

Singing revives: Vivificanos

by

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A REPORT

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Abstract

With these lesson plans, I demonstrated a part of my teaching philosophy, that learning can be a life-long process, and singing in particular can be reviving. These lessons helped choir members appreciate the cultural and historical context that informs the music written in that culture's style, including the communication of the joy and vibrancy found in that music, in its historical context. I acted as a facilitator to encourage mastering the language and feeling of the music. And, I believe that I reinforced my philosophy that all students with desire can learn. The videos will show positive reactions to the idea that they can confidently learn and express this music.

During the time I have spent with the professors in all my classes, I have noticed a trend: learning styles of students relate directly to how to best make connections with students. In the context of Survey of Vocal Music for Adolescent Singers, I noted how often I have in fact worked as a vocal coach and teacher during my work with choirs, choral ensembles, and soloists. I have already been instrumental in helping young singers develop healthy singing habits, and I have seen how sandwiching gentle corrections between declarations of positive encouragement can facilitate such learning. While I already noticed the impact of outstanding choral arranging, Choral Arranging provided me with specific tools for using arrangement to enhance the message of a song. Because I lacked choral conducting experience prior to taking Advanced Choral Rehearsal Techniques, the class challenged me, and brought me to a new appreciation for what characterizes skillful choral conducting. The choral classroom setting looks different from the perspective of the choral director than from the view from the piano bench. When I learned to focus on several of these elements, I realized how much a couple of things can impact students' success in choral singing: 1) better reading skills, and 2) greater understanding of what, why and how singers sing.

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Acknowledgments

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Dedication

I wish to dedicate this report to hundreds of students who have known me as Mrs. R. at Leavenworth High School, to choirs and choir directors, past and present, with whom I have worked, and to those with whom I have collaborated on musical projects in varied capacities.

Chapter 1 - Teaching Philosophy

Prior to my enrollment in K-State's Master's of Music program, I had not given very much thought to my own teaching philosophy. I am sure that if I had thought about it, my philosophy would have changed throughout the years, because of my own experience, and mindset changes brought about by that experience. Overall, though, I know that I have always been guided by a key principle, that each individual soul should feel its great worth, and by the belief that every soul can learn to make music that touches or communicates with someone's soul. I sincerely want all students to feel valued, respected, and safe in their efforts to succeed as music students. Considering myself an autodidact, I recognize that we never have to stop learning. I fully embrace that philosophy, and I hope that students can catch me when I model that example.

Why teaching? We have built educational systems for the purpose of preparing students for their futures, whether their plans for those futures include further education, so that they will grow into well-rounded individuals with an appreciation for the history which came before them. Children attend school at an age when their brains develop most optimally, but they also are learning how to learn for a lifetime of learning. As a music educator, I believe in the importance of including music education for students' development as human beings. Within the scope of music education, we teach expression, cooperation, empathy, and how to gain confidence in a new skill by practicing, which are all valuable and valid life skills to acquire.

Formal music education helps to preserve the history of music and of society and revives our connection to our historical roots. Music education sets the foundation for a future of music and music making. Obviously, not every music student will choose a career in a musical field, but all music students should be able to experience the beauty of music, feel joy in making or

listening to music, and develop their own passion for music.

Music education can preserve our society's history, but can music education save a life? I argue that it can save a life. When a former student visited the school a couple of years after her graduation, she acknowledged that she would have dropped out of school altogether had it not been for the way she looked forward to choir class and singing. In choir class, she was seen, heard and recognized for her contribution to the choir. She developed the confidence to audition for solos. When she found out that to be eligible to compete with the choir, she needed to bring up her grades in her other classes, she took action on her own behalf to make sure that the grades came up, and was motivated to stay in school.

Can music change the world? In my mind, music matters significantly in human experience. Like the little girl in *The Star Thrower* by Loren C. Eiseley (1978), who couldn't save every starfish on the beach, perhaps music can't change the world all at once but, like the girl said when told she wouldn't be able to make a difference, "Well, I made a difference for that one!" Music in the context of a music class can make the day better or even change the heart of one music student at a time, or one listener at a time, as it did in the case of the student who credited choir class with saving her life.

