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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACDA	American Choral Directors' Association (USA)
FET	Further Education and Training
GET	General Education and Training
GMAP	General Music Appraisal Programme
HET	Higher Education and Training
INSET	In-Service Education and Training
IPA	International Phonetic Alphabet
ISME	International Society for Music Education
MENC	Music Educators National Conference (USA)
MEUSSA	Music Education Unit Standards for Southern Africa
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSB	National Standards Body
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
PRESET	Pre-Service Education and Training
SACS	South African Choral Society
SAMRO	South African Music Rights Organisation
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SARRAL	South African Recording Rights Association
SGB	Standards Generating Body

PART I

Academic Foundation and Unit Standards for Choral Work in the Primary School

Chapter 1

RESEARCH OUTLINE

1.1 Background Information

South Africa is currently restructuring its education system and replacing the old traditional "content-based" system with the "outcomes-based" (OBE) system. South Africa's outcomes-based education at school level is reflected in the document *Curriculum 2005*. The conversion to the outcomes-based approach has been implemented since 1998 in various learning areas (subjects). *Curriculum 2005* addresses school education (Grades R – 12), but the first unit standards required to be formulated for the OBE approach are only from Grade 9 upwards. Details of outcomes-based post-school education are not yet available, and the Higher Education Sector is still actively debating its future with the Education Department and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

SAQA dictates that unit standards for all learning areas have to be generated for the implementation of the outcomes-based education system. Because of lack of funding, Professor Caroline van Niekerk, Head of Music Education at the University of Pretoria, was instrumental in forming the MEUSSA team. MEUSSA is an acronym for "Music Education Unit Standards for Southern Africa". The team consists of 18 master's and doctoral researchers whose assignment is to develop unit standards for the various fields in music. Proff. van Niekerk and van der Mescht lead the team.

The MEUSSA researchers' task of developing unit standards for music(s) in South Africa, based on thorough in-depth research, have to meet the academic standards of the University of Pretoria in order to obtain a masters or doctoral degree. All the team members are regarded as experts in different fields of music and are dedicated to

generating unit standards that are nationally relevant and internationally competitive. This project could prove to be of immense value to music education in this country and could serve as a catalyst for related studies in other countries.

Participation in Choral Singing in South African schools has, to date, largely been regarded as an extra-curricular activity for which neither choristers nor teachers receive due recognition or status. A comprehensive, balanced and sequenced choral framework/curriculum/learning programme/syllabus for primary school choirs does not exist.

It is a common occurrence that the person who directs the Primary School Choir, is not a music specialist, but a general classroom teacher, who, more often than not, does not have adequate training or expertise for the task. The choir direction is thus often ineffective, without innovation and not to any significant purpose. The fundamental problem is inadequate and inefficient training of teachers. There is also a lack of regular in-service training courses of an extended nature.

There are a few American and English books available that address the challenge of choral directing in *primary* schools specifically. These books, however, are often difficult to obtain and are exorbitantly expensive due to the weak South African rand. (For an explanation of evaluating the cost of text books in terms of the purchasing power of local currencies, refer to 1.5 "The South African Cost Factor", below.) The circumstances and backgrounds referred to in the books are, furthermore, not always applicable to the South African milieu.

There is no common foundation or framework for all choirs from various different cultures throughout South Africa and at all levels of development, i.e. from the foundation phase at school, right through to tertiary level.

1.2 Personal Motivation

This researcher's primary interest is in successful, practical work with children of primary school age, and especially within the context of choral singing, with all the benefits this can hold for their holistic development. As a member of the MEUSSA team, the author intends to make a contribution in choral music education.

1.3 Research Question

How can curricular recognition be given for choral singing in South African primary schools?

The research question above is subject to the following sub-questions:

- How can the choral director in the Primary school be guided in a constructive and meaningful way to address the issue of quality in structuring a comprehensive, balanced and sequenced choral programme?

- How can a formal procedure for assessment of results be provided to ensure greater accountability to the choral director, choristers, parents, school governing body, government educational administrators, and the community at large?

- What support (resource) material does the general classroom teacher (who is responsible for the Primary School Choir) need to direct the choir effectively, with innovation and purpose. Furthermore, how can this essential support material, that addresses the challenge of choral directing in South African primary schools specifically, be made readily available at an affordable rate for a South African teacher?

- How can a common foundation or framework for all choirs throughout the country and at all levels of development be generated?

- Are there critical cross-field linkages/articulation possibilities with other learning experiences and career opportunities; and if so, what are they?

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The study sets out to design Choral Unit Standards and their associated Assessment Criteria for Choral Singing at the level of the Primary School. This should enable choristers/learners to earn curricular recognition and academic credits for their participation, thereby gaining acknowledgement of and support for their significant and substantial involvement. In addition to this, the following aspects are also addressed:

- Effective choral guidelines, giving clear and explicit explanations of the skills, knowledge and attitudes that the choristers should gain from a worthy choral programme.

- Assessment criteria for choirs jointly and/or choristers individually, which will provide greater accountability to stakeholders.

- Support material for primary school teachers that they may require for the effective and purposeful directing of the School Choir. Students at tertiary institutions who are studying choral methods and choral conducting, should also find the support material applicable and helpful. This material is designed to serve as a practical guide for teachers to assist in more effective and innovative choral directing practices. In addition, accessible, affordable and useful material, applicable to the South African situation is designed.

- Choral Unit Standards that will apply to all cultural groups and every level of development. This will contribute to a common foundation for all choirs in South Africa.

- Critical cross-field linkages/articulation possibilities with other learning experiences and career opportunities.

1.5 The South African Cost Factor

Currently the price of the following books that are available in English on choral directing in the primary school is as follows:

- *Teaching Kids to Sing* by Kenneth H. Phillips $39.00
- *Teaching the Elementary School Chorus* by Linda Swears $27.95

(These prices are in American dollars and were obtained from Van Schaik bookstore in Hatfield, Pretoria.)

Should one wish to purchase these books in South Africa from Van Schaik bookstore, the prices in South African rands would be as follows:

- *Teaching Kids to Sing* by Kenneth H. Phillips   R980.00
- *Teaching the Elementary School Chorus* by Linda Swears   R805.00

(These prices are in South African rands and were quoted by Van Schaik bookstore on 17 October 2001.)

In evaluating the cost of text books in terms of the purchasing power of local currencies, it is expedient to use a tool such as "burgernomics". *The Economist*, a British publication, established "burgernomics" as an informal basis of comparison in 1986. This basis of comparison is upgraded annually. The Big Mac hamburger, sold in 120 countries around the world with more or less the same recipe, is used as a "currency" to determine the relative cost of goods. In pursueing this basis of comparison, the following becomes evident:

Country	Book Price	Big Mac price	Big Macs/book	Multiple
USA	$39.00	$2.54	15.4	101B15.4
RSA	R980.00	R9.70	101	= 6.6

Table I - 1-1a Comparative price analysis of the book *Teaching Kids to Sing* by K.H. Phillips

Country	Book Price	Big Mac price	Big Macs/book	Multiple
USA	$27.95	$2.54	11.0	82.9B11.0
RSA	R805.00	R9.70	82.9	= 7.5

Table I - 1-1b Comparative price analysis of the book *Teaching the Elementary School Chorus* by Linda Swears

The Big Mac prices were obtained from *The Economist* (Big Mac Currencies 2001).

- Table I - 1-1a, above, shows that in the USA *Teaching Kids to Sing* by K.H. Phillips would cost 15.4 Big Mac burgers as against 101 in South Africa.

- Table **I** - 1-1b, above, shows that in the USA *Teaching the Elementary School Chorus* by Linda Swears would cost 11.0 Big Mac burgers as against 82.9 in South Africa.

By dividing the "burger cost" of these books (Big Macs/book) in South Africa by the cost in the USA, we see the multiples of 6.6 and 7.5. This is the number of times the books are more expensive in South Africa than in the USA. These multiples indicate the high cost of imported goods in South Africa, largely as a result of our weak currency. As is evident, these prices are well out of reach for most choral educators in South Africa. A South African publication of similar size and content can be produced at a considerably reduced sum, and **Part II** of this thesis can be published and made available to choral educators.

1.6 The General Music Appraisal Programme

The Unit Standards for Choral Singing are linked to the General Music Appraisal Programme (GMAP) which has been generated by Grové (2001). The rationale for the GMAP is to provide the opportunity for all learners to acquire general music skills and knowledge in a wide variety of music styles and practices. This particular thesis addresses the practical implementation of the basic skills and knowledge in choral music.

Activities in the choral programme should reinforce and build upon music-specific concepts and general music skills learned in the GMAP. Table **I** - 1-2, below, by Grové (2001: 3-11), is a two-dimensional summary (mapping) of the actual three-dimensional MEUSSA model, which illustrates the components of the MEUSSA model. The grey areas indicate the sections that are covered within the GMAP, while the pink section indicates the focus area of this specific study, namely Choir Performance as a practical extension and implementation of the GMAP. The areas within the GMAP are as follows:

- Conceptualising (knowledge),
- Contextualising (style),
- Listening,
- Analysis, and
- Notation.

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) levels imply the inclusion of specific assessment criteria.

MUSIC SKILLS			MUSIC KNOWLEDGE		
CREATING	PERFORMING	APPRAISING	KNOWLEDGE Conceptualising	STYLE Contextualising	NQF LEVELS
Improvising	Idiophones	Conceptualising (Knowledge)	Melody	S.African Music	8	A
	Membranophones		Rhythm	Art Music	7	S
Arrangement	Aerophones	Contextualising (Style)	Dynamics	Indian Music	6	S
	Chordophones		Texture	Folk music	5	E
Composition	Electrophones	Listening	Timbre	Popular Music	4	S
	Vocal	Analysis	Harmony	Jazz	3	S
Technology	Group/Ensemble	Technology	Form	World Music	2	I
Notation	Theatre	Notation	Tempo	Technology	1	N
Assessment	Assessment	Assessment	Notation	Notation	ABET	G

Table I - 1-2 Components of the MEUSSA Model (Grové 2001: 3-11)

Below is a graphic illustration (Figure **I** - 1-1) to demonstrate the link-up with the Music Education Unit Standards for Southern Africa (MEUSSA) model as well as the GMAP. This graphic mapping was designed by Grové and is titled "Practical extension of the GMAP in choral singing" (2001: 5-8).

The choir functions as a performance group or ensemble, thus its presence as a "performing" aspect in the model.   Choir performance is an extension of the GMAP as the aspects that make up the core cluster thereof, namely listening, analysis, conceptualising, contextualising and notation, are applied practically in choral singing.   However, choral singing also has an additional set of choral-specific criteria that are not necessarily applicable to general music practices. These will be addressed and formulated in unit standards for choral singing.

The Choral Unit Standards will be formulated on widely accepted choir-performance criteria and are as follows (in no specific order of priority):

The Relationship between Choir Performance and the General Music Appraisal Programme

| TECHNOLO-GY | | | MUSIC STYLE AND/OR PRACTICE |

	LISTENING	ANALYSIS	
ANY PERFOR-MANCE PRACTICE	CONCEPTUA LISE		RELATED ART FORM
GROUP/ ENSEMBLE	CONTEXTUA LISE	NOTATION	NQF LEVEL 1

UNIT STANDARDS FOR CHOIR PERFORMANCE
Nita Wolff

PHRASING

TIMING

DICTION

EXPRESSION

CRITICAL EVALUATION

BALANCE & BLEND

INTONATION

VOICE/TONE PRODUCTION

STYLISTIC AUTHENTICITY

LISTENING	ANALYSIS	NQF LEVEL −1 INTERMEDIATE
CONCEP-TUALISING	GROUP/ ENSEMBLE	WESTERN MUSIC
CONTEX-TUALISING	NOTATION	NQF LEVEL −1 FOUNDATION

Figure I - 1-1 Practical extension of the GMAP in choral singing (Grové 2001: 5-8)

- Intonation,

- Phrasing,

- Diction,

- Voice/Tone Production,

- Balance & Blend,

- Stylistic Authenticity,

- Expression,

- Timing, and

- Critical Evaluation.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

In this thesis, a specific choral curriculum/syllabus is not offered. However, the combination of the Generic Unit Standards with the mapping of the route to be followed (support material) in order to implement the standards in a comprehensive choral programme, provides the teacher with sufficient coordinated guidelines to be able to proceed.

In the light of the author's training and teaching experience of a predominantly Western music approach, the thesis has a largely Eurocentric bias. This does not intend in any way to denigrate the value of non-Western music. The scope of this thesis, however, does not allow for the inclusion of the vitally important and necessary supplementary material, which is obviously required for a balanced South African choral programme. Additional research by adequately qualified and suitable person(s) is urgently required. Two co-members of the MEUSSA team, Zabalaza Mthembu and Vinayagi Govinder, are currently doing research on singing. Mthembu is doing research on African Choral Music and will write the required material for African Choirs. Govinder is formulating Unit Standards for Indian Music. Artistic elements and aesthetic responses transcend cultural differences and the cultural diversity of South Africa offers a vast resource for interesting choral singing and participation.

This thesis focuses on vocal development and choral art in general; hence music-reading skills are beyond the scope of the thesis. Choral singing in schools is viewed as an extension of the General Music Appraisal Programme (GMAP) where learners are taught aural skills and music literacy. Whilst music literacy is considered important in the choral programme, it is assumed that learners are taught aural skills and music literacy in the General Music Appraisal Programme (Grové 2001).

1.8 Target Groups

This thesis addresses three main target groups, namely:

- The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), which requires Generic Unit Standards for various disciplines;
- Students in training at tertiary academic institutions, who are intending to direct choirs at schools, i.e. pre-service education and training (PRESET); and
- Choral directors of primary school choirs, i.e. in-service education and training (INSET).

The *Generic Choral Unit Standards* and the *General Outcomes*, supplied in this thesis, are the same for all the cultural groups in South Africa. They are also applicable to all levels of development, i.e. starting in the Primary School right through to Tertiary level. *The Specific Outcomes* and *Range Statements and Assessment Criteria* will vary from one cultural group to another and will be modified for different levels of development by future research.

Apart from the above main target groups, there is much in this thesis which can prove of use to church and Sunday schools or the many choirs attached to a variety of community institutions. Whether teachers are completely untrained, "semi-specialist" or even "specialist" music teachers, the accessibility of relevant teaching material is always useful. The material produced in this thesis can be made available to interested parties within the South African context at a more affordable rate than imported publications.

1.9 Research Methodology

This study is based on (in no order of priority):

- Wide choral listening experience to both live and recorded music with a specific focus on the formulation of acceptable standards of choral singing practice;

- Attendance of numerous in-service choral workshops and courses;

- An extensive media survey involving the following sources:

  - Articles in educational journals and bulletins;

  - Videos and tapes on choral technique and conducting;

  - Books on choral technique and conducting; and

  - Internet web sites.

- Action research involving:

  - Informal interviews with fellow-teachers (whose task it is to direct the school choir) and surveys of their need of easily accessible and affordable material regarding choral directing and conducting; and

  - Personal experience teaching children in the relevant age-groups, and from a wide variety of cultural/religious/racial backgrounds.

- Collective expertise of the MEUSSA team. This involves regular team meetings and debates with other team members as well as access to the considered opinions of the National and International Critical Friends;

- Original thought and creative work required to generate the unit standards.

A positive derivative of generating Choral Generic Unit Standards lies in the process itself. One is inevitably compelled to question the value of the choral programme:

- to contemplate, deliberate and critique what is perceived to be important and why; and

- to clarify expectations.

After the difficult and time consuming task of generating the Choral Generic Unit Standards, a core formulation of the essential knowledge, values and skills had been reached. From this the "backwards process" to considering the necessary curricula/support material/learning programmes/syllabi was engaged in. The advantage of working this way around was that the fundamental evaluation was first done of what was

of greatest importance and what children should learn in choral singing, before a more detailed exposition of content and its progression was undertaken.

1.10 Layout of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into three parts:

Part I, *Academic Foundation and Unit Standards for Choral Work in the Primary School,* involves the essential preliminary information about the study in chapter 1, *Research Outline.* This is followed by chapter 2 which comprises a literature review of books on choral training as well as a brief history of children's choirs in the second half of the 20th century. Chapter 3 consists of the Choral Generic Unit Standards' framework and chapter 4 has a section on the vital issue of "assessment", as well as "critical cross-field linkages".

Part II is the *Support Material for the Choral Educator in the Primary School.* This is laid out like many choral conductors' handbooks, from the beginning stage of "Starting a Choir" in Chapter 1, through to "Concert Preparation" in Chapter 7.

Part III, *Conclusion,* comprises the *Conclusions and Recommendations* related to this study as a whole. This is followed by an appendix which is a summary of the core structure of the General Music Appraisal Programme (GMAP). The list of sources is at the very end of the thesis where it is most easily referred to.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF CHORAL TRAINING, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN'S CHOIRS IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 20th CENTURY

The literature discussed in 2.1 and 2.2 in this chapter, refers to books of the variety required by teachers needing comprehensive texts in which they can find information on all, or most of, the aspects on which they require information or assistance. The vast majority of sources consulted for this thesis have been articles in educational journals and bulletins as is evident in the list of sources. Some of these articles are discussed under 2.3 "Summary of Trends in Choral Music Education and a Brief History of Children's Choirs in the Second Half of the 20th Century" at the end of this chapter. This background chapter serves to place this thesis in the context of developments and trends in the second half of the 20th century, and to discuss the literature which influenced the generation of both the unit standards and the support material.

2.1   Choral Directing Books Specifically Aimed at the Primary School Level

The following list of only four books has specifically been written for the director of the primary school choir and has proved to be most useful for the purpose(s) of this thesis. These books are listed in alphabetical order, according to the authors' surnames:

- *Lifeline for Children's Choir Directors* by Jean Ashworth Bartle (1988);
- *Directing the Children's Choir* by Shirley W. McRae (1991);
- *Teaching Kids to Sing* by Kenneth H. Phillips (1992); and
- *Teaching the Elementary School Chorus* by Linda Swears (1985).

The first two books on the list (Bartle and McRae) are currently both out of print. The above four books will now be discussed individually.

2.1.1 *Lifeline for Children's Choir Directors* **by Jean Ashworth Bartle** (1988)

Jean Ashworth Bartle is a Founder Member and Music Director of the internationally acclaimed Toronto Children's Chorus. In this publication she addresses school, church and community or professional children's choirs in a practical and anecdotal style. The colloquial writing allows for easy reading by the non-specialist choral facilitator, but detracts from the academic stature of the work. The chapter headings are as follows:

- *Before You Begin;*
- *Developing the Child's Voice;*
- *The Uncertain Singer;*
- *Diction;*
- *Musicianship;*
- *Conducting Children's Choirs;*
- *The School Primary Choir;*
- *The School Junior Choir;*
- *The Junior Church Choir;*
- *The Community, or Professional, Children's Choir;*
- *Questions Most Frequently Asked;* and
- *And Finally....*

Extensive repertoire lists are supplied with some teaching plans for specific songs. There is no back-of-book indexing, which makes it difficult to find specific topics for research purposes. The layout of the headings in the book is such that one has to consult several different chapters should you need information about a specific topic: *Rehearsal Techniques*, for instance, appears in four different chapters under that heading.

