" and bodily movements used to support articulation (Observation 1). In another rehearsal, ensemble members participated enthusiastically in a Friday dance activity, singing along, moving, and engaging in deliberately playful behavior together (Observation 2). Commitment was also evident under less enjoyable conditions. Reflecting on repeated work on a difficult passage, Penelope described herself and other altos becoming increasingly annoyed after multiple unsuccessful attempts, yet the singers continued participating in the rehearsal process (Journal 3). Across these contrasting moments, commitment was visible not as constant enthusiasm but as continued investment in collective participation across both playful and frustrating circumstances.

The ensemble is already in motion when something begins to slip. An entrance falters, a few voices hesitate, and the sound briefly loses its center. But the singers keep going. Eyes lift from scores. Bodies lean toward neighboring voices. Singers listen across sections, grasping for something familiar to hold onto. A confident entrance offers a place to rejoin; a visible breath draws voices back together. Small adjustments ripple across the room. Within seconds, the uncertainty disappears. Entrances settle, voices reconnect, and the phrase regains its shape. No single singer brings the ensemble back together. They find their way through by listening, adjusting, and continuing. They reach the cadence together. There is hardly time to notice. The next phrase is already underway. (Dramatization of Penelope's third reflective journal)

Together, these dimensions operated as mutually reinforcing aspects of collective leadership within the ensemble. Direction provided shared interpretive orientation, alignment enabled coordinated musical action, and commitment sustained participation through uncertainty, repetition, and disruption. DAC did not appear as a final state achieved once and subsequently maintained without interruption. Instead, its dimensions were repeatedly enacted and restored through ongoing ensemble interaction. Moments of uncertainty, error, or misalignment could temporarily disrupt coordinated performance, but continued participation, peer correction, embodied adjustment, and distributed leadership allowed the ensemble to reorganize and resume collective musical work. DAC therefore functioned as a dynamic collective outcome, continually enacted through the interaction of shared direction, coordinated action, and sustained commitment.

The ensemble functioned through recursive interactions across different levels of analysis. Individual behaviors, sectional practices, and ensemble-wide activity influenced one

another, creating repeated cycles of adjustment across the system. For the purposes of this study, the ensemble represents the system level; practices may occur both within sections and across the ensemble. These interactions illustrate how leadership processes can be examined at different levels without treating those levels as independent or assuming that influence moves in only one direction.

Similar movement occurred between sections and the full ensemble. In another rehearsal, an articulation style established within one section was subsequently mirrored by another, extending a localized musical choice into a more consistent ensemble approach (Observation 6). Sectional activity therefore served as an intermediary between individual contributions and ensemble-wide musical outcomes, allowing behaviors and musical information to move beyond the singer who initially introduced them.

Influence also moved in the opposite direction. Ensemble sound, conductor input, and the developing musical result provided information to which sections and individual singers subsequently responded. As singers heard the collective result, they modified their own contributions, which in turn altered the sound available for others to hear and respond to. The relationship among levels was therefore recursive rather than exclusively bottom-up: individual actions shaped collective outcomes, while those collective outcomes simultaneously provided feedback for subsequent individual and sectional adjustment.

> *Today, the familiar rows disappear. The choir forms one enormous circle, sending their voices toward the open space at its center. One singer adjusts to what they hear beside them; another follows, and soon the section shifts. Across the circle, others listen and respond. Individual voices become sectional sounds, gathering in the middle until they become the sound of the ensemble. Then that sound travels outward again,*

asking the singers to listen, adjust, and send something new back into the circle. The music gathers in the center and returns changed, again and again. Soon, the circle will open outward, and the sound they have shaped together will reach a new set of ears: the audience. (Observation 12)

This interaction illustrates how leadership processes moved across different levels of analysis rather than following a single linear pathway. Individual behaviors could contribute to collective practices and ensemble-wide outcomes, while the resulting activity provided feedback that shaped subsequent participation and adjustment. Leadership therefore involved recurring interactions among individual behaviors, shared practices, and collective outcomes.

Theme 7: Emergence of Ensemble Cohesion as a System State (Adaptive Musical Organism)

Across the rehearsal process, ensemble cohesion became visible not as a static condition but as a collective state produced through the interaction of behaviors, practices, and outcomes documented throughout the preceding themes. Cohesion was not attributable to any single mechanism. Rather, prosocial behavior, distributed leadership, collective cognition, shared direction, embodied alignment, and sustained commitment interacted to support the ensemble's ability to function as a coordinated musical whole.

The ensemble's cohesion also did not depend on uninterrupted stability. As demonstrated throughout the findings, errors, uncertainty, disagreement, and temporary misalignment remained present within rehearsal. What distinguished cohesive functioning was the ensemble's capacity to respond to these disruptions through peer support, distributed problem-solving, mutual adjustment, and continued participation. Disruption and recovery therefore existed within, rather than outside of, the ensemble's collective functioning.

These processes developed through recursive interactions among individual behaviors, sectional practices, and ensemble-wide activity (Theme 6). Individual contributions shaped collective practices and outcomes, while the resulting musical activity provided new information that influenced subsequent responses and adjustments. Through these interactions, the OCB, LAP, and DAC processes examined in this study converged in observable moments of coordinated ensemble functioning.

The culmination of these processes was particularly visible in performance:

> *Tonight, forty-six singers stand before an audience. The weeks of stopping, starting, questioning, adjusting, listening, and trying again and again have given way to music that simply moves. Singers listen across the ensemble as both leaders and followers, their roles shifting almost imperceptibly from phrase to phrase. Individual voices reach outward and become something larger, shaped by all the small acts of attention that brought them here. For these few moments, the singers breathe, move, and make music as one—and the sound that was once theirs alone fills a much larger room. (Concert observation)*

The concert did not represent the disappearance of the individual behaviors and interactions documented during rehearsal, but their convergence in collective performance. The coordinated musical result remained dependent on singers listening, responding, adjusting, and sustaining their individual contributions in relation to others. Ensemble cohesion therefore represented a system-level outcome emerging through the recursive relationship among individual behaviors, shared leadership practices, and collective direction, alignment, and commitment.

Chapter 4 Summary

This chapter presented the findings of this qualitative, arts-informed case study examining how leadership emerged through Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB), Leadership as Practice (LAP), and Direction, Alignment, and Commitment (DAC) within a collegiate choir. Analysis of observations, participant journals, researcher reflexive journaling, rehearsal recordings, field notes, and artifacts revealed leadership as an emergent, collaborative process enacted through the everyday interactions of ensemble members rather than through formal authority alone.

Seven interconnected themes illustrated the progression from individual discretionary behaviors to collective leadership practices and, ultimately, to system-level outcomes. Organizational Citizenship Behaviors functioned as the social infrastructure supporting ensemble participation, while distributed leadership practices, co-constructed musical cognition, shared direction, and embodied alignment demonstrated how leadership emerged through collaborative interaction. The final themes extended these findings by illustrating Direction, Alignment, and Commitment as recursive, interconnected processes operating across individual, sectional, and ensemble levels, resulting in the emergence of a cohesive and adaptive musical system.

Collectively, these findings suggest that leadership within collegiate choirs is best understood as a dynamic, multilevel process in which discretionary behaviors, collaborative practices, and recursive system interactions continuously shape one another. Rather than functioning as separate phenomena, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Leadership as Practice, and Direction, Alignment, and Commitment operated as complementary components of an integrated leadership process that sustained both musical and organizational functioning.

In chapter 5 I will interpret these findings in relation to existing scholarship and the study's conceptual framework. It discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the findings, offers recommendations for practice and future research, and considers the contributions of this study to leadership scholarship, music education, and collaborative artistic practice.

Chapter 5 - Risoluto: Summary, Discussion, and Recommendations

Summary of the Study

Background of the Problem

Leadership within collegiate choirs has traditionally been understood through the actions of the conductor, whose formal authority shapes musical interpretation, rehearsal processes, and ensemble performance. While the conductor remains an essential leader within the ensemble, the day-to-day functioning of collegiate choirs also depends upon the interactions, initiative, and collaborative efforts of ensemble members. Students routinely support one another musically and socially, coordinate rehearsal activities, solve problems collectively, and contribute to the overall success of the ensemble in ways that extend beyond their formally assigned responsibilities.

Despite the importance of these peer-to-peer interactions, leadership scholarship and music ensemble research have largely emphasized formal leadership roles while giving comparatively little attention to the distributed and emergent leadership processes enacted among ensemble members. Existing research has seldom examined how discretionary behaviors, collaborative practices, and collective outcomes interact across multiple levels of the ensemble to sustain leadership and ensemble functioning. As a result, important aspects of how leadership develops through everyday musical participation remain insufficiently understood.

This study addressed this gap by examining leadership as an enacted, shared, and recursive process within a collegiate choir. Rather than viewing leadership as the responsibility of a single individual, the study investigated how discretionary Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB), collective Leadership as Practice (LAP), and emergent Direction, Alignment, and Commitment (DAC) interacted to produce leadership across individual, sectional, and

ensemble levels. By exploring these interconnected processes, the study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of collaborative leadership within artistic organizations.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, arts-informed case study was to examine how leadership emerged through discretionary Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB), collaborative Leadership as Practice (LAP), and recursive Direction, Alignment, and Commitment (DAC) processes within a collegiate choir. Specifically, this study explored how everyday interactions among ensemble members contributed to the development of shared leadership practices and how these practices collectively produced direction, alignment, and commitment across individual, sectional, and ensemble levels. By examining leadership as an emergent, multilevel phenomenon, the study sought to provide a richer understanding of how collaborative leadership is enacted and sustained within collegiate ensemble settings.