So many students seem to have adopted the attitude that they cannot create music, that music can only be created by other people. I want all students to know personally that not only can they listen to music, they can *music*. Elliot spoke of all cultures participating in what he named "a diverse human practice," which he named "music," and the people who made music or practiced "musicking," he called "musickers" (Elliott 1994, p. 42). He wrote that the practice of musicking engages one in "flow experiences," where "flow" is defined by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) as complete absorption, or enjoyment, of an activity as a result of deep

concentration on the activity. The use of “music” as a verb causes it to take on the meaning of actively participating in making music, a very human activity to undertake in an era of accelerating dehumanization in society.

Among my favorite moments in my educational career are when I have managed to look for and notice the spark: of recognition, wonder, possibility, imagination, discovery, and/or understanding. Every student possesses that inner light, and when a teacher manages to connect with it, then each student can learn to perform confidently. Students apply the principles they have learned and begin to assume responsibility for their own learning. The fire has been lit. But the teacher's job is not yet finished when that happens. Then, the question becomes, what can the teacher do to help keep it burning?

For education to preserve the past and inform the future, decisions are made regarding which historical elements are worthy of study, and what defines success for the future. What aspects of history rise to the level of being worth remembering? What bias informs the answer to this question? Which foundational critical thinking skills, if acquired, will best prepare students to evaluate, analyze, and synthesize new information? How can a broad and objective overview be provided?

More access to information has been made available today than at any other time in history. For students to build their strongest foundation, they need to improve their overall understanding of subjects and learn how to use the tools they will wield in adapting and adjusting to rapidly changing new information. These things hold true for education in general. Music education also strives towards the goals of preserving the past and improving the odds for the future's success. Since throughout history, societies have used music for a variety of purposes, the study of music should be valued as a component of education for that reason alone.

The study of music should include technical aspects, including theory, analysis, music history, and performance skills. In the context of choir, students learn to cooperate and respect others; they learn discipline and patience. They learn to express emotion safely and appropriately. Music expresses human nature in a unique and satisfying way. Everyone should have the opportunity to experience making music individually and with others, and to experience that human connection.

Summary

In summary, music should be taught 1) as part of a well-rounded education, simply as an important part of history which is still relevant. 2) to inform and shape the future. 3) to impart a way of communication that is uniquely human. .

How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching

Still working from the premise that learning can be a life-long process, and singing in particular can be reviving, the lessons I developed helped choir members appreciate the cultural and historical context. I have constantly seen how individual desire to learn leads to positive outcomes in learning.

Many modalities of teaching are available to teachers, but Neuro-linguistic programming comes most naturally to me, perhaps because I personally have learned successfully with visual and auditory styles. Neuro-linguistic programming is “concerned with how we communicate and how this affects our learning” (Pritchard, 2013, p. 49). Visual learners learn by seeing. Auditory learners learn by hearing. Kinesthetic learners learn by doing.

Visual learners “have good visual recall and prefer information to presented visually” (Pritchard, 2013, p. 50). Seeing the sheet music on the page and including some historical context for the piece in written form supports visual learners. Auditory learners “like sequence

and repetition” (Pritchard, 2013, p. 50), hence they learn by ear exceptionally well, and seem to be able to echo what they hear, especially with repetition and practice.

I have found visual and auditory modalities good places to start with instruction, and that adding a kinesthetic element can help a great deal. Sometimes teachers need to be flexible and innovative as they respond to reactions from students. Elliot Eisner states “Teaching that is not hog-tied to rigid specifications often moves in directions and explores ideas that neither the students nor the teacher could envision at the outset” (1991, p. 68). Both Eisner (1991) and Elliott (2005) emphasize the cognitive value of music, and I agree with that value judgment, as well as Bennet Reimer’s (1993) belief that music education based on experience values all experiences in music. I embrace David Elliott’s (2012) statement, that if we teach *to do* music, *about* music, and *through* music, “we empower people to pursue what many philosophers throughout history consider to be the highest human values: a virtuous life well lived, a life of well-being, flourishing, fulfillment, and constructive happiness for the benefit of oneself and others” (p. 22).

