

5-31-2017

We Are One: Singing, Sisterhood, and Solidarity in Appleton-Area Women's Choirs

Lauren Vanderlinden
vanderlinden.lauren@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://lux.lawrence.edu/luhp>

 Part of the [Education Commons](#), [Ethnomusicology Commons](#), [Fine Arts Commons](#), [Music Education Commons](#), [Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

© Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

Recommended Citation

Vanderlinden, Lauren, "We Are One: Singing, Sisterhood, and Solidarity in Appleton-Area Women's Choirs" (2017). *Lawrence University Honors Projects*. 103.
<https://lux.lawrence.edu/luhp/103>

This Honors Project is brought to you for free and open access by Lux. It has been accepted for inclusion in Lawrence University Honors Projects by an authorized administrator of Lux. For more information, please contact colette.brautigam@lawrence.edu.

We Are One: Singing, Sisterhood, and Solidarity in Appleton-Area Women's Choirs

Lauren Vanderlinden
Lawrence University
Ethnomusicology
April 9, 2017

Advisor: Professor Sonja Downing

Abstract

Despite its relatively small population, the city of Appleton has a large and thriving women's choir community. Between the Lawrence Academy of Music Girl Choir, which serves hundreds of girls every year, and Lawrence University's Cantata, a collegiate women's choir, opportunities for involvement in nationally-recognized female-voice ensembles range from second grade all the way through college graduation. Using the theories of Foucault, Bourdieu, Butler, Green, and Bentham, this project explores the women's choir culture of Appleton in an attempt to discover the core values of these two influential programs. I accomplished this by conducting ethnographic research in the form of interviews and surveys as well as completing analysis of existing literature. At the end of my research, I determined that there are three key areas that have defined the success of each program: the ways in which community and intimate relationships are fostered, the performance of challenging and meaningful repertoire, and the empowerment of singers. These programs encourage young women to "find their voices" by breaking, discarding, reclaiming, and subverting stereotypes associated with women and women's choirs.

Acknowledgements

To my participants: This project never would have happened without you. Thank you for your openness, your honesty, and your deeply thoughtful responses to my fumbling questions. You have made me smile, laugh, cry, and remember, and I am so grateful for everything you have shared with me.

To my advisor, Sonja: Thank you for never letting me give up on this project (even when I wanted to!) and for always encouraging me to be and do better. Your patience, empathy, and willingness to learn with me have made this process so enjoyable and worthwhile.

To all of the directors, teachers, and Phenomenal Women I have had the privilege to sing with and learn from over the years: thank you for bringing me here.

Chills ran down my spine as I listened to the voices around me resonate in the magnificent space of the Chapel. My hands tingled as they sweated inside the hands of the girls next to me. I looked at the face of my director; her eyes filled with tears and, overwhelmed by the music, she moved to a nearby chair and shook her head in amazement at the music her choir had just created. As a member of the Lawrence Academy of Music Girl Choir program, along with having some of the most amazing musical moments of my life, I have made countless friends and learned about all kinds of music, various cultures, and life. In college and throughout the rest of my life, I know that I will apply the lessons I have learned about music and diversity every day of my life (Alumna 3, survey response, 2017).

Introduction

When women stand together and sing together, a space of possibility is created that is unlike any other. As a lifelong participant in women's and girls' choirs, I have experienced this firsthand, and the anecdote I quoted above, one of many I could have included, attests to the fact that I am not the only one. In particular, two extremely high-caliber choral programs in the Appleton area have fostered these spaces of possibility for their female-identifying singers for many years by providing an environment where students are safe to be, think, feel, speak, and create in the presence of other women. In a world where women are often taught to compete with each other rather than collaborate, and where harmful stereotypes about women's passivity, insecurity, cattiness, and lack of ability influence their actions, these kinds of spaces are incredibly important and worth recognizing. Throughout this paper, I examine both the Lawrence Academy of Music's Girl Choir program and Cantala (the Lawrence University Women's Choir) in order to better understand the ways in which these simultaneously challenging and affirming spaces are cultivated, structured, and received by both the directors and singers.

Foucault's notion of docile bodies, Bentham's Panopticon, Bourdieu's model of *habitus*, Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, and Lucy Green's writings on music and gendered delineations have all driven and shaped my analysis through the course of this paper (Bentham 1791, Bourdieu 1990, Butler 1988, Foucault 1977, Green 1991). My research indicates that there are three key areas that have defined the success of each program: the ways in which community and intimate

relationships are fostered, the performance of challenging and meaningful repertoire, and the empowerment of singers. These programs encourage young women to “find their voices” by breaking, discarding, reclaiming, and subverting stereotypes associated with women and women’s choirs.

Literature Review

When I initially began research for this project, I was genuinely shocked by how little recent literature exists regarding single-sex ensembles, particularly women’s choirs, from the student perspective. Quite a bit has been written about how to teach and direct women’s choirs, and much of that literature is very sensitively and insightfully written, but I found that those resources seldom accounted for individual participants or their experiences within the ensemble with any significant detail. For example, the most recent noteworthy book on the subject of women’s choir, entitled “Conducting Women’s Choirs: Strategies for Success,” was released in 2012, and contains chapters by some of the United States’ most highly-regarded women’s choir directors. Chapter headings include topics like “Building Community in the Women’s Choir” and “Writing for Women’s Voices: A Conversation with Composers,” (Spurgeon 2012) but there is one set of voices that is overwhelmingly missing from books like this: the singers themselves. The experience of a choir director in any given rehearsal can be very different from the experience of their students, and in my research I have noticed that those different student experiences are not often given the same weight in literature on choral methods, if they have garnered inclusion at all.

This, of course, is not a universally true observation; directors and scholars like Patricia O’Toole, the current Artistic Director of the Columbus Women’s Chorus whose work I have quoted throughout this paper, and Lynn Gackle, Director of Choral Activities at Baylor University and one of the contributors to the book mentioned in the previous paragraph, have written extensively on

female choir singers and their experiences in the generally male-dominated discipline of music (Gackle 1985, 2011, O'Toole 1994, 1998, 2012). However, the trend of this recent literature is inclined toward the adolescent female changing voice, a topic that has been severely understudied for many years (Sweet 2016), and does not continue to examine young women's choral experiences once they reach high school, college, and beyond. This is a dearth of scholarship that I aim to address with this paper; despite my geographically narrow focus, I think it is important to understand how young women today negotiate issues of gender, power, expectation, and stereotypes through the lens of a communal musical experience. Further, I hope to contribute to a broader structural understanding of spaces that emphasize female empowerment through my delineation of the aspects of Appleton-area programs that create places of possibility, growth, and inspiration for their students. In a world where women's experiences are all too often silenced, dismissed, and patronized, my goal is to highlight the strength and insight of both their literal and metaphorical voices.

Setting, Participants, and Methods

Lawrence University, an undergraduate-only liberal arts school and conservatory with a student population averaging about 1,500, has a nationally recognized and well-established choral program that consists of three distinct ensembles: Viking Chorale, Cantala, and Concert Choir. Viking Chorale is the largest of the three at around 100 singers, and is a non-auditioned mixed ensemble. Cantala is a smaller group, usually between 30 and 40 singers, and is the auditioned women's choir. Concert Choir, the auditioned mixed group, is typically around 40 to 50 singers. This brings the total number of students participating in choir each year to around 180, sometimes as many as 200. For a school the size of Lawrence, that level of involvement by non-music-majors in a choral program is a bit surprising at first glance. The scope of my research did not include the vocal

jazz ensemble, chamber groups, opera choruses, or student-run a cappella ensembles on campus, but it is worth noting that most of the students who participate in these groups are also enrolled in one of the university's three curricular choral ensembles.

I recruited participants for my research study primarily through announcements made in these three ensembles during the first few weeks of winter term. I made it clear that the only criteria for participation were a) identifying as female, and b) prior participation in a women's or treble-voice choir, either at Lawrence or elsewhere. After collecting the names of interested students, I connected with them via email and begin scheduling interviews, which were the main component of my research for this project. Each interview was conducted on-campus, and lasted from as little as fifteen minutes to well over an hour. I was struck by the wide range of experiences that my informants here at Lawrence were bringing to the table in each interview; liberal arts learning encourages interdisciplinary work, critical thinking, and deep engagement, and I was not surprised to find that my list of participants included women majoring in theater, biology, English, psychology, and more. Their range of musical experiences was equally widespread, including activities like Baroque recorder ensemble, piano, jazz ensemble, and marching band. In short, there is only one unifying factor that brought any coherence to my informants at this stage: a love of women's choir.

My second research site was virtual in nature, rather than physical. The Lawrence Academy of Music, a community extension of Lawrence University, is home to an expansive Girl Choir program that includes seven different ensembles and over 300 girls from second or third grade all the way through high school seniors in the Appleton area. Again, this is a surprisingly large program for this area, but as a Fox Valley native who grew up in the program, it felt natural to see Girl Choir continue its consistent growth over the course of my involvement. Due to time and ethical constraints of adding in-person interviews with current program participants, most of whom are under the age of 18, to explore the culture of Girl Choir I relied on alumnae of the program.

Thanks to a large Facebook group of Girl Choir alums, I was able to recruit women there and simply email them a questionnaire and consent form (see Appendices C and F). This proved to be very effective and easy for those who remembered to return it to me, but I did send out almost three times as many questionnaires as were returned. The factor with this group that created a sense of cohesion was, much like with my first group of participants, an affinity for singing with and learning from other women.