According to personal communication, a new book by this author, on the same subject, is in publication and due to be released towards the end of 2001. It will be interesting to see whether the tone of this new book will in any way differ from the

approach in the 1988 publication, in addition to new aspects which may be introduced.

2.1.2 *Directing the Children's Choir* by Shirley W. McRae (1991)

This is a well-written, concise resource book for all children's choral educators, and especially the choral director of a church-based children's choir. The book is divided into eight chapters:

- Chapter one, *Promoting and Organizing the Children's Choir,* gives many helpful suggestions to formulating a rationale, recruiting choristers, auditioning singers, and setting up the choir in general.
- Chapter two, *Music and Children in the Church,* deals with church-based children's choirs.
- Chapter three offers valuable information about the personal and musical characteristics of children at different levels and the implications for the choir. The different levels discussed are:
  - the pre-school child (4-5 years),
  - the primary child (6-7 years),
  - middle elementary child (8-9 years), and
  - the upper elementary child (10-11 years).
- In chapter four the author discusses Orff Schulwerk and Kodály pedagogies and their usefulness for the children's choir.
- In chapters 5-8 there is practical information on vocal technique, rehearsal strategies and conducting, to name but a few.

This book is aimed specifically at church choir programmes and is the ideal resource book for this purpose. Choral educators in schools may find some of the material superfluous or irrelevant.

2.1.3 *Teaching Kids to Sing* by Kenneth H. Phillips (1992)

The author stresses the importance of implementing a systematically graded vocal technique method to help children to learn to sing confidently. This is in addition to "the song approach" to teach children to sing. In "the song approach" the choristers learn to sing by singing songs. The main consideration is "expression", and technique, as such, is relegated to a secondary place, if it is implemented at all.

There has been undue emphasis on "the song approach" in the second half of the 20th century. So much so, that the pre-World War II "bel canto" style, which emphasised the mastery of singing technique before song, has just about become obsolete in the training of children's choirs. In "the song approach", the acquisition of song repertoire often becomes more important than the development of singing technique itself. Prospective teachers are usually not trained in vocal pedagogy and are therefore ill-equipped to deal with the problems encountered in teaching children to sing.

"The song approach" has the advantage that it involves children in singing. The only harmful feature arises when "the song approach" emphasises acquiring repertoire, and *completely* ignores developing singing technique. Phillips certainly does not plead for a return to the early days of vocal drill, but stresses the importance of teaching children good, healthy singing habits and adopting a more balanced approach between song acquisition and child vocal pedagogy.

The research-based text is most informative and of immense value to teachers and conductors who work with children's voices. Phillips demonstrates the feasibility of group voice training for children as a complement to "the song approach" which is generally employed in class music situations and choirs. He maintains that the use of the singing voice is a learned, complex skill.

Because successful, good voice production depends on correct, efficient breath management, Phillips stresses the primary importance of teaching children breath management skills. He suggests that breath control training is an effective way to

improve pitch accuracy and also significantly affects range. "If nothing else is done in the way of child vocal training, children should, and can, be taught to breathe properly" (1992:15).

The book does not, however, offer a comprehensive approach for a choral programme. Topics that are not covered in the book, for instance, are:

- Organisation and management of choral programmes, like promotion, public relations, recruitment, budgeting, structuring, assessment, etc.;
- Conducting technique and related issues;
- Choral repertoire and style; and
- Rehearsal techniques.

Choral educators who are looking for material on vocal techniques, however, will find this book most useful.

2.1.4 *Teaching the Elementary School Chorus* by Linda Swears (1985)

This is a most informative, useful publication with practical suggestions for primary school choral teachers. The reader gains insight into the development of the child voice and the book is divided into three main sections for easy referencing:

- Section One deals with *Building a Choral Music Program for Children* and provides functional and practical suggestions for, amongst other things:
    - The philosophy of the children's choir, setting goals and objectives and starting a choir;
    - Gaining administrative, staff and community support;
    - Financing;
    - Recruiting choristers; and

- Understanding the development of the child's voice and many techniques to effect the development of the child's voice to its fullest potential.

- Section Two is titled *Developing a Fine Children's Choir.* It offers many suggestions and activities in achieving a good choral sound and teaching children the basics of:
  - good posture,
  - breathing,
  - diction,
  - tone quality,
  - balance and blend,
  - intonation, and
  - singing expressively.

It also offers practical suggestions to teach part-singing.

- Section Three, *Planning for Successful Rehearsal and Performance,* offers suggestions for organising the successful choral rehearsal for children. Concert preparation and detailed step-by-step planning from start to finish is furnished. The selection of appropriate repertoire is made easier by the provision of several lists of suitable repertoire, with levels of difficulty indicated. In the last chapter, developing conducting skills are discussed and guidelines for selecting and working with an accompanist are also included.

This handbook offers useful guidelines for the implementation and development of an effective choral programme in the primary school.

2.2 Books on Choral Directing Aimed at Secondary and Tertiary Levels

The books which are discussed below were not as generally useful as the above list, and are not specifically aimed at the choir in the primary school, but they did provide specific

insights into particular aspects. These nine books are listed in alphabetical order, according to the authors' surnames:

- *Kick-Start Your Choir* by Mike Brewer (1997);
- *Choral Music: Methods and Materials* by Barbara A. Brinson (1996);
- *Choral Conducting: Focus on Communication* by Harold A.Decker and Colleen J. Kirk (1988);
- *Conducting Choral Music* by Robert L. Garretson, 7th edition (1993);
- *Choral Director's Rehearsal and Performance Guide* by Lewis Gordon (1989)
- *Group Vocal Technique* by Frauke Haasemann and James M. Jordan (1991);
- *"Die Groot Afrikaanse Koorleiersgids"* edited by Salóme Hendrikse (1991);
- *Comprehensive Choral Music Education* by John Hylton (1995);
- *We Will Sing!* By Doreen Rao (1993); and
- *Choral Music Education* by Paul F. Roe (1970).

2.2.1   *Kick-Start Your Choir* by Mike Brewer (1997)

It would be more apt to refer to this publication as a "booklet" as it consists of a mere short 32 pages. It was written by Mike Brewer, director of the National Youth Choir in the United Kingdom. The chapter headings are as follows:

- *The voice in the classroom;*
- *Starting a choir;*
- *Getting young people to sing;*
- *Sound gestures and conducting;*
- *Programme planning and repertoire;*
- *Preparation and rehearsal;*
- *Basic vocal techniques;*
- *Troubleshooting.*

There are a few useful hints to be found in the book but the discussion of topics is superficial and not treated in depth at all. Jaco van der Merwe reviews Brewer's book as one of two "new" publications in the journal, *The South African Music Teacher* (Van der Merwe 2001: 30). "Kick-start Your Choir" was first published in 1997; hardly a "new" publication in the year 2001. Van der Merwe states that: "Although it is a slim publication (32 pages), it presents a treasure trove of ideas and practical strategies on almost every aspect of choral directorship" (Van der Merwe 2001: 30). It is far-fetched to describe this publication as a "treasure trove of ideas and practical strategies on almost every aspect of choral directorship". Firstly, with regards to the "treasure trove" claim, there are very few (if any) profound or new, innovative statements made in the book that could be considered as "treasures". Secondly, there are numerous aspects of choral directing that are not discussed in the book in any way whatsoever. Despite this discrepancy, van der Merwe states that there are "ideas and practical strategies on almost every aspect of choral directorship". With regard to organisation and management of choral programmes, Brewer either barely mentions, or does not discuss at all aspects like the following: strategies for promotion, budgeting, equipment, purchasing of music, recruitment, structuring, public relations, auditions, selection and placement of voices, seating arrangements – to mention but a few areas that are not dealt with in the book. The chapter on "Basic Vocal Techniques" provides little guidance. Style considerations are not dealt with at all and selection of repertoire only warrants a brief discussion.

For study purposes the book offers the researcher very little indeed. The book may, however, serve as reading material for informal, casual or entertaining purposes.

2.2.2 *Choral Music: Methods and Materials* by Barbara A. Brinson (1996)

The book is designed for use by directors of choirs, primarily at the Secondary school level and for students at tertiary institutions studying the art of choral

conducting. Choral conducting literature is significantly enriched by this publication. The methodology is made functional and practical, and valuable guidelines are supplied. The chapters are divided as follows:

- *Philosophical Foundations,*
- *Recruitment and Retention of Singers,*
- *Auditions and Placement of Singers,*
- *Development and Evaluation of a Choral Curriculum,*
- *Repertoire,*
- *Programming Music,*
- *Musical Analysis and Score Preparation,*
- *The Rehearsal,*
- *Behavior Management in Rehearsal,*
- *Vocal Techniques and Musicianship Skills,*
- *The Changing Voice,*
- *Pop Ensembles and Musical Productions,* and
- *Management of a Choral Program.*

This comprehensive publication provided most useful general resource material for this thesis. The section on seating arrangements in the chapter *Auditions and Placement of Singers* was especially informative.

2.2.3 *Choral Conducting: Focus on Communication* by Harold A. Decker and Colleen J. Kirk (1988)

The book was reissued in 1995 by Waveland Press. Both authors have been hailed as eminent choral conductors of exceptional artistry and both are excellent pedagogues. The book is divided into seven chapters:

- *Relating Gesture to Musical Expression;*
- *Preparing for Music Making: Score Study;*

- *Creating Music with the Choral Instrument;*
- *The Rehearsal: Aesthetic Performance;*
- *Developing the Choral Instrument;*
- *Developing Musical Skills and Responsiveness;* and
- *Selecting Repertory and Building the Concert Program.*

Choral conducting students at tertiary institutions and seasoned conductors who wish to refresh their skills, will find this book most informative and enriching. The only area that is not covered extensively in the book is "organisation and management". The authors do not, for instance, discuss topics like a financial budget, the purchasing of equipment or gaining support and public relations. This omission, however, is insignificant if one considers the considerable attention to all the other areas that are covered.

2.2.4 *Conducting Choral Music* by Robert L. Garretson, 7th Edition (1993)

Garretson's enduring and perpetually popular book (as shown by the number of editions), has been used extensively by students of choral methods classes since it was first published in 1961. It is aimed, particularly, at the conductor of the high school choir. The book is divided into eight chapters:

- *Conducting Techniques,*
- *Tone and Diction,*
- *Maintaining Vocal Health,*
- *Children's Voices and the Boy's Changing Voice,*
- *Style and Interpretation,*
- *Rehearsal Techniques,*
- *Programs and Concerts,* and
- *Planning and Organization.*

There is a wealth of valuable techniques and useful, practical information contained within this comprehensive, easy-to-understand book and the body of the choral conducting literature has been positively enriched by this publication. The sections on *The Singer's Posture and the Circulatory System* and *Achieving Correct Diction* were most informative.

2.2.5   *Choral Director's Rehearsal and Performance Guide* by Lewis Gordon (1989)

Gordon offers basic coverage of vocal fundamentals with a traditional approach to posture and breathing. He discusses vocal hygiene and how to "work around" some common ailments. He covers the skill of conducting in depth, and divides this particular aspect into four sections:

- *Establishing Rudiments of Conducting*;
- *Developing Expressive Conducting Technique;*
- *Learning Music;* and
- *Polishing and Interpreting Music.*

In the chapter *Developing Authentic Style* he covers the periods from the Renaissance right through to the 20th century and gives general guidelines regarding expression. In the chapters *Conducting Rehearsals* and *Preparing for Performance* there is a multitude of practical, useful hints to enhance the choral programme.

2.2.6   *Group Vocal Technique* by Frauke Haasemann and James M. Jordan (1991)

Both Haasemann and Jordan studied and worked under the internationally acclaimed choral conductor Wilhelm Ehmann (1904-1989). Frauke Haasemann

(1922-1991) was renowned as one of the world's authorities on choral conducting and is also recognised as one of the world's experts in the field of group vocal technique. Haasemann and Jordan have produced a comprehensive package of accessible, practical material for teaching group vocal technique to choirs. The package includes a book, a video and 300 vocal exercises on separate cards (vocalise cards). The set largely replaces the earlier Ehmann and Haasemann publication, *Voice Building for Choirs* (1981).

The choral director's task will be greatly advanced and enriched by this valuable publication. There is unfortunately no back-of-book index referencing, which makes finding specific topics difficult. This deficiency, however, is minor in comparison with the enormous benefit that the book offers.

2.2.7 *"Die Groot Afrikaanse Koorleiersgids"* edited by Salóme Hendrikse (1991)

This South African publication, in Afrikaans, contains a wealth of information, direction and guidance for choral directors of several different types of choirs. Twenty of the country's top experienced choral directors have contributed to this auspicious book. There are two chapters on the choir in the primary school: the chapter on the choir in the Foundation phase was written by Mariana le Roux and Magriet Louw; and the chapter on the choir in the Intermediate phase and the regional choir, contributed by Tinus Kühn. The book is, unfortunately, currently out of print. It would be a great advantage if the book is translated into English so that it is accessible to a wider readership.

2.2.8 *Comprehensive Choral Music Education* by John B. Hylton (1995)

The book is intended for use by conductors of secondary school, college and community choirs and students at tertiary institutions preparing for a career in

choral conducting. It is indeed a "comprehensive" publication on the topics typically contained in a choral methods class. The book offers a wealth of practical, functional guidelines and techniques on the following topics:

- *Building Tone,*
- *Rehearsal Planning and Techniques,*
- *Performance,*
- *The Score,*
- *Style in Choral Singing,*
- *Administration of the Choral Music Education Program,*
- *Planning for Special Events and Specialized Ensembles,*
- *Comprehensive Choral Music Education,* and
- *The Choral Profession.*

The chapter on *Developing Conducting Skill* was especially useful as resource material for this thesis.

2.2.9 *We Will Sing!* by Doreen Rao (1993)

This is a performance-based textbook for pupils, aged nine and above, and their classroom teachers. Teachers have not always viewed musical understanding necessarily as something that was inherently part of musical performance. "Today we know that when students perform musically, they are *demonstrating their knowledge* – they are *singing their understanding*" (Rao 1993: xiv). When the choir performs the music with skill and understanding, the choristers are *thinking-in-action* and singing their understanding of the music. Rao has written a functional, practical, systematic curriculum which may be adaptable to many different choral environments.

Unfortunately there is no back-of-book indexing, which makes it difficult to consult the book for research purposes.

2.2.10 *Choral Music Education* **by Paul F. Roe** (1970)

This book has been widely used by students of choral methods at tertiary institutions ever since its publication in 1970. It is aimed, particularly, at the choral music educator in the high (secondary) school. The book is divided into three main parts.

Part One consists of three chapters relating to matters that involve the music teacher in the context of the school itself:

- *Promotional Activities and Recommendations for Scheduling and Curriculum;*
- *Organizing the Singers*, and
- *Extra-Class Responsibilities of the Teacher.*

Part Two includes:

- two chapters on *Vocal Fundamentals*,
- a chapter on *Sight-reading*, and
- a chapter on *The General Music Class and some Junior High Problems.*

The material covered in the two chapters on vocal fundamentals is written in such a way that the reader can readily understand the principles.

Part Three includes:

- *Conducting,*
- *Class Control and Rehearsal Techniques,*
- *Style and Musical Traditions,* and
- *Performances.*

Roe advocates a rehearsal design in which the rehearsal opens and ends with something the choristers like and enjoy singing. This is either preceded or followed by vocal

exercises to warm up the voices and sharpen the ears. The middle portion of the rehearsal is devoted to:

- the presentation of new repertoire; and
- the slower paced, detailed and analytical work on contest or concert material.

He also suggests alternating the music being rehearsed according to the style, familiarity and degree of difficulty; i.e. frequently changing the pace of the rehearsal.

The book contains a myriad of clear, practical suggestions and realistic advice for the prospective choral teacher.

2.3 Summary of Trends in Choral Music Education and a Brief History of Children's Choirs in the Second Half of the 20th Century

The purpose of this summary is to provide an overview of published articles on choral music education that might reveal trends in the field and their relevance to the South African situation. This is followed by a brief history of the development of children's choirs in the second half of the 20th century. Lastly, Philip McLachlan's influence on choral singing in South Africa is discussed.

2.3.1 Children's Singing and Vocal Pedagogy

Ever since the second half of the 1980s there has been a steadily increasing interest in children's vocal development. The following researchers have contributed a great deal of information in the areas of children's vocal development, range, and singing ability.

Graham Welch (1985) conducted research on how children learn to sing in tune. He refers to children who cannot sing in tune as "poor pitch singers". He concludes that the inaccurate singer needs "Knowledge of Results" (KR) and a

variety of experience in order to learn to sing in tune. He proposes a schema theory of how children learn to sing in tune.

Betty Bertaux (1989: 92) states that singing is a learned skill and that: "The number of out-of-tune singers is greatly reduced as awareness and control of the operation of the vocal instrument increases". In order to teach accurate singing, teachers are encouraged to use the aural/kinesthetic feedback loop. This involves a process whereby the singer continually makes vocal adjustments to auditory information. She suggests that there is a hierarchy of technical skills and a sequence of activities designed to help children to develop control of the vocal instrument. The hierarchy is as follows:

- breath management;
- connecting breath to sound;
- exploring vocal registers;
- controlling pitch levels of sound;
- producing a specific pitch;
- exercising the muscles of articulation and tone modification; and
- producing specific pitches in time while articulating vowels, selected words, or a song text.

Bertaux postulates that the singers should become more aware of the sensation that they are experiencing when singing. "Tuned singing involves vocal-kinesthetic sensation that the individual has learned to associate with an aural perception of tone" (1989: 93). She gives the following suggestions for working with out-of-tune singers:

- Discontinue the use of piano accompaniments.
- Encourage individual singing.
- Do not sing along with students.
- Match group singing to the pitch range and key of the unskilled singer.

Kenneth Phillips has shown a significant interest in singing and vocal pedagogy with children and adolescents and has conducted extensive research in this area. His book *Teaching Kids to Sing* (1992) is reviewed in **Part I**, 2.1.3. He stresses the need for teaching of vocal technique (child vocal pedagogy) in the primary school. "The process of singing is complex, requiring many psycho-motor coordinations" (Phillips 1985: 22). The ability to sing does not necessarily develop automatically. Singing is a skill and it has to be taught. Phillips makes a plea for better training of prospective teachers in child vocal pedagogy at tertiary institutions so that they are better able to implement a plan for vocal development in the schools.

> Beginning teachers are often at a loss even as to what constitutes a desirable singing quality for children's voices. Added to this is the inability to know what to do in order to produce better singing results. Teacher training institutes must do a better job of preparing teachers in this most important area of child vocal production (Phillips 1986: 36).

Phillips and Aitchison (1997) found that the child's singing voice could be cultivated and improved through the implementation of Phillips' vocal instruction method (1992) that goes beyond the song approach. The development of breath-management skills has a direct relationship to singing performance in that vocal range is extended and pitch accuracy improved.