Research Questions

1. What specific discretionary behaviors (OCB) do ensemble members engage in that contribute to shared leadership and the collective functioning of collegiate choirs?
2. How do ensemble practices (LAP) emerge from, reinforce, and interact with individual behaviors to support collective direction, alignment, and commitment?
3. What observable evidence of DAC is present in collegiate choirs, and how does it manifest across nested levels of interaction (individual, sectional, full ensemble)?
4. How do these recursive interactions between behaviors, practices, and outcomes shape leadership processes and inform strategies for fostering collaboration, mutual influence, and collective artistry in ensemble settings?

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by an integrated theoretical framework consisting of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), Leadership as Practice (LAP), and Direction, Alignment, and Commitment (DAC). Together, these complementary frameworks provided a multilevel perspective for understanding how leadership emerged through discretionary behaviors, collaborative practices, and collective outcomes within a collegiate choir.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior served as the lens through which discretionary behaviors supporting the ensemble were identified and interpreted. Leadership as Practice shifted the focus from formal leadership roles to leadership as an emergent process enacted through everyday interactions among ensemble members. Direction, Alignment, and Commitment provided a systems-oriented framework for examining the collective outcomes of these interactions and the ways leadership was manifested across individual, sectional, and ensemble levels.

Rather than viewing these frameworks as independent or sequential, this study integrated them into a recursive conceptual model in which discretionary behaviors informed collaborative leadership practices, leadership practices contributed to the development of Direction, Alignment, and Commitment, and these collective outcomes subsequently influenced future behaviors and interactions. This integrated framework provided the conceptual foundation for examining leadership as an emergent, dynamic, and multilevel phenomenon within collegiate choir settings.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative, arts-informed case study design to examine how leadership emerged through behaviors, practices, and collective outcomes within a collegiate

choir. A single auditioned collegiate choir served as the bounded case, allowing for an in-depth exploration of leadership processes as they unfolded through interactions among individual singers, sectional groups, and the ensemble as a whole.

Data were collected through multiple sources to capture leadership from a variety of perspectives and to strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings. These sources included direct observations of rehearsals, participant journals, researcher reflexive journaling, field notes, rehearsal recordings, and relevant artifacts. Data were analyzed using iterative thematic coding guided by the integrated conceptual framework of Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Leadership as Practice, and Direction, Alignment, and Commitment. Throughout the analysis, patterns were examined across multiple levels of interaction to better understand how discretionary behaviors contributed to collaborative leadership practices and emergent ensemble outcomes.

This methodological approach provided a rich understanding of leadership as an enacted, relational, and recursive phenomenon while supporting triangulation across multiple data sources and perspectives. The design aligned with the study's research questions by facilitating examination of leadership behaviors, collaborative practices, and collective outcomes within the natural context of collegiate ensemble rehearsals.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study showed that, within this collegiate choir during the semester of observation, leadership emerged through dynamic and recursive interactions rather than through formal authority alone. Analysis of observational data, participant journals, researcher reflexive journaling, field notes, rehearsal recordings, and artifacts examined how discretionary behaviors, collaborative practices, and collective outcomes related to one another across individual,

sectional, and ensemble activity. Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB) served as sensitizing concepts for attending to discretionary behaviors, Leadership as Practice (LAP) provided the primary perspective for interpreting leadership as it unfolded through everyday interactions, and Direction, Alignment, and Commitment (DAC) provided a framework for examining collective outcomes.

Seven interrelated themes emerged from the analysis. The first theme identified Organizational Citizenship Behaviors as the social infrastructure that supported ensemble functioning through altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, conscientiousness, and civic virtue. The second theme demonstrated that leadership functioned as a distributed and emergent practice in which influence shifted fluidly among ensemble members according to contextual needs rather than remaining tied to formal leadership positions. The third theme revealed that musical understanding was co-constructed through distributed cognition, peer-to-peer problem-solving, and collaborative interpretation. The fourth and fifth themes illustrated how shared musical direction and ensemble alignment emerged through iterative interaction, embodied coordination, and nonverbal communication rather than through directive authority alone.

The final two themes addressed the systemic integration of Direction, Alignment, and Commitment and the emergence of ensemble cohesion. The sixth theme showed how direction, alignment, and commitment operated as mutually reinforcing collective outcomes sustained through ongoing ensemble participation, with recursive feedback connecting individual behaviors, collective practices, and ensemble-wide activity. The seventh theme examined ensemble cohesion as a system-level state emerging through these interactions. Together, these findings illustrate how leadership processes unfolded recursively within this choir during the study period.

Collectively, these findings suggest that leadership within this collegiate choir during the study period can be understood as an emergent, multilevel process in which discretionary behaviors, collaborative practices, and recursive system dynamics interacted in the production of shared musical and organizational outcomes. The following discussion examines these findings in relation to the existing literature and considers their implications for understanding leadership within this case.

Discussion

Leadership as an Emergent, Practice-Based Process

The findings of this study suggest that leadership within this collegiate choirs is best understood as an emergent, practice-based process enacted through everyday interactions rather than as the product of formal authority alone. Although the conductor remained central to the ensemble's musical direction, leadership consistently emerged through the discretionary actions, collaborative practices, and mutual responsiveness of ensemble members. These findings support the Leadership as Practice (LAP) perspective, which conceptualizes leadership as something that is accomplished through interaction rather than possessed by designated leaders (Carroll et al., 2008; Crevani et al., 2010; Raelin, 2011).

Across the findings, Organizational Citizenship Behaviors served as the social foundation upon which collaborative leadership developed. Acts of helping, encouragement, preparation, and organizational investment were not isolated expressions of goodwill but routine practices that enabled the ensemble to function effectively. These discretionary behaviors created the relational conditions necessary for leadership to emerge through shared participation rather than hierarchical control. Rather than separating citizenship behaviors from leadership, the findings

suggest that prosocial behaviors constituted the everyday interactions through which leadership in this choir became possible.

Leadership further emerged through distributed practices in which influence shifted fluidly among ensemble members according to contextual needs. Musical expertise, situational awareness, and peer responsiveness frequently outweighed formal leadership positions in determining who influenced collective action at any given moment. This finding extends Leadership as Practice by illustrating how leadership within this collegiate choir continuously circulated among participants as they collectively interpreted musical problems, coordinated rehearsal activity, and supported one another toward shared goals.

The findings also reinforce the importance of understanding leadership as a relational process that is continuously negotiated through participation. Throughout rehearsals, leadership shifted in response to immediate musical demands, allowing ensemble members to assume leadership functions when they possessed relevant knowledge, confidence, or situational awareness. These leadership moments were temporary and responsive rather than fixed, illustrating that leadership within the ensemble functioned as a dynamic practice rather than a stable role or position.

These findings align with existing Leadership as Practice scholarship by demonstrating that leadership is produced through collective interaction rather than individual authority. However, this study also extends prior research by illustrating the mechanisms through which leadership practices emerged within this collegiate choir. Specifically, Organizational Citizenship Behaviors provided the social infrastructure that enabled distributed leadership to develop, while peer modeling, collaborative problem-solving, and shared musical decision-making transformed individual behaviors into collective leadership practices. Rather than

existing as separate constructs, OCB and LAP operated as mutually reinforcing processes that supported both musical achievement and ensemble cohesion.

The findings further demonstrate that leadership within this collegiate choir is inherently collaborative. Musical interpretation, rehearsal efficiency, and collective performance quality depended not only upon conductor expertise but also upon the willingness of ensemble members to contribute actively to shared goals. Leadership therefore emerged as a property of participation itself, reflecting continuous interaction among singers who collectively shaped the musical and social life of the ensemble. This perspective challenges traditional assumptions that leadership within collegiate choirs resides primarily with the conductor and instead suggests that effective ensemble functioning depends upon the distributed contributions of all members.

Direction, Alignment, and Commitment as an Emergent System

The findings of this study suggest that Direction, Alignment, and Commitment (DAC) can be understood as emergent system properties rather than static leadership outcomes in this instance. Rather than appearing only after effective leadership has occurred, direction, alignment, and commitment were continually produced and reproduced through the ongoing interactions of ensemble members. This finding supports Drath et al.'s (2008) conceptualization of leadership as the production of DAC while extending the framework by illustrating how these outcomes emerged recursively through everyday musical practice.

Direction developed through the collective construction of musical understanding rather than through unilateral decision-making. Although the conductor established interpretive goals and provided artistic guidance, ensemble members actively participated in developing shared musical meaning through discussion, peer modeling, collaborative problem-solving, and repeated rehearsal interactions. Musical direction therefore became a collectively negotiated

understanding of performance goals rather than a set of instructions transmitted from conductor to ensemble.

Alignment similarly emerged through continuous processes of embodied and relational coordination. Singers synchronized their actions through shared physical preparation, visual attention, nonverbal communication, mutual listening, and ongoing adjustment to one another's performance. Rather than relying exclusively on verbal instruction, the ensemble maintained cohesion through distributed systems of interaction that enabled members to anticipate, adapt, and respond collectively to changing musical demands. These findings suggest that in this choir, alignment functioned as an ongoing accomplishment requiring constant maintenance through collaborative participation.