Theoretical Frameworks: Butler, Foucault, Bentham, Bourdieu, and Green

I have used five intertwined theoretical lenses to frame my research and subsequent analysis. The first of these is Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and femininity. The concept of gender as a continual bodily construction is vital to the understanding of women's choirs and their interaction with the concept of performance. She writes, "[Gender] is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body, and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self" (Butler 1988: 519). There is more than one kind of performance that Butler's writings can be applied to: there is first the everyday performance of one's gender that we all participate in, a rigidly structured set of acceptable actions and behaviors, and there is also the more conventional act of performance involving a non-metaphorical stage and audience. Both of these performances come into play when discussing women's choirs, as do the gendered societal structures whose existence they imply. I argue that both the Girl Choir program and Cantala encourage students to perform alternative conceptions of femininity, utilizing what Butler has termed "subversive performance" (Ibid 531) to allow female singers to push back against the restrictive gender stereotypes that are bound up in representations of women's spaces and women's music.

Butler's theories on gender and the body are further tied to the writings of Michel Foucault. In his monograph, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, he posits a theory of docile bodies, defined as "[a body] that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved" (Foucault 1977: 136). His writing is specifically focused on the bodies being disciplined within churches, hospitals, and the military, but can be extended beyond these historical birthplaces of discipline to be applied to many institutions today, including the institution of choral music. Looking at choir rehearsals as disciplined spaces, the concept of a docile body can be applied both to the choir as a whole and to the individual singers themselves in the various ways that directors regulate, control, and order their singers' bodies in rehearsal: position on the risers, posture, stance, breathing technique, jaw movement, even the acoustic shapes in singers' mouths are controlled to some degree by a single director standing in front of the choir. Choral director Patricia O'Toole furthers Foucault's theory, arguing that "directors also discipline the emotional and mental choral body by condoning desired behaviors and attitudes and by valuing the knowledge belonging to directors over the experience of singers" (O'Toole 1994: 13). While the basic structure of bodily docility is still in play in the programs I am studying here simply by the nature of how choral rehearsals operate, I have found that, contrary to O'Toole's perceptions of directors' disciplinary tendencies, both the Girl Choir program and Cantala have created spaces where female singers are encouraged to take back bodily and emotional agency in the way rehearsals and conversations are structured.

Related to Foucault's notion of the docile body is that of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon (Bentham 1791), the theoretical prison in which a central watchtower surrounded by a backlit ring of cells causes prisoners to self-regulate their behaviors for fear of constantly being watched. This concept is arguably at play during each choral rehearsal, when "[singers] are visible to the director... who can not only see, but also presumably hear each and every singer. Ironically, it is the singers, rather than the director, who subject themselves to the transforming pedagogical conventions of the

discipline of music” (O’Toole 1994: 15). Due to a sometimes-incapacitating need to please a strict director, self-policing in this way can effectively reinforce docility and passivity in the bodies and minds of choral singers without the director even lifting a finger. The Panopticon is tied to Butler’s performance theory in the institution of choir as well. The self-regulation of feminine behavior manifests itself in the body- and sound-monitoring that female choir singers experience when male singers are reintroduced to their warm-up or performance space. Performance theory is thus intimately linked to the concept of gender as a continued bodily performance – it might be well and good to let the standards of performance slip when there are no male singers around, but once the rehearsal space is no longer single-gender, those standards are reintroduced. However, my research has shown that the directors of both Girl Choir and Cantala employ strategies in rehearsal to combat this and challenge their students to think differently about music, gender, and power.

I also use Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of *habitus* as applied to performance by ethnomusicologist Jane Sugarman to make sense of the data I have collected. In a 1989 article about sung performances of gender among Prespa Albanians, she writes, “Specific beliefs and attitudes regarding gender form an inextricable component of specific types of systems... For individuals living within a system, the internal consistency and logic of the fundamental relationships upon which it is based are so pervasive that concepts regarding gender appear to be utterly natural and unquestionable” (Sugarman 1989, 192). This is a combination of Butler’s and Bourdieu’s theories that is very applicable to my own research; the performance of gender is dictated by *habitus* – a set of unconsciously constructed principles, which Bourdieu calls “structuring structures” (Bourdieu 1990, 53), which in turn appear to be naturally occurring and immutable. However, Sugarman also writes of Prespa performers’ ability to shape the structures of *habitus* through “using their singing to suggest [*habitus*]’ revision” (Sugarman 1989, 193). This, much like Butler’s discussion of subversive performances, can be applied to the Girl Choir program as well as to Cantala through the culture

shifts these groups aim to inspire, both locally and potentially on a national level, by changing the way that singers perform femininity in order to confront and discredit dominant paradigms of women in music as passive instruments for “pretty” music.

Many of these theories converge in the writing of Lucy Green, a professor of music education at the University College London Institute of Education. This convergence can be summed up by a quote from her book *Music, Gender, Education*: “When music delineates femininity through a female performer or composer, we are liable to also judge the handling of inherent meanings by that performer or composer; in terms of our idea of her femininity. In a relationship of circularity, gendered musical practice, musical meaning, and musical experience are entwined” (Green 1997, 16). I would like to extend this idea to include poets, lyricists, and directors as well; through Green’s lens of circularity, it is impossible to separate any aspect of a women’s choir experience from cultural ideology and expectations of gender and femininity. She argues that this is because of the process of musical delineation, or “the idea that music metaphorically sketches, or delineates, a plethora of contextualizing, symbolic factors... delineated meanings consist of connotations or associations which derive from the position and use of music in a social context” (Ibid 8, 10). In other words, because of the inherent meanings we have applied to music, we can become trapped in a circular structure that reinforces itself and its gendered values as natural, a clear link to *habitus*. She also touches on performances of alternative femininities, which I have interpreted as in line with Judith Butler’s subversive performances, and how those performances have the potential to undermine and challenge preconceived notions of gender. I have taken Green’s ideas and applied them to the Appleton-area women’s choirs I am working with, using the constructions of both programs to expand upon her theories of alternative modes of feminine performance and to further prove the importance of organizations like the Girl Choir program as spaces of female empowerment.

Community

Community and Communication: Fostering Open Dialogue and Overcoming Insecurity

The biggest difference my participants reported between a women's choir and a mixed choir, aside from the obvious gender disparity, was the feeling of community they experienced in one ensemble versus another. Community is an important part of any choral experience, since the ensemble relies so heavily on the collaborative effort of music-making, and it is multi-faceted and has many influences. Among other things, participants from both Cantala and the Girl Choir program noted a difference in their own willingness to be open, a culture of mutual respect, trust, and care, a supportive network, and a focus on empowerment in their single-sex ensembles that they did not necessarily experience to the same degree in a mixed-voice group. Directors and administrators played a huge part in fostering this multivalent, positive sense of community, but participants attributed an equally large part of it to the fundamentally different experience of singing in the absence of men.

One of the first things to come up when I asked about a difference in choral experience between mixed- and single-gender ensembles was the contrast between women's willingness to speak up and share thoughts when in the presence of exclusively other women. For example, Cantala singers who are now in Concert Choir often compared their experiences in the two choirs and found that they speak less now, often because the boys in the room speak up more. One singer said "I've actually never realized this, but I probably feel more equal [when I'm just with women], if that makes sense... like [we're] all kind of on the same playing field. I don't necessarily feel like I'm inferior [with guys], but I'm probably less likely to say something. They're more outspoken anyways" (p.c., Student 1, 2017). Even if this hesitancy to speak up doesn't come from a recognizable feeling of inferiority or passivity, the exchange of ideas in a mixed-voice ensemble still tends to be relatively male-dominated. This is not surprising, since girls

... learn [early on] to at least perform femininity by feigning lack of confidence in their physical and intellectual abilities. Whether girls believe they are good at a lot of things does not seem to matter. It is more important that girls do not acknowledge their abilities so they are perceived as feminine by the boys (and teachers to some extent) and, therefore, will have a better chance at succeeding at what counts most in middle and high school – social acceptance (O’Toole 1998, 12).

Even if their abilities surpass those of the boys in the room, women often find themselves feeling as though they need to keep their skill and opinions to themselves.

Additionally, even for members of Cantala, when male singers come into the room for combined warm-ups before concerts or the combined-choir rehearsals for major works, things immediately change. One woman told me that once men are there, she starts body- and sound-monitoring; she thinks, “Is that sound pretty?... It’s like, do I look okay? It’s something I need to get over, but there’s just a different dynamic that shifts a little bit” (p.c., Student 2, 2017). Not once did I hear any of the twenty-four singers I worked with mention anything about worrying about how they presented their bodies in a women’s choir rehearsal. The hesitancy to speak up and be the center of attention relates intimately to feeling pressure to put their bodies on display in the presence of men. The concept of the Panopticon applies here; when the relative safety of Cantala’s sisterhood is dissolved, female singers start to feel like they are constantly being watched. They begin to self-regulate their bodies, voices, and the way they present themselves to better fit the conventional feminine mold that they believe the male singers desire, even if no one is explicitly telling them to do so. The unconscious structures that are culturally in place with regards to gender have established performative perimeters that may disappear in the presence of exclusively other women, but reappear once men are reintroduced to the ensemble and it becomes much harder to maintain the alternative modes of femininity that have been established in the previous single-sex space. Lucy Green writes,

Those aspects of musical meaning that are interruptive and threatening for femininity... are strengthened by the physical presence of males as onlookers to the display of the female musical performer. For this reason, all-girl groups present distinct advantages as learning

environments in which the sexual risk of female display and the interruption and threat to femininity caused by masculine delineations can be reduced (1997, 248).

Even in a pre-concert warm-up situation, women still feel like they are under pressure to perform for their male colleagues, resulting in a femininity that is very different from the one present in their own rehearsals.