Instruction begins with me leading with focus, structure, and consistency. While I am engaged in teaching, I need to have a plan to lead students to further learning, but sometimes I need to pivot in a direction led by a student or students who are actively engaged in learning. These opportunities for teaching moments can be quite fruitful, and sometimes after going off on a tangent, we come full circle back to where we started on our musical learning journey, having experienced some sights along the way that cause us to remember in a more meaningful way.

In the lesson plan for *Singing revives: Vivificanos*, I hoped that choir members would feel valued, respected, and safe as they learned a new foreign language song. Community choir members are already acknowledged life-long learners, or they probably would not be

participating in a community choir. As they practice their singing skills and learn a song in a different language, they expand their musical literacy, and exercise their brains in a focused and cooperative manner.

Chapter 2 - Lesson Plans

With the goal of teaching the women of the St. Mary's University Community Choir the song, *Vivificanos*, by Judith Rounda (2023), I asked the acting choir director for 10-minute sessions prior to their regular rehearsal times and worked with the choir members in attendance at those times. I set out to introduce and begin learning the parts for the song. Some of the instructional strategies that I employed included lecturing, modeling, call and response and listening. Listening comprised my only assessment. Moving forward, if I can continue this instruction, I will continue to use these strategies and refine with further sectional rehearsal time. My thinking expanded when I realized that I was trying to ask the choir members to do too many things at once and needed to break it down into more manageable parts, such as singing on “loo” before trying to add the foreign language pronunciation to the sung notes. This realization enhanced my teaching practice by causing me to think through how to break things down into logical chunks that may be productively rehearsed in a short session.

Lesson Plan 1

Introduction to *Vivificanos* Rehearsal #1

Teacher's Name: Judith Rounda

Class Meeting Objective

Choir members will pronounce Spanish language lyrics in *Vivificanos*.

Assessment of the Class Meeting

I will assess the accuracy by listening to the group pronounce the lyrics. Choir members will assess themselves by listening to other sections' pronunciation.

Instructional materials, resources, & Technology:

Vivificanos sheet music (Figures 1 and 2)

National Standards Addressed

MU:Pr4.2.E.5a (Performing-Analyze),

MU:Pr4.3.E.1a (Performing - Interpret),

MU:Pr5.3.E.1a (Performing - Rehearse, Evaluate, Refine),

MU.Cn11.0.T.8a (Connect #11)

Time	Activity	Description	Purpose of Activity	Assessment
2 min	Introduction to <i>Vivificanos</i>	Tell about the background of the composition of <i>Vivificanos</i> , the English meaning of the Spanish language text, and the inspiration for the musical setting	Catch choir members' interest in the history and background of the piece	Describe the characteristics of Paraguayan folk songs. Recall what we have talked about in later rehearsals
2 min	Pronounce Spanish language text	Repeat Spanish pronunciation of text	Learn correct pronunciation	Choir members will correctly pronounce lyrics
2 min	Rhythmic patterns	Choir members will repeat given models with correct rhythms	Internalize subdivisions and allow choir members to accurately sing rhythms found in music without the notes yet	Choir members will use the correct rhythms

Table 1: Rehearsal Plan #1

Lesson Plan 2

Lesson Planning Framework

Vivificanos Rehearsal #2

Teacher's Name: Judith Rounda

Class Meeting Objective

Choir members will *sing one section of Vivificanos*, using "loo" syllable.

Assessment of the Class Meeting

I will assess the accuracy by listening to the group sing.

Instructional materials, resources, & Technology:

Vivificanos sheet music (Figures 1 and 2)

National Standards Addressed

MU:Pr4.2.E.5a (Performing-Analyze),

MU:Pr4.3.E.1a (Performing - Interpret),

MU:Pr5.3.E.1a (Performing - Rehearse, Evaluate, Refine),

MU.Cn11.0.T.8a (Connect #11)

Time	Activity	Description	Purpose of Activity	Assessment
2 min	Rehearse <i>Vivificanos</i> mm. 10-26, each section separately	Using "loo" syllable, each section will sing from mm. 10-26	Reinforce the parts learned in the previous rehearsal	Listen to parts
2 min	Rehearse <i>Vivificanos</i> two sections at a time (S1S2, S1A, S2A)	Sing in two parts from mm. 10-26	Hold parts while hearing another part being sung	Listen for each part to be heard
2 min	Rehearse all three parts of <i>Vivificanos</i>	Sing all parts from mm. 10-26	Sing all three parts	Listen for all parts

Table 2: Rehearsal Plan #2

Lesson Plan 3

Lesson Planning Framework

Vivificanos Rehearsal #3

Teacher's Name: Judith Rounda

Class Meeting Objective

Choir members will sing together one section of *Vivificanos*, using Spanish language words

Assessment of the Class Meeting

I will assess the accuracy by listening to the group sing.