Commitment was demonstrated through sustained engagement with both the musical and social dimensions of ensemble life. OCB, such as helping peers, preparing independently, supporting ensemble traditions, and maintaining positive interpersonal relationships, reflected a shared investment in the success of the group that extended beyond formal participation requirements. These behaviors reinforced not only individual motivation but also collective responsibility for achieving common goals.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of this study is the finding that direction, alignment, and commitment did not function independently in this choir. Instead, they operated as mutually reinforcing processes within an adaptive system. Changes in one dimension influenced the others, creating recursive feedback loops through which the ensemble continually refined its musical performance and social functioning. Rather than representing the endpoint of leadership, DAC functioned as a dynamic process that both emerged from and shaped ongoing leadership practices. This recursive perspective expands existing understandings of DAC by

illustrating how leadership outcomes simultaneously become conditions that influence future leadership behaviors.

A Recursive Model of Collaborative Leadership in a Collegiate Choir

The findings of this study contribute to leadership scholarship by supporting a recursive model of collaborative leadership in which individual behaviors, collective practices, and system-level outcomes continuously influence one another. Rather than functioning as discrete or sequential stages, OCB, LAP, and DAC interacted as interconnected components of a dynamic leadership system. Leadership emerged through the continual interplay of these elements, with each shaping and reinforcing the others over time.

This recursive process was evident across multiple levels of the ensemble. At the individual level, singers engaged in discretionary behaviors that supported their peers and contributed to rehearsal effectiveness. These behaviors accumulated within sectional interactions, where collaborative problem-solving, peer modeling, and shared decision-making transformed individual actions into collective leadership practices. As these practices spread throughout the ensemble, they contributed to the development of shared direction, alignment, and commitment that characterized the choir as a cohesive musical organization.

Importantly, the findings also suggest that these system-level outcomes influenced subsequent behaviors and practices. As direction, alignment, and commitment became established within the ensemble, they created conditions that encouraged additional OCB, strengthened collaborative leadership practices, and reinforced the ensemble's capacity for collective adaptation. Leadership therefore functioned as a recursive process in which outcomes simultaneously became inputs for future leadership activity.

This recursive perspective offers an important contribution to both leadership and music ensemble scholarship by illustrating that leadership within this collegiate choir cannot be adequately explained through individual leaders or isolated behaviors alone. Instead, leadership emerged as a property of an adaptive social system in which individuals, sections, and the ensemble continuously shaped one another through ongoing interaction. The resulting model positions leadership as a dynamic process of collective participation rather than a function of formal authority, demonstrating how collaborative artistic organizations generate and sustain effective leadership through everyday practice.

Collectively, these findings extend existing understandings of Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Leadership as Practice, and Direction, Alignment, and Commitment by illustrating how the three frameworks operate together within a single integrated system. Rather than viewing these perspectives as separate explanations of leadership, this study suggests that they represent complementary components of a broader process through which collaborative leadership emerges, evolves, and sustains itself within collegiate choirs.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Practice

The findings of this study offer case-specific insights into leadership practice within the collegiate choir examined. First, conductors and music educators should recognize that leadership extends beyond formally designated roles. While conductors remain essential in establishing artistic vision and facilitating rehearsal processes, ensemble members also contribute meaningfully to leadership through everyday interactions, discretionary helping behaviors, collaborative problem-solving, and mutual support. Intentionally creating

opportunities for students to exercise these forms of leadership may support both musical performance and ensemble cohesion.

Second, educators should consider fostering Organizational Citizenship Behaviors as an integral component of ensemble culture. Behaviors such as helping peers, sharing knowledge, demonstrating initiative, and contributing to the social well-being of the ensemble were observed in this study and formed part of the collaborative activity examined. Rather than viewing these actions as incidental or secondary to musical achievement, conductors may intentionally encourage and model these behaviors as essential elements of successful ensemble participation.

Third, rehearsal environments should be designed to support collaborative learning and distributed leadership. Opportunities for peer modeling, sectional collaboration, shared musical decision-making, and collective reflection may encourage singers to assume active responsibility for both musical and organizational success. Such practices are consistent with understanding leadership as a shared process and may offer opportunities for students to participate in collaborative leadership alongside musical learning.

Although this study focused on one collegiate choir, the findings raise questions that may be worth exploring in other collaborative settings. In particular, this case highlights the potential value of attending to the everyday behaviors and interactions through which collective work is accomplished, alongside formal leadership roles. Further research could examine whether and how creating opportunities for individuals to share expertise, respond to emerging needs, support peers, and participate in collective problem-solving contributes to shared direction, coordinated action, and sustained commitment in other organizational contexts.

Finally, this case raises questions about how collegiate music-teacher preparation might address leadership as a collaborative process. In this choir, leadership emerged through

participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility rather than being confined to formal roles. These findings suggest the value of further examining how preservice music teachers learn to recognize and facilitate peer-generated leadership, shared musical decision-making, and collaborative problem-solving. Research is needed to determine how such insights might inform music-teacher education and rehearsal pedagogy.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study represents one examination of collaborative leadership within a single collegiate choir and suggests numerous opportunities for future research. First, similar studies conducted across multiple collegiate ensembles would help determine the extent to which the findings are transferable across different institutional contexts, ensemble types, and musical traditions. Comparative studies involving bands, orchestras, jazz ensembles, and musical theatre productions may further illuminate how collaborative leadership develops across diverse performing arts settings.

Future research may also examine how collaborative leadership evolves over longer periods of time. Longitudinal studies following ensembles across multiple semesters or academic years could provide additional insight into how Organizational Citizenship Behaviors, Leadership as Practice, and Direction, Alignment, and Commitment develop, stabilize, and change as ensemble membership evolves.

The relationship between Organizational Citizenship Behaviors and Leadership as Practice also raises questions for future research. Although discretionary behaviors may initially extend beyond formal role expectations, repeated behaviors may become informal social expectations within a group. Future studies could examine when and how this transition occurs, including how social pressure shapes whether behaviors continue to feel voluntary or become

implicitly required. Relatedly, further conceptual and empirical work could investigate how Leadership as Practice accounts for exceptional or infrequent actions that may nevertheless influence ongoing leadership processes. These questions were beyond the scope of the present study but emerged from considering the relationship between discretionary behavior and everyday practice within this case.

Additional research exploring collaborative leadership in community ensembles, professional performing organizations, and interdisciplinary artistic collaborations would further extend understanding of leadership as an emergent practice beyond collegiate settings. Likewise, studies incorporating participant interviews, social network analysis, or mixed-methods approaches may provide complementary perspectives on the interpersonal relationships and communication patterns that support collaborative leadership.

Finally, future scholarship should continue exploring the recursive relationships among Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Leadership as Practice, and Direction, Alignment, and Commitment in organizational contexts beyond music. Examining the integrated conceptual model proposed in this study within educational, nonprofit, corporate, healthcare, or community organizations may further refine understanding of leadership as a dynamic, multilevel, and practice-based phenomenon.

Chapter Summary

This study examined how leadership emerged through everyday behaviors, collaborative practices, and recursive system processes within a collegiate choir. Guided by the complementary frameworks of Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Leadership as Practice, and Direction, Alignment, and Commitment, the study demonstrated that leadership was not confined

to formal authority but was enacted through the ongoing interactions of ensemble members as they collectively pursued shared musical goals.

The findings contribute to leadership scholarship by illustrating how Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Leadership as Practice, and Direction, Alignment, and Commitment can be used together to examine leadership processes within a single case. Rather than viewing leadership solely as the actions of an individual, this study interprets leadership within the choir examined as a relational process shaped through participation, mutual influence, and collective engagement. The findings also highlight questions about how discretionary behaviors relate to everyday leadership practices and how these interactions contribute to system-level outcomes.

Beyond its theoretical contributions, the study offers practical insights for music educators, conductors, leadership educators, and others who seek to cultivate collaborative leadership within organizations. By recognizing the value of everyday interactions and shared responsibility, leaders may create environments in which direction, alignment, and commitment emerge naturally through collective practice.

Ultimately, this study illustrates how one collegiate choir can serve as a context for examining collaborative leadership alongside musical learning. Through the continuous interplay of discretionary behaviors, shared practices, and recursive system dynamics, ensemble members collectively create the conditions through which leadership, learning, and artistry emerge.

Coda

A choir offers a particular way of understanding leadership. From the audience, the most visible leader stands at the front of the ensemble. The conductor gives the downbeat, shapes the phrase, and guides the singers toward a shared interpretation. Yet the music that follows cannot be produced by the conductor alone. It depends upon dozens of individuals choosing, moment by

moment, to listen and respond—to adjust a vowel, match a breath, offer help, accept correction, recover from a mistake, take a risk, or simply remain attentive to the people singing beside them. Much of this work is quiet enough to escape notice. Collectively, however, these small acts make ensemble music possible.

The findings of this study suggest that leadership can be similarly quiet. It does not always announce itself through a title, an instruction, or an individual stepping forward to lead. Leadership can emerge through the ordinary practices by which people care for one another and for their collective work. Within the ensemble examined here, singers repeatedly contributed to direction, alignment, and commitment through actions that were often small and sometimes nearly invisible. A correction passed between peers, a page turned together, a section reorganizing itself around a musical problem, or an ensemble recovering after disruption each represented a moment in which leadership was practiced rather than possessed.

To understand leadership in this way requires attention not only to those who stand at the front of organizations, but also to what happens among the people within them. The accomplishment of collective work depends upon individuals who listen, respond, adapt, contribute, and remain committed to something they cannot create alone. Leadership, then, may be less like a solo and more like ensemble singing: distributed across many voices, shaped through relationships, and realized in the moments when individual contributions become something collective.

No singer can create harmony alone. Perhaps leadership, at its most collective, begins with the same understanding: that what becomes possible together depends not only on the voice one contributes, but on the willingness to listen to every other voice in the room.

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Leave this Section break before any appendices. If you have no appendices, then you can remove the Section Break.