The directors also noticed this; one male conductor who works with both Cantala and Concert Choir commented, “There’s something that happens when [the female singers] get with the men. There’s a different sense, and talking with the women one-on-one or in small groups, I feel connected, but when they’re in the full group I feel alienated” (p.c., Director 1, 2017). There is an openness and fluidity of communication and presence in a women’s space that is not there in a mixed-gender ensemble that this professor has touched on; the other director also noticed this. He also works with both groups, and when asked about this issue said, “There is a very perceptible difference in the level of participation and speaking and sharing from particularly younger women... I find even here that... the women in Cantala... hands go up, thoughts are shared, ideas are explored to a degree that I don’t even see in Concert Choir, where I think a lot of people in the room are already aware of gender bias and things like that, but we’re still not seeing what it would look like if we all just raised our hands and shared our thoughts” (p.c., Director 2, 2017). It is reassuring to know that both directors are cognizant of the communication disparities across ensembles, but it piques my curiosity as to how the women in the choral program at Lawrence can go through one empowering, inclusive ensemble and then as soon as men are re-introduced into the situation all of that goes away. What changes when women go from Cantala to Concert Choir?

I argue that a lot of those dormant feelings of inferiority, temporarily erased by the supportive environment Cantala creates, come from negative middle and high school choral experiences. Over and over again I heard stories about how teachers, friends, and male singers in high school inspired feelings of anger, confusion, and not being good enough. One student, who

went to a performing arts high school, summed up her experience as follows: “I think [not being taken seriously then] affects how I learn music [now], too, because in my high school there would always be guys who were very, very good at reading music and super good at theory... [who] looked down on me and my other female friends and looked down on our abilities, and that makes you second-guess your abilities too” (p.c., Student 3, 2017). This development of self-consciousness exists for young women on a broader scale, too, as Orenstein posits: “For a girl, the passage into adolescence is not just marked by menarche or a few curves. It is marked by a loss of confidence in herself and her abilities. It is marked by a scathingly critical attitude toward her body and a blossoming sense of personal inadequacy” (Orenstein 1995, xvi). Cantala’s supportive environment can certainly help students move past those negative experiences in middle and high school, but upon being reintroduced to mixed choir, memories of perceived inadequacy and self-consciousness can come flooding back and subconsciously affect women’s participation in their ensembles. This student’s experience was not unique, I heard many iterations of the same story- and experienced it myself- but I think it is noteworthy that Cantala does provide a space where these feelings of discomfort and insecurity can be confronted, and where the process of working to overcome them can begin. As one singer said, “Being with girls, you just feel like you belong, and there’s no man that’s better than you there” (p.c., Student 4, 2017). Solidarity, community, and empowerment are all important healing qualities that are fostered by participation in women’s spaces.

In both Cantala and the Girl Choir program, for example, women consistently pointed out how free they felt to speak up and participate fully in rehearsals and how refreshing and empowering that was. One alumni of the Girl Choir included numerous references to this, but her viewpoint can be summed up as follows: “The [Girl Choir directors] basically churn out badass women who know how to stand up for themselves respectfully, taking no BS from anything or anyone. I am unapologetic when it comes to standing up for myself when necessary” (p.c., Alumna 1, 2017).

Another Cantala singer referred to the process of opening up to her fellow singers as “building bridges to each other,” (p.c., Student 2, 2017) while a Viking Chorale student described it as “discovering who you are and who they are at the same time” (p.c., Student 4, 2017). There is an intimacy in these descriptions that implies the connections created by women’s choir through communication extend past simple friendship and into the realm of sisterhood. There is a definite component of sharing parts of who you are with each other, and the musical bonds created between women in these situations can constitute some powerful cognitive re-formatting for singers who are learning how to respect and appreciate womanhood in all of its forms.

In contrast to this, though, some women expressed barriers to communication among other women. For example, one singer noted that she sometimes feels more comfortable in an ensemble with men because she is “very forward and comfortable expressing herself... [and] due to culture, a forward woman to other women is not always taken in the best way; [with] a forward woman in a men’s situation, it’s a lot easier to connect because men are used to that” (p.c., Student 5, 2017). It is interesting to think about this discrepancy in experience, because it highlights something that often colors our opinions on women’s spaces without our realization: women in today’s world are taught to compete with each other for jobs, for men’s attention, for “having it all.” Women’s choir, however, can provide a space where these ideas can be overcome, where women can learn to work with other women and learn from their experiences, cooperating rather than competing. However, as my interviewee mentioned, this can be a challenge if members do not necessarily conform to the same idea of what “working together” means. For this singer, she came into college as an excellent musician who was ready to work, and while she believes that “it’s important for women to get together and gather a sense of women’s solidarity,” (Ibid) this can be difficult if personalities in the group don’t mesh because of the emphasis on emotional and personal relationships within the ensemble.

Despite this potential for tension, learning to work with other women is one of the most valuable skills participants reported learning during their time in female-voice ensembles. Almost everyone I spoke to emphasized the importance of this aspect of the women's choir experience, and the directors did as well. One of the most eloquently-stated quotes came from a freshman in Cantala who has never been in a women's choir before; she summed up her experience as follows:

I think in a lot of cases... we are taught as women to pit [ourselves] against each other, you know? And so I think when you can come together with a bunch of women who are supposed to be competitive with each other, not like each other... and you come together and... we work on [hard] pieces and do them well... I feel very empowered. I think we all do. Because sometimes as a woman I feel like I'm lesser, and like I can't do something as well as somebody else, and when we do something really well all together, I think "this is what it's about!" (p.c., Student 6, 2017).

This experience was echoed by participants in Cantala and Girl Choir alike, and often emphasized the collaborative process of learning to appreciate womanhood in all of the forms that identity can take. This particularly was brought up by Girl Choir singers, where I know from personal experience the multiplicity of femininity is explored all the time. One singer, who is now a choir teacher, noted how that emphasis on diverse perspectives has influenced her teaching:

As a high school teacher of women's choirs, I have seen first-hand how choir can break down barriers between girls of all ages, sizes, races, identities, religions, etc. It is through our work as a choir that young girls realize how to celebrate our differences and yet understand how similar our human experiences are. Through choir I have seen girls realize their potential as women and that is a powerful and incredibly fulfilling feeling (p.c., Alumna 2, 2017).

Learning from the experiences of women who come from different religious, socio-economic, ethnic, and geographic backgrounds can provide incredible perspective and encourage a musical community that runs deeper than simply the connections made during rehearsal. The emotional bonds formed by sharing what it means to be a woman creates life-long friendships and deeply meaningful musical experiences that are remarkably empowering.

Many stereotypes exist about women's choirs and women's spaces that seek to contradict the points I have just made. First and foremost is the expectation that women's choirs are second-tier

ensembles, consisting of left-over women who were not good enough to get into the top mixed ensemble. Directors in most schools tend to treat these ensembles as less important and less deserving of their attention and effort. There are also stereotypes about groups of women that include the words “catty,” “dramatic,” “bossy,” “judge-y,” “cliquey,” and “gossipy” (p.c., Student 2, 2017). I would like to posit that, based on my participants’ discussion of these issues, both Cantala and the Girl Choir program create environments where all of these stereotypes are broken down, overcome, and subsequently discarded as non-defining. A good friend of mine from the program stated this very well:

I gained an ability and willingness to trust other women [in Girl Choir]. In such a space (in both Cantala and Girl Choir), I heard insights from women with such different life experiences than mine, and that challenged me to really listen and to never assume I know where someone is coming from. It’s all too easy to adopt a “mean girl” attitude; [people say] girls gossip, girls try to one-up each other, girls slander one another... The conversations in rehearsal and [our] common goal [in choir] create a space for love and understanding that I’ve rarely experienced elsewhere (p.c., Alumna 3, 2017).

The directors are conscious of the social pressure for women to compete, particularly the directors of the Girl Choir program, and actively work to overcome these taught attitudes and internalized stereotypes in their fostering of open communication within the ensemble. One Girl Choir director really drove home the importance of women’s choirs in her responses; “I think still in our society... we must find safe places to engage in all of this... I think it’s important for young women to be able to identify what it is they value rather than to have somebody impose it from the outside” (p.c., Director 3, 2017). By encouraging girls to speak up and engage in rehearsal on a personal level, she is encouraging them to explore themselves and their beliefs, as well as their relationships with others.

Additionally, stereotypes and internalized values about women’s choir can be reclaimed and overcome through encouraging communication about the bodily aspect of the female experience. One alumni wrote, “My experience in Girl Choir prompted me to embrace treble choir experiences and the community of women they create as beautiful and powerful all by themselves, without

viewing them as grooming choirs for mixed ensembles. Treble choirs for young singers present opportunities to address issues that are specific to girls and young women, opening the door for discussion and reflection that might not be possible without such a community” (p.c., Alumna 4, 2017). The ability to freely discuss womanhood in all its infinite complication is so important for young women, and it is often not included in middle or high school choir at school. For example, the female voice change is rarely, if ever, talked about in school choirs, but Girl Choir has built it into the structure of their program. The ensemble I have managed for the last five years, Arioso, is specifically geared towards girls going through the voice change, and it is openly discussed each week as our singers struggle with experiencing it- and it really is a struggle. The voice is such an intimate part of the body and identity, and when it goes through changes that result in missing notes, voice cracks, and self-consciousness about tone and timbre, many middle-school girls in particular can go through corresponding identity crises and feel deeply insecure. Having a space where it is okay to talk about the female body, voice, and mind without judgement or feeling like “the boys are grossed out if we talk about periods, so we don’t do it...” (p.c., Student 6, 2017) is extremely important. By taking subjects that are often taboo and normalizing them as a part of conversation and communal choral experience, it becomes possible to turn self-consciousness into self-empowerment, and to instill a sense of self-love and appreciation for their bodies and voices in singers from an early age. Not many spaces in today’s world can do that for women.

This contradictory-to-expectations space created by the women’s ensembles in the Appleton area creates a different type and level of community that makes for deeply meaningful experiences. Both Cantala and Girl Choir have opened up opportunities for honest, thoughtful, heartfelt communication and navigation of the female experience, counteracting the many ways in which “girls lose out in schools: they receive less teacher attention; they are asked fewer higher-order thinking questions; their learning styles are discounted” (O’Toole 1998, 13-14). These single-sex

choral programs instead allow young women to achieve at their fullest potential without being treated as second-rate students and musicians.