"The Effects of Psychomotor Skills Instruction on Attitude Toward Singing and General Music Among Students in Grades 4-6" (1998) is the second part of Phillips' and Aitchison's investigation (1997) and involves determining the relationship of psychomotor skills instruction to the learners' *attitude* toward singing and general music instruction. As a result of their findings, they suggest that group vocal instruction should be implemented before children arrive in the intermediate grades (4-6).

Joanne Rutkowski's research (1990) describes a(n) instrument/tool to measure and evaluate the development of children's singing voices. This is known as the

"Singing Voice Developmental Measure" (SVDM) and the following is an adaptation thereof:

1. *Presingers*: Children who do not sustain tones, but chant the text.
2. *Speaking-range singers*: Children who sustain tones and exhibit some sensitivity to pitch but remain within the speaking-voice range, usually **a** (1½ tones below Middle C) to $\mathbf{c}^1$.
3. *Uncertain singers*: Children who sustain tones but often waver between a speaking-voice range and a singing-voice range. When in singing voice, they utilize a range up to approximately $\mathbf{f}^{\sharp 1}$ and seem to have difficulty lifting the voice above this pitch.
4. *Initial-range singers*: Children who have the use of the singing-voice range up to the register lift, usually to $\mathbf{a}^1$. At this stage, the children rarely drop back into speaking-voice range.
5. *Singers*: Children who are able to sing over the register lift, $\mathbf{b}^{\flat 1}$ and above, and have full use of their singing voices.

These categories are concerned with the singing voice but not the accuracy of intonation.

Levinowitz et al (1998) conducted a study to examine the reliability of Rutkowski's Singing Voice Development Measure for use in the general music classroom, grades 1-6. Due to its reliability, they recommend its use in grades K-5 as a tool to evaluate the singing content standard of the USA National Standards of 1994. This could also be used in South Africa to assess children's use of the singing voice.

Graham Welch and Peta White conducted research on "The Developing Voice: Education and Vocal Efficiency – A Physical Perspective" (1993) and found that early vocal habits learned in childhood persist into adulthood. Teaching children vocal technique has the effect, amongst others, of ensuring a more consistent configuration (or shape) of the vocal tract. That is "the jaw opening is more stable,

the velum is raised and the larynx is lowered to increase the resonance area, having the effect of lowering the upper formant frequencies" (Welch & White 1993: 153).

Moore's research (1994) sets out to determine the effects of age, sex, and melodic/harmonic patterns on pitch-matching skills of children. He found that all harmonic pitch-matching tasks are not of equal difficulty. "Even the most skillful singers may find some pitch-matching tasks more difficult than others" (1994: 4). He suggests a task hierarchy for children's part-singing.

Klinger, Campbell and Goolsby (1998) examined the effect of two instructional procedures for teaching songs by rote to children in grade 2:

- Song transmission through immersion, whereby the teacher presents the material by singing the entire song repeatedly and the children gradually learn the words, rhythm and pitches. This is also referred to as the "whole song method".
- The teaching of a song using the phrase-by-phrase method. This involves the teacher presenting the song by fragmenting it initially and then gradually connecting song phrases toward the creation of a meaningful whole.

Klinger et al's results show that children who were taught through the immersion method performed the song with greater accuracy than those who were taught through the phrase-by-phrase process. The immersion method provides greater musical and textual continuity.

2.3.2 Male Vocal Modelling with Children

Several researchers have studied the effect of vocal models on the pitch matching accuracy of children. Male choral educators who work with primary school children often face difficulties in providing an appropriate model for treble singers. Children have to transpose an octave higher in response to the male model's

example and this may present a problem for accurate pitching. One dilemma the male choral educator has when working with children, is with regard to which register to use when modelling for the choristers.

Montgomery (1988) investigated the effect of a male teacher using his normal singing voice (modal register) in one class and a falsetto voice in the other class on children's ability to sing pitch patterns. All the subjects were significantly more correct in their responses when the vocal model was singing in a falsetto voice.

Green (1990) investigated the effect of vocal models (an adult male, adult female, and a child) on the pitch matching accuracy of children in grades 1-6. The most accurate responses were given to the child model and the least number of correct responses were elicited by the male model.

The purpose of the study by Price et al (1994) was to determine the effects of male timbre (both bass and tenor), falsetto, and sine-wave models on pitch-matching skills of 216 inaccurate singers in grades K-8. They found that children respond more accurately to vocal models than to instrumental ones (sine waves).

2.3.3 Choral Educator Competencies and Behaviours, Teaching Style and Methods, and Rehearsal Techniques

Patricia Bourne (1990) investigated the instructional techniques and strategies utilised by exemplary children's choral directors from community and public school settings. Other areas that were also investigated were: organisation of the children's choir; criteria for and selection of appropriate choral literature; and development of desirable vocal tone. This research provides the choral educator of the children's choir with valuable information.

Research by Hamann et al (1990) investigated the effects that the classroom environment had on the achievement of high school instrumental and vocal groups

in contest ratings. They found that pupils need to feel a part of the learning process and not function merely as passive recipients of the teacher's knowledge. The study of Hamann et al clearly indicates that classrooms that were more pupil-centred, promoted the highest levels of achievement. There should be many opportunities for pupil input, high levels of teacher support (caring), clarity of rules, and a variety of well-structured lessons and activities.

Gumm (1993) researched the teaching styles of secondary choral music directors, basing the study on teachers' perceptions of their own teaching. The primary purpose of the study was to develop a comprehensive model. Common factor analysis of 134 teaching behaviour survey items was used to confirm eight dimensions of choral music teaching styles: Student Independence, Teacher Authority, Positive Learning Environment, Time Efficiency, Nonverbal Motivation, Aesthetic Music Performance, Group Dynamics, and Music Concept Learning.

Charles Schmidt (1995) examined 120 secondary school choristers' perceptions of teacher verbal approval and disapproval feedback in response to a student's vocal performance. The researcher's results indicate that the choristers are more likely to attribute success in choral music to internal reasons (effort and ability), rather than external reasons (teacher, task difficulty and luck). Approval feedback that is directed to student improvement (e.g. "That sounds much better than it did last week") appears to be more significant than norm-referenced approval (e.g. "You're doing much better on that exercise than other students I've had"). The researcher advises choral educators to be circumspect in the ways in which disapproval or negative feedback is used.

The purpose of Julie Skadsem's research (1997) was to examine the effectiveness of four instructional techniques – conductor's verbal directions, dynamic markings in the score, conducting gestures, and choir dynamic level – on individuals' singing of sudden dynamic changes in music. Her results indicated that verbal instruction had a significantly better influence on the singer's dynamic singing

responses than the other three modes of instruction. She cautions that the verbal instructions should be kept brief so as not to interfere with the flow of the rehearsal. Surprisingly, the instructional stimulus that received the lowest level of response was the conductor's gestural change. Skadsem recommends having students practise conducting gestures or other physical movements as they sing so that they might be encouraged to pay more attention to the conductor.

Dunn (1997) conducted research to observe performance improvement of seven choral music concepts across six 30-minute rehearsals, after sequential, structured task presentation. The study was also designed to examine the effects of teacher reinforcement on student attentiveness, performance achievement, and attitude. The subjects for this study were the choristers from two select high school choirs in the USA. Experimental treatment was implemented in that one choir received reinforcement (feedback) and the other no reinforcement (no feedback). The group that received teacher reinforcement, achieved higher scores from the judges than the group that received no teacher reinforcement.

> These results support the idea that given equivalent amounts of teacher instruction and performance time, the addition of teacher academic reinforcement might produce better musical performances (Dunn 1997: 564).

Furthermore, choristers in the feedback group consistently had a more positive attitude toward the music, rehearsals, and the choral educator.

Davis (1998) investigated 83 rehearsals and four final performances of the beginning and advanced choirs in two high schools to observe the rehearsal of one musical selection in each choir from introduction to performance at an adjudicated festival. The researcher endeavoured to pinpoint how two accomplished choral educators with varied effective teaching skills brought about high musical achievement. Her findings show that as the performance improved in rehearsals, there was increased student rehearsal performance and increased educator "conducting only", i.e. "the conductors in this study provided more non-verbal communication during student performance time as students became more

proficient" (Davis 1998: 506). Furthermore, as performances improved, there was a decrease in educator instructional sequences per minute, and sequences ending with positive educator feedback.

The purpose of Yarbrough and Madsen's study (1998) was firstly, to identify and define choral educator behaviours that create good rehearsals, and secondly, to determine how those behaviours succeeded in producing excellence in music performance. The subjects for the study were 89 university music majors. They were presented with seven videotaped choral rehearsal excerpts which focussed on the conductor/teacher. The subjects were asked to rate the conductor/teacher in each excerpt with regard to: use of rehearsal time, musicianship, accuracy of instruction, student attentiveness, student performance quality, overall teaching effectiveness, enthusiasm, intensity, pacing and personality.

As a result of their findings, the researchers state the following (Yarbrough & Madsen 1998: 477):

> In choral conducting and methods classes we strongly encourage prospective conductors to maintain a fast pace, to allow singers maximum performance time, and to keep instructions brief and to the point. [...] Even tedious drill rehearsals can be successful in maintaining student attentiveness if approvals and eye contact are high and if teacher talk is efficient, accurate, and kept to a minimum.

2.3.4   Recruiting Choristers

Research by Mizener, "Attitudes of Third- Through Sixth-Grade Children Toward Singing and Choir Participation and Assessed Singing Skill" (1993), shows that girls have a more positive attitude toward singing and choir participation than boys. Both boys' and girls' positive attitude towards singing decreased steadily as the grade level increased. Mizener's research indicates that most children like to sing under certain circumstances. The choral educator therefore needs to make use of these preferred singing circumstances to enhance positive attitudes to singing, like for instance using songs that are age- and grade-appropriate. Boys' attitude to

singing may be strengthened and a more positive gender identification may be inculcated by identifying with men who are active in singing organisations in the community or participating in social singing activities. Singing experiences in the home have a significant relationship to attitude toward music, and children have a more positive attitude towards singing when the home environment supports singing activities. The choral educator should periodically inform the parent body and stress the importance of the favourable influence of participating in the choral programme. (Refer to **Part II**, 2.6 "Involving Parents".)

Cooper (1995) observes that differences between boys' and girls' singing accuracy should probably not be attributed to gender alone. Other factors such as motivation and peer pressure may also have an effect.

2.3.5 The Mixed-Gender Children's Choir

For centuries only boys' voices were trained to sing in the churches and cathedrals of Europe and England. (Refer to **Part II**, 2.3 "The Changing Voice".) In the second part of the 20th century, an innovative development was the establishment of children's choirs that involved *both* boys and girls. The all-boy choir tradition, emulating the tradition of the Europeans, particularly that of the Central Europeans (e.g. the Vienna Boys Choir), and the British Cathedral Choir tradition, was the forerunner of the more recent mixed-gender children's choir phenomenon. The mixed-gender children's choir movement has grown from strength to strength and has become the norm rather than the exception in all of the Western World. Music educators discovered what a tremendously rewarding aesthetic instrument the mixed-gender children's choir can be.

2.3.5.1 The Scandinavian Mixed-Gender Children's Choir

Professor Erkki Pohjola, founder and director (1963-1994) of the world renowned Tapiola Choir from Finland, was instrumental in establishing a

mixed-gender choir of soprano and alto voices as a new artistic instrument in the Scandinavian countries. He established the Tapiola Choir in 1963 and developed it into one of the most highly acclaimed vocal instruments of our time. Pohjola is considered one of the leading personalities of Finnish music education.

In 1964 Pohjola attended the International Society for Music Education (ISME) conference in Budapest. The conference demonstrated to what extent the Soviet bloc countries, Hungary in particular, had progressed in music education. He had the chance to meet Zoltán Kodály, the celebrated Hungarian champion of music education in the 20th century. Pohjola heard the children's choirs from Hungary and Bulgaria perform and was captured by the music which "bubbled out from the national musical culture. Practically all the songs were sung in the singers' own languages" (Pohjola 1992: 51).

> At the Budapest ISME Conference in 1964 I realised that a new artistic instrument had been born, a 'mixed choir' of soprano and alto voices, with both boys and girls in the line-up. My work was carried along by this new current, one which has since happily become a worldwide flood (Pohjola 1992: 61).

From Budapest Pohjola travelled to Salzburg and attended a summer course at the Orff Institute, where he met Carl Orff. These encounters with the main currents of music education in the 1960s had a definite influence on Pohjola's work.

The Tapiola choir has produced several CDs under Pohjola's direction. The choir has prompted the international choral community to refer to their natural voice production based on the Finnish tradition as the "Tapiola Sound". The choir emphasises the singer's ability to blend with the other voices, but also values the individuality of a voice.

The basic element is the young singer's own voice, moulded by
the vernacular. The ideal sound is that of a stringed instrument: it
is warm, light and translucent, the phrasing is musical and the
singing gives the impression of being easy and effortless. But the
ideal sound of the Choir is not just one closely-defined concept; it
is a combination of different choral timbres and is always adapted
to the music being performed (Tapiola Choir: 2001).

The integration of singing, instrumental music and movement has since the
choir's inception been one of the guiding principles of the Tapiola Choir.
Each of the choristers entering the choir either plays an instrument already
or is encouraged to do so. Choristers often act as soloists or accompanists
to the choir. The performances are enhanced by movement and dance.

In 1971 Tapiola Choir won the illustrious and coveted Silver Rose Bowl in
the BBC's "Let the Peoples Sing" competition. The choir has been on
almost 60 international concert tours, visiting several countries in Europe,
as well as Israel, the United States, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan,
the Philippines, Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand.

Kari Ala-Pöllänen has been the Tapiola Choir's conductor and artistic
director since 1994. Tapiola Choir has made three CDs with Kari Ala-
Pöllänen as the conductor.

The Children's Choir of the Royal Danish Academy of Music was founded
in 1978 by Margrete Enevold. The choir serves as a practice choir for
future conductors and teachers. Bente Colding-Jørgensen is currently the
conductor of the choir. Since 1978 the choir has developed into one of the
finest international children's choirs. The choir consists of 60 talented boys
and girls, aged 10-16, who come from the Copenhagen area. There is a
"Little Choir" of younger children, aged 7-10, that feed into the Children's
Choir. The choir has recorded four CDs and they have recorded numerous
radio and TV performances. They perform all over Denmark and have
undertaken several tours abroad to countries like Norway, Sweden,

Scotland, Germany, USA, Israel, Argentina, Brazil, Greenland and Austria. (Children's Choir of the Royal Danish Academy of Music 2001.)

2.3.5.2 The American Mixed-Gender Children's Choir

In America the mixed-gender children's choir gained momentum with the moving performance of Doreen Rao's Glen Ellyn Children's Choir at the American Choral Directors' Association (ACDA) Bicentennial Celebration (1976). This was the first mixed-gender children's choir to perform at such an event (Friar 1999).

> Early in 1979, ACDA began to discuss the difference between boy choirs and children's choirs. It was agreed that while choral repertory was in most cases a common quality, the European-based boy choir tradition, educational philosophy, rehearsal psychology, and social implications significantly differed from that of most American children's choirs in the schools, church, and community (Rao 1989: 6).

In 1979 the American Choral Director's Association formed the ACDA National Committee on Children's Choirs. Up to this stage, the children's choirs fell under the auspices of the ACDA Boy Choir Committee. In the 1980s and 1990s the mixed-gender children's choir movement grew from strength to strength in North America under the leadership of the ACDA National Committee on Children's Choirs, chaired by Doreen Rao. Their primary aim was to:

> develop a *national awareness of children's choirs:* (a) as an instrument of artistic excellence; (b) as a resource basic to music education; and (c) as a means of reviving the joy of singing in American culture (Rao 1989: 7).

The ACDA National Committee on Children's Choirs promoted the formation of children's choirs throughout the USA in community, church, and elementary school contexts. They encouraged distinguished American

composers to compose choral music for children's voices and prevailed upon choral departments and music education faculties at tertiary institutions to design courses pertinent to the treble voice children's choir. They were also instrumental in the formation of an ACDA National Honors Children's Chorus, representing children from throughout the United States to rehearse and perform at the Nashville convention in 1983. The ACDA Honors Choir at the National Convention received an enthusiastic standing ovation from the full Convention. In 1993 the San Antonio Convention celebrated the tenth anniversary of the honour choir concept, which was introduced in 1983.

> ACDA members began to recognize that: (a) the children's choir represented the 'future of choral music' in America; that (b) attending to young choirs can be an *artistically* satisfying experience; and that (c) supporting the children's choir movement is an investment in the future of high school, college, and professional choral programs (Rao 1989: 8-9).

A joint effort by the ACDA National Committee on Children's Choirs and MENC produced the publication entitled *Choral Music for Children: An Annotated List* (1990). The committee consisted of five dedicated, experienced and inspired group of United States and Canadian teachers who direct children's choirs. Doreen Rao was the editor. The project was undertaken to provide choral educators with a sourcebook on choral repertoire with artistic merit and pedagogical value, suitable for the children's unchanged, treble voice choir. Furthermore, the ACDA developed one of the first professional resources in video format – *ACDA on Location, Volume 1: The Children's Choir with Doreen Rao and the Glen Ellyn Children's Chorus.*

Newly formed children's choirs proliferated throughout the USA and the children's choir movement was steadily coming into its own. This has resulted in more published articles pertaining to children's choirs in professional journals like the *Music Educators Journal* and *The Choral*

Journal. The following are a few examples (in publishing chronological order):

- "A Responsibility to Young Voices" by Peggy Bennett (1986);
- "Writing and Arranging for Young Singers" by Mary Goetze (1989);
- "Choral Tone in a Children's Choir – Its Description and Development" by Amy Chivington (1989);
- "Music in Worship: A Selected List for Children's Choirs" by Eva Wedel (1990);
- "Elementary School Choirs and Auditions" by Janice Haworth (1992);
- "Our Best and Most Lasting Hope" by Samuel Adler (1993);
- "Children's Choirs: The Future, the Challenge" by Linda Ferreira (1993);
- "Children's Choirs: A Revolution From Within" by Doreen Rao (1993);
- "Building the American Children's Choir Tradition" by Barbara Tagg (1993);
- "Michael Hurd's Choral Cantatas for Children" by James McCray (1996);
- "Tuning Up for a Great Elementary Chorus" by Amy Chivington (1998);
- "Developing a Children's Choir Concert" by Angela Broeker (2000);

Several pertinent research studies can be found in the *Journal of Research in Singing*, the *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, and *The Journal of Research in Music Education*. (For an overview of published articles on research related to children's choirs, refer to **Part I**, 2.3.1 "Children's Singing and Vocal Pedagogy", 2.3.2 "Male Vocal Modelling with Children" and 2.3.4 "Recruiting Choristers", above.)

In January 1991, Malcolm Goldring, Music Inspector in the West Midlands, England, spent two months touring the United States and Canada

to study the training of children's choirs. He was looking for examples of good practice which might be applied in the United Kingdom to stop the decline of choral singing among young people there. He states that:

> yes, we do have a wonderful and rich history of choral music in our cathedrals and larger parish churches, but this is but a veneer, below which the situation is very patchy indeed (Goldring 1992: 31).