Appendix A - IRB Approval Documentation

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Office of Research Integrity,
Compliance and Security

TO: Kerry L Priest

School of Leadership Studies

Proposal Number: IRB-13558

FROM: Lisa Rubin, Chair

Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 02/11/2026

RE: Proposal Entitled, "Group Interaction and Leadership in Collegiate Choir Rehearsals."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects / Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Kansas State University has reviewed the proposal identified above and has determined that it is EXEMPT from further IRB review. This exemption applies only to the proposal - as written – and currently on file with the IRB. Any change potentially affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation and may disqualify the proposal from exemption. Based upon information provided to the IRB, this activity is exempt under the criteria set forth in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, **45 CFR §104(d), category:Exempt Category 2 Subsection ii.**

Certain research is exempt from the requirements of HHS/OHRP regulations. A determination that research is exempt does not imply that investigators have no ethical responsibilities to subjects in such research; it means only that the regulatory requirements related to IRB review, informed consent, and assurance of compliance do not apply to the research.

Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, the University Research Compliance Office, and if the subjects are KSU students, to the Director of the Student Health Center.

Electronically signed by Lisa Rubin on 02/11/2026 1:49 PM ET

Appendix B - Recruitment Materials

Introduction Script

Hi everyone, I want to take a moment to introduce myself for those who don't know me: My name is Megan Zeman, and I'm a PhD candidate conducting a study on how collegiate choirs function and how leadership naturally happens between singers within rehearsals. Research on choir leadership tends to focus on the conductor rather than on the singers. I'm interested in you all. What do people do as "citizens" of this choir community?

For that research, I'll be observing the class to collect general group-level data on dynamics and leadership behaviors. Participation in this part of the study is automatic as part of class observation, but your data will be reported only in summary form. No individual student will be identified in any reports.

What I will not be doing is categorizing the behaviors I see as "good" or "bad". In fact, doing so would weaken my research. I'm not in charge of what is a "good" or "bad" behavior in this room–that's Dr. Melody. My goal is objective observation. So not, "this is a good behavior", or "bad behavior", but just "this is a behavior; this is a thing that happened and I observed." Completely neutral. I'm coming into this with more curiosity than anything else.

The IRB (university ethics committee) considers this low-risk for you all, however if you have concerns about my observation please do not hesitate to reach out. Doing so will not affect your standing in this class in any way.

I'll be sitting quietly during rehearsals, taking notes, and not interfering with your work. My hope is that you'll totally forget I'm here.

In addition to the general group-level data, I'm also inviting students who are interested to take part in optional, individual activities such as journaling about your experiences in choir.

These activities are completely voluntary and would take about 15 extra minutes of your time per week on your own schedule, so you could work on them whenever you have a spare 15 minutes. Ideally, I would have 5-10 singers be participating in these extra activities. If you are interested in learning more about participating in this individual-level of my research, please scan this QR code and fill out the interest form. This form is just to gauge interest – filling it out doesn't automatically sign you up for anything.

So, I just said a lot of things, but to sum up: I'll be doing general, anonymous and objective observations of the whole group, and ideally a handful of you will be working with me and doing no more than 15 minutes of extra reflection per week.

If you have any questions about the study or about the optional activities, please feel free to reach out to me via email (on the screen), fill out the form using this QR code, or come visit me upstairs in McCain 327. Note: Dr. Melody isn't a part of this study in any way other than letting me be here. If you ask her any question about this, she will not know the answer! Please come to me with your questions with regards to this study. My hope is to have a list of individual participants by this upcoming Friday so that I can begin my rehearsal observations next week.

I cannot thank you enough for your participation and willingness to welcome me into your rehearsals–my research would be impossible without you. Thank you so much, and have a great rehearsal!

Interest Form

Leadership in Collegiate Choirs Interest Form

Hi! Thank you for your interest in learning more about my research on leadership and group dynamics in collegiate choirs.

Participation in the **optional, individual component** of this study is completely voluntary. It would involve about **15 minutes per week** and is separate from regular class activities. Your responses and participation will be kept confidential, and you can opt in or out at any time.

How to Get Involved:

Please fill out the form below to indicate your interest. After you submit, I'll follow up with more details and scheduling options. Completing this form does not commit you to participation. It simply allows the researcher to share more information.

Questions?
Feel free to email me at mmzeman@ksu.edu, or visit me in McCain 327.

1. First and Last Name

2. KSU email

3. Is this your first semester in Collegiate Chorale?

   Mark only one oval.

   - ◯ Yes
   - ◯ No

4. Voice Part

Mark only one oval.

- Soprano
- Alto
- Tenor
- Bass

5. Do you have any questions or concerns at this time?

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms

Syllabus Disclosure

Participation in this course includes engagement in ensemble activities that will contribute to aggregate research data on rehearsal dynamics and leadership in collegiate choirs. No individual student will be identified in any reporting of this aggregate data. Participation in the individual research portion is voluntary, and students may opt out without affecting their grade or standing in the class.

Appendix C - Informed Consent Form

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT TEMPLATE

PROJECT TITLE: **Leadership in Harmony: Leadership as Practice in a Collegiate Choir**

APPROVAL DATE OF PROJECT: ____ **EXPIRATION DATE OF PROJECT:**

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): **Megan Zeman:Kerry Priest**

CONTACT AND PHONE FOR ANY PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS: **mmzeman@ksu.edu, 785-259-4738**

IRB CHAIR CONTACT/PHONE INFORMATION: **Lisa Rubin, Chair (785) 532-3224**

SPONSOR OF PROJECT: **This research is being conducted as part of a doctoral dissertation at Kansas State University and is not externally funded.**

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: **The purpose of this study is to better understand how people work together, communicate, and perform leadership behaviors within a collegiate choir. This research focuses on how leadership and collaboration emerge naturally during rehearsals and ensemble activities.**

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED: **If you agree to participate, you will be part of aggregate observation during regular choir rehearsals, meaning the researcher will observe overall group interactions and communication patterns across the ensemble. No individual will be evaluated or singled out. Rehearsals are already audio recorded for educational purposes, and these recordings may also be used for research analysis. You may also choose to participate in short reflective journaling activities about your experiences in the choir. These individual activities are optional, will take approximately 15 minutes per week, and you may skip any prompt or stop participating at any time. Participation in individual activities is voluntary and separate from course requirements.**

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS, IF ANY, THAT MIGHT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SUBJECT:

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. The alternative to participation is simply not to participate. Choosing not to participate will not affect your standing in the choir, your relationship with Dr. Melody, or your academic evaluation in any way.

LENGTH OF STUDY: **Spring 2026 semester**

RISKS ANTICIPATED: **This study involves minimal risk. Possible risks include mild discomfort associated with reflecting on personal experiences, awareness of being observed during rehearsals, or concern about how one's contributions may be represented in research findings. These risks are expected to be no greater than those encountered in everyday academic or ensemble activities. Participants may skip any questions they do not wish to answer and may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.**

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED: **Reflecting on your experiences in the choir may help you learn more about yourself, your interactions with others, and your role within a musical ensemble. These insights may also be useful in other choirs or collaborative group settings, helping you understand and contribute to group dynamics more effectively.**

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: **Your privacy will be protected to the fullest extent possible. Your name and other identifying information will not be used in any reports or publications. Pseudonyms or participant codes will be used instead. Only the researcher will have access to individual journals or identifiable data, and Dr. Melody will not see any individual responses. Rehearsal audio recordings may be used for research analysis, but they will be stored securely and accessed only by the researcher. Because this study takes place in a group setting, complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed, but every effort will be made to protect your identity and present findings in a way that does not identify individuals.**

IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY OCCURS: **No**

PARENTAL APPROVAL FOR MINORS: **Participants must be 18 years or older to participate.**

TERMS OF PARTICIPATION: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

(Remember that it is a requirement for the P.I. to maintain a signed and dated copy of the same consent form signed and kept by the participant

Participant Name: ____

Participant Signature: ____ **Date:** ____

Witness to Signature: (project staff) ____ **Date:** ____

Appendix D - Research Timeline

Data Collection Timeline/High-Level Dates

March

2nd – Introduce project to class, assess interest

4th - Send follow-up email to all interested students, schedule meetings

6th-13th - Initial meetings with participants, collect informed consent

10th - Send out email with initial journal prompts

11th - Observation #1

13th - Observation #2

16th-20th – Spring Break

22nd – Review journals, send iterative prompts

23rd - Observation #3

25th - Observation #4

27th - Observation #5

29th – Review journals, send iterative prompts

30th – Observation #6

April

1st – Observation #7

3rd – Observation #8

5th – Review journals, send iterative prompts

6th – Observation #9

8th – Observation #10

10th – Observation #11

13th – Observation #12

15th – Collect final journal prompts, send thank yous to all participants

16th – Analysis, writing

May

4th – Final Concert

Appendix E - Field Guide

Field Guide

Purpose

This field guide will provide structured guidance for observing leadership behaviors in Collegiate Chorale. Observations will focus on how individual discretionary actions (OCB), collective practices (LAP), and systemic outcomes (DAC) interact to produce direction, alignment, and commitment within the ensemble.

Observation Focus Areas

1. Individual Behaviors (Micro-Level) PINK
    - Instances of Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB), including:
        - Altruism: Helping section members, sharing resources.
        - Courtesy: Preventing conflicts, giving gentle reminders.
        - Conscientiousness: Going beyond role expectations (e.g., preparing practice tracks, arriving early).
        - Civic Virtue: Promoting choir participation, engaging in ensemble life.
        - Sportsmanship: Maintaining positivity in less-than-ideal situations.
    - Gestures, postures, or non-verbal cues that indicate leadership, support, or coordination.
    - Vocal cues or informal direction given to peers during rehearsal.
2. Sectional and Ensemble Practices (Meso-Level) BLUE
    - Leadership dynamics among section leaders and peer interactions.
    - Coordinated behaviors that influence collective rehearsal outcomes.