“Finding Our Voices:” Encouraging Agency and Empowerment in a Safe Community

“There is no glass ceiling in Girl Choir. Everyone is equal- everyone can speak up, and everyone can be heard and respected” (p.c., Alumna 1, 2017). I conducted these surveys and interviews right around the time of the 2017 inauguration, and to read this statement that time brought tears to my eyes. To me, this drives home the mission of both Cantala and the Girl Choir program, which involves inspiring young women to do and be more than the stereotypes, insecurities, and challenges that they face in the world today. One Cantala singer spoke simply about how the ensemble had empowered her through the community they had built together: “We are women. We can do things, we are smart, we are very well-rounded people with varying interests... and we can work together to make something beautiful and expressive” (p.c., Student 7, 2017). Cantala, in this context, created a space where this singer and her peers felt strong, creative, and confident, partially because of their differences. Another student commented that, “In Cantala, you can be a student, teacher, performer, vocalist, and more all wrapped up into one. When I’m in Cantala, it just *feels* important” (p.c., Student 2, 2017). This is arguably one of the most vital pieces of singing in a women’s choir; young women can bury so much confidence in middle and high school, and reaffirming their abilities and encouraging students to *use* those abilities is incredibly important, because “girls know in many cases they cannot act smart and capable, even if they believe they are, if they want to be accepted socially” (O’Toole 1998, 14). Creating an environment where young women are not only allowed but are encouraged to use their voices and abilities is one of the most immediately impactful parts of women’s choir.

Girl Choir's mission statement includes the phrase "Where girls find their voices," (Academy of Music website, 2017) and they're not just referring to the singing voice. They teach young women to be self-sufficient, to speak out with confidence, to find beauty in diversity, and to respect the stories of those who have lived different lives from themselves. The conductors recognize the importance of inspiring girls to feel powerful and reminding them of their worth and value; one of them told me, "I wanted to create a space [with Girl Choir] where young woman could have that [place free of issues] in their lives while simultaneously they were also dealing with the AP Chemistry teacher who was telling them they didn't have to take the AP test because that 'wasn't for them,' right? So to give that space where they could figure that stuff out in a safe environment" (p.c., Director 2, 2017). A recent alumnus wrote, "[In Girl Choir] I have been empowered as a young woman to believe in my own power to achieve whatever I set my mind to. I have prompted to think more deeply, and to believe in the potential for good in all people and in the world" (p.c., Alumna 4, 2017). Teaching young women that they already possess the power to be successful is one of the Girl Choir program's most important goals, and based on all of the responses I have received I would argue that they have been remarkably successful in that quest.

Cantala, too, has a focus on student-centered pedagogy. The directors in particular both brought up a desire to empower their students; when speaking about his goals for the ensemble, one director said, "I want people who leave this program to feel so good about what they did that it would be a seminal experience in their life" (p.c., Director 1, 2017). A lot of the directors' intentions with this ensemble come through in the way that they select, present, and work on repertoire, which will be discussed in the next section, but the environment that both directors create through their encouragement of community, invitations for singers to participate fully in rehearsals, and careful engagement with issues facing their students is one of support and respect. One student brought up the directors' reminders to the choir to "use your woman's voice, not your girl's voice" (p.c., Student

7, 2017). This comment, unremarkable at first listen, carries with it the reminder to be strong, mature, and independent; the directors are encouraging their singers to use their full voices, literally and metaphorically, and to be confident in who and what they are within the supportive space of the ensemble. Inspiring students to perform strength instead of passivity is another marker of Butler's style of subversive performance, and it can be carried with singers into all areas of their lives.

Building Community Beyond Rehearsal

In both of the women's ensembles this paper is concerned with, community is continually fostered outside of the formal rehearsal space. This is noteworthy because so many choirs do not worry about what their singers do outside of rehearsals, but in the cases of Girl Choir and Cantala, both the singers and the directors have placed a significant amount of focus on bringing their ensembles together on a plane that extends beyond music. Through the addition of off-campus tours, breaks during rehearsal, trips to Björklunden (Lawrence's Door Country campus extension), and scheduled bonding events, the community that is created in each ensemble runs deeper than just a shared musical experience limited to the time constraints of rehearsal.

This was particularly evident among members of the Girl Choir program. Many women, when asked about favorite Girl Choir memories, referenced things that did not occur during rehearsals, but rather during breaks, dress rehearsals, or on tour. One alumni told me that "Those Girl Choir breaks were just as important as the rehearsals. Singing together, laughing together, and talking with one another was extremely good medicine when life handed us a whole lot of lemons" (p.c., Alumna 1, 2017). Creating connections that have meaning beyond just standing next to each other and singing together is one of the trademarks of the Girl Choir program – at the program's 25th anniversary concert last spring, over 100 alumni traveled back to Appleton from all over the country to participate in the alumni choir, even though they had to pay for that travel themselves.

And walking into that room felt for many of us like coming home. The feeling of that day was indescribable- we could look across the risers and see the faces of women we had grown up with, and talking with each other it felt like nothing had changed. One alumni described it well: “I still feel so connected to the Lawrence Girl Choir community. I know they will always have my back. It was nostalgic to come back for the 25-year anniversary concert and sing “Goin’ Up A Yonder” with hundreds of women again. It felt like I had reconnected to a very precious part of my life that I hadn’t tapped into for years” (Ibid). Another wrote, “[Being at the 25th anniversary] was completely overwhelming and beautiful – there were so many women who I hadn’t seen in years, but our love of the music and the program made it seem like hardly any time had passed” (p.c., Alumna 4, 2017).

These non-musical moments of community can be such formative experiences for young girls, and speaking again from personal experience, I see this reflected in my students all the time. Every year my middle school group goes on a mini-tour (usually about an afternoon’s time) to another program somewhere in the state of Wisconsin. It is always great fun, and immediately at the beginning of each new year, one of the first questions I get asked is invariably some iteration of “where are we going this year?” The girls love it, and it is a wonderful way to give them time to bond with each other outside of our fast-paced and once-a-week rehearsals. The director of this ensemble also recognizes how important those extra community-building opportunities are for girls at this age, and she makes sure to work as many as she can into the year. This is not unique to my ensemble, either. The two older choirs will often tour as well, with the Cantabile choir (grades 8-10) taking a national tour every other year and Bel Canto (grades 10-12) performing in extra events and conventions when they can. The culture of friendship that this has created among the girls involved in the program manifests itself every year in emotional good-byes and heartfelt Instagram captions at the end of the final concerts every spring, and in the inevitably tearful faces of the graduating seniors in the program each year.

In Cantala, this community manifests itself particularly well in the first-week trip to Björklunden, where on the first evening Cantala hunkers down with each of the directors for a yearly ritual called “fireside chats.” New singers learn about the history of the ensemble and its naming, as well as a strange tradition of using the word “honk” to encourage other women in the ensemble. One director has a geese metaphor that he loves that involves the example of geese flying in a ‘v’ formation, with one leading and others taking its place when the former is too tired to continue. He uses this as a metaphor for supporting each other in the ensemble, and understanding that sometimes it is okay both to lead and to follow. Emails regarding the ensemble are always signed with some variation of “honk,” and the word gets thrown around in rehearsals as an indicator of encouragement, support, and unconditional respect. One singer referenced its long-lasting impact on the way she thinks about women’s choir; “[Our director] came in with this beautiful story... [and] it was a really touching... thing and we could all think of that together as like “the geese have to fly together and do all these things together to help support each other,” which is kind of like women in music” (p.c., Student 1, 2017). It is an odd but remarkable feature of Cantala that makes it a unique experience, and it starts with the fireside chats every year. A single word can carry so much meaning, and “honk” is a perfect example of the invisible web of community that can be created between women through shared experiences.

When Women Work Together: Supportive Community

When women are not competing, they can support each other, lift each other up, celebrate each other’s accomplishments, and lend a hand when someone is feeling down. This is a big part of the mission of the Girl Choir program and of Cantala, and I have already discussed aspects of this in previous sections. What I wish to focus on here is the emphasis on a culture of respect and trust, brought to mind by the idea of “honk” and flying formations of geese, on strong examples of female

leadership, and on the multi-generational community aspect of women's choir that can create a dynasty of strong women for younger girls to look up to. All of these things play an important role in the ways that women's choirs in the Appleton area have carved out a very special place for themselves in the choral world at large.

Building a culture of encouragement and support is a cornerstone of these specific programs. Many women have identified a feeling of “unspoken respect among women that goes hand-in-hand with support” (p.c., Student 2, 2017) in their women's choir experiences, and the opportunity to “see other strong women, interact with them, and collaborate with them” (p.c., Student 7, 2017) is an integral part of that. It is important to be able to see the alternative femininities that Green discusses being able to access through music; it is possible, then, to learn to appreciate, understand, and even emulate those other portrayals of femininity. Patricia O'Toole asks this question in her 1994 article: “I wonder if we could talk about choir as being made up of individuals with diverse interests, needs, experiences, and social histories and how their knowledge could inform and transform our practices?” (O'Toole 1994, 24). I think that the women's choirs of the Appleton area directly answer to this question with a resounding “yes!” Expressing appreciation for other types and experiences of womanhood creates a choral environment where relationships are emphasized over a final product, and where performance of gender is no longer forced to ascribe to a single unattainable ideal of femininity. Instead, the focus is on learning to respect other women and their life experiences, which leads to a deeper bond between singers.