Instructional materials, resources, & Technology:

Vivificanos sheet music (Figures 1 and 2)

National Standards Addressed

MU:Pr4.2.E.5a (Performing-Analyze),

MU:Pr4.3.E.1a (Performing - Interpret),

MU:Pr5.3.E.1a (Performing - Rehearse, Evaluate, Refine),

MU.Cn11.0.T.8a (Connect #11)

Time	Activity	Description	Purpose of Activity	Assessment
2 min	Review <i>Vivificanos</i> Spanish language words	Using Spanish language, each section will sing from mm. 10-26	Reinforce the parts learned in the previous rehearsal	Listen to parts
2 min	Rehearse <i>Vivificanos</i> mm. 10-26, two sections at a time (S1S2, S1A, S2A)	Sing in two parts from mm. 10-26	Hold parts while hearing another part being sung	Listen for each part to be heard
2 min	Rehearse all three parts of <i>Vivificanos</i>	Sing all parts from mm. 10-26	Sing all three parts	Listen for all parts

Table 3: Rehearsal Plan #3

Lesson Plan Reflections

Community choir members come from varying backgrounds, life experiences, and current situations, but since they come together to sing by their own choice, I found them to be very receptive to singing this Spanish language song, *Vivificanos* by Judith Rounda (2023). As I am not the director of the choir, I will not be deciding whether or when the piece will be programmed on a concert, but the choir members who worked on the song asked if we would be singing it next year and said they would like to learn the whole song and perform it.

My initial attempts to center my lesson plans on my piano students met with too many difficulties, so I needed to summon some creativity to come up with a project for this master's report. I turned to asking the choir director for the St. Mary's University Community Choir to allow me a few rehearsals with the women of that choir. I chose to introduce and teach the song, *Vivificanos*, which I composed as an entry to the Notre Dame Basilica Magnificat Choir 2023 Liturgy Alive! Composition Competition¹. The text for *Vivificanos*, given in Spanish and Latin, was required to be set to music for SSA choir, unaccompanied, for this contest, and comes from Psalm 118: 7, 10, 17, 25. The musical setting I composed was inspired by Paraguayan folk songs. When played on a Paraguayan harp, these songs typically are played with the left hand arpeggiating chords, while the right hand provides the melody and simple harmonies. In *Vivificanos*, the altos duplicate the harpist's left hand, with first and second soprano harmonizing as the right hand.

Chapter 3: Reflections

Before I began my journey at K-State, colleagues, parents, community members, and students had been acknowledging and recognizing me as a music educator throughout my employment as an accompanist for six high school choirs. In 2016, a student nominated me as a Horizon Teacher at Leavenworth High School, and on another occasion, I was honored with the L.U.V. Award (Leadership, Unity, and Vision.) I worked closely with the choir director, frequently finding myself in a teaching role, even if it was from behind the piano rather than from a podium. Through observation, I learned that identifying the things that “light up” the students served as the ticket to realizing the payoff of getting to see the spark of recognition, wonder, possibility, imagination, discovery, and/or understanding.

In Pat Conroy's *The Lords of Discipline* (2011), the main character observes “that great teachers had great personalities and that the greatest teachers had outrageous personalities.” What could it be about having an outrageous personality that would produce a great teacher? Does this hold even more true today, when gaining and holding the attention of students has become ever so much more challenging? Reimer (1970) stated

The impact the profession can make on society depends in large degree on the quality of the profession's understanding of what it has to offer which might be of value to society. There is an almost desperate need for a better understanding of the value of music and of the teaching and learning of music...The tremendous expenditure of concern about how to justify itself –both to itself and to others – which has been traditional in this field, reflects a lack of philosophical “inner peace.”