He expresses the opinion that North America has a children's choir movement that is "underpinned with a strong philosophical base, with clear aims and objectives, and clear organizational structures to help carry these out" (Goldring 1992: 32). He visited approximately 20 children's choirs in the United States and America and was most impressed that every one of them had a structured rehearsal pattern with the choristers being prepared for the rehearsal with relaxation activities, posture control, and breathing exercises. He was also struck by the exceptional standards which the American/Canadian choral directors set for their choirs and the same high standards which the choristers set for themselves. He witnessed rehearsals that provided rich learning experiences for the choristers and was thrilled to hear "so many of your young people's choirs singing works which made great demands on their intellectual, literary, emotional, and musical resources (Goldring 1992: 33). He commended the North Americans for having managed to encourage composers and arrangers to write for young choirs and to persuade publishing houses to make the music readily available. He was also taken with the level of training that choral directors receive at tertiary institutions. The expanding children's choir movement in North America is certainly alive and well; so much so, that "children's choir directors have become one of the fastest growing constituencies in ACDA" (Tagg 1993: 7).

2.3.5.3 The English Mixed-Gender Children's Choir

For centuries the English cathedral choir tradition allowed the selection of boys only for performance of sacred music. This has changed in the last decade of the 20th century and it is now becoming common to find girls in these previously male dominated choirs or, alternatively to have a parallel girls' choir. Salisbury Cathedral was the first to have a parallel girls' choir in 1990. Cathedrals in Exeter, Wells, Norwich, York, Wakefield, Chester and Winchester now have parallel girls' choirs. Sarah Baldock directs a girls' choir at Winchester Cathedral. She says that:

> We won't just be barging in with the girls. I have a deep sense
> that we will be joining an existing foundation and adding a
> dimension to it (Kay 1998: 30).

Cathedrals such as St Mary's, Edinburgh, and Manchester have mixed choirs.

Research has been conducted which suggests that it is not necessarily such an easy task to tell the difference between trained boys and girls singing the treble line in a choir. When Desmond Sergeant and Graham Welch of the British Centre for Advanced Studies in Music Education played recordings of boys', girls' and mixed choirs to a panel of experts, most were misidentified. Welch states the following:

> We have a clear stereotype of a cathedral boy choir sound. What
> this study shows is that if girls have been trained in that tradition,
> we perceive that they sound the same as boys. Choirs who do not
> conform to this stereotype were mistakenly identified as girls. We
> conjecture that this difference is intimately connected to the choral
> director's approach: they can train girls to imitate the acoustic
> patterning of the male voice (Kay 1998: 31).

David Howard, Christopher Barlow and Graham Welch subsequently did research on "Vocal Production and Listener Perception of Trained Girls

and Boys in the English Cathedral Choir" (2000). The aim was to investigate whether or not listeners could perceive the difference between boys or girls singing the top line of snippets of traditional cathedral choral music. Either the girls or the boys sang with the lay clerks in the cathedral. It is clear from their research results that the ability to distinguish between the boys or the girls singing the top line is not necessarily such an easy task. There was considerable variation between the musical choral setting which the choristers were singing. Masking by the rest of the choir and/or organ accompaniment could have an influence on the listener's ability to differentiate between whether the boys or the girls were singing the top line.

The Americans, Randall Moore and Janice Killian's research also maintains that the ability to distinguish between trained boy and girl singers in a blind situation may be a more difficult task than centuries of tradition might have led us to believe (2000).

2.3.5.4 The South African Mixed-Gender Children's Choir

As was mentioned before, the mixed-gender children's choir movement grew from strength to strength in the second half of the 20th century throughout the Western world and has become the norm rather than the exception. This trend can also be discerned in South Africa, to the extent that most of the outstanding children's regional choirs currently, are mixed-gender choirs. The following outstanding choirs (to name but a few) are examples of these mixed-gender Children's choirs; and serve as role models for primary school choirs:

- Bloemfontein
- East Rand
- Highveld (Ermelo)
- Jakaranda (University of Pretoria)
- Kimberley

- North West (Potchefstroom)
- Pietermaritzburg
- Tygerberg
- West Rand.

2.3.6 Philip McLachlan's Influence on Choral Singing in South Africa in the Second Half of the 20th Century

Philip McLachlan (1916-1983) has repeatedly been called "the father" of choral singing in South Africa (Jankowitz 1990: iv). He initially studied in natural sciences at the University of Stellenbosch and obtained a B.Sc. degree in 1936 and two years later, a B.Ed. degree – both with distinction. Because of his interest in music, he also attended classes at the university's music conservatory. He completed two years of study in both organ and piano and one year of solo singing and theory.

In 1947/48 he studied school music and singing at the London Institute of Education and the Royal Academy of Music. He studied choral training with Kurt Thomas in the 1950s and this experience had a dramatic influence on his work. In 1962 he undertook a study tour of the USA and Europe. He was deeply impressed by the Roger Wagner Chorale and the Oberlin College choir in the USA, the Netherlands' Chamber Choir under the direction of Felix de Nobel and the boys' choir of the Sistine Chapel in Rome. In 1968 he once more travelled to the USA where he attended the American Choral Directors' Association (ACDA) Conference and the Music Educators National Conference (MENC). He also travelled throughout Europe in that year and attended the International Society for Music Education (ISME) Congress held in Dijon, France. These visits served as an additional shaping influence and added to his extensive experience in music education and choral conducting; experience which he put into practice with his own trend-setting choral and general class music teaching activities.

McLachlan was appointed as a Senior Lecture in Nature Study and School Music in the Faculty of Education at the University of Stellenbosch in 1954. In 1973 he became Associate Professor in School Music at the same university. McLachlan was also responsible for training senior music students in what was then called "Class singing and choral conducting". He was a founder member of University Choir of Stellenbosch in 1936 and he became the conductor of this choir in 1955. This choir was ultimately received with great acclaim both in South Africa and overseas.

> In his two chosen fields of school music and choral conducting, Philip McLachlan advanced to the forefront of South African musicians. His choral work established new standards of choral performance which have often been emulated but rarely equalled, and with his dynamic application to the cause of South African school music he contributed decisively to the establishment of international standards of class instruction. This energetic and lovable man became a prominent figure in the South African musical world to two generations which equally share the impress of his work (Malan 1984: 222).

The Afrikaans book *Klasonderrig in Musiek: 'n Handleiding vir Onderwysers* by McLachlan (1986), to this day serves as a valuable resource book for teachers of general class music, and also contains a substantial section on choral work.

McLachlan's tremendous influence on choral music in South Africa is undisputed, so much so, that the South African Choral Society decided in 1983 to institute biennial choral workshops which they named after him. He was instrumental in establishing a fine choral tradition in South Africa which is continually growing from strength to strength.

Chapter 3

GENERATING CHORAL UNIT STANDARDS

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of generating choral unit standards is to devise a framework within which all the stakeholders can provide the choristers/learners with a worthy, comprehensive and rounded choral education in South Africa. To date choristers have not received academic credit for their participation in the choir programme as it still is viewed as an extra-curricular activity. For choristers to obtain any credit for their endeavours, choral unit standards and their associated range statements and assessment criteria have to be in place.

The choral unit standards lend consistency to the quality of choral programmes at all levels of development, i.e. from the Foundation phase at school, right through to tertiary institutions. The "Generic Unit Standards" and the "General Outcomes" are applicable, not only to all levels of development, but to choirs from different cultural groups as well. This creates a common foundation for all choirs. The "Range Statements and Assessment Criteria" will apply to a specific level of development. The "Western Music Specifics" are, as the title implies, mostly applicable to Western music.

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 1 is equal to grade 9 in schools. The Foundation and Intermediate phases are indicated as level -1.

The choral unit standards framework should be helpful to educators and serve as a model which enables them to better devise their own choral programme, lesson plans and assessment strategies. The aim of the choral unit standards is also to gain greater recognition for the choral programme by educational authorities and school administrators. Finally, with the choral unit standards in place, choral education is in a more advantageous position to meet the needs of learners (choristers) and to enhance their quality of life.

As a result of personal experience teaching children of the relevant age groups and after studying several books and articles in journals and bulletins on choral education, the author decided on a core formulation of essential knowledge, values and skills, and the process of generating the choral unit standards was undertaken. There are nine generic choral unit standards with the following titles (in no specific order of priority):

- Intonation
- Phrasing
- Diction
- Voice/Tone Production
- Balance & Blend
- Stylistic Authenticity
- Expression
- Timing and
- Critical Evaluation.

These nine generic unit standards cover the fields that are deemed important according to all the literature studied.

In this chapter, each unit standard is set out in a table format as this lends a concise overview of the structure of that particular unit standard. This is followed by a detailed analysis (essence) of the content according to the guidelines given by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). The "notes" are placed in separate boxes to facilitate the reading process. The notes contain:

- additional, explanatory detail;
- quotations from leading choral directors and masters in the field of education; and
- cross-referencing to other unit standards or the support material for the teacher in **Part II**.

The unit standards are written in straight-forward language which is clear, direct and precise. This is to avoid confusion and to maintain integrity. What the standards mean should be immediately clear to all concerned.

3.2 Choral Unit Standard: Intonation

TITLE	GENERIC UNIT STANDARD	GENERAL OUTCOMES	RANGE STATEMENTS AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
I N T O N A T I O N	Sing in tune independently and with others	1. Sing varied repertoire of songs independently and on pitch 2. Match pitches with other choristers who are singing the same vocal part 3. Maintain own part while simultaneously listening and tuning to other part(s)	The Choir/Choristers demonstrate(s) the following: 1. Ability to sing varied repertoire of songs/works independently and in tune. Repertoire lies within suitable range, with an ever-increasing level of difficulty according to developmental stage 2. Ability to preserve key and pitch in unison group singing 3. Vocal independence with pitch accuracy in part-singing.

WESTERN MUSIC SPECIFICS

- Sing repertoire mainly in major and minor tonalities
- Accompaniment that enhances overall performance with appropriate balance between accompaniment and singing.

Field: NSB 02 Culture & Arts (Sport & recreation)

Sub-field: Music

Domain: Music Education

Sub-Domain: Choral Singing

Purpose (aim): To develop musicianship through choral singing

NQF Level: -1

Foundation Phase

Intermediate Phase

Credits: Integrated*

Standard No:	Not applicable at this stage
Learning Assumptions:	It is recommended that GMAP and Choir Performance are studied concurrently
Title of Standard:	**INTONATION** (IN CHORAL SINGING)
Generic Unit Standard:	*Sing in tune independently and with others*
General Outcomes:	1. *Sing varied repertoire of songs independently and on pitch*
	2. *Match pitches with other choristers who are singing the same vocal part*
	3. *Maintain own part while simultaneously listening and tuning to other part(s)*
Range Statements and Assessment Criteria:	*The Choir/Choristers demonstrate(s) the following:*
	1. Ability to sing varied repertoire of songs/works independently and in tune. Repertoire lies within suitable range, with an ever-increasing level of difficulty according to developmental stage**

Range Statement: "varied repertoire"

In addition to the Western music repertoire (representing a variety of styles, composers, and periods), musics sourced from other cultures are also used to add an international flavour to the choir's programme. Obviously, in the South African context, the major additional focus will be on African music.

Foundation Phase: In addition to songs from the Western repertoire, songs/works from other South African language groups, which have simple language texts, may be attempted.

Intermediate Phase: In addition to songs from the Western repertoire and songs/works from other South African language groups, International songs/works with simple foreign language texts may also be introduced.***

Notes

*The 9 Unit Standards in Choral Singing are integrated into one core cluster for Choir Performance. If Choir Performance is an extension of GMAP, the minimum suggested credit allocation is 3. (Refer to Grové thesis, Diagram 5.1 – Credit allocation for the GMAP.)

*Refer to **Part III**, 1.2 "Recommendations".

Refer to **Part II, 2.5 "Selecting Appropriate Repertoire".

*** "The Intermediate phase child has "an increased interest in other cultures and curiosity about the world" (McRae 1991: 46).

*** "Texts in foreign languages are wonderful singing vehicles for children. Through them, children become part of our global culture. They also master new vowel and consonant sounds that in turn widen their palette of vocal timbres" (Broeker 2000: 27).

*** "The multifaceted experience of humankind lies in the arts of a people, and music is one of the most delightful means of achieving a deeper understanding of that humanity. Music reflects holistically the woof and warp of a culture, its past, present, and future yearning, its glory and its despair, its delight and its grief" (Palmer 1999: 14).

*** "Music has always served as an expression of people's will to convey feelings, to maintain traditions, and to enrich living, just as do all the arts" (Apfelstadt 2001: 35).

<u>Range Statement</u>: "independently and in tune"*

    Foundation Phase: For the purpose of assessment, minor pitch inaccuracies are allowed when a chorister is performing independently, without accompaniment.

    Intermediate Phase: Greater pitch accuracy is required.**

Notes

*Problematic intervals in songs require repeated practice.

**There is general agreement amongst researchers that pitch accuracy in singing improves with maturity. "There is a positive relationship between age and singing ability. As children grow older, they tend to sing with increased accuracy" (Goetze et al 1990:30).

Choristers in the Intermediate phase should be able to aurally discriminate between "in-tune" and "out-of-tune" singing.

<u>Range Statement</u>: "suitable range"*

    Foundation Phase: The pitch range recommended for songs is c^1-e^2.** (**Middle** $c = c^1$ and the c an octave higher $= c^2$).

Notes

*Refer to **Part II**, 2.5 "Selecting Appropriate Repertoire", and 6.6 "Children's Vocal Ranges and Registers".

**Individual vocal ranges vary, but most children in the choir by the end of the

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Foundation phase (grade 3) should sing accurately in a range from $c^1 - e^2$. Shirley McRae also recommends the range $c^1 - e^2$ (1991:44). According to Kenneth Phillips, the tessitura extends from $d^1 - c^2$ in grade 3. The tessitura refers to the average position of a song's notes, i.e. the kernel/nucleus of the range, or "the comfort zone in which the majority of pitches should be written" (1992: 59).

Intermediate Phase: The range is extended, both higher and lower. The pitch range recommended is alto, $a - e^2$ (the "a" refers to the note 1½ tones below middle c); and soprano, $c^1 - g^2$.*

Notes

*"While ranges vary, $b^\square$ to f$\square$ is typical; a range of up to two octaves is possible" for the upper elementary child (McRae 1991: 46). According to Phillips, "the limited vocal range in the primary grades is gradually raised and lowered until a full two octaves is used in the sixth grade", i.e. $g - g^2$ with a tessitura between $d^1 - d^2$ (1992: 59-60). The author's personal experience has shown that the lower vocal range limit seems to be very low for the average White South African 6th grade chorister. (This was confirmed, in personal communication, by Dr. Johan van der Sandt and Riekie van Aswegen, both associated with the University of Pretoria.) The average Black South African 6th grade chorister, however, will find Phillips' vocal range recommendation appropriate.

Research has found that African-American children's ranges are somewhat lower in compass: "Young's findings presented in 1976 indicated ... black children's mean pitches were approximately two semitones lower than those of white or native American children of corresponding ages" (Goetze et al 1990: 21).

Range Statement: "level of difficulty"

Foundation Phase: Choristers sing vocal repertoire with appropriate quality and a complexity level of 2 on a scale of 1-6.*

Intermediate Phase: Because musical memory (tonal and rhythmic) continues to increase from the Foundation phase to the Intermediate phase (and beyond), more complex music, with a complexity level of 3, can be sung in the Intermediate phase.

Notes

*Scale for Level of Complexity for songs:

1. Songs suitable for use in the Pre-school phase;
2. Songs suitable for use in the Foundation phase (*only* grades 1 – 3, i.e. excluding grade 0, which is the Reception year);
3. Songs suitable for use in the Intermediate phase (i.e. grades 4 – 6);
4. Songs suitable for use in the Senior phase (i.e. grades 7 – 9);
5. Songs suitable for use in FET (Further Education and Training, i.e. grades 10 – 12);
6. Songs suitable for use in HET (Higher Education and Training, i.e. Tertiary educational institutions).

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2. *Ability to preserve key and pitch in unison group singing*

Foundation Phase: Minor inaccuracies in matching pitches with other choristers may be accepted.*

Intermediate Phase: Greater accuracy in matching pitches with other choristers is expected.

Notes

*Mary Goetze found that:

> kindergartners and first graders sang more accurately alone than in unison with other children, although no significant difference between individual and unison accuracy was apparent for third graders. [...] Young children may have difficulty focusing attention on their own voice when louder singers, including other children or the teacher, are singing simultaneously (Goetze et al 1990: 26/7).

It is essential to bear this in mind when auditioning grade 1 and 2 children for the Foundation phase choir.

3. *Vocal independence with pitch accuracy in part-singing**

Foundation Phase: Most Foundation phase choirs only sing unison work. The rationale for this is that the choristers are still learning to pitch accurately and that they should be proficient in unison singing before part-singing (harmonising) is introduced.**

Notes

*Refer to **Part II**, 4.3 "Unison and Part Singing".

** "With good vocal instruction and many opportunities for singing, most youngsters should sing on pitch most of the time by the end of third grade. Children are increasingly aware of pitch accuracy for themselves and others. A sense of tonality is established and the rudiments of singing in harmony usually begin" (Swears 1985: 30).

Intermediate phase: Two-part (soprano and alto) singing.*

Notes

*"Some of the results of this study can be applied directly to teaching by music educators. These pitch-matching findings suggest a basic task hierarchy for children's part-singing on a continuum from easy to difficult:

1. Upper parts, such as descants or soprano lines, are easiest.
2. Lower parts, such as alto lines, are more difficult.
3. Middle parts, such as second soprano lines, are the most difficult.

[…]. When music educators know that finding the middle pitch of a triad is difficult, they would do well to have more adept or experienced singers on middle parts." (Moore 1994: 12).

Western Music Specifics: *1. Sing repertoire mainly in major and minor tonalities**

Foundation Phase: Mostly stepwise movement and small leaps within major and minor tonalities. Tessitura, range and direction have to be considered as well.**

Intermediate Phase: Bigger, more adventurous leaps and the use of more chromatic notes are possible.

Notes

*With regard to the inclusion of both major and minor tonalities in the song repertoire of the Foundation phase, Joanne Rutkowski (1990: 86) states that:

> While pentatonic songs have often been used for the musical training of young children, Jarjisian (1981) and Michel (1973) concluded that children sing in major and minor modes just as readily as in pentatonic. In addition, several researchers have found minor songs easier for young children to sing than major songs (DeYarman, 1972; Dittemore, 1969).

Lili Levinowitz et al (1998:41), on the other hand, found a conflicting result:

A statistically significant main effect for song across all six grade levels was found in favor of the major song.

More research in this regard is obviously required to give a definitive answer to this debate.

**Refer to Range Statement and Assessment Criteria No. 1, "suitable range", above.

2. *Accompaniment that enhances overall performance with appropriate balance between accompaniment and singing*

Range Statement: "accompaniment that enhances performance"*

Foundation Phase: Instrumental accompaniment in the Foundation phase should involve simple, tonal chord progressions.**

Notes

*Refer to **Part II**, 3.14 "Accompaniment and the Role of the Accompanist".