Additionally, for Girl Choir in particular, the emphasis on the multi-generational nature of the Girl Choir dynasty is important in showing the younger girls that it is possible to “see women lead so beautifully and gracefully,” (p.c., Alumna 5, 2017) and to show them that they, too, can be leaders one day. One alumni-turned-manager of the Girl Choir program wrote me, saying that “Learning from strong female mentors like those in the Girl Choir program... looking up to girls

turning into women who were a few years older than me in the program, I learned what it meant to be female and strong and powerful, but a beautiful type of powerful...” (p.c., Alumna 6, 2017)

Especially because so many school programs are headed up by male directors, particularly at the collegiate level, growing up in a nationally-recognized program led by women at every level- conductors, administrators, managers, and accompanists- paints a picture of possibility and empowerment for young singers. They see women succeeding in every corner of the music industry both in the ensemble and after graduation, and the thriving alumni community I drew upon for this research attests to this sense of connection despite generation. I was able to recruit participants ranging from women who graduated in the last year to women who were in the program when it began 25 years ago. All of them were incredibly excited to be participating in this project, and many of them iterated how much of an impact the program’s female leadership had on their perceptions of their own abilities growing up. The empowerment-through-example culture of the Girl Choir program is to credit, I think, for the remarkably strong, outspoken, and successful group of women it has produced.

Repertoire: Overcoming Stereotypes

The selection of repertoire is an extremely important part of the directors’ jobs in both Cantala and the Girl Choir program, and was a big talking point for just about everyone I interviewed. Many stereotypes exist about the kinds of repertoire often assigned to women’s choirs, with words like “girly,” “fussy,” “lovey-dovey,” “cutesy,” etc. making frequent appearances in the descriptions of participants. These gendered qualities are not assigned to the repertoire of men’s choirs, which instead gets descriptors like “rough-and-tumble,” “manly,” “strong,” “raucous,” etc. It is clear in many interviews that these more weak, passive adjectives are perceived to be a result of the feminine nature of the ensemble they are linked to. In fact, when asked about her thoughts on

women's choir repertoire, one singer at Lawrence said, "Well, somebody has to sing the cute stuff..." (p.c., Student 8, 2017). Implicit in this sentence is the subsequent phrase "... so why not the women's choir?" The stereotypes extend to include both the music and the text; commonly-programmed women's choir music often uses texts centered around ideas of love, nature, and beauty, rife with messages of passivity, objectification, and a glossing-over of women's experiences and strength. When receiving repertoire like this, singers reported thinking things like "people are going to think this is so *cute*," (Ibid) which carries connotations of lack of substance and therefore lesser value, or "this repertoire doesn't really suit us" (p.c., Student 3, 2017). This indicates a lack of interest on the singers' part in singing music that they cannot connect with on a personal level, and a subsequent desire to perform repertoire that they feel represents who they are as women. Many singers want to participate in a subversive performance, they want to challenge the stereotypes that come along with women's repertoire, but when they are handed another "cute" piece of music, that opportunity is taken away from them.

Additionally, the music that correlates to those flowery, passive texts is often very melodic and "pretty," but rarely has substance or anything for the singers to really dig into. It provides perimeters of gendered performance that are very narrow and built out of male-enforced, culturally-constructed stereotypes, and performing this old-fashioned, demure repertoire can be interpreted as performing that same type of femininity; in Judith Butler's words, "To be a woman is to have *become* a woman, to compel the body to conform to an historical idea of 'woman,' to induce the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize oneself in obedience to a historically delimited possibility, and to do this as a sustained and repeated corporeal project" (Butler 1988, 522). Such passive, inconsequential repertoire requires the singers to repetitively embody a historically-enforced passive femininity, and it does not often allow space for the creation of any other type of womanhood or the inclusion of any other life experiences or voices. This is one of the circular feminine delineations

that Green emphasizes in her writing, and the endlessly repeating circle of oppression, repression, and embodiment cannot be broken unless something new is introduced into the circle; conventional repertoire does not often provide that potential for breakage, or “the possibility of exposing and exploding the ubiquitous influence of gendered delineations” (Green 1997: 250).

Oftentimes directors of Cantala will choose pieces that have an emphasis on women’s empowerment, trying to break the cycle of stereotypes and give their singers agency through carefully-selected repertoire. One of the directors told me that he works very hard to program pieces that are a bit off-the-beaten path; “I think it matters when we’re singing something that’s written from a female voice. I think it matters when we’re singing something that’s written from a non-hetero-conforming voice, I think it matters when we’re singing something from a person of color, and the fact that we don’t have a lot of that repertoire to draw from should not be an excuse to be like, oh well, all Brahms!” (p.c., Director 2, 2017). That this director does not let empowering repertoire’s relative scarcity discourage him from searching for it shows his dedication to providing a positive, respectful environment for the singers under his direction. Another example of this occurred on a concert last fall, when the directors programmed the piece “Now I Become Myself” by Gwyneth Walker. Multiple interviewees brought up this piece as an inspiring moment for them; the words and music on their own were thought-provoking and beautiful, but when the director made the decision to step back and not conduct the piece, it became something more than just another piece about women’s empowerment. The director told me, “[I just thought] I’m sorry, but this feels stupid for me to be standing here as the man who tells you [(Cantala)] when to come in” (Ibid). Of the five or six women who brought up this experience with me, all of their reactions were absolutely positive; one singer told me, “[That piece] was one of the best experiences [I’ve had in Cantala]... because it made us listen better and let us take charge of things and make decisions” (p.c., Student 7, 2017).

The sense of empowerment that resulted from this situation came in part from the director's decision to remove some of the layers of power inscribed onto him by the choral rehearsal's structure. Rather than choosing to direct them into a position of docility and subordination to his gestures and phrasing choices, he allowed the singers to order themselves, to make their own decisions about the performance, and to take on leadership roles normally reserved for the (male) directors of the ensemble. In the many positive responses I heard about this piece, it seemed to me that the singers were so enthused because they had been able to create something that they were truly comfortable embodying onstage; Lucy Green writes about the affirming power of this sort of subversive work, arguing that

For many girls, this celebratory musical experience will generate an unmitigated pleasure when, for example, they enjoy their affirmative display, enjoy the inherent meanings of the music which they perform, enjoy finding themselves reflected as girls in the overall musical experience. At its most powerful, such an experience can connect with... alternative images of femininity... (Green 1997: 162).

By encouraging the women of Cantala to take ownership of their performance in such a visible, performative way, this director encouraged students to be cognizant of how they as a group wanted to perform their femaleness. Judith Butler describes the potential of this sort of act well, arguing "the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such [stylized, repetitive] acts [of gender], in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style... In [gender's] very character as performative resides the possibility of contesting its reified status" (Butler 1988, 520). Cantala's performance of "Now I Become Myself" implied a different kind of gendered performance, one where women direct themselves, performing the music of a female composer and singing the words of a female poet, and where they have agency over what and how they perform. The universally positive response to this performance sheds light on the subconscious impacts it had on the performers.

The other director that works with this ensemble has a similar mindset to his colleague when it comes to repertoire, but takes a different approach to it. Instead of combatting the lack of empowering repertoire for women by seeking out music on the margins of the choral world's consciousness, he chooses to focus on commissioning new repertoire for women's choirs and build a body of works by contemporary composers instead. He told me,

[I want to] establish the validity and importance of women's choirs... it's about making music, which is the core of every choir, [and] they're not second-rate. People will look back at this time and forge ahead, not accepting cheesy music for women anymore, [and think] that [women's] ensembles deserve credibility just like everybody else, and that requires first, good music selection, and secondly, pushing them just as hard as you would push any other ensemble to the best that they can be (p.c., Director 1, 2017).

This has earned him considerable renown as a conductor in the United States, and he has commissioned some 40-odd works for women's choir in his time as a director. He also clearly recognizes the tendency to conceptualize women's choirs as second-rate or left-over choirs, and is actively trying to combat it through his commissions of repertoire. This contributes significantly to Lawrence's reputation as a world-class choral program, and also contributes to the singers' sense of empowerment and agency. It isn't often that a women's choir gets to premiere new works, but Cantala premieres, on average, three or four per year, sometimes more – and those are often world premieres of pieces by up-and-coming composers. Singers in Cantala have the opportunity to be a part of a very unique program in this way; I can think of no other conservatories of music where the choral programs focus so heavily on new works, but that is certainly the case here.

In the Girl Choir program, this tendency to empower through repertoire also holds true. Rather than programming overtly feminist texts and messages, however, the directors here prefer to choose pieces that require deep engagement and the unraveling of many threads to get at that kernel of inspiration and empowerment. When asked, one director told me:

I tend not to program a lot of the 'women's empowerment' kind of songs because that to me is a little bit "hit you in the face." I would much rather unpack something that is meaningful and might be metaphorical that I can then worm my way into, because then you can also get

at the musical skills and musical knowledge that I also have to build into young musicians as they grow, right? Helping them unpack all of those things and scaffold that knowledge is really important but then if I can also then tie in either through the text or through the music or what was happening in society at the time or through a composer's story or one of those things then can connect to the girls' personal lives, that's the complete package (p.c., Director 3, 2017).

This emphasis on holistic learning is a hallmark of the Girl Choir program; directors often say that the concerts they put on each semester are a nice bonus for parents, but that the important work is being done each week in rehearsal, learning to sight-read, critically engage with music, and respect each other. The repertoire selected for these ensembles provides ample opportunities for all of these things: it is often difficult to learn, requires deep thought to understand, and carries messages that are important for young girls to hear. "Nigra Sum" by Pablo Casals is one example of a piece that the teacher-conductor I spoke with loves to program; the text is certainly not straightforward, it brings up issues of race, class, and what it means to be a woman, and it has one of the most beautiful alto lines of all time, thanks to the composer's background as a cellist. This particular piece has been performed multiple times throughout Girl Choir's twenty-five-year history, and it came up in several surveys as a piece that carried significant memories for singers. Repertoire selection is clearly a key part of the women's choir experience, and the careful consideration and planning that the directors in the Girl Choir program put into their choices make for an engaging, educational rehearsal experience. And, indeed, "the woman singer is able to resist patriarchal constructions of femininity, and furthermore to articulate alternative constructions of femininity..." (Green 1997: 35), and one of the ways this can be done is through empowering, challenging repertoire.