Where and how do we find this inner peace? Do some people consider it outrageous when we refrain from apologizing for believing in the intrinsic value of music in our society and

in education? For the music to revive us, maybe we need to sing both the outrage and the inner peace. If we need further reason to justify the value of teaching music, consider this quote from Daniel J. Levitin (2008) in *This Is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession*:

Music listening, performance, and composition engage nearly every area of the brain that we have so far identified and involve nearly every neural subsystem.

During the summer master's program, I have lengthened my stride as a music educator and found my revival as a student of music, as I broke out of my comfort zone. Inspired as I tried several new things, including choral conducting and choral arranging, I also learned about voice physiology and vocal pedagogy to a much deeper level, which has helped to make me feel more qualified to teach singing.

While I previously re-arranged music to fit an ensemble, in the Arranging Choral Music class I had the opportunity with Dr. Weston to refine my arranging skills, and created an arrangement of *All the Things You Are* for SATB choir for my final project. In Survey of Vocal Solos, Dr. Rosine provided criteria for evaluating the appropriateness of solo literature that has already helped me immensely to help students choose repertoire. With Dr. Yu in Advanced Choral Rehearsal Techniques, I emerged from behind the piano to take the podium and learned to communicate musical thoughts and ideas without using those familiar eighty-eight keys. The History of School Choral Music offered an overview of performance practices and choral literature, including a focus on some world music choices that were new to me.

Throughout this degree program, I have learned not only from well-qualified professors, but from my classmates in these classes, who are music teachers with significant real-world experience in classrooms. I have conducted research and learned to quantify results. I have learned that I am more of an “influencer” than I might have believed in students' lives, just by

bringing them to music and encouraging their connection to music. As I have reflected on my own experiences as a music educator, I have devised ways that I might improve as a teacher, leader, and coach. With these experiences, I feel much more prepared to enter a classroom as a masterful and confident music teacher.

Appendix 1 *Vivificanos* sheet music

Figure 1: Page 1 of *Vivificanos*, mm. 9-15

Commissioned by the *Notre Dame Magnificat Choir*; Dr. Patrick Kronner, Director

Vivificanos

Offertory for the Fifth Sunday of Lent Confitebor
(Psalm 118: 7, 10, 17, 25)

Judith Rounda

mf $\text{♩} = 132$

Soprano 1 *mf* Te a-la-ba - ré, Se - ñor Te a-la-ba - ré, Se - ñor Te a-la-ba -

Soprano 2 *mf* Te a-la-ba - ré, Se - ñor Te a-la-ba - ré, Se - ñor Te a-la-ba -

Alto *mf* Te a-la-ba - ré, Se - ñor Te a-la-ba -

6

S 1 ré, Se - ñor Te a-la-ba - ré, Te a-la-ba - ré, Se -

S 2 ré, Se - ñor Te a-la-ba - ré, Te a-la-ba - ré, Te a-la-ba - ré, Se -

A ré, Se - ñor Te a-la-ba - ré, Te a-la-ba - ré, Te a-la-ba -

11

S 1 ñor, Te a-la-ba - ré, Se - ñor, con to - do mi co - ra -

S 2 ñor, Te a-la-ba - ré, Se - ñor, con to - do mi co - ra -

A ré, Se - ñor, Te a-la-ba - ré, Se - ñor, con to - do mi co-ra-zón

Figure 2: Page 2 of Vivificanos, mm. 16-25

2 Vivificanos

System 1 (mm. 16-20):

S 1: zón con-ce - de a tu sier-vo vi-vir y que guar-de tus pre-

S 2: zón con-ce - de a tu sier-vo vi-vir y que guar-de tus pre-

A: con mi co - ra - zón con-ce-de a tu sier - vo vi - vir tus pre -

System 2 (mm. 21-25):

S 1: cep - tos con to - do mi co - ra - zón to do mi co ra zon

S 2: cep - tos con to - do mi co - ra - zón

A: cep - tos con to - do mi co - ra - zón

System 3 (mm. 26-30):

S 1: ¡Oh Se - ñor, vi - vi - fi - ca - nos

S 2: ¡Oh Se - ñor, vi - vi - fi - ca - nos

A: ¡Oh Se - ñor, ¡Oh Se - ñor, vi - vi - fi - ca - nos

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