**In an article, "Writing and Arranging for Young Singers", by Mary Goetze (1989:37), the following points as regards accompaniment need consideration:

In general, accompaniments should be light in both texture and dynamics. Full, loud piano parts can evoke a heavy, shouty quality from the child's singing voice and contribute to unhealthy vocal production. Dynamic markings should caution a pianist from overplaying. Vocal lines need not, and in fact, should not be doubled by the accompaniment.

Intermediate phase: Instrumental harmonic accompaniment may be more dissonant and complex.

3.3 Choral Unit Standard: Phrasing

TITLE	GENERIC UNIT STANDARD	GENERAL OUTCOMES	RANGE STATEMENTS AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
P H R A S I N G	Control melodic flow musically through appropriate breath management	1. Breathe in appropriate places 2. Sculpt phrases musically	The Choir/Choristers demonstrate(s) the following: 1. Singing most phrases in one breath, maintaining the musical line 2. Musical shaping of phrases, making use of *crescendo* & *diminuendo*, tension & release, and *tempo rubato*.

Field: NSB 02 Culture & Arts (Sport & recreation)

Sub-field: Music

Domain: Music Education

Sub-Domain: Choral Singing

Purpose (aim):   To develop musicianship through choral singing

NQF Level: -1

                                        Foundation Phase

                                        Intermediate Phase

Credits: Integrated*

Standard No: Not applicable at this stage

Learning Assumptions: It is recommended that GMAP and Choir Performance are studied concurrently

Title of Standard: **PHRASING** (IN CHORAL SINGING)

Generic Unit Standard: *Control melodic flow musically through appropriate breath management*

General outcomes: *1. Breathe in appropriate places*
2. Sculpt phrases musically

Range Statements and
Assessment Criteria: *The Choir/Choristers demonstrate(s) the following:*

1. Singing most phrases in one breath, maintaining the musical line**

Foundation Phase: Choristers sing regular-length phrases (2 – 4 bars) in one breath, maintaining the musical line.

Intermediate Phase: Choristers sing slightly longer phrases*** in one breath, maintaining the musical line. Inordinately long phrases are sustained by successfully employing the technique of staggered breathing.****

Notes

*The 9 Unit Standards in Choral Singing are integrated into one core cluster for Choir Performance. If Choir Performance is an extension of GMAP, the minimum suggested credit allocation is 3. (Refer to Grové 2001, Diagram 5.1 – Credit allocation for the GMAP.)

*Refer to **Part III**, 1.2 "Recommendations".

Refer to **Part II 6.4 "Breath Management".

***In the Intermediate phase, developing physical maturation makes possible greater breath control, which allows for more extended phrases.

****Refer to **Part II**, 6.4.3 "Staggered Breathing".

2. *Musical shaping of phrases, making use of crescendo & diminuendo, tension & release, and tempo rubato**

Foundation Phase: The choir demonstrates musical phrase sculpting, mostly as a result of choristers imitating and following the choral director's instruction and modeling in rehearsal. The choristers' input in rehearsal, however, should be regularly sought in order to develop an independent ability in determining and demonstrating musical phrasing by making use of *crescendo & diminuendo*, tension & release, and *tempo rubato*. At this stage the skill is mostly demonstrated because of "rote learning" or skill gained through imitation and repetition. Italian musical terms like, *piano, forte, crescendo, diminuendo, ritardando*, are explained and choristers gradually "become more familiar" with these.**

Intermediate Phase: The choir demonstrates musical phrase sculpting by utilising vocal intensity and tempo variation, with all choristers' understanding of where points of tension, climax and release occur. Choristers "know" Italian musical terms like *piano, forte, crescendo, diminuendo, ritardando*, and become more familiar with others like, *a tempo* and *tempo rubato*. ***

Notes

*Refer to **Part II**, 4.4.3 "The Musical Phrase".

Refer to **Part I, 3.10 "Choral Unit Standard: Critical Evaluation", Western Music Specifics Number 2, "Know certain musical terms […]." (Foundation Phase).

*** Refer to **Part I**, 3.10 "Choral Unit Standard: Critical Evaluation", Western Music Specifics Number 2, "Know certain musical terms […]." (Intermediate Phase).

3.4 Choral Unit Standard: Diction

TITLE	GENERIC UNIT STANDARD	GENERAL OUTCOMES	RANGE STATEMENTS AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
D I C T I O N	Communicate the meaning of the text with clear pronunciation	1. Enunciate uniform vowel colours and correct vowel sounds 2. Pronounce words appropriately within context 3. Articulate consonants clearly 4. Project sound to the back of the performance space, without undue vocal strain 5. Execute attacks and releases with uniform precision	The choir/choristers demonstrate(s) the following: 1. A homogeneous choral sound with uniformity of vowel colours and idiomatic correct vowel sounds 2. Standardised, generally accepted pronunciation according to the language/dialect used 3. Coherent text with precise articulation of all relevant consonants, without becoming obtrusive. 4. Adequate audibility through relaxed voice projection in a venue suitable for at least 250 people 5. Uniform attacks and releases, according to the conductor's direction.

WESTERN MUSIC SPECIFICS

- Ensure vowel consistency throughout all registers with special attention to the upper register (vowel modification).
- Sustain the correct vowel sound in diphthongs and triphthongs.

Field: NSB 02 Culture & Arts (Sport & recreation)

Sub-field: Music

Domain: Music Education

Sub-Domain: Choral Singing

Purpose (aim): To develop musicianship through choral singing

NQF Level: -1

Foundation Phase

Intermediate Phase

Credits:	Integrated*
Standard No:	Not applicable at this stage
Learning Assumptions:	It is recommended that GMAP and Choir Performance are studied concurrently
Title of Standard:	**DICTION** (IN CHORAL SINGING)
Generic Unit Standard:	*Communicate the meaning of the text with clear pronunciation*

General Outcomes:

1. Enunciate uniform vowel colours and correct vowel sounds

2. Pronounce words appropriately within context

3. Articulate consonants clearly

4. Project sound to the back of the performance space, without undue vocal strain

5. Execute attacks and releases with uniform precision

Range Statements and Assessment Criteria:

The choir/choristers demonstrate(s) the following:

1. A homogeneous choral sound with uniformity of vowel colours and idiomatic correct vowel sounds

Range Statement: "uniformity of vowel colours"**

Foundation Phase: All choristers sing the same vowel colours, mostly as a result of choristers following, imitating and repeating the choral director's instruction and modeling of correct vowel formation*** in rehearsal. The choristers' input in rehearsal

should be regularly sought in order to develop an independent ability to determine and demonstrate correct vowel colours.

Intermediate Phase: All choristers sing the same vowel colours. The choristers know about the anatomy of the vocal instrument and employing the appropriate technique.****

Notes

*The 9 Unit Standards in Choral Singing are integrated into one core cluster for Choir Performance. If Choir Performance is an extension of GMAP, the minimum suggested credit allocation is 3. (Refer to Grové 2001, Diagram 5.1 – Credit allocation for the GMAP.)
*Refer to **Part III**, 1.2 "Recommendations".

**Vowels carry the singing tone. Uniformity of vowels that have vertical space in the mouth, enhances tone quality and ensemble blend. "Vowels carry the tone and affect choral blend and intonation as well" (McRae 1991: 139).

***Refer to **Part II**, 6.8 "Italian Basic Pure Vowels, Uniform Vowel Colours and Vowel Modification".

****Refer to **Part II**, 6.8 "Italian Basic Pure Vowels, Uniform Vowel Colours and Vowel Modification" and 6.5 "Resonance".

Range Statement: "idiomatic correct vowel sounds"

Foundation Phase: The choristers sing correct vowel sounds, mostly as a result of choristers following the choral director's instruction,

combined with imitating and repeating the modeling of the choral director's correct vowel sounds in rehearsal. The choristers' input in rehearsal, however, should be regularly sought in order to develop independent ability in determining and demonstrating correct vowel colours. At this stage the skill is mostly demonstrated because of "rote learning" (or skill gained through imitation and repetition) and choristers being told to "relax and drop the jaw" and to slightly extend/flare the lips (vocal "embouchure").*

Intermediate Phase: The choristers sing correct vowel colours. Choristers know about the anatomy of the vocal instrument and employing the appropriate technique,* i.e.:

- a relaxed/dropped jaw;
- slightly extended, flared lips (vocal "embouchure");
- arching of the soft palate; and
- a relaxed, low lying tongue, with the tip lightly touching the bottom of the lower front teeth.

Notes

*Refer to **Part II**, 6.8 "Italian Basic Pure Vowels, Uniform Vowel Colours and Vowel Modification" and 6.5 "Resonance".

*2. Standardised, generally accepted pronunciation according to the language/dialect used**

Foundation Phase: Clear manner of uttering the words and correct stress/emphasis of syllables within words (word accent). The natural word accent and appropriate syllabic stress

should be maintained in singing for the text to be intelligible and to clearly convey the meaning to listeners of simple texts within a limited number of languages, and chiefly the mother tongue.**

Intermediate Phase: Established and distinctive pronunciation within the expanded range of languages sung.***

Notes

*All languages have rise and fall, strong and weak, volume and rhythmic variety, and this colourfulness must be brought out in singing. The natural word accent must be preserved in the *staccato* line – some syllables have to be emphasised, without making the smooth phrase too 'lumpy' (Hewitt 1989: 47).

Refer to **Part I, 3.2 "Choral Unit Standard: Intonation", Range Statement: "varied repertoire".

*** Pronunciation and conveying the meaning of the text, obviously, is closely integrated with enunciation of vowels and articulation of consonants. (Refer to Range Statements and Assessment Criteria number 1, above, and number 3, below. Also refer to **Part II**, 6.9 "Diction"). Conveying the distinct meaning of the text, furthermore, is closely related to facial expression and body language. (Refer to **Part I**, 3.8 "Choral Unit Standard: Expression", Range Statement and Assessment Criteria number 3. Also refer to **Part II**, 4.5 "Polishing and Interpreting Music".)

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3. Coherent text with precise articulation of all relevant consonants, without becoming obtrusive*

Foundation Phase: Precise, clear articulation of consonants, but not exaggerated. There should be sufficient vowel space between the consonants.**

Intermediate Phase: Clear articulation of consonants leading to balanced and appropriate pronunciation which should be easily followed by the listeners.

Notes

*Refer to **Part II**, 6.9.3 "Clear Articulation of Consonants".

**In the Foundation phase several choristers may have front teeth missing, causing temporary impairment of diction.

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4. Adequate audibility through relaxed voice projection in a venue suitable for at least 250 people

Foundation Phase: In the Foundation phase the dynamic range of the choristers will be restricted because of their physical immaturity. They will not be able to sing very loudly without straining and the emphasis should be on projecting the tone rather than on increasing the dynamics. Choristers should constantly be reminded that they must never sing louder than that which is beautiful. The dynamic range encompasses *mezzo piano* to *mezzo forte*.* The optimum use of resonators will increase resonance, which in turn, will ensure better diction.**

Intermediate Phase: In the Intermediate phase the choristers' greater physical maturity will enable greater dynamic contrasts. They are

not, however, yet able to attain the same *fortissimo* effects of an adult choir. The dynamic range encompasses *piano* to *forte*.* The optimum use of resonators will increase resonance, which in turn, will ensure better diction.**

Notes

*Refer to **Part I**, 3.8 "Choral Unit Standard: Expression", Range Statement and Assessment Criteria No. 1.

Refer to **Part I, 3.5 "Choral Unit Standard: Voice/Tone Production", Range Statements and Assessment Criteria No. 1.

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5. Uniform attacks and releases, according to the conductor's direction*

Foundation Phase: Attacks and releases at speeds of no more than an eighth note (quaver). Limited use of upbeat attacks. Development of choristers' ability to focus on the conductor with undivided attention throughout the performance of a song/work.

Intermediate Phase: Greater precision in attacks and releases because of consistent concentration and focus by all choristers during the performance of a song/work.

Notes

*Refer to **Part II**, 5.8 "Attacks and Releases".

Western Music Specifics: *1. Ensure vowel consistency throughout all registers with special attention to the upper register (vowel modification)**

<u>Range Statement</u>: "vowel modification**

Foundation Phase: Choristers employ vowel modification where necessary, mostly as a result of choristers following, imitating and repeating the choral director's instruction and modeling of vowel modification in rehearsal. The choristers' input in rehearsal, however, should be regularly sought in order to develop independent ability to determine where vowel modification should be employed. At this stage the skill is mostly demonstrated because of "rote learning" (or skill gained through imitation and repetition) and choristers being told to modify the vowel sound in specific places.

Intermediate Phase: Choristers are familiar with the Italian basic, pure vowels and their relative darkness and brightness.* The higher choristers sing, the more the jaw has to be dropped and the roof of the mouth arched to maintain the overall tone consistently. The bright vowels naturally become piercing/shrill in the upper range and to prevent this, the "i" (pronounced like _ea_t) and the "e" (pronounced like in _e_nter) are modified towards the "a" (pronounced like in f_a_r).

Notes

*The choir demonstrates overall tone consistency in lower, middle, and upper register.

Refer to **Part II, 6.8 "Italian Basic Pure Vowels, Uniform Vowel Colours and Vowel Modification".

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2. Sustain the correct vowel sound in diphthongs and

triphthongs*

Range Statement: "sustain the correct vowel sound in diphthongs and triphthongs"

Foundation Phase: All choristers sustain the correct vowel sound in diphthongs and triphthongs by following the example of and imitating the choral director's modeling of correct procedure; i.e. learning by rote through imitation and repetition. The choristers' input in rehearsal, however, should be regularly sought in order to develop independent ability to determine the correct sustaining vowel sound in diphthongs and triphthongs.

Intermediate Phase: All choristers sustain the correct vowel sound in diphthongs and triphthongs and know what these terms mean.

Notes

*The choir demonstrates uniform execution of sustaining vowel sounds in diphthongs and triphthongs.
*Refer to **Part II**, 6.9.5 "Diphthongs and Triphthongs".

3.5 Choral Unit Standard: Voice/Tone Production

TITLE	GENERIC UNIT STANDARD	GENERAL OUTCOMES	RANGE STATEMENTS AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
V O I C E / T O N E P R O D U C T I O N	Consciously utilise appropriate techniques in the generation of sound with the voice	1. Maximise vocal tract freedom 2. Sing with vocal agility and flexibility 3. Demonstrate good singing posture 4. Demonstrate good habits of breath management	The choir/choristers demonstrate(s) the following: 1. Tone colour that has warmth and depth, with a buoyant, resonant, forward sound that rings out 2. The execution of rapid runs and leaps without strain 3. Upright, comfortable standing position 4. Breath support and control according to the phrasing indicated by the composer and/or musical, as well as textual demands of the work.
WESTERN MUSIC SPECIFICS			
• Sing from lower to upper register without a noticeable break(s).			

Field: NSB 02 Culture & Arts (Sport & recreation)

Sub-field: Music

Domain: Music Education

Sub-Domain: Choral Singing

Purpose (aim):   To develop musicianship through choral singing

NQF Level: -1

Foundation Phase

Intermediate Phase

Credits:	Integrated*
Standard No:	Not applicable at this stage
Learning Assumptions:	It is recommended that GMAP and Choir Performance are studied concurrently
Title of Standard:	**VOICE/TONE PRODUCTION** (IN CHORAL SINGING)
Generic Unit Standard:	*Consciously utilise appropriate techniques in the generation of sound with the voice*

General Outcomes:

1. Maximise vocal tract freedom

2. Sing with vocal agility and flexibility

3. Demonstrate good singing posture

4. Demonstrate good habits of breath management

Range Statements and Assessment Criteria:

The choir/choristers demonstrate(s) the following:

1. Tone colour that has warmth and depth, with a buoyant, resonant, forward sound that rings out

Foundation Phase: At this stage it is sufficient to make choristers aware of singing with a more open mouth position merely by relaxing and dropping the lower jaw. They are constantly reminded not to revert to forced, loud, harsh and boisterous singing and never to sing louder than that which is beautiful.**

Intermediate Phase: As the choristers' emotional, physical, intellectual and musical abilities develop, they are formally made aware of the difference between chest and head voice. Optimum use

of the resonance cavities and the development of the head voice is stressed and they are made more aware of the physiological aspects of singing and the vocal mechanism.*** The optimum use of resonance cavities will result in a buoyant, resonant, forward sound that rings out. The head voice should be developed to a clear and resonant vocal timbre through the use of effective vocalises.****

Notes

*The 9 Unit Standards in Choral Singing are integrated into one core cluster for Choir Performance. If Choir Performance is an extension of GMAP, the minimum suggested credit allocation is 3. (Refer to Grové 2001, Diagram 5.1 – Credit allocation for the GMAP.)
*Refer to **Part III**, 1.2 "Recommendations".

**Beautiful tone quality is based on the way vowels are shaped and the optimum use of the resonators. Children, generally, do not open their mouths sufficiently when singing, which results in a lifeless, dull, thin and apathetic tone.

> The AH vowel is very helpful when working with young singers. It is probably the best for encouraging an open mouth and a relaxed jaw. [...] Careful attention to the AH vowel will help them become comfortable with this more open mouth position (Swears 1985: 78).

*** Refer to **Part II**, 6.1 "The Vocal Instrument"; 6.2 "Choral Tone Quality"; 6.5 "Resonance"; 6.6 "Children's Vocal Ranges and Registers"; and 6.7 "The Importance of Head Voice".

****Refer to **Part II**, 6.11 "Use of Vocalises".

> **** During fifth and sixth grade most children reach a peak of vocal development. This occurs just prior to adolescence and often results in a beautiful singing tone unique to the child voice (Swears 1985: 31).

2. The execution of rapid runs and leaps without strain*

Foundation Phase: At this stage, the choristers will merely be asked to relax and to sing softly and lightly those passages that demand agility and flexibility.

Intermediate Phase: The more advanced physical maturity of choristers in this phase, allows for greater vocal agility and flexibility. The use of carefully selected vocalises will assist in further improving agility and flexibility.* Choristers will also lighten the voice quality by using the light head-voice.**

Notes

*Refer to **Part II**, 6.10 "Agility and Flexibility".

Refer to **Part II, 6.6 "Children's Vocal Ranges and Registers".

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3. Upright, comfortable standing position

Foundation phase: Choristers are introduced to correct singing posture.* Choristers should not be standing and performing for longer than 10 minutes.

Intermediate phase: Correct singing posture should be the norm. Choristers at this stage can remain standing and performing for up to 15 minutes.

Notes

*Refer to **Part II**, 6.3 "Correct Singing Posture".

4. *Breath support and control according to the phrasing indicated by the composer and/or musical, as well as textual demands of the work**

Foundation Phase: Choristers are asked to take a deep breath as if inflating a tube around their tummies. They must not raise their shoulders at all as this is an indication of shallow, clavicular breathing.