- Communication patterns, problem-solving, and collaborative decision-making.
- Embodied leadership: gesture, posture, expressive cues, or musical timing that guide others.

3. Systemic Outcomes (Macro-Level) PURPLE
    - Evidence of direction, alignment, and commitment (DAC) across the ensemble.
    - Moments where individual or section behaviors impact ensemble cohesion, performance, or workflow.
    - Emergent patterns of leadership and collective practices that sustain ensemble functioning.

Observation Procedures

1. Positioning
    - Sit in a discreet location that allows full visual and auditory access to the rehearsal without interfering. This unobtrusive position will vary each rehearsal in order to obtain observations from multiple angles.
    - Minimize interaction with ensemble members during observation.
2. Field Notes
    - Take detailed, descriptive notes on behaviors, interactions, and contextual factors.
    - Include time stamps or markers for notable moments.
    - Note micro, meso, and macro-level behaviors as they occur (color coded in the moment).
    - Record both verbal and non-verbal leadership cues, highlighting emergent or unusual behaviors.
3. Researcher Journaling

    - Record reflexive observations, emergent patterns, analytic insights, and potential biases after each class.
    - Maintain separate sections for micro, meso, and macro observations to support multilevel analysis. Move color coded observations into these sections during the reflexive process.
4. Artifacts
    - Reference rehearsal schedules, scores, and other ensemble materials to contextualize observed behaviors.
    - Annotate how artifacts relate to leadership or ensemble practices.

Ethical and Reflexive Guidelines

- Consent: Only include detailed observations from participants who have provided informed consent for individual-level data. Aggregate observations may include all ensemble members but will never identify individuals.
- Confidentiality: Use pseudonyms or codes in field notes. Avoid including personally identifying details in reports or memos.
- Minimal Intrusion: Avoid influencing rehearsal; remain a silent observer.
- Transparency: Remind participants periodically of observation and voluntary participation.
- Reflexivity: Note how prior ensemble experience may influence interpretations; bracket assumptions in researcher journal.

Observation Schedule

- Observe rehearsals (Monday, Wednesday, Friday) over the course of the semester.

- Take notes continuously but selectively highlight behaviors relevant to OCB, LAP, and DAC frameworks.
- For optional, individual-level journaling participants, integrate insights from their reflections into field notes when relevant.

Appendix F - Participant Journal Prompts

The following are the journal prompts the five individually participating students received. Students were given these prompts to guide their reflections, but they were also encouraged to deviate from the prompts if something particularly salient happened that was not encompassed by the prompt they received that week.

Week 1

- Today, I noticed that… (Focus on leadership, support, or coordination in the ensemble, either from yourself or others.)
- One way I contributed to the rehearsal was… (Think about helping peers, problem-solving, or supporting the group.)
- A moment that stood out in terms of teamwork or collaboration was… (Describe how individuals or sections worked together or influenced the ensemble.)
- I observed leadership today when… (Include both verbal and non-verbal cues, gestures, or musical guidance.)
- One challenge I noticed or experienced during rehearsal was… and how it was addressed… (Reflect on obstacles, adjustments, or ways the ensemble stayed aligned.)

Week 2

- How, if at all, did the week-long break affect the way the choir's behavior?
- Attached are the behaviors I've been looking for during rehearsal. Take a look at these and see if that changes the behaviors you noticed this week.

Week 3

- Who influenced what happened in the choir this week? How did they influence others, and how did people respond?
- Were there any moments of tension, confusion, or disagreement this week? If so, how did the group respond?
- Based on your experience so far, what is something about being in this choir that you think deserves more attention and understanding?

Week 4

- How has the group's energy shifted as the semester progresses?
- What specific moments or interactions have you noticed this semester that show individual growth or stronger teamwork among members?
- Looking back at your time in the choir this semester, what is the most important thing I should understand about your experience before my observations end?

Appendix G - Sample Researcher Reflexive Journal Entries

The following excerpts are selected from the researcher's reflexive journal maintained throughout data collection and analysis. Entries are presented chronologically and retain their original wording, except where identifying information has been removed or replaced with pseudonyms.

Entry 1: March 11, 2026

Note: Sat behind the basses in large group, and by the altos in sectionals

What happened that stood out?

Rehearsal seemed to fly by much quicker than it did when I was a singer. Students, especially within their sections, are comfortable with each other; they get there early to talk and laugh together. From what I observed today, I have no idea who the section leaders are—though I have my guesses about who they aren't.

How did my prior experience shape what I noticed?

I was able to discern whether or not they had prior instruction despite not being other rehearsals this semester. I know when something has been set up as a norm by Dr. Melody, and when something has emerged as a norm from within the ensemble.

Did I feel like an insider or outsider today? Why?

About 50% of each. I had insider knowledge of the group, but I obviously didn't sing with everyone. Everyone also did a pretty good job of ignoring that I was there; even people who I've been in choir with before and know me on a personal level.

What assumptions might I be making?

I have assumed the attitudes of some of the members due to personnel challenges within the faculty.

What should I re-examine in the data later?

I need to get final copies of the sheet music and maybe look into getting scans of the sheet music from my participants in general—so much of what I observed was people writing extra little tidbits in their music. Having that side-by-side with my individual participants' journal entries might surface something valuable. Does time of day have any affect on data?

Entry 2: March 27, 2026

Note: Sat behind the altos for the duration of rehearsal

What happened that stood out?

Efficiency was the name of the game today. Less chatter overall and transitions between pieces felt quicker. There were still moments of side conversation, but they felt more contained and less disruptive than earlier rehearsals. This was especially interesting because it was a Friday.

How did my prior experience shape what I noticed?

I know when something has been set up as a norm by Dr. Melody, and when something has emerged from within the ensemble. I may also be more attuned to efficiency because I associate it with "good" rehearsals based on my own past experiences.

Did I feel like an insider or outsider today? Why?

About 50% of each. I had insider knowledge of the group, but everyone also did a pretty good job of ignoring that I was there; even people who I've been in choir with before and know me on a personal level. I think I'm finally starting to really fade into the background (before

people I knew would smile at me as they came in and things like that—no talking, but just polite acknowledgement that I was there).

What assumptions might I be making?

I need to remember that everyone comes in with a different day under their belt. Just because someone is frustrated or unusually quiet doesn't mean it's a result of something happening in the choir.

What should I re-examine in the data later?

Whether efficiency correlates with musical improvement, or if those are independent with this group.

Entry 3: April 3, 2026

Note: Integrated ensemble rehearsal today, I moved around as they moved to stay out of the way

What happened that stood out?

The rehearsal was more cohesive today. Even when mistakes happened, recovery was quicker and less disruptive. And more collective response to direction—cutoffs were cleaner, and entrances felt more unified, etc. Socially, there was still some chatter before rehearsal, but once it started, focus held more consistently than past rehearsals.

How did my prior experience shape what I noticed?

I associate this level of cohesion with ensembles nearing performance—it's definitely getting to that point in the semester. My expectations of what "pre-concert" rehearsal should look like may be shaping how positively I interpret these changes.

Did I feel like an insider or outsider today? Why?

Leaning insider. This particular group's identity feels clearer to me now, and I feel more able to anticipate both musical and social patterns. I can predict when they're going to just follow a direction kinda and when they're going to really follow the direction.

What assumptions might I be making?

That the ensemble all feels pressure to make the concert good. For some people, particularly the non-majors, they maybe just want to have an average show or they have finals that are more pressing on their mind. This choir is maybe their break from pressure rather than the source of it.

What should I re-examine in the data later?

Whether this apparent cohesion is consistent across all pieces and sections, or if it varies depending on repertoire difficulty or familiarity.

Appendix H - Anonymized Codebook Sample

Level	Code	Observation or Journal	Observation	Notes
Micro	Altruism	Ob 2	A student kept track of attendance as it was being taken without being asked. Dr. Melody was keeping track of fun or naps over spring break, and she was taking attendance, but someone jumped in and kept track of % of naps or fun without being asked so that they could have a tally later	
Micro	Civic Virtue	Ob 2	Choral staff is planning social acitivites - Konza Walk, bonfire at the lake, pizza soiree, movie night, etc. for the group	Choral staff and section leaders are not the same thing
Macro	Committment	Ob 2	Just Dance dance party because it's Friday - people were willing to be silly, singing along, going for it, everyone laughing at themselves and each other, lighthearted and easy	Two people sat out, but even they did the arm movements - may have been sick because they were also sitting in the back and not singing -- Ra Ra Rasputin
Macro	Alignment	Ob 2	People doing hand gestures that felt good to them during warm ups without being asked	
Micro	Courtesy	Ob 2	Quietly politely shushing people during transition moments when people start chatting	
Meso	Peer Coordination	Ob 2	People pointing out do and sol to the person next to them if they didn't know	
Meso	Section Leadership	Ob 2	Returning tenors leading the charge by example during sightreading	This section seems timid and unsure, quiet (young and also the smallest section)
Micro	Altruism	Ob 2	Sharing music for the people who forgot	
Macro	Alignment	Ob 2	Sopranos and altos decided that today would be pajama day because it's the day before Spring Break -- decided this totally independently from Dr. Melody. Just for fun	
Meso	Section Leadership	Ob 2	One tenor started moving his body to the beat to help with a difficult rhythm and it rippled through the section until they were all doing it	By the time they were all doing it, the difficult rhythm locked in
Meso	Section Leadership	Ob 2	Tenor elbowed their neighbor to point out something they'd both been missing but hadn't realized before. Their response was a nod and quiet thank you. They both marked it in their music	
Meso	Collective Problem Solving	Ob 2	Sopranos came in correctly in pitch and rhythm, but not in tone. They recognized that as a unit and adjusted just moments after opening their mouths	