Directors & Gender

Lawrence University: Male Directors in a Woman's World

Lawrence University, much like many collegiate programs in the United States, has two male conductors leading its choral program. This is not abnormal, but it certainly contributes to the

dynamics of each rehearsal. Students in Cantala don't seem to have a problem with having two men standing in front of their women's choir; one student said, "It could have been weird [when our professor gave us pieces about empowerment], but because [our directors] are so respectful and accepting, it wasn't" (p.c., Student 9, 2017). This isn't to say that the women of Cantala blindly accept the leadership of their directors, because many of them raised some issues that they do have with the concept of male leadership of a women's choir in general. One student mentioned that "[our directors] don't necessarily understand what it means to be a woman today, even though they're very sympathetic... [and] they don't always know the female voice, especially how it changes and the weird parts" (p.c., Student 7, 2017). There is a discrepancy of life experience, as my interviewee mentioned, that makes it difficult to talk about living life as a woman. And while the directors, as many students have noted, are extremely open to learning and are respectful of their students' experiences and opinions, there is still a barrier that exists between student and director that is exacerbated by the difference in subjectivity.

A student also mentioned that having male directors for Cantala "can reinforce the idea that women can be women, but in the end men are still directing you" (Ibid). Foucauldian docile bodies are very much at play in this aspect of a rehearsal; Patricia O'Toole describes this in terms of physical control over the bodies of the singers. She writes, "Docility [in the choir rehearsal] is achieved through architecture. The choir is enclosed in a room and distributed on the risers according to voice type... The director is then positioned in front of the choir, so singers see the director primarily and each other only peripherally. All attention and focus move toward the director" (O'Toole 1994, 8). This implies a strict control on the part of the director over the bodies of the singers, which is further complicated by the gender distinction between a male director and female singers. When I asked the directors themselves about this gender barrier, one director in particular was very cognizant of it, but ascribed a definite agency to the singers in their acceptance of

him into their feminine space. He said, “There’s a sense of community [in Cantala] because they’re women, and that’s kind of hard to define, and it’s odd because I don’t fit that category, but somehow they allow the space for me to fit in, and that’s why it works” (p.c., Director 1, 2017). His mindset on this topic is very much one of deference – he is allowed into the space, rather than establishing himself as its leader with all of the power that position entails. This effectively works in contrast to the power structures already inherent in a choral rehearsal, particularly one led by a male director, and arguably gives a good deal of power back to the students themselves.

This same director spoke to his place in the education world as a man directing a women’s choir, and the significant amount of pushback he’s gotten from his female colleagues; they will often tell him that he is “taking a job that a woman could have,” (Ibid) which he understands, but also disagrees with. So many male directors at the collegiate and high school level conduct women’s choirs, but they so often think of those ensembles as second-rate and less-important groups. This director, however, wants to serve as an example and an advocate for men conducting women; he said, “I can do a whole lot of advocacy... to say why do you think [your women’s choir] is a second-rate group? It’s not, it’s just different” (Ibid). He also mentioned that his male colleagues who do not work with women’s choirs tend to look down on him for his self-determined focus on female-voice ensembles and repertoire, which is reflective of a larger cultural shift that needs to occur in the field of choral music. Part of this director’s goal in working with Cantala is to be able to provide other men in his situation with the tools to effectively teach and empower their female-voice ensembles.

This goal ties closely to Bourdieu’s *habitus*, but also has the potential to challenge it. Bourdieu argues that *habitus* perpetuates itself and only changes gradually over extensive periods of time, referring to its self-reinforcement as “like a train laying its own rails,” and that even when change is perceived to be occurring it is merely a “regulated improvisation;” that is, a less-common option that still fits within the realm of prescribed possibility (Bourdieu 1990, 57). However, I have found that

the women's choir program at Lawrence University is succeeding at changing the way students view women's choir more quickly than the original *habitus* would allow; instead, I view both Cantala and their male directors' attempt at changing the culture governing women's choir much more in line with Jane Sugarman's application of *habitus* to Prespa Albanian singing. She writes,

Singing, rather than merely reflecting notions of gender, also shapes those notions in return... Through singing, [the Presparë] are temporarily able to mold their individual selves into the form of a cultural ideal. In the process they may choose to affirm that ideal, following closely the norms of musical practice, or they may use their singing to suggest its revision. Gender concepts and musical practice can thus be seen to exist in a dialectical relationship to each other... (Sugarman 1989: 193).

This quote implies an adoption of *habitus* by the Presparë, but rather than meek acceptance of its structures Sugarman sees the taking on of cultural values in order to undermine them and challenge their definition as correct or inherent. *Habitus* as a concept relies heavily on its being more or less unseen, and awareness of structures meant to be followed unconsciously could perhaps lead to changes occurring faster and with more gravity. I believe this is what is happening with the male directors of Cantala. Rather than simply accepting their roles as patriarchal society has defined them, both directors are instead choosing to actively subvert those expectations, recognize the choral *habitus*, and instead move towards a cultural view where women's choirs are not thought of or treated as second-rate ensembles.

Girl Choir: A Dynasty of Female Leadership

In contrast to Lawrence's male-led program, Girl Choir is entirely headed up by women. As I mentioned earlier, not only are the directors of each ensemble female, but so are the administrators, accompanists, and managers. Their leadership is one of the most important factors in creating the welcoming, challenging, and safe atmosphere of the Girl Choir program, and my participants sang their praises consistently across generations. One alumna wrote, "I believe [it is key] to have a leader who is passionate about making a difference in young girls' lives with a mission

of empowering them to think, connect, build courage, and share. In my life, the winning combination for me to find my voice was Girl Choir” (p.c., Alumna 1, 2017). Every single member of the Girl Choir program is incredibly passionate about what they do, and they do it well. The program is thriving and growing at an exponential rate- in my last five years as a manager, I’ve seen a new choir added because of the ever-increasing number of young women who want to be involved, and my own choir of middle-school girls had to be split into two choirs because it was so huge.

I attribute a good bit of this success to the fearless, thoughtful, and empathetic women leading this program and changing girls’ lives. Their strength, grace, and willingness to speak up have inspired hundreds and hundreds of girls who grow up to sing in ensembles like Cantala, including myself. I have already discussed how important it is for young girls to see older women in positions of leadership and power, but I also want to point out the difference in environment that is created for young girls when their director is also female; the ordering of bodies that is such a big part of choral singing and choral spaces occurs very differently when there is no male presence. Not only is there opportunity to talk about the changing female body in a comfortable and safe environment, but there is also a more relaxed nature to the process of ordering. Gender hierarchies do not come into play in Girl Choir the way that they do in Cantala; there is no masculine leader requiring submission from female students. And while the directors of Cantala do consciously work to overcome this, in Girl Choir it is simply not an issue. The power dynamic of the Panopticon is still there, but the nature of having a female director means that those structures of ordering are simply there to ensure rehearsals run smoothly and effectively, not to enforce a gendered hierarchy of power. There is more space for conversation, learning, and growing together because of the female nature of the organization’s leadership, and it has resulted in a program that builds multi-generational relationships of mutual respect and trust between women across the boundaries of class, race, religion, and age.

Criticisms

Despite the many truly wonderful qualities of both the Girl Choir program and of Cantala, they are not necessarily perfect examples of spaces for women's empowerment. There are some areas where both programs are lacking despite directors' best efforts. Most striking is the relative lack of diversity represented in both programs. Neither Appleton nor Lawrence University are particularly diverse in terms of ethnicity or religious preference, but Lawrence's ensembles in particular are overwhelmingly white. Again, this is not for a lack of trying to recruit students on the part of the directors, and the directors do their best to combat this by programming thoughtful repertoire that represents a wide range of identities, but "there is a lack of diversity [in the conservatory at Lawrence] as a whole, and it needs to be recognized and worked on" (p.c., Student 8, 2017). Granted, it is difficult to have an ethnically diverse ensemble when the student population within the conservatory is, again, overwhelmingly white. This is an issue facing the institution as a whole, not just the choral program, and there is no "quick fix." For Girl Choir, the issue of diverse representation seems to be more closely tied with socio-economic diversity rather than ethnicity, although both are still issues. The Girl Choir program does require tuition, and although there are many wonderful scholarship opportunities, cost can be an initial barrier to low-income families who may not know to seek out those funding opportunities. However, the directors of both programs are very aware of this issue and are doing their best to create welcoming environments for the students they do have.

Another potential criticism of these programs is the lack of gender-non-conforming students in either group. While directors of both groups have expressed off-the-record that they would love to welcome non-binary singers into their ranks, problems with the labeling of the ensembles and with their attire may turn potentially interested students away. Both programs have gendered names (i.e. the *Girl* Choir program and Cantala *Women's* Choir) that adhere to the male-female gender

binary, and while that is not necessarily a bad thing, the lack of non-binary students in both programs- despite their presence in the Fox Valley and at Lawrence- attests to the potentially exclusionary nature of these names. This issue could be addressed, at least partially, by increased publicity on inclusive policies that are unofficially in place. Non-conforming students sing in mixed ensembles around the Fox Valley, both at local high schools and on Lawrence's campus, but likely do not know that these female-identifying ensembles would be willing to accommodate them because they do not see themselves represented in any of these programs. Further, the attire for both ensembles also conforms to traditionally feminine styles: for the older girls in Girl Choir and the women in Cantata, this includes floor-length dresses that are cut to emphasize the waist and flow over the hips. Even the younger Girl Choir singers' uniforms are distinctly feminine, with skirts, blouses, and tights or nylons forming the basis for each choir's attire. Either changing the ensembles' attire to either a gender-neutral uniform or instituting a concert black policy, like Lawrence's orchestras, bands, and non-auditioned mixed chorus already have in place, could provide an easy fix to this issue. While there is a potential financial barrier to a uniform overhaul, it is not insurmountable and could make these ensembles even more welcoming to singers who do not fit neatly into the gender binary.