Intermediate Phase: The anatomy and physiological process of the breathing mechanism is explained to the choristers.** As the physical development of the choristers progresses from the Foundation phase to the Intermediate phase (and beyond), in combination with effective breath management exercises, they are better able to apply breath management skills.***

Notes

*Refer to **Part II**, 6.4 "Breath Management".

Refer to **Part II, 6.4 "Breath Management".

***Breath support and control exercises should be included in the vocal instruction programme. Kenneth Phillips states that:

> If nothing else is done in the way of child vocal training, children should – and can – be taught to breath (sic) properly! (Phillips 1985:22).

Western Music Specifics: *Sing from lower to upper register without a noticeable break(s)**

Foundation Phase: In this phase the repertoire extends from c^1 (i.e. **middle C**) to e^2. The pure chest voice (or lower register) should thus be avoided for this age group.** The middle register is used from c^1 to c^2 and the pure head voice (upper register) is used from c^2 and extends upward.

Intermediate Phase: The choir demonstrates the ability to smoothly blend lower and upper registers in the middle register. It is more beneficial initially to develop the blending of vocal registers by vocalising downward, thereby carrying the head voice further down into the middle register. This is to prevent the chest voice being used exclusively for singing passages that actually require more of a head voice quality. ***

Notes

*Refer to **Part II**, 6.6 "Children's Vocal Ranges and Registers".

**According to Phillips (1992: 43), the pure chest voice is used only from middle C and lower. "Middle C is the pitch where children will traditionally shift into the chest voice, if permitted".

Refer to **Part I, 3.2 "Choral Unit Standard: Intonation", Range Statement and Assessment Criteria 1, "suitable range".

*** "It is commonly known that children lacking vocal instruction mostly gravitate to the chest voice for singing" (Phillips 1992:44). Phillips (1992:48) also states that:

> Today's pop culture often presents a vocal model that is all chest voice ...
> Care must be taken that this incorrect use of the voice not be allowed or
> encouraged among females of any age!

***In the Intermediate phase, the vocal range is extended, higher and lower, both as a result of choristers reaching greater physical maturity and the implementation of effective vocalises. The use of the chest voice in its pure form is developed and used for singing below c^1 (i.e. **middle C**).

3.6 Choral Unit Standard: Balance & Blend

TITLE	GENERIC UNIT STANDARD	GENERAL OUTCOMES	RANGE STATEMENTS AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
B A L A N C E & B L E N D	Perform with sensitivity to balance between voice parts and blending in a homogeneous choral sound	1. Blend voices to create a unified sonority 2. Maintain appropriate balance between different voice parts 3. Recognise the relative importance of any one part at a particular time and adjust the balance accordingly	The choir/choristers demonstrate(s) the following: 1. Uniformity of ensemble sound; i.e. ensemble awareness by all choristers to blend their voice with the rest of the choir 2. Equalisation of tonal weight between vocal parts where required 3. An awareness of how the balance may change between parts and how at certain times some parts may be more prominent and should be brought out, while others are more in the background.

Field: NSB 02 Culture & Arts (Sport & recreation)

Sub-field: Music

Domain: Music Education

Sub-Domain: Choral Singing

Purpose (aim):   To develop musicianship through choral singing

NQF Level: -1

Foundation Phase

Intermediate Phase

Credits: Integrated*

Standard No:	Not applicable at this stage

Learning Assumptions: It is recommended that GMAP and Choir Performance are studied concurrently

Title of Standard: **BALANCE & BLEND** (IN CHORAL SINGING)

Generic Unit Standard: *Perform with sensitivity to balance between voice parts and blending in a homogeneous choral sound*

General Outcomes:
1. *Blend voices to create a unified sonority*
2. *Maintain appropriate balance between different voice parts*
3. *Recognise the relative importance of any one part at a particular time and adjust the balance accordingly*

Range Statements and Assessment Criteria: *The choir/choristers demonstrate(s) the following:*

1. *Uniformity of ensemble sound; i.e. ensemble awareness by all choristers to blend their voice with the rest of the choir***

Foundation Phase: Individual voices blend in with the rest of the group so that no voice protrudes and is heard above the others.*** Uniform vowel production is initiated.****

Intermediate Phase: Individual voices blend in with the rest of the group so that no voice protrudes and is heard above the others. Greater unity in blend is obtained through insistence on uniform vowel production throughout the choir.*****

Notes

*The 9 Unit Standards in Choral Singing are integrated into one core cluster for Choir Performance. If Choir Performance is an extension of GMAP, the minimum suggested credit allocation is 3. (Refer to Grové thesis, Diagram 5.1 – Credit allocation for the GMAP.)

*Refer to **Part III**, 1.2 "Recommendations".

Refer to **Part II, 4.8 "Balance and Blend".

***Choristers must be able to hear their neighbours, otherwise they are singing too loudly. This will contribute to a homogeneous or unified sound. Hylton says that superb blend is obtained when each individual submerges "his or her individual voice into the collective sound" (1995: 28).

****Refer to **Part I**, 3.4 "Choral Unit Standard: Diction", Range Statements and Assessment Criteria No. 1 as well as **Part II**, 6.8 "Italian Basic Pure Vowels, Uniform Vowel Colours and Vowel Modification".

*****"Any deviation from correct vowel formation and production will distort the section sound and inhibit blend" (Decker & Herford 1973: 85).

2. *Equalisation of tonal weight between vocal parts where required**

Foundation Phase: Choristers sing mostly in unison.** Balance between different harmonising vocal parts is not particularly relevant. However, in the case of:

- "Call and Response" songs;

- soloist group versus main group;
- where an echo effect is required, balance becomes relevant.***

Intermediate Phase: The balance between soprano and alto vocal parts will be affected by the number of singers to each part as well as the strength of individual voices. ****

Notes

*Refer to **Part II**, 4.8 "Balance and Blend".

Refer to **Part I, 3.2 "Choral Unit Standard: Intonation", Range Statements and Assessment Criteria No. 3.

*** The balance between the accompaniment and the voices also needs to be carefully monitored. (Refer to **Part II**, 3.14 "Accompaniment and the Role of the Accompanist".)

**** Refer to **Part I**, 3.2 "Choral Unit Standard: Intonation", Range Statements and Assessment Criteria No. 3.

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3. *An awareness of how the balance may change between parts and how at certain times some parts may be more prominent and should be brought out, while others are more in the background*

Foundation Phase: At this stage the choir does not attempt harmonised part-singing.* However, in the case of:

- "Call and Response" songs;

- soloist group versus main group; and

- where an echo effect is required,

the relative importance of any one part at a particular time becomes relevant.

Intermediate Phase: The relative importance of the various vocal lines changes and choristers need to be responsive to cues given by the conductor regarding dynamics.**

Notes

*Refer to **Part I**, 3.6 "Choral Unit Standard: Balance & Blend", Range Statements and Assessment Criteria No. 2.

  **The singers should also be aware of the variable importance of vocal lines so that they will make the necessary adjustments in dynamics to allow important lines to dominate and thereby achieve proper balance with the other parts (Decker & Herford 1973:86).

3.7 Choral Unit Standard: Stylistic Authenticity

TITLE	GENERIC UNIT STANDARD	GENERAL OUTCOMES	RANGE STATEMENTS AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
S T Y L I S C T I C A U T H E N T I C I T Y	Perform within a specific music type and context	1. Respond to cultural and historical aspects of the song/work 2. Perform in an idiomatically appropriate manner	The choir/choristers demonstrate(s) the following: 1. Insight and understanding of the appropriate historical performance practice required 2. Awareness of the cultural background to music.

Field: NSB 02 Culture & Arts (Sport & recreation)

Sub-field: Music

Domain: Music Education

Sub-Domain: Choral Singing

Purpose (aim):   To develop musicianship through choral singing

NQF Level: -1

                      Foundation Phase

                      Intermediate Phase

Credits:　　　　　　　　Integrated*

Standard No:　　　　　　Not applicable at this stage

Learning Assumptions:　It is recommended that GMAP and Choir Performance are studied concurrently

Title of Standard:　　　　**STYLISTIC AUTHENTICITY** (IN CHORAL SINGING)

Generic Unit Standard:　*Performing within a specific music type and context*

General Outcomes:

1. *Respond to cultural and historical aspects of the song/work*
2. *Perform in an idiomatically appropriate manner*

**Range Statements and
Assessment Criteria:**　　*The choir/choristers demonstrate(s) the following:*

1. *Insight and understanding of the appropriate historical performance practice required***

Foundation Phase:　Choristers should know the names of 2 master composers and know of (have listened to) and/or sing a vocal composition composed by each of them.

Intermediate Phase:　Choristers should know the names of 4 master composers and know of (have listened to) and/or sing a vocal composition composed by each of them. They should also be able to put the material thus presented into a historical context.

Notes

*The 9 Unit Standards in Choral Singing are integrated into one core cluster for Choir
Performance. If Choir Performance is an extension of GMAP, the minimum suggested
credit allocation is 3. (Refer to Grové thesis, Diagram 5.1 – Credit allocation for the
GMAP.)
*Refer to **Part III**, 1.2 "Recommendations".

Refer to **Part II, 4.9 "Historical/Stylistic Guidelines and Cultural Context".

*2. Awareness of the cultural background to music**

Foundation Phase: Choir demonstrates and shows elementary understanding of
distinctive cultural traditions in performing a song/work, e.g.
characteristic movements, instrumental accompaniment or
tone quality. This is important as cultural background
information may influence the creating/composition and/or
performing of the music.**

Intermediate Phase: Choir demonstrates and shows greater understanding of
distinctive cultural traditions in performing a song/work, e.g.
characteristic movements, instrumental accompaniment or
tone quality. This is important as cultural background
information may influence the creating/composition and/or
performing of the music.**

Notes

*Refer to **Part I**, 3.2 "Choral Unit Standard: Intonation", Range Statements and Assessment Criteria No.1, and **Part II**, 4.9 "Historical/Stylistic Guidelines and Cultural Context".

Refer to **Part II, 1.1 "The Rationale for Choral Singing".

3.8 Choral Unit Standard: Expression

TITLE	GENERIC UNIT STANDARD	GENERAL OUTCOMES	RANGE STATEMENTS AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
E X P R E S S I O N	Perform with human meaning appropriate to the music context	1. Utilise a range of dynamics 2. Convey mood/atmosphere of text 3. Display nuances of facial expression and body attitude 4. Perform music with appropriate articulation	The choir/choristers demonstrate(s) the following: 1. Musically effective dynamic flexibility without undue vocal strain and maintaining a homogeneous sound by: • employing dynamic contrasts (pp, p, mp, mf, f, ff) • gradually increasing/decreasing volume 2. Conveying the mood/atmosphere/spirit of the text by creative word "painting" (word-meaning emphasis) 3. Involvement with the emotional meaning of the text through nuances of facial expression and body attitude 4. Ability to execute music in a variety of ways between the *legato* and *staccato* extremes.

Field: NSB 02 Culture & Arts (Sport & recreation)

Sub-field: Music

Domain: Music Education

Sub-Domain: Choral Singing

Purpose (aim):   To develop musicianship through choral singing

NQF Level: -1

Foundation Phase

Intermediate Phase

Credits: Integrated*

Standard No:	Not applicable at this stage
Learning Assumptions:	It is recommended that GMAP and Choir Performance are studied concurrently
Title of Standard:	**EXPRESSION** (IN CHORAL SINGING)
Generic Unit Standard:	*Perform with human meaning appropriate to the music context*

General Outcomes:

1. *Utilise a range of dynamics*
2. *Convey mood/atmosphere of text*
3. *Display nuances of facial expression and body attitude*
4. *Perform music with appropriate articulation*

Range Statements and Assessment Criteria:

The choir/choristers demonstrate(s) the following:

1. *Musically effective dynamic flexibility without undue vocal strain and maintaining a homogeneous sound by:***
   - *employing dynamic contrasts (p, mp, mf, f)*
   - *gradually increasing/decreasing volume*

Foundation Phase: Only a limited dynamic range from *mezzo piano* (mp) to *mezzo forte* (mf) is possible at this stage.*** The emphasis should be on the projection of tone and resonance rather than on "loud singing". Choristers demonstrate a gradual *crescendo* and *diminuendo*, with the softest dynamic being, *mezzo piano*, and the loudest dynamic being, *mezzo forte*.

Intermediate Phase: In the Intermediate phase the dynamic spectrum is increased to include:
   - *piano* (p),

- *mezzo piano* (mp),

- *mezzo forte* (mf), and

- *forte* (f).

Choristers demonstrate a gradual *crescendo* and *diminuendo*, with the softest dynamic being *piano*, and the loudest dynamic being *forte*. As the *crescendo* becomes louder, the jaw is dropped more, and vice versa, the mouth is closed more as the sound becomes softer.**** The expressive technique of *messa di voce* is introduced.*****

Notes

*The 9 Unit Standards in Choral Singing are integrated into one core cluster for Choir Performance. If Choir Performance is an extension of GMAP, the minimum suggested credit allocation is 3. (Refer to Grové thesis, Diagram 5.1 – Credit allocation for the GMAP.)
*Refer to **Part III**, 1.2 "Recommendations".

Refer to **Part II, 4.4 "Presenting New Repertoire".

***Vocal dynamic range is, inter alia, age-related. The relatively immature voices of the Foundation and Intermediate phase choirs are, obviously, not capable of the full vocal dynamic range. "Young children will not be able to sing with great dynamic contrast [...]. The goal is a light, forward sound full of energy, vitality, and personality" (McRae 1991:138).

**** "For a crescendo, the choir should drop the jaw and open the mouth (keep the fishmouth!) as the crescendo increases in intensity" (Haasemann & Jordan 1991:78).

*****Refer to **Part II**, 4.5 "Polishing and Interpreting Music".

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2. Conveying the mood/atmosphere/spirit of the text by
creative word "painting" (word-meaning emphasis)*

Foundation Phase: Expression of the text by emphasizing important words and key syllables creates a more pertinent atmosphere. Utilization of "word painting" can be most effective in conveying the mood of a song/work. The choristers' input in rehearsal is regularly sought in order to develop independent ability to determine where there are interpretative "word painting" possibilities in the text. At this stage the skill is mostly demonstrated because of "rote learning" (or skill gained through imitation and repetition) and choristers being told where to apply word painting techniques.

Intermediate Phase: Choristers have a greater ability to determine instances of effective expression of text through word painting.

Notes

*Refer to **Part II**, 4.4.2 "Expression of Text".

---

3. Involvement with the emotional meaning of the text
through nuances of facial expression and body attitude*

Foundation Phase: Young choristers at this stage have vivid imaginations and they enjoy pretending. They love singing songs that include movement which give freer vent to their emotions.

Intermediate Phase: In the Intermediate phase these body movements will be expressed with more restraint, involving finer nuances; i.e. infer, rather than boldly state a movement.**

Notes

*Refer to **Part II**, 4.5 "Polishing and Interpreting Music".

**Kinesics is a field of study which has exciting implications for the conducting profession. This science is concerned with ways that humans send messages to one another through facial expression, arm and hand movements, and posturing. According to experts in the field, people employ physical behavioral patterns, which are partly learned and partly instinctive, to communicate such basic feelings as hate, fear, joy, and sadness (Gordon 1989: 93).

4. *Ability to execute music in a variety of ways between the legato and staccato extremes**

Foundation Phase: The difference between *legato* and *staccato* is established in a practical way, linked to the text. Choristers imitate/echo the teacher's example.

Intermediate Phase: Choristers demonstrate greater variation between *legato* and *staccato* and increased ability in executing finer nuances of *legato* and *staccato*. They know the terms and signs for *legato* and *staccato* and understand the meanings.

Notes

*There are three basic articulation styles in choral singing: *legato, staccato*, and *marcato*.

Legato = smooth, connected. *Staccato* = short, detached. *Marcato* = each note sung with an accent, the rhythm quite pronounced, and the explosive qualities of consonants exaggerated. In l*egato* singing one aims for a sustained, expansive musical line.

3.9 Choral Unit Standard: Timing

TITLE	GENERIC UNIT STANDARD	GENERAL OUTCOMES	RANGE STATEMENTS AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
T I M I N G	Perform music both rhythmically correctly and with flexibility	1. Sing/execute rhythms accurately within a metric framework 2. Utilise appropriate tempi 3. Respond and adjust to acoustics of performance venue 4. Perform prescribed repertoire and/or repertoire appropriate to the occasion 5. Display appropriate concert/performance etiquette 6. Exhibit neat, uniform appearance	The choir/choristers demonstrate(s) the following: 1. Rhythmic patterns performed accurately within the time signature, according to the score and/or the director's model 2. Use of suitable tempi to convey the appropriate mood/atmosphere and the choristers follow the conductor's cues regarding tempi and variations of tempi (*rubato*) 3. Ability to make allowances for the dry (little reverberation) or live (substantial reverberation) acoustical properties of the performance venue 4. Prescribed repertoire and/or repertoire which has been selected with great care and discretion, to be appropriate for the occasion 5. Appropriate concert/performance etiquette regarding leading on and off stage, formation and spacing of choristers, professional conduct, attitude, deportment, choir discipline, acknowledgement of applause 6. Visual unity in appearance.

Field: NSB 02 Culture & Arts (Sport & recreation)

Sub-field: Music

Domain: Music Education

Sub-Domain: Choral Singing

Purpose (aim): To develop musicianship through choral singing

NQF Level:	-1
	Foundation Phase
	Intermediate Phase
Credits:	Integrated*
Standard No:	Not applicable at this stage
Learning Assumptions:	It is recommended that GMAP and Choir Performance are studied concurrently
Title of Standard:	**TIMING** (IN CHORAL SINGING)**
Generic Unit Standard:	*Perform music both rhythmically correctly and with flexibility*

General Outcomes:

1. *Sing/execute rhythms accurately within a metric framework*
2. *Utilise appropriate tempi*
3. *Respond and adjust to acoustics of performance venue*
4. *Perform prescribed repertoire and/or repertoire appropriate to the occasion*
5. *Display appropriate concert/performance etiquette*
6. *Exhibit neat, uniform appearance*

Range Statements and
Assessment Criteria: *The choir/choristers demonstrate(s) the following:*

1. *Rhythmic patterns performed accurately within the time signature, according to the score and/or the director's model****

Foundation Phase: Choristers perform rhythmic patterns accurately within limited range of difficulty, i.e. mostly regular sub-divisions of the beat. Choristers develop sensitivity to logical music timing.

Intermediate Phase: Accepted accuracy and sensitivity to finer nuances of text in combination with rhythm. Greater sensitivity to *rubato* is expected.

Notes

*The 9 Unit Standards in Choral Singing are integrated into one core cluster for Choir Performance. If Choir Performance is an extension of GMAP, the minimum suggested credit allocation is 3. (Refer to Grové 2001, Diagram 5.1 – Credit allocation for the GMAP.)

*Refer to **Part III**, 1.2 "Recommendations".

**Timing has different meanings in this context:
- Timing in music, e.g. with regard to rhythm, metre, tempo;
- Timing with regard to acoustics;
- Timing in the sense of appropriateness, e.g. choice of repertoire, suitable attire;
- Timing in terms of activities, e.g. walking onto the stage, waiting long enough for applause to finish.