Macro	Direction	Ob 3	Students all visualizing/picturing the same thing quietly before singing so that they're all on the same page once the sound comes out	
	Notes	Ob 3	"The person next to you is the most important"	
Meso	Peer Coordination	Ob 3	Students "agree" and unify in the moment	
Meso	Section Leadership	Ob 3	Initial pitches were played and several people in each section adjusted their sitting posture automatically. Other members of their section followed after	
Other	Emergent	Ob 3	The right side of the room (altos and tenors) heard the L side, adjusted mouth space, and suddenly the chord opened up and became more balanced	
	Notes	Ob 3	"Don't wait for your neighbor to give you permission"	
Meso	Section Leadership	Ob 3	Some students have their pencils in their hands automatically without being asked	
Macro	Direction	Ob 3	Everyone was given a minute to work on something on their own, then there was a cacophony of audiations as everyone did their own thing. Everyone came back in more confident	This can be vulnerable--what if you open your mouth to audiate and you're the only one who does anything? That could be embarassing. But everyone trusted that the people around them were going to sing, so no one was alone
Meso	Section Leadership	Ob 3	A prospective student came in and Dr. Bunce had them jump in and sing with the altos. All of the altos made space automatically, and the person on the end held her music out for her. Immediately took on the leadership role of telling the new student where they were in the music, how they were splitting up the rhythm (articulating every quarter note on dee), and said hi to welcome them.	This was a brand new choir student, but in that moment she realized she was the expert. She less experience than everyone in the room, but more experience than the new student, so she stepped up.
Meso	Collective Problem Solving	Ob 3	Basses had the leading line, needed to be seamless. All other sections followed their lead through the line	In the Bach
Micro	Conscientiousness	Ob 3	Students taking notes as they sang "All Children" on words for the first time.	Notes on vowels, even though it was on English
Micro	Conscientiousness	Ob 3	Students nodding and active listening during a lecture-y portion	
Meso	Section Leadership	Ob 3	There's one alto who's always first to stand up	

Appendix I - Participant Score Samples
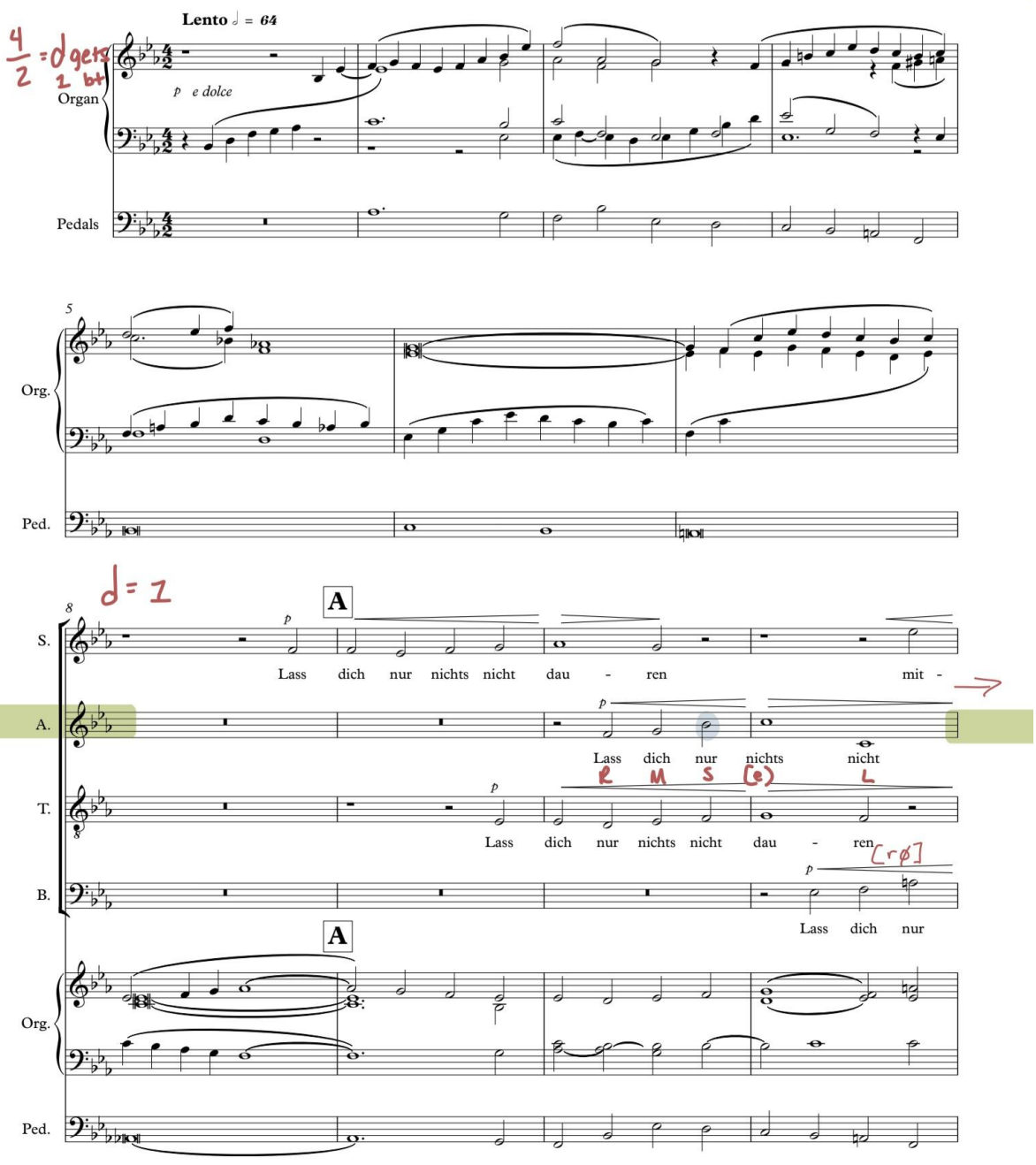
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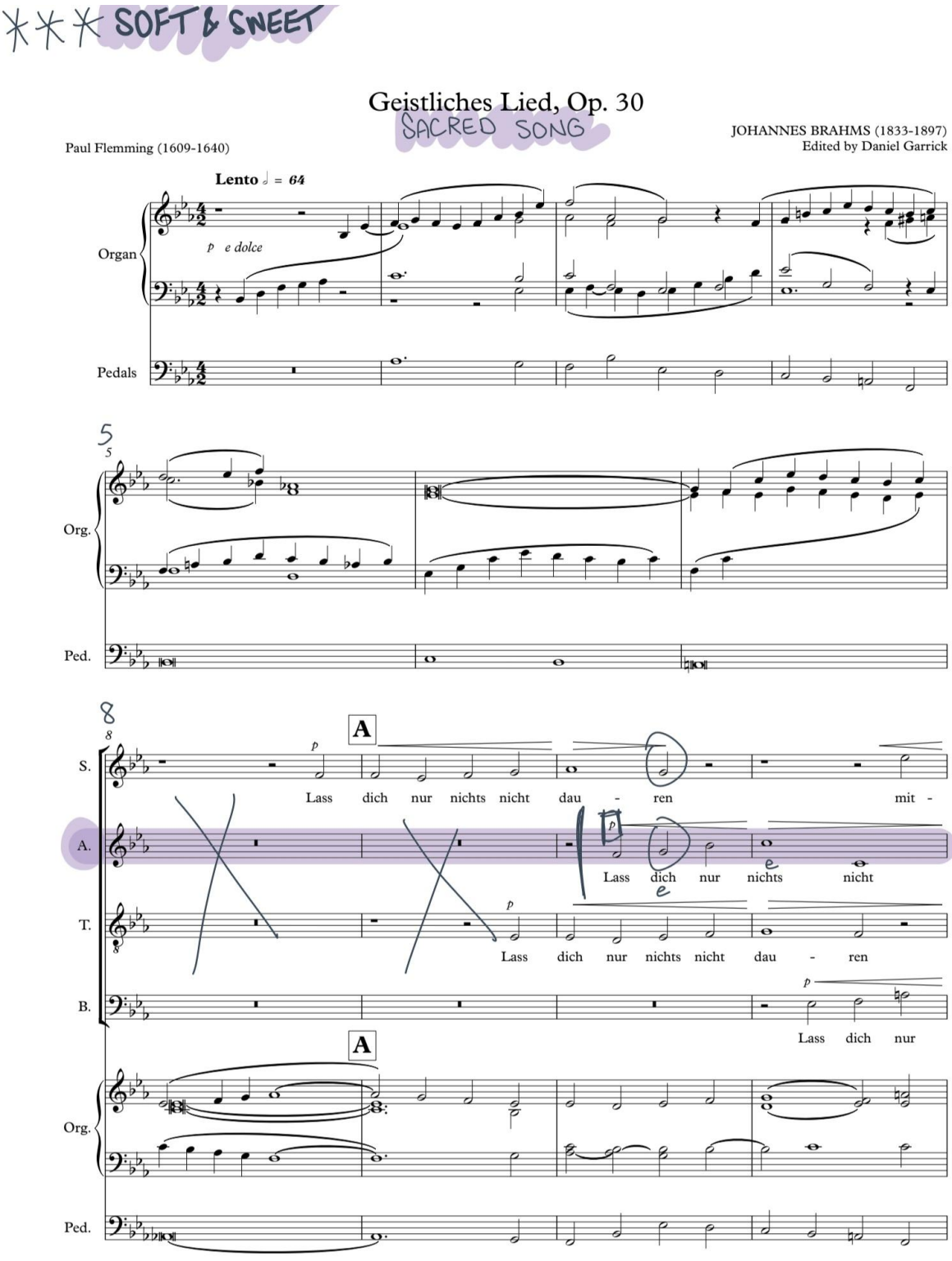
Geistliches Lied, Op. 30 (4)