One final criticism of these programs pertains to their accessibility to women of varying musical backgrounds. Both groups are auditioned ensembles, and so a certain level of skill is required to get into the ensemble in the first place, and if a singer has not had access to good musical education in her life due to socio-economic class, location, ethnicity, or religion, it will be difficult for her to access these opportunities. Additionally, at Lawrence, the only women's group is an advanced auditioned ensemble, so women cannot access that space unless they already have a certain level of ability when they enter college. For non-voice majors, this can be an even bigger challenge to overcome, since they will often have less singing experience than their vocalist

counterparts. For students who are not majoring in music at all, they may not even bother to audition for Cantala because of an assumption that they are not good enough to make it in. The Girl Choir program tries to combat this by offering a sort of training choir for young girls in grades 3-5 that is not auditioned, so that girls who may not be ready to audition for the regular choirs still have a place to learn, but there is no such ensemble at Lawrence. I am conscious of the time constraints for the directors at Lawrence, but I think that the program is doing some really wonderful work that could be expanded to include more singers if a similar sort of non-auditioned women's choir was offered. There are certainly enough female-identifying singers at Lawrence: in Viking Chorale, the non-auditioned mixed choir, there are usually at least twice as many female singers as there are male singers, often much more. Creating another ensemble geared towards women who want the community of a female-voice ensemble could go a long way towards increasing the accessibility of an empowering women's space to a broader range of singers.

Conclusion

The women's choir programs in the Appleton area, though not perfect, are truly unique in the spaces that they have opened for young women, spaces that challenge, affirm, encourage, empower, and build relationships. They have created a culture of possibility through fostering open dialogue, encouraging community among singers, exploring the diversity of women's lived experience through challenging, deeply meaningful repertoire, and the use of leadership positions to encourage agency on the part of the singers. These are not universal qualities in women's choral music education, and that becomes clear when the theories of Butler, Foucault, and Bourdieu are applied to choral rehearsals and performance. My inability to complete a one-to-one mapping of theory to practice in many situations is indicative of the ways in which the directors of both the Girl Choir program and Cantala are not participating in common choral practice; they do not settle for

docility and passivity from their female singers, but encourage them to take agency and work with each other. They do not settle for old-fashioned women's repertoire, chock-full of harmful and limiting stereotypes, but push themselves to find better, stronger, deeper repertoire that will expand the definition of womanhood, if a definition can even be applied at all.

When I think about the future of these ensembles, I am incredibly excited. I know from personal experience the impact that participating in a women's choir of this caliber can have on a young woman's conception of herself, and I am not alone in that. Alumnae and current singers in both programs have expressed similar feelings to me over and over again. One singer wrote, "[Because of women's choir] I have gained confidence, belief in myself, and strength to follow my gut, my dreams, and my instincts. It has empowered me to stand up for what I believe is right. My participation in women's choirs gave me a voice – I did not feel silenced then and do not feel silenced now" (p.c., Alumna 2, 2017). The work that Cantala and the Girl Choir program is doing is changing lives, and I firmly believe that because of their insightful pedagogy they will continue to do so for many years to come.

Works Cited

- Bentham, Jeremy. 1791. *Panopticon: Postscript Part I*. London: Printed for T. Payne.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. "Structures, *Habitus*, Practices" In *The Logic of Practice*, 52-66. Translated by Richard Nice. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Butler, Judith. 1988. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Theory" In *Theatre Journal* 40(4): 519-531.
- Foucault, Michel. 1977. "Docile bodies" In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 135-169. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books.
- Gackle, Lynne. 1985. "The Young Adolescent Female Voice (Ages 11-15): Classification, Placement, and Development of Tone." In *Choral Journal* 25(8): 15-18
- 2012. *Finding Ophelia's Voice, Opening Ophelia's Heart: Nurturing the Adolescent Female Voice: An Exploration of the Physiological, Psychological, and Musical Development of Female Students*. Dayton: Heritage Music Press.
- Green, Lucy. 1997. *Music, Gender, Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lawrence University – Academy of Music. 2017. "Mission Statement." Accessed March 28th. http://www.lawrence.edu/s/academy/programs/academy-choirs/girl_choir
- Orenstein, Peggy. 1995. *Schoolgirls: Young Women, Self Esteem, and the Confidence Gap*. New York: Anchor Books.
- O'Toole, Patricia. 1998. "A Missing Chapter From Choral Methods Books: How Choirs Neglect Girls." In *The Choral Journal* 39(5): 9-32.
- 1994. "I Sing in a Choir, But I Have "No Voice!"" In *The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning* 4(5): 2-26.
- 2002. "Threatening Behaviors: Transgressive Acts in Music Education." In *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 10(1): 3-17.

Spurgeon, Debra Lea, ed. 2012. *Conducting Women's Choirs: Strategies for Success*. Chicago: GIA Publications.

Sugarman, Jane. 1989. "The Nightingale and the Partridge: Singing and Gender among Prespa Albanians" In *Ethnomusicology* 33(2): 191-215.

Sweet, Bridget. 2016. "Choral Journal and the Adolescent Female Changing Voice" In *Choral Journal* April: 53-66.

List of Interviewees

Alumna 1. Interviewed via email survey, received on January 27th, 2017.

Alumna 2. Interviewed via email survey, received on January 30th, 2017.

Alumna 3. Interviewed via email survey, received on March 1st, 2017.

Alumna 4. Interviewed via email survey, received on March 9th, 2017.

Alumna 5. Interviewed via email survey, received on January 31st, 2017.

Alumna 6. Interviewed via email survey, received on February 6th, 2017.

Director 1. Interviewed in the Conservatory on February 15th, 2017.

Director 2. Interviewed in the Conservatory on February 14th, 2017.

Director 3. Interviewed in the Conservatory on February 1st, 2017.

Student 1. Interviewed in the Warch Campus Center on January 30th, 2017.

Student 2. Interviewed in the Warch Campus Center on January 30th, 2017.

Student 3. Interviewed in the Seeley G. Mudd Library on February 1st, 2017.

Student 4. Interviewed in the Seeley G. Mudd Library on January 28th, 2017.

Student 5. Interviewed in the Seeley G. Mudd Library on January 28th, 2017.

Student 6. Interviewed in the Warch Campus Center on January 27th, 2017.

Student 7. Interviewed in the Seeley G. Mudd Library on January 29th, 2017.

Student 8. Interviewed in the Warch Campus Center on January 31st, 2017.

Student 9. Interviewed in the Seeley G. Mudd Library on February 3rd, 2017.

List of Choirs

Lawrence Academy of Music Girl Choir (all auditioned ensembles except where noted)

Ragazze – Grades 3-5 (non-auditioned)

Primo – Grades 3-5

Allegretto – Grades 4-6

Capriccio – Grades 5-7

Arioso – Grades 6-8

Cantabile – Grades 8-10

Bel Canto – Grades 10-12

Lawrence University Choral Program

Viking Chorale – non-auditioned, mixed

Cantala – women's choir, auditioned

Concert Choir – auditioned mixed choir

APPENDIX A

We Are One: Singing, Sisterhood, and Solidarity in Appleton-Area Women's Choirs

Interview Guide – Directors/Administrators

Biographical Information:

1. What led you to pursue music in college, and what kind of music degree did you receive?
2. How did you end up at your current job(s)?
3. What in your educational career has led you to be involved with women's choirs now?

Women's Choir Directing

1. What is your favorite part of directing women's (or girl's) choirs? Your least favorite part?
2. What is your repertoire selection process like for your all-female ensembles? What is most important in a piece of repertoire for a women's choir?
3. What are some of your favorite pieces for women's choir, and why?
4. Why do you think that women's choirs are important- or, on the flipside, if you think they are not, why?
5. In your experience, is there a different sense of community in all-female ensembles than in mixed ensembles? Why do you think that is?
6. *(For Lawrence directors and joint Girl Choir-public school teachers)* Are there challenges you experience directing a women's choir that you don't experience directing mixed ensembles?
7. *(For administrators only)* Why do you think the Girl Choir program has enjoyed such a long-lasting success and continued growth?
8. *(For Lawrence directors only)* Do you feel like your gender impacts your direction of your all-female ensemble? Your mixed choir? How so?
9. Is there anything else about your experience directing women's ensembles that you think might be significant or important to my research?

APPENDIX B

We Are One: Singing, Sisterhood, and Solidarity in Appleton-Area Women's Choirs

Interview Guide – Lawrence Singers

Biographical Information:

1. Can you list your choral experience?
2. What other musical experience do you have?

Why Do You Sing?

1. Why do you sing? What does singing do for you, if anything, that other forms of self-expression don't?
2. Why do you sing in choir? What does singing with other people do (or not do) for you that singing alone doesn't?

Experience in Women's Choirs

1. What do you think makes women's choir a unique experience when compared to mixed ensembles? What are some differences you've noticed between the two? Which do you like better?
2. Do you feel like your gender affects the way you experience choir, music, education? Can you tell me about that?
3. Do you see women's choir as a community? How so?
4. What do you think are some of the personal benefits you've gained from participating in women's choirs? Or do you perceive no lasting benefits from your participation?
5. What is your favorite memory of singing in a women's choir? Why?
6. Do you think that participating in women's choirs is important for young girls? Why or why not?
7. What is the piece that has had the most lasting impact on you from your time in women's choirs? Mixed choirs?
8. How does it feel to sing songs about women's empowerment with male directors?
9. Has singing ever helped you overcome something difficult in your life? If you are comfortable elaborating, would you tell me about it?
10. So, is there anything else that you think I should know? Anything I've left out or forgotten? Questions I should add or get rid of?