***Refer to **Part II**, 4.4.4 "Rhythm and Pitch".

---

2. *Use of suitable tempi to convey the appropriate mood/atmosphere and the choristers follow the conductor's cues regarding tempi and variations of tempi (rubato)*

Foundation Phase: Limited range of tempi around *moderato* to establish and develop good diction.* Performing a song/work at a fitting tempo, is an important aspect of conveying the spirit, mood, or atmosphere. Choristers need to watch the conductor carefully to follow tempo changes during *rubato* passages.

Intermediate Phase: Expanded range of tempi, ranging from sustained *adagio* to detached *allegro*.**

Notes

*Refer to **Part I**, 3.4 "Choral Unit Standard: Diction".

**This is closely integrated with diction. The text has to remain intelligible. Experiment with different tempi to find an acceptable tempo and to establish ensemble compliance.

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3. *Ability to make allowances for the dry (little reverberation) or live (substantial reverberation) acoustical properties of the performance venue**

Foundation Phase: Choristers respond to director's awareness of acoustics and a conscious response thereto.

Intermediate Phase: Choristers have a developing self-awareness of compensation to acoustical properties and respond to conductor's non-verbal direction.

Notes

*Refer to **Part II**, 7.7 "Acoustics".

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4. *Prescribed repertoire and/or repertoire which has been selected with great care and discretion, to be appropriate for the occasion**

Foundation Phase: Choristers respond to teacher's selection of repertoire.

Intermediate Phase: Choristers are more aware of the appropriate selection of repertoire for a variety of performance occasions.

Notes

*Refer to **Part II**, 2.5 "Selecting Appropriate Repertoire" and to **Part I**, 3.2 "Choral Unit Standard: Intonation", Range Statement and Assessment Criteria No. 1", regarding the use of a varied repertoire.

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5. *Appropriate concert/performance etiquette regarding leading on and off stage, formation and spacing of choristers, professional conduct, attitude, deportment, choir discipline, acknowledgement of applause*

Foundation Phase: Developing discipline and concentration in performance settings.*

Intermediate Phase: A greater degree of self-discipline, concentration and controlled initiative regarding suitable behaviour in performance environment.

Notes

*Refer to **Part II**, 7.5 "Stage Deportment".

*6. Visual unity in appearance**

Foundation Phase: Developing awareness of personal appearance in relation to others, but still under supervision.

Intermediate Phase: Personal responsibility for apparel and neat appearance.**

Notes

* Wearing a specific performance outfit for concerts provides a visual uniformity, complementing the musical uniformity for which every choir strives. The choir, after all, is a group; therefore, attention should be not on various individuals but rather on the entire ensemble (Brinson 1996: 283).

Refer to **Part II, 7.4 "Performance Attire".

3.10 Choral Unit Standard: Critical Evaluation

TITLE	GENERIC UNIT STANDARD	GENERAL OUTCOMES	RANGE STATEMENTS AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
C R I T I C A L E V A L U A T I O N	Analyse music and describe music performances, using appropriate terminology	1. Evaluate/appraise other choirs they hear 2. Evaluate/appraise other sections in own choir 3. Evaluate/appraise own choir's performance 4. Evaluate/appraise soloist's performance	Choristers manifest knowledge of music and performance criteria, using correct terminology and naming/describing/evaluating the following: 1. Choral performances, both live and on recordings, by other choirs 2. Performance by other sections within own choir 3. Performance of own choir, both in rehearsal and after a concert performance, using adjudicator's assessment, video or audio recording 4. Performance of a soloist, both live and on recordings.

WESTERN MUSIC SPECIFICS

- Identify the metre, tonality and form of song(s)/work(s)
- Know certain musical terms and perform songs/works demonstrating an understanding of terminology

Field: NSB 02 Culture & Arts (Sport & recreation)

Sub-field: Music

Domain: Music Education

Sub-Domain: Choral Singing

Purpose (aim): To develop musicianship through choral singing

NQF Level:	-1
	Foundation Phase
	Intermediate Phase

Credits:	Integrated*

Standard No:	Not applicable at this stage

Learning Assumptions:	It is recommended that GMAP and Choir Performance are studied concurrently

Title of Standard:	**CRITICAL EVALUATION** (IN CHORAL SINGING)

Generic Unit Standard:	*Analyse music and describe music performances, using appropriate terminology*

General Outcomes:	*1. Evaluate/appraise other choirs they hear*
	2. Evaluate/appraise other sections within own choir
	3. Evaluate/appraise own choir's performance
	4. Evaluate/appraise soloist's performance

Range Statements and Assessment Criteria:	*Choristers manifest knowledge of music and performance criteria, using correct terminology and naming, describing, and/or evaluating the following:***
	*1. Choral performances, both live and on recordings, by other choirs****

Foundation Phase:	Choristers are required to discuss and distinguish between:
	• Performers (men/women, adults/children)

- Expression (Mood - happy/sad, lively/peaceful. Dynamics - mostly soft/mostly loud/both. Facial expression and body attitude - involved/uninvolved, disinterested, uninspiring)
- Timing (Metre in two/three. Tempo - fast/moderate/slow)
- Accompaniment (with/without)
- Interest (interesting …why?/boring …why?)

Intermediate Phase: Choristers are required to note/discuss and distinguish between:

- Performers (soprano/alto/tenor/bass)
- Intonation (in tune/out of tune …where?)
- Phrasing (Breathes in appropriate/inappropriate places)
- Diction (Pronounce words clearly/indistinctly. Projection: choir can/cannot be heard at back of venue)
- Tone production (Tone colour - mostly chest voice/head voice. Singing Posture of choristers - good/inappropriate)
- Stylistic authenticity (within context/out of context)
- Expression (Dynamics - mostly *piano*/mostly *forte*/both. Mood - happy/sad, lively/peaceful. Facial expression and body attitude - involved/uninvolved, disinterested, uninspiring)
- Timing (Metre in two/three/changes. Tempo - *allegro/moderato/adagio*. Performance etiquette - appropriate/inappropriate. Appearance - neat/untidy)
- Accompaniment (with/without …name the instrument[s] if applicable)
- Interest (Interesting …why?/boring …why?)

Notes

*The 9 Unit Standards in Choral Singing are integrated into one core cluster for Choir Performance. If Choir Performance is an extension of GMAP, the minimum suggested credit allocation is 3. (Refer to Grové 2001, Diagram 5.1 – Credit allocation for the GMAP.)

*Refer to **Part III**, 1.2 "Recommendations".

Refer to **Part II, 1.1 "The Rationale for Choral Singing".

***Listening to the recordings of other excellent choirs will help to shape and refine a concept of superior choral tone and performance practice. Help to focus the choristers' listening by making specific suggestions as to what they should be listening for, e.g. intonation, phrasing, diction, choral tone quality, balance and blend, and stylistic authenticity.

*2. Performance by other sections within own choir**

Foundation Phase: Choristers are required to assess:

- Phrasing (Breathing in appropriate/inappropriate places)
- Singing Posture: good/inappropriate
- Expression (Mood conveyed convincingly/unconvincingly. Contrasts between soft and louder singing is good/needs improvement)
- Diction (Pronounced words clearly/indistinctly)
- Timing (all choristers watching conductor/some choristers inattentive; Facial expression and body attitude - animated and involved/uninspiring and expressionless).

Intermediate Phase: Choristers are required to assess:

- Intonation (in tune/out of tune)

- Phrasing (Breathing in appropriate/inappropriate places)

- Diction (words pronounced clearly/indistinctly)

- Tone production (Tone colour - beautiful/needs improvement. Singing Posture - good/inappropriate)

- Expression (Dynamics - effective/poor contrasts between *p* and *f*; *crescendos* and *diminuendos* - effective/not effective. Mood conveyed - convincingly/unconvincingly. Facial expression and body attitude - animated and involved/expressionless, indifferent and uninspiring)

- All choristers watching conductor.

Notes

*It is important to remind choristers that they should be supportive of their fellow-choristers and always give constructive criticism. Ask choristers to listen carefully and to: list/name at least two positive aspects of the performance; list/name problem areas and give suggestions for improvement. Constantly solicit choristers' opinions on their own efforts in rehearsals.

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3. *Performance of own choir, both in rehearsal and after a concert performance, using adjudicator's assessment, video or audio recording**

Foundation Phase: Choristers are required to discuss, assess and distinguish between:

- Expression (Mood conveyed convincingly/unconvincingly. Contrasts between soft and louder singing good/needs improvement. Facial expression and body attitude - involved/uninspiring, detached, uninvolved)

- Timing (Performance etiquette regarding way in which choir leads on and off, formation and spacing; all choristers watching conductor; animated expressions; correct singing posture; neat and uniform/untidy attire).

Intermediate Phase: Choristers are required to discuss, assess and distinguish between:

- Intonation (in tune/out of tune)

- Phrasing (Breathing in appropriate/inappropriate places)

- Diction (Pronounced words clearly/indistinctly)

- Tone production (Tone colour - beautiful/needs improvement. Singing Posture - good/inappropriate)

- Expression (Dynamics - effective/poor contrasts between p and f; crescendos and diminuendos effective/not effective. Mood conveyed convincingly/unconvincingly. Facial expression and body attitude - involved/uninspiring, detached, uninvolved)

- Timing (Performance etiquette regarding - way in which choir leads on and off, formation and spacing; all choristers watching conductor; animated expressions; correct singing posture; neat and uniform/untidy attire).

Notes

*Refer to **Part II**, 3.12 "Audio and Video Aids", and 7.9 "Contests, Eisteddfodau and Festivals".

4. Performance of a soloist, both live and on recordings*

Foundation Phase: Choristers are required to discuss, assess and distinguish between:

- Performer (man/woman, adult/child)
- Expression (Mood - happy/sad, lively/peaceful. Dynamics mostly soft/mostly loud/both. Facial expression and body attitude - involved/uninspiring, luke-warmness)
- Timing (Metre in two/three. Tempo - fast/moderate/slow)
- Accompaniment (with/without)
- Interest (interesting …why?/boring …why?).

Intermediate Phase: Choristers are required to discuss, assess and distinguish between:

- Performer (soprano/contralto or alto/tenor/bass)
- Intonation (in tune/out of tune)
- Phrasing (Breathes in appropriate/inappropriate places)
- Diction (Pronounce words clearly/indistincly. Projection - soloist can/cannot be heard at back of venue)
- Tone production (Tone colour - mostly chest voice/head voice. Singing Posture - good/inappropriate)
- Stylistic authenticity (within context/out of context)
- Expression (Dynamics - mostly *piano*/mostly *forte*/both. Mood - happy/sad, lively/peaceful. Facial expression and body attitude - involved/uninspiring, lukewarmness)
- Timing (Metre in two/three/changes. Tempo: *allegro/moderato/adagio*. Performance etiquette: appropriate/inappropriate. Appearance: neat /untidy)

- Accompaniment (with/without ...name the instrument[s] if applicable)
- Interest (Interesting ...why?/boring ...why?).

Notes

*A variety of listening experiences is beneficial in broadening and developing the choristers' musical education and in improving their aesthetic appreciation.

Western Music Specifics: *Choristers manifest knowledge of music and performance criteria, using correct terminology and naming/describing/evaluating the following:*

1. Identify the metre, tonality and form of song(s)/work(s)

Range Statement: Metre

Foundation Phase: Choristers distinguish between metre in two (duple) and three (triple).

Intermediate Phase: Choristers distinguish between metre in two (duple), three (triple), and four (quadruple).

Range Statement: "tonality"

Foundation Phase: Choristers demonstrate an elementary awareness of different tonalities.

Intermediate Phase: Distinguish between at least major and minor tonality.

<u>Range Statement</u>: "form"

Foundation Phase: Distinguish between repetition and contrast of material like in micro binary and ternary form.*

Intermediate Phase: Distinguish between repetition and contrast of material like in micro binary and ternary form, and macro strophic and rondo form.**

Notes

*Micro binary form like in "Row, row, row, your boat" (a b). Micro ternary form like in "Twinkle, twinkle, little star" (a b a).

**Rondo form (A B A C A …). Strophic form (A A A…), i.e. using the same music for all stanzas, as in hymns.

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2. *Know certain musical terms and perform songs/works demonstrating an understanding of terminology*

<u>Range Statement</u>: "Know certain musical terms", i.e. basic signs, abbreviations and interpretative music terminology and symbols.

Foundation phase: The choral educator *introduces* Choristers to the following terminology and symbols by frequently referring to the Italian names:

- dynamics (*p* , *f, crescendo,* <, *diminuendo,* >);
- tempo (*accelerando, ritardando*);
- articulation (*legato, staccato* and *staccato* mark).

These terms, however, are continually explained as meaning:

- dynamics

  (*p* = *piano* = soft,

  f = *forte* = loud,

  crescendo and < = gradually getting louder,

  diminuendo and > = gradually getting softer);

- tempo

  (*accelerando* = gradually getting faster,

  ritardando = gradually getting slower);

- articulation

  (*legato* = tones smoothly connected,

  staccato and *staccato* mark = detached = separated).

Intermediate phase:	Choristers need to *know* the meaning of the following Italian music terms and symbols:

- dynamics

  (*p, f, crescendo*, <, *diminuendo*, >);

- tempo

  (*accelerando, ritardando*,);

- articulation

  (*legato, staccato* and *staccato* mark).

The choral educator *introduces* the following terminology to the choristers by frequently referring to the Italian terms, but continually explains the meaning at the same time:

- dynamics

  (*mp* = *mezzo piano* = moderately soft,

  mf = *mezzo forte* = moderately loud,

  pp = *pianissimo* = very soft,

  ff = *fortissimo* = very loud);

- tempo

  (*a tempo* = the original tempo to be resumed,

tempo rubato = robbed time = taking a portion of the duration from one note or group of notes and adding it to another,

adagio = slow,

andante = "walking" pace = a somewhat slow tempo,

moderato = at a moderate pace,

allegro = quick = lively,

presto = fast = rapid);

- articulation

(*marcato* = marked = accented);

- expression

(*scherzo* = joke = playful,

passionato = passionately = with deep intensity,

maestoso = majestically = with dignity,

cantabile = in a singing style).

Range Statement: The choir demonstrates interpretative techniques that indicate "understanding of terminology".

Foundation Phase: The choir, at this stage, demonstrates interpretative techniques mostly as a result of choristers imitating and following the choral director's instruction and modeling in rehearsal. The choristers' input in rehearsal, however, should be regularly sought in order to develop an independent ability in determining and demonstrating interpretative techniques. At this stage the skill is mostly demonstrated because of "rote learning" or skill gained through imitation and repetition. Terminology is regularly referred to and explained.

Intermediate Phase: Choristers have a greater knowledge of terminology and ability to demonstrate their understanding.

Chapter 4

ASSESSMENT OF CHORISTERS AND CRITICAL CROSS-FIELD LINKAGES/ARTICULATION POSSIBILITIES

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4.1 Assessment of Choristers

All Unit Standards formulated in South Africa have as an integral part the aspect of assessment. This is thus also applicable to Choral Unit Standards. It is every choral educator's professional responsibility to implement thorough and accurate assessment of choristers. This should be an ongoing process in every rehearsal, whether formally or informally. At least twice a year there should be a formal written assessment.

This assessment involves not only providing feedback to choristers and their parents, but also providing valuable information to the choral director. The assessment information is used to identify problem areas in the choral programme, finding solutions to rectify these, and analysing strengths to build on. The choral director thus decides on appropriate future instructional methods that may be employed to stimulate and enhance the choristers' future learning experiences.

It is absolutely essential to be most circumspect in one's manner and approach when individual assessments of choristers' singing abilities are being undertaken.

> Very few people enjoy evaluation by others and children are no exception. Their egos are often fragile and the slightest negative comment may be perceived as total failure. Therefore, choose your words carefully. Be positive and encouraging. Your words will have a powerful effect on shaping the child's opinion of his or her voice. [...] In general, the evaluation session should be viewed by students as a chance to determine what is needed to help them achieve their singing potential, not as a test one passes or fails. To do this successfully the child must know (1) you value him or her regardless of his or her present singing ability, (2) singing is something that can be learned, and (3) you will help the child in every way you can to become the best singer possible (Swears 1985: 34 – 35).

It is imperative to design a chorister's progress assessment report form with a grading system that is simple, efficient and quick to complete. This assessment should form an integral part of the rehearsal process without unduly interrupting or intruding upon the instructional time. The assessment should be fair, precise and objective, while at the same time being concise, requiring a minimal time to complete. The assessment report should make expectations clear and be comprehensive enough to provide the chorister with necessary information as to what strategies foster learning. The chorister should also be encouraged/motivated to improve in certain areas.

The effectiveness of music instruction within the choral programme becomes more transparent where a well-constructed progress assessment system is in place. As a result, greater credibility is generated for the choral programme by the choristers, parents, colleagues and school administrators. The choristers take greater pride in their participation because their individual contribution, accomplishments and successes are valued. This ensures greater commitment.

It is vital that the progress report does not only reflect non-music-based criteria like attendance, effort, behaviour and attitude. While these are important for a successful choral programme, and including them in the assessment grading is fully justified, they may not be the *only* criteria for purposes of assessment. Music-based criteria, as the nucleus of the choral programme's subject matter, should be assessed.

Choral directors with large choirs find it a time-consuming and daunting task to assess choristers' musical development individually. They therefore shun assessment altogether, or alternatively, resort to grading only non-music-based criteria. For choristers to receive credits for their choral participation, it is absolutely essential to employ an assessment strategy that is accurate, meaningful and fair, and reflects both the music-based criteria and the appropriate non-music-based criteria.

The following are some assessment strategies that may be employed to implement assessment of music-based criteria, without sacrificing choral instructional time:

- Choristers are grouped in teams and then have to evaluate each other, while the choral educator monitors the process. (Choristers need to be reminded to be supportive of

each other.) Examples of skills that may be assessed in this way are posture, correct breathing (not raising shoulders), singing with loose, relaxed jaw.

- Audio and/or video-tapes of rehearsals and/or performances are used to aid assessment in an authentic performance setting.

- Listen to individuals singing while walking amongst choristers as the choir is performing in rehearsal. An alternative is to divide choristers from different voice parts into small groups and ask them to perform. This strategy may be employed for the assessment of several criteria, e.g. intonation, diction, balance and blend.

- Compile a simple, short written test on: Italian terms and other musical signs and terminology, music theory materials, lyrics of songs, breathing fundamentals, ear training materials, background information regarding repertoire which has been studied, and evaluation of other choral performances, live or recorded. One could also draw up a listening sheet, which has to be filled in as the choristers listen to a recording. All the choristers then write the test, or fill in the listening sheet.

For the purpose of efficient and swift assessment, choristers' names should be either listed alphabetically, or according to a seating chart. This will save considerable time and effort, both for recording choristers' attendance and recording other assessment criteria at different times. There should be ample space next to each name to allow for several symbols or marks to be recorded. These assessment criteria and other information that has been meticulously gathered during rehearsals and performances are then transferred on to the progress report form at a later stage. Transferring the necessary information from the checklist to the assessment report forms, obviously, is done outside rehearsal time and does not interrupt or intrude on instructional time. On the next page is an example of a progress assessment report form that may be filled in for each chorister.