Paul Flemming (1609-1640)

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)
Edited by Daniel Garrick



1/8


SOFT & SWEET
Geistliches Lied, Op. 30
SACRED SONG
Paul Flemming (1609-1640)
JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)
Edited by Daniel Garrick
Lento ♩ = 64
Organ
p e dolce
Pedals
Org.
Ped.
S.
A.
T.
B.
Lass dich nur nichts nicht dau - ren mit -
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Lass dich nur nichts nicht dau - ren
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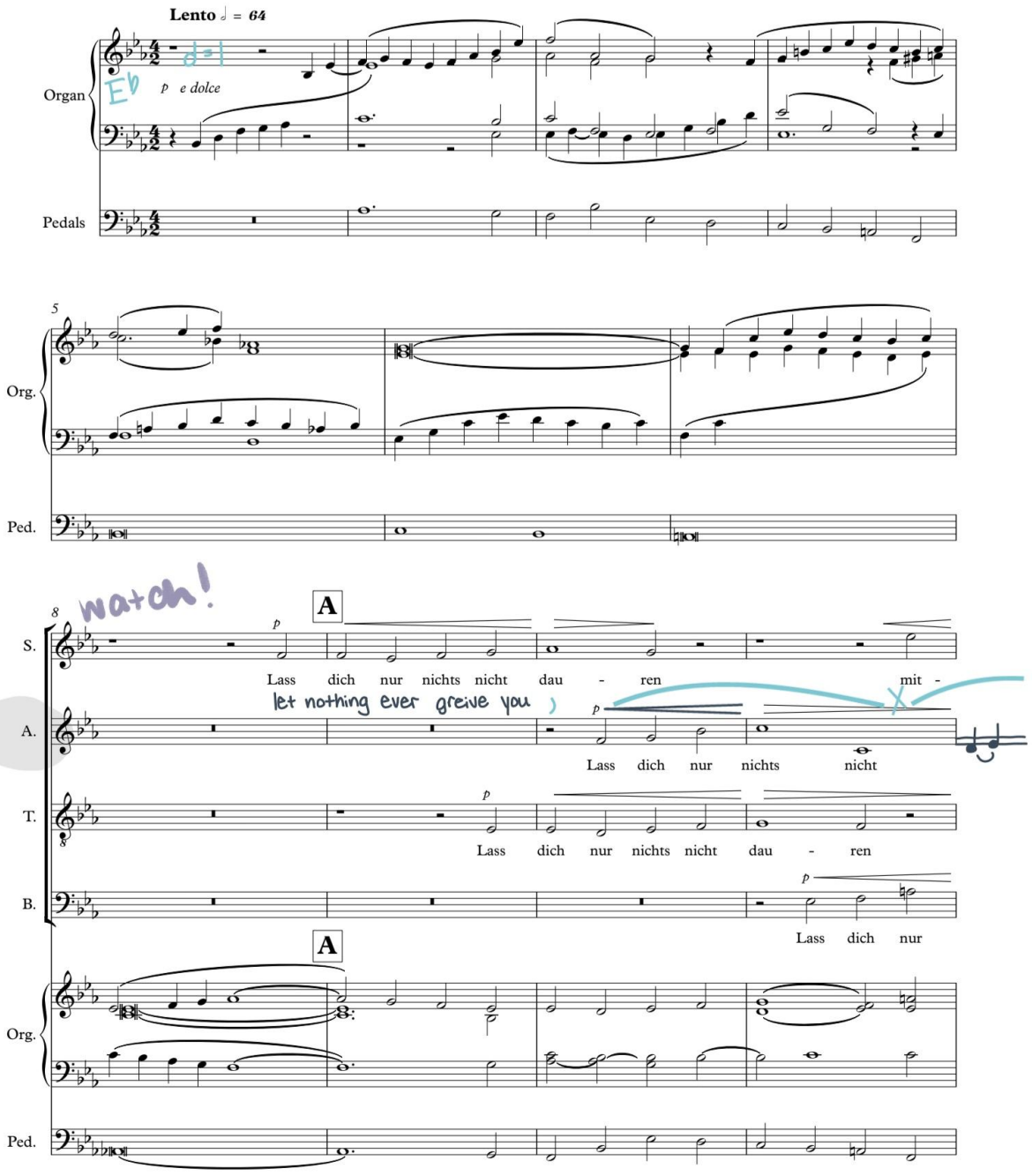
"sacred song"

Geistliches Lied, Op. 30

romantic

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)
Edited by Daniel Garrick

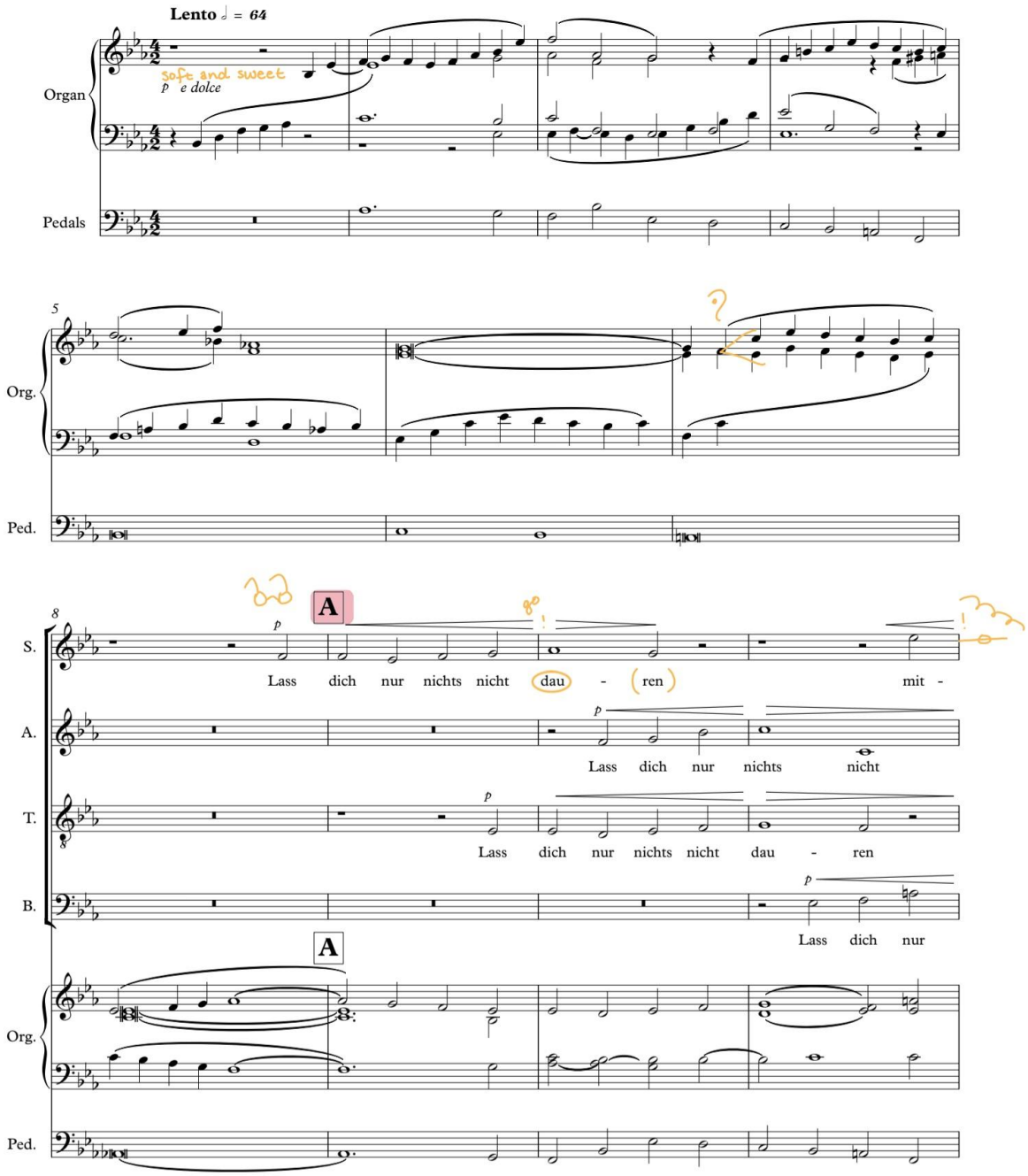
Paul Flemming (1609-1640)