APPENDIX C

We Are One: Singing, Sisterhood, and Solidarity in Appleton-Area Women's Choirs

Interview Questions – Girl Choir Alumni

Name of Participant:

Biographical Information:

Thank you so much for agreeing to read this through and reflect on women's choral singing with me! I really appreciate it. To start, I'd love to learn a little bit about your musical background.

1. Please list in chronological order your experience with girls' or women's choirs. Nice and simple to start!
2. What other musical experience do you have? (Other instruments, ensembles, types of singing, etc.)
3. What kind of job do you have now? Additionally, what kind of role has music played in your life post-Girl Choir, generally speaking?

Why Do You Sing?

Now I'm curious about why you like, love, or hate to sing, what drew you to it, and what it does for you.

1. If you're not employed as a choral singer and you still participate in choir as a hobby, why did you seek it out?
2. Why do you sing? What does singing do for you, if anything, that other forms of self-expression don't?
3. Why did you sing in choir? What does singing with other people do (or not do) for you that singing alone doesn't?

Experience in Women's Choirs

Now I'd like to talk a bit more specifically about your experience with women's choirs.

1. What is your favorite memory of singing in a women's or girl's choir? Why?

2. What do you think are some of the personal benefits you've gained from participating in women's choirs? Or do you perceive no lasting benefits from your participation?
3. Do you see women's choir as a community? How so?
4. Do you think that participating in female-voice ensembles is important for young girls? Why or why not?
5. What do you think makes women's choir a unique experience when compared to mixed ensembles?
6. What is the piece that has had the most lasting impact on you from your time in female-voice ensembles?
7. Has singing or being involved in a women's choir specifically ever helped and supported you through a tough time? If you are comfortable doing so, would you elaborate on what and how? (If you'd rather not, you can simply answer 'yes!')

Additional Information

Is there anything else you would like to share that doesn't fit under the list of questions above? Any questions you think should be added, removed? Any comments?

Thank you so much for your participation, I appreciate it endlessly! Please let me know if you have any concerns following your participation in this e-mail interview.

APPENDIX D

We Are One: Singing, Sisterhood, and Solidarity in Appleton-Area Women’s Choirs Informed Consent Form - Directors Lawrence University

I have been asked by Lauren Vanderlinden, Lawrence University Department of Musicology, to participate in a research project. This research is being supervised by Dr. Sonja Downing, Musicology. The purpose of this research is to examine the ways in which participation in women’s choirs has had a positive impact on the lives of female-identifying singers in the Fox Valley area.

The participants in this research will be roughly four directors of girls’ or women’s choirs in the Appleton area. All participation will occur on-campus or in the nearby area of downtown Appleton, depending on participants’ schedules and preferences. The study will involve a one-time interview lasting approximately 30-45 minutes in length.

This research has been approved by Lawrence’s Institutional Review Board, which protects human subjects. Participation is **completely voluntary** – I may withdraw or decline to participate at any time without penalty. The researcher also has the right to withdraw my participation at any time. To withdraw, I can simply inform the researcher. Declining to participate or withdrawing will have no effect on my academic status or any class grade. If I agree to participate, the following will occur: the researcher will ask me several questions pertaining to my personal experience with women’s choirs and singing.

To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, there will be no more risk of harm than normally experienced in my daily life; anticipated risks are minimal. Possible benefits of participating in this project include an increased awareness of the positive impacts singing has had on my own life, as well as contributing to the growing breadth of literature on the importance of women’s spaces in the arts. However, there is no guarantee that I will receive any benefit. Participation is voluntary with no compensation.

Every effort will be taken to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that I participated in the study and to ensure that all of my responses are confidential. No information that personally identifies me will be released or reported in any way unless required by law. Signed consent forms will be kept by the researcher, and will be destroyed three years after the completion of this project. Pseudonyms will be used on any official documents, and the master list linking pseudonym to consent form will only be seen by the researcher. Data and responses will be kept on a password-protected computer. Since the number of directors in the Fox Valley area is relatively small, while every attempt to provide anonymity will be undertaken it is possible that identity may be guessed. I understand this, and am welcome to withdraw at any time if I am no longer comfortable with this.

I can ask the researcher any questions that would help me to decide whether to participate. If I have any questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints that arise, I can contact Lauren Vanderlinden at lauren.o.vanderlinden@lawrence.edu. If I have any questions about my rights as a participant, I can contact the Lawrence University IRB chair, Dr. Peter Glick (920) 832-6707 or irb@lawrence.edu.

Signatures

Participant:

By my signature, I am affirming that I am at least 18 years old and that I agree to participate in this study. I understand I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

Signature of participant

Date

Printed name of participant

Person Obtaining Consent:

I have explained to the participant above the nature, purpose, risks, and benefits of participating in this research project. I have answered any questions that may have been raised, and I will provide the participants with a copy of this consent form.

Name of [authorized] person obtaining informed consent

Date

APPENDIX E

We Are One: Singing, Sisterhood, and Solidarity in Appleton-Area Women's Choirs Informed Consent Form – Students Lawrence University

I have been asked by Lauren Vanderlinden, Lawrence University Department of Musicology, to participate in a research project. This research is being supervised by Dr. Sonja Downing, Musicology. The purpose of this research is to examine the ways in which participation in women's choirs has had a positive impact on the lives of female-identifying singers in the Fox Valley area.

The participants in this research will be roughly twenty female-identifying students at Lawrence University who have participated in women's choir either on campus or in high school. All participation will occur on-campus or in the nearby area of downtown Appleton, depending on participants' schedules and preferences. The study will involve a one-time interview lasting approximately 30-45 minutes in length.

This research has been approved by Lawrence's Institutional Review Board, which protects human subjects. Participation is ***completely voluntary*** – I may withdraw or decline to participate at any time without penalty. The researcher also has the right to withdraw my participation at any time. To withdraw, I can simply inform the researcher. Declining to participate or withdrawing will have no effect on my academic status or any class grade. If I agree to participate, the following will occur: the researcher will ask me several questions pertaining to my personal experience with women's choirs and singing.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there will be no more risk of harm than normally experienced in my daily life; anticipated risks are minimal. Possible benefits of participating in this project include an increased awareness of the positive impacts singing has had on my own life, as well as contributing to the growing breadth of literature on the importance of women's spaces in the arts. However, there is no guarantee that I will receive any benefit. Participation is voluntary with no compensation.

Every effort will be taken to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that I participated in the study and to ensure that all of my responses are confidential. No information that personally identifies me will be released or reported in any way unless required by law. Signed consent forms will be kept by the researcher, and will be destroyed three years after the completion of this project. Pseudonyms will be used on any official documents, and the master list linking pseudonym to consent form will only be seen by the researcher. Data and responses will be kept on a password-protected computer.

I can ask the researcher any questions that would help me to decide whether to participate. If I have any questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints that arise, I can contact Lauren Vanderlinden at lauren.o.vanderlinden@lawrence.edu. If I have any questions about my rights as a participant, I can contact the Lawrence University IRB chair, Dr. Peter Glick (920) 832-6707 or irb@lawrence.edu.

Signatures

Participant:

By my signature, I am affirming that I am at least 18 years old and that I agree to participate in this study. I understand I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

Signature of participant

Date

Printed name of participant

Person Obtaining Consent:

I have explained to the participant above the nature, purpose, risks, and benefits of participating in this research project. I have answered any questions that may have been raised, and I will provide the participants with a copy of this consent form.

Name of [authorized] person obtaining informed consent

Date

APPENDIX F

We Are One: Singing, Sisterhood, and Solidarity in Appleton-Area Women’s Choirs Informed Consent Form – Girl Choir Alumni Lawrence University

I have been asked by Lauren Vanderlinden, Lawrence University Department of Musicology, to participate in a research project. This research is being supervised by Dr. Sonja Downing, Musicology. The purpose of this research is to examine the ways in which participation in women’s choirs has had a positive impact on the lives of female-identifying singers in the Fox Valley area.

The participants in this research will be roughly twenty female-identifying alumni of Appleton’s Lawrence Academy of Music Girl Choir program. All participation will be conducted via email, with a returned documents deadline of February 17th, 2017.

This research has been approved by Lawrence’s Institutional Review Board, which protects human subjects. Participation is **completely voluntary** – I may withdraw or decline to participate at any time without penalty. The researcher also has the right to withdraw my participation at any time. To withdraw, I can simply inform the researcher. Declining to participate or withdrawing will have no effect on my academic status or any class grade. If I agree to participate, the following will occur: the researcher will ask me several questions pertaining to my personal experience with women’s choirs and singing.

To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, there will be no more risk of harm than normally experienced in my daily life; anticipated risks are minimal. Possible benefits of participating in this project include an increased awareness of the positive impacts singing has had on my own life, as well as contributing to the growing breadth of literature on the importance of women’s spaces in the arts. However, there is no guarantee that I will receive any benefit. Participation is voluntary with no compensation.

Every effort will be taken to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that I participated in the study and to ensure that all of my responses are confidential. No information that personally identifies me will be released or reported in any way unless required by law. Signed consent forms will be kept by the researcher, and will be destroyed three years after the completion of this project. Pseudonyms will be used on any official documents, and the master list linking pseudonym to consent form will only be seen by the researcher. Data and responses will be kept on a password-protected computer.

I can ask the researcher any questions that would help me to decide whether to participate. If I have any questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints that arise, I can contact Lauren Vanderlinden at lauren.o.vanderlinden@lawrence.edu. If I have any questions about my rights as a participant, I can contact the Lawrence University IRB chair, Dr. Peter Glick (920) 832-6707 or irb@lawrence.edu.

Signatures

Participant:

By my signature, I am affirming that I am at least 18 years old and that I agree to participate in this study. I understand I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

Signature of participant

Date

Printed name of participant

Person Obtaining Consent:

I have explained to the participant above the nature, purpose, risks, and benefits of participating in this research project. I have answered any questions that may have been raised, and I will provide the participants with a copy of this consent form.

Name of [authorized] person obtaining informed consent

Date