Geistliches Lied, Op. 30

Paul Flemming (1609-1640)
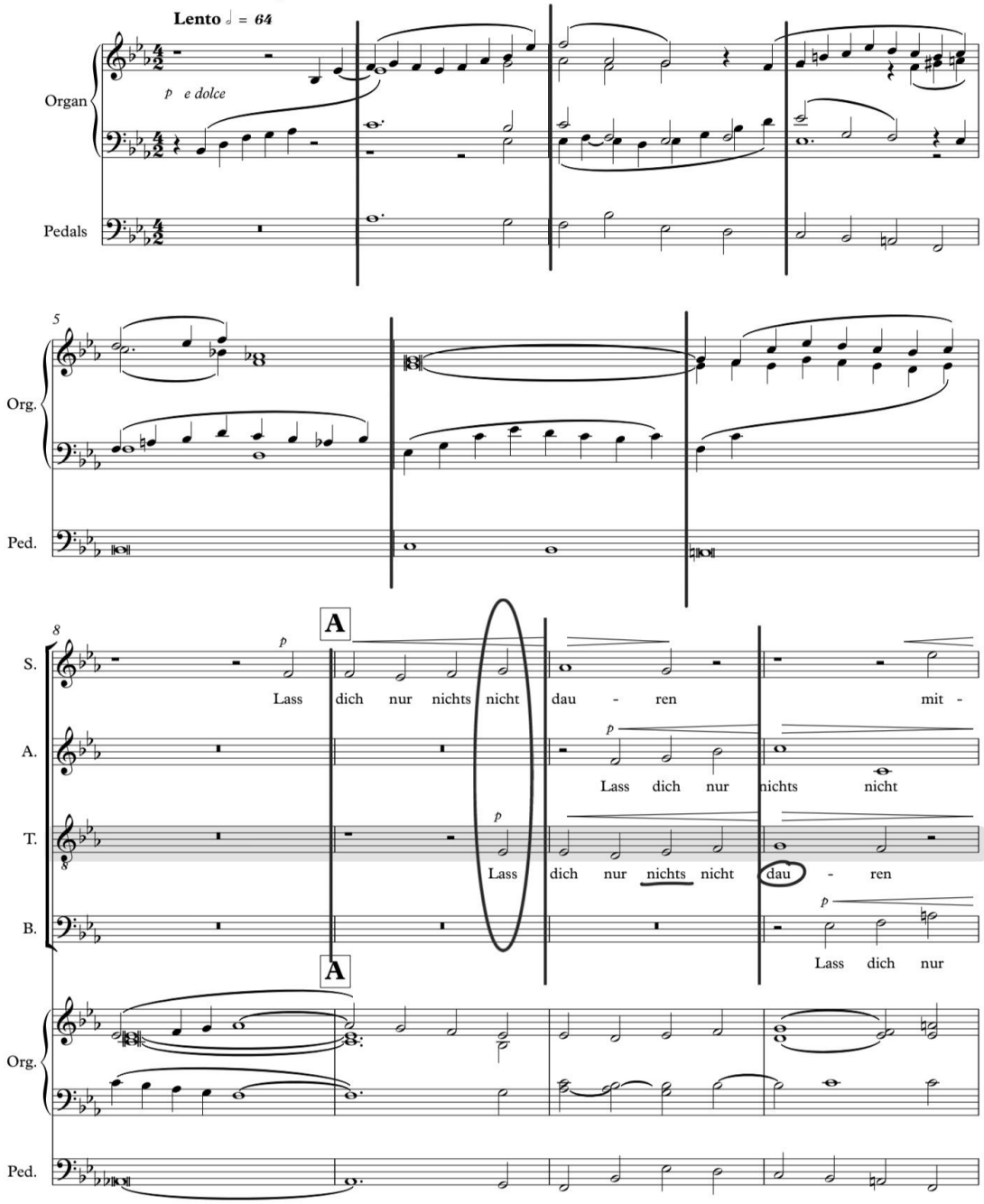
JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)
Edited by Daniel Garrick



Geistliches Lied, Op. 30

Paul Flemming (1609-1640)

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)
Edited by Daniel Garrick



Appendix J - Final Concert Program

Geistliches Lied, Op. 30 Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Audrey Pickering, *organ*

Laß dich nur nichts nicht dauern Mit Trauern; Sei stille; Wie Gott es fügt, So sei vergnügt, Mein Wille!	Let nothing ever grieve you; be at peace. Whatever God ordains, accept it gladly, my soul!
Was willst du heute sorgen Auf Morgen? Der Eine Steht allem für; Der dibt auch dir Das Deine.	Why do you want to worry today about tomorrow? The One is lord of all; he also gives to you that which is yours.
Sei nur in allem Handel Ohn Wandel, Steh feste; Was Gott beschleußt, Das ist und heißt Das Beste. Amen.	In all things be not inconstant; stand firmly. Whatever God ordains is and signifies the best. Amen.

-Paul Fleming (1609-1640)

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) was only 23 when he wrote Geistlicheslied, op. 30, a piece that would become one of his most beloved for generations to come. It is fitting, then, that the vocal parts are written in astonishing pairs of nearly exact canons at the ninth, as if for an assignment befitting a young composer in the thick of his training. Using a 140 year-old hymn tune, and a 200 year-old text by the Saxon poet Paul Fleming (1609-1640), he chose relatively ancient material for this exercise in polyphony, a nod to the device's early roots. However, the sensitive genius of Brahms glows within this structure; it is anything but a sterile, academic exercise.

Fleming was likewise a young man when he wrote the untitled poem about finding solace by trusting in God's ultimate design. This theme reappears often in Lutheran texts, such as in Bach's motet Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit, BWV 106, which makes sense; the young poet attended the Thomasschule in Leipzig a century before Bach would become cantor there. Fleming's take on this familiar idea is notably intimate for the early 17th century. His words seem to reveal inner life and experience of the poet, as it becomes clear that he is directing his appeals to receive God's plan (so sei vergnügt) at the conclusion of the first stanza not to a faceless reader, but to himself (mein Wille).

Brahms's treatment of the poem is similarly personal and expressive. The key of E-flat major signified to nineteenth century audiences, who would be educated in rhetoric, a sense of love and intimate connection with God. Yet the piece opens with tonal and rhythmic ambiguity with an arpeggiated dominant chord that begins on an anacrusis to the second beat. The choir enters in similarly unmoored fashion. Bereft of a conclusive cadence in the preceding phrase, the sopranos enter on the second scale degree with a melody that features a plaintive minor second within dauern ("suffer") and an even more dissonant, lamenting tritone within trauern ("grief"). Here, Brahms seems to be unable to find this intimate connection with a divine protector. The mood shifts in the second stanza as ascending lines repeat the text auf morgen ("about tomorrow"), a climactic and free-spirited challenge to the those who would worry about the future. Brahms returns to the opening choral material to set Fleming's final stanza with straightforward and heartfelt confidence.

The final amen is not original to the poetry, and the musical material in this section reflects this departure. Contrary to the soprano entrances that begin each of the previous sections, the basses begin on a quiet, vulnerably exposed D-flat that is dissonant to the ever-present E-flat pedal tone. The altos answer in imitation just as the duet between soprano and tenor reappears, with all voices building to a glorious climax of undulating lines that suggest that God does indeed appear in our darkest moments. Dissonant moments of human doubt and quiet agitation reappear as a series of suspensions but become increasingly hushed before resolving into the comforting embrace of a lush plagal cadence.

"Look Up Look Down" from *Five American Songs* — arr. John Wykoff

This lonely, often-covered early American tune tells the tale of a life needlessly lost amidst the frustration of unanswered questions. The metaphor of a slowly approaching train represents to us the inevitable pain of loss. The loud clusters at the apex of the piece overwhelm with fear and shock, followed by a mournful, sparse lament.

"Nox" from *Illuminare*

Elaine Hagenberg
Traditional liturgical text
Poetry by Aurelius Prudentius Clemens (348-413)

Prof. Heather McCornack, *piano*

Anger often follows grief. Beginning with a sobbing plea for mercy in the treble voices, the peace is suddenly broken with an unrelenting, bass-heavy piano ostinato. What follows is a wailing and gnashing of teeth as the choir and piano roil together in violent frustration and fear. The final, dirge-like statement is an empty shadow, the only survivor of the fit of rage. The text is ancient, but the dark message may be a familiar one.

Kyrie eleison.	Lord have mercy.
Christe eleison.	Christ have mercy.
Nox et tenebrae et nubila,	Night and darkness and fog,
confusa mundi et turbida.	confused world and turmoil.
Caligo terrae scinditur,	Dark gloom tears the earth,
percussa solis spiculo.	beats and stabs the sun.

Ain'-a That Good News! arr. William Dawson (1899-1990)

American composer, conductor, professor, and musicologist William Dawson may have been born in Alabama, but he spent many years as a public school teacher in Kansas City, Missouri, and studied orchestration with Henry V. Stearns at what is now Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas. A specialist in black religious folk music, he was a key figure in the development of the concertized spiritual. Under his tutelage as a professor, the Tuskegee Institute Choir became an ensemble internationally recognized for its excellence. His Ain'-a That Good News! is now a classic arrangement that exemplifies that art form. This exuberant treatment of the text tells us to keep hope!

Combined Choirs

We Belong to Each Other Annie Schlaefer after words by Nikita Gill

Everyone, oh, everyone, oh every
one of these people are ours,
just like we are theirs.
We belong to them, and they belong to us.

The Children of All Others Mark Miller text by Jabez Van Cleef, inspired by the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959)

Recently, composer Mark Miller visited us virtually from his home state of New Jersey to hear our performance of this yet-to-be-published work, *The Children of All Others*. He spoke to us about his inspiration for writing this piece, which was commissioned in 2019 as a gift for Dr. Anne Matlack, director of the Harmonium Choral Society. The poetry turns inclusion, acceptance, and mutual care into marching orders, calling each of us to treat everyone the way we would treat ourselves. Miller's vibrant and joyful setting has become a choir favorite!