Name:		Assessment Period:	

Music-based Criteria

Intonation	Vocal technique (voice production, posture, phrasing, diction, breathing & breath control)	Listening Work Sheets and/or Written Test Results	General Choral Performance Participation
A Always on pitch **B** Minor pitch inaccuracies **C** Mostly on pitch **D** Seldom on pitch	**A** Accomplished **B** Developing **C** Beginning/Emerging **D** Minimal achievement	**A** Complete understanding **B** Substantial understanding **C** Some understanding **D** Little understanding	**A** Superior Grading Choral performance exceptional, with remarkable musical expression. Achievement significantly above the level of skill required. Follows conductor at all times. **B** Outstanding Grading Choral performance excellent in many respects but with minor little defects in technique. Admirably achieved the level of skill required. Follows the conductor most of the time. **C** Proficient Grading Acceptable performance, which shows accomplishment, but lacks one or more essential qualities and, overall, is not outstanding. Has made distinct progress but has only achieved elementary level of skill desired. Does not always follow conductor carefully. **D** Needs Improvement Substantial further work is required to demonstrate the level of skill desired.

Non-Music-based Criteria

Attendance (Rehearsals & Performances)	Effort (Concentration and focus)	Behaviour	Attitude	Participation Total
4 Attended all **3** Reliable attendance **2** Usually attends **1** Unreliable attendance	**4** Exceeds expectation **3** Meets expectation **2** Approaching expectation **1** Below expectation	**4** Exemplary **3** Good **2** Satisfactory **1** Continually disruptive	**4** Highly co-operative **3** Co-operative **2** Moderately co-operative **1** Un-co-operative	**14-16** Excellent participation **11-13** Good participation **8 - 10** Fair participation **0 – 7** Detrimental participation

Comments   **Signed**

Form II - 4-1 Progress Assessment report

The choir's performance in public is probably the most common and authentic way of gaining feedback as to how well the choristers are performing.

> A choral concert is a report of the progress made in rehearsals, and after its completion the chorus and conductor should evaluate this *report* to the audience and ascertain if that *report* measured up to their expectations, if it proved to be an accurate summation of their preparatory efforts, and if there was evidence of achievement or failure. The concert is not an *end in itself*, for the chorus and the conductor must profit from this analysis and continue to learn together more and more about the choral art (Decker & Herford 1973: 92).

Working towards a performance can do a great deal to help motivate both the choristers and the director. It provides an excellent incentive to work diligently to transcend the mundane and to strive for worthy results. The performance, however, is merely one event in a continuous process of attaining musical development, sensitivity and aesthetic refinement. After the concert performance is over, it is back to the rehearsal room where the performance experience is used and applied to further shape the continual process of choral education.

Another valuable assessment strategy that is inclined to be overlooked, is a *portfolio* assessment. This involves tangible evidence of the choristers' learning in the form of recordings of the choir's performance, programmes of performances, certificates and adjudicators' commentary.

4.2 Critical Cross-Field Linkages/Articulation Possibilities

Participation in the choral music programme involves numerous trans-disciplinary learning experiences, i.e. critical cross-field linkages or articulation possibilities. In the first instance, this signifies links between *learning areas* (subjects) within the school, whereby various disciplines draw upon practices and skills taught in other learning areas. Examples of critical cross-field linkages with other learning areas taught in the GET (General Education and Training) phase are (listed in alphabetical order):

- **Arts and Culture (Drama):** expression of human emotions.

- **Languages:** lyrics of a song/work relate to language arts and poetry.

- **Life Orientation:** participating as an effective, conscientious, responsible and supportive team member of the choir. Developing leadership abilities by serving as a monitor or group/section leader.

- **Science & Technology (Biology):** knowledge about anatomy of breathing and other organs necessary for tone production, like the larynx, resonating cavities and ears.

- **Social Sciences (Geography):** geographic regions that the music originates from or relates to.

- **Social Sciences (History):** historical background of composers and songs/works.

In the second instance, there are career opportunities and cross-field linkages with some of the *fields* (NSBs) within SAQA (listed in alphabetical order):

- **Music Business and Other Related Fields** (NSB 03 – Business, Commerce & Management)
  - Music industry professionals
  - Manager of a concert venue
  - Manager of a vocal/choral performing group.

- **Music Composition** (NSB 02 – Culture & Arts)
  - Composer/arranger of choral/vocal compositions
  - Writer/composer of background music/TV commercial jingles

- **Music Education** (NSB 05 – Education, Training and Development)
  - Choral director (within school, church or the community at large);
  - Primary school teacher
  - Lecturer/professor at a university or college

- **Music Merchandising and Manufacturing** (NSB 03 – Business, Commerce & Management)
  - Tape/CD retailers
  - Sheet music retailers
  - Recording tapes/CDs for manufacturing
  - Sound technician for concerts or live performances

- **Music Performance** (NSB 02 – Culture & Arts)
  - Pop/jazz/opera/recital singer
  - Studio/choral singer
- **Music Publishing** (NSB 03 – Business, Commerce & Management)
  - Music editor
  - Sales
- **Music Therapy** (NSB 09 – Health Sciences & Social Services).

It can thus be seen that participation in the choral music programme lends itself to a wide range of critical cross-field linkages or articulation possibilities.

Chapter 1

STARTING A CHOIR

1.1 The Rationale for Choral Singing

It is absolutely essential to have a clearly defined rationale (or purpose) formulated for a choral programme. This gives a sense of direction and contributes to a well-organised, efficient and productive programme. We have to know where we are coming from (a basic philosophy) to be able to know where we are going to. Every choral educator has to decide what the choir's basic function is to be. The benefits that a chorister acquires from singing in a choir will now be discussed under two separate headings: *Musical Benefits* and *Non-Musical Benefits*.

1.1.1 Musical Benefits

The Primary School Choir has the wonderful potential for laying the foundation for **a life-long love of choral music**. The choral educator's goal is to provide the choristers with a challenging, musical and artistic choral programme. The choristers deserve the most enriching musical experiences possible: to make every choral work they perform fresh and exciting – a moving and aesthetically memorable moment. Singing in a choir can be such a tremendously great force. In some cases it may even be considered as a life transformation experience. It provides avenues for the choristers to grow emotionally and intellectually. The choral educator has many opportunities to show the choristers the exquisite beauty of life through music. Mary Goetze, a highly respected figure in music education in the USA, states the following:

> As one who has been active with a children's chorus for ten years, I am
> convinced that participating in this activity has a profound effect on the
> musical attitude and achievement of my choristers. While there are
> numerous sources for the positive effects choral experience has, it seems

to me that this success may result in large part from the children's active participation in music-making, refining music for performance, learning its system of symbols, and knowing the work of composers from the inside out (American Choral Directors' Association National Committee 1989:17).

It should be every choral teacher's goal to develop to the utmost each chorister's ability to enjoy music with perception, sensitivity and discrimination. Teaching choristers the skill of fine listening and the ability to perceive (and articulate) the subtleties of an outstanding performance, is of paramount importance. The **music appreciation skills** thus gained will aid the development of sensitive citizens who are involved in musically aesthetic and satisfying experiences for the rest of their lives. (Refer to **Part I**, 3.10 "Choral Unit Standard: Critical Evaluation".)

> Aesthetically sensitive people have a more rewarding, interesting, fuller life: people who are insensitive to aesthetic experiences are confined to a sombre and lack-lustre existence (Wolff 1992:1).

Music touches the soul and is therefore one of the **vital components** or basic elements in our lives.

> Just how basic became apparent in a most powerful way when Americans first entered Somalia. The nightly news programs showed hundreds of starving, naked Somalis and their children waiting for death. Yet they sang and tried to move as if to dance. It appeared to be the only sustaining force in their nearly spent lives (Miller & Coen 1995: 10).

Development of musicianship and music reading ability are some of the vitally important skills that a chorister gleans from singing in a choir. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.14 "Aural and Music-Reading Skills".) Singing in the choir provides the children with the opportunity to practise the fundamentals of good singing, which leads to choral artistry. Healthy vocal production and artistic interpretation should be taught and nurtured in the choral rehearsal.

1.1.2 Non-Musical Benefits

Some of the **non-musical benefits** of being in a school choir include being able to:

- perform,
- travel with the group,
- wear a special choir outfit, and
- hear the applause of an appreciative audience.

The choir, thus, offers a unique opportunity to develop a strong sense of group solidarity and cohesion, of social interaction with other children, and pride in accomplishment. A choir performance takes place in a co-operative setting. The success of the performance depends on the co-operation of the individuals within the group. They learn about each other and bonding occurs; this builds a tremendous sense of **esprit-de-corps**.

> The beauty of group singing in a classroom or choir lies in its corporate nature. There are few places in life or the school curriculum where people actively join together in a group effort to share their feelings and thoughts about life. Whatever its benefits, expressive group singing is a tradition of humankind that has as its basis this need to share and express what makes people human. These affective elements are a natural extension of this innate need to share and are powerful in a group effort, especially among adolescents. The expressive elements of vocal music should not be ignored (Phillips 1992: 336-337).

John Rutter writes as follows in the foreword to Ronald Corp's book:

> Choral singing remains one of the most richly rewarding of corporate experiences. In an age where the solitude of the computer screen drives people apart and threatens to oust real group activity, the world needs its choirs more than ever before, in church, in school, in the concert hall, and in the community (Corp 2000: 3).

The choristers gain life orientation skills, that enable them to function optimally in life, like:

- sense of community,
- respect for others and the ability to blend in with the group,

- civil behaviour as an exemplary and contributing citizen.

Choristers engage in emotional aspects such as self-understanding by developing sensitivity to inner feelings, self-esteem, poise, confidence and identity. Whilst singing in the choir, one is inclined to lose the sense of *self* and to experience a congenial, amicable bond of harmony with the rest of the choir. **Self-esteem and self-confidence** are nurtured and strengthened as a result. The choristers, thus, learn more about themselves and more about the world around them.

> Before we can attain harmony, balance and blend within the music, we must establish it with one another. To build and strengthen our musical performances, we have to build and strengthen our personal relationships within the group (Lautzenheiser & White 2000: 15).

According to the American psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi one of the most important benefits of singing in a choir, is growth in the form of *self-knowledge*. He says that "you forget yourself while you sing, but if you master an unfamiliar, difficult work and you think back on what you have done, you feel that you have grown" (Csikszentmihalyi 1995:17).

Music participation can be crucial to a pupil's overall **intellectual development**. The study of music heightens critical thinking skills and stimulates the creative part of the brain. In speaking of his renowned *Theory of Relativity*, Albert Einstein said: "It occurred to me by intuition that music was the driving force behind that intuition and my discovery was the result of my musical perception" (Lautzenheiser & White 2000: 12).

Within the choral framework, choristers engage in profound intellectual, emotional and aesthetic activities such as:

- Kindling or intensifying of multi-dimensional thinking that reinforces the highest level of intellect – i.e. discernment/judgement/discretion, subtlety, refinement, reflection, breadth of view, depth, profoundness, open-mindedness, tolerance/consideration;
- Memorising;

- Stimulation of the creative mind;
- Fine nuances of non-verbal communication;
- The ability to cope with unforeseen circumstances in performance (wisdom in action);
- Inquiry and expression of human feelings;
- A sense of order and prioritising;
- Speaking clearly and eloquently; and
- Expressing ideas in other languages.

One often hears choir members remarking on how well, exhilarated or energised they feel after a choir rehearsal. This is partly due to correct diaphragmatic breathing that ensures an abundant oxygen supply into the bloodstream. Singing is indeed **potent medicine** for health and general well-being.

The study of music (and choir participation) cultivates **better-disciplined** and **harder working** citizens. The choristers soon become aware of just how hard one has to work to attain a modicum of success and they consistently expect of themselves the highest standards attainable. This persistence in working towards and attaining goals inculcates and reinforces a standard of excellence that is a vital component for success in all of life. Most former pupils that had the privilege to study music (sing in a choir), will tell you that the one subject that teaches **perseverance, hard work and** the importance of **self-discipline** better than any other subject, is music.

The choristers learn about their own **cultural heritage** and the world around them. Doors to the musical heritage of other cultures within South Africa's diverse society ("rainbow nation") are opened and this discovery instils respect, which diminishes racial and cultural differences. Thus we are acknowledging the fact that, in spite of our variance and diversity, we are one country. Educators are obligated to establish a harmonious culture for all learners in South Africa. The following quote is an extract from a speech made at a Heritage Day assembly at Redhill School:

> Diversity is not about agreement. We do not have to share a common
> culture, a common political ideal, a common world view. But it is vital
> that we make the effort to understand and embrace our differences. The
> motto of the old SA was 'Unity is Strength'. I do not think that this is
> accurate. Rather, I believe our strength will be found in our differences.
> [...] May our children go forward without fear. May our children go
> forward with hope. May our children go forward with the courage to be
> different (Mitchell 2001).

The choristers also learn that music is a powerful force in the everyday life of people around the world. (Refer to **Part I**, 3.2 "Choral Unit Standard: Intonation", Range Statement: "varied repertoire".) The *Global Village* is becoming a reality at an ever-increasing pace. Television and information technology puts us in contact with people all over the world and challenges us to find common ground for mutual understanding.

Singing in the choir challenges the intellect, stimulates the imagination and expands musical appreciation. The choristers learn to set goals and have high aspirations. It is an aid to giving cultural perspective and gaining greater sensitivity, appreciation and understanding of other cultures. The choir also gives members the opportunities for self-expression and developing self-esteem, confidence and poise.

1.2 What Skills do I need to be an Effective Choral Educator?

The effective and successful choral teacher must not only be a competent musician and a skilful educator, but also a pleasant, genial and amicable person. Some of the skills that are required by the choral educator will now be discussed and are classified under the following two headings: *Musical Skills* and *Non-Musical Skills*.

1.2.1 Musical Skills

Dynamic and effective choral teachers need to be thoroughly **trained musicians**, possessing **excellent musicianship**. They should be able to analyse the musical components of the choral work to be studied. These include the overall form; the

harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic structure; text and style. Furthermore, they should have an inner sense about music and its expressive powers and possess a musical imagination. They are, thus, very sensitive to the "magic" within the music. They are charismatic and gifted teachers and they can express beauty in the music with their choristers.

The choral teacher has to fully **grasp the meaning and emotion in the text and the music**. (Refer to **Part II**, 4.4.2 "Expression of Text" and 4.4.3 "The Musical Phrase". Also refer to **Part I**, 3.8 "Choral Unit Standard: Expression" and 3.3 "Choral Unit Standard: Phrasing".) This knowledge is then transferred to the choristers. If the teacher speaks clearly, precisely and eloquently, uses poetic expression and has a supply of colourful, descriptive, captivating and imaginative ideas, the choristers are more likely to understand and grasp the meaning and emotion of the song. With children one cannot deal too much in abstract technical concepts and terms. One, therefore, has to resort to linguistic tools like metaphor, simile, imagery and life analogy. The children love to have their imaginations stimulated. The choral educator needs to inspire them to sing the music with passion, to love the music and share its beauty with the audience.

To direct a successful choir, the choral teacher needs to have an in-depth **understanding of the vocal instrument** and needs to be able to model/demonstrate healthy vocal technique. The choral teacher does not necessarily have to be an extremely talented singer. Many of the most successful choral conductors are or were merely average singers. They should, however, have an exceptionally **good ear**. The development of aural sensitivity is an on-going, life-long process.

Knowledge about the physiology of the human voice enables one to diagnose a vocal problem and to prescribe an appropriate remedy. One has to constantly study by reading extensively and attending choral training workshops in order to find new ways of teaching and gaining insights and specific ideas on how to solve choral problems. (Refer to **Part II**, 1.3 "Membership of the South African Choral Society", below.)

It is necessary to have an in-depth **knowledge of a variety of choral music** from different historical periods, cultures, and different styles and genres. The musical menu has to provide the choristers with a balanced programme from these historical periods, cultures and musical styles. Knowledge of these styles and sensitivity to the interpretation practices is needed. (Refer to **Part II**, 4.9 "Historical/Stylistic Guidelines and Cultural Context".)

Excellent **keyboard skills** are a great advantage to the choral teacher. The ability to sing or play any vocal line or rhythm accurately is absolutely essential. If a good accompanist is available, however, only elementary keyboard skills are required.

1.2.2 Non-Musical Skills

The conductor's **personality and teaching style** play a tremendously important role in the development of group dynamics. A warm, friendly, sincere and understanding choral teacher who creates a nurturing environment is more likely to succeed than one who is merely concerned with musical perfection. The choristers will learn more readily if they like and respect the teacher.

The choral teacher's **speaking voice should be strong or clear** enough to be heard by all the choristers. It should be pleasant, versatile and well-modulated so that it can be raised and lowered to retain attention. It should possess a quality of confidence, assurance and decisiveness – an aura of firm, yet genial, authority.

The choral educator needs to **motivate** the children so that they *want* to sing. To be able to do this, one has to be highly resourceful and even crafty at times. The teacher's ingenuity and gentle persuasion will establish a positive rapport with the pupils. This, in turn, will hopefully have the result that the children increasingly develop a positive rapport with the music. One should be demanding and not

accept second rate effort or results but, at the same time, one has to be patient and sensitive to the children's rate of progress.

Imagination, resourcefulness and the ability to be **stimulating** is absolutely essential in order to hold the choristers' attention. Facial expressions, tone of voice, posture and gestures are used to emphasise, elaborate or anticipate and establish greater contact with the group. The teacher's **enthusiasm** for the art of choral singing should rub off on the choristers to create a passionate love for and involvement with the choral programme.

An effective choral teacher should have excellent **organisational skills** in order to give firm direction and to attain specific goals. Without good organisational skills, rehearsals would probably be meaningless and become unruly. The choral programme will suffer and the choristers will lose interest.

It is essential that the choral teacher **acknowledges the immense value and impact of choral music** as a life-enriching, aesthetic experience involving both the intellect and the emotions. Music has the amazing ability to transform, to elevate, to enhance and enrich the lives of those that perform and hear it. Unless the teacher firmly believes in the inherent power of music, there will be scant hope for the development of a dynamic and successful choir in that particular school.

The successful choral educator needs to be **pro-active**. That means that one has to search for ways to prevent a situation developing that might give rise to a problem. Should one plan meticulously for a rehearsal, one is more likely to avoid becoming re-active by trying to solve a problem after it has occurred.

The choral teacher needs to be **in command** of the rehearsal. Body language and stance goes a long way to project confidence. A "drooping daisy" stance will most definitely not succeed, whereas an alive, enthusiastic and confident stance will arrest the attention of the choristers and they will be more readily prepared to co-operate. Confidence, obviously, is also fostered through musical and pedagogical preparation. The secret lies in thorough score analysis and careful planning of a

logical sequence of teaching strategies. (Refer to **Part II**, 3.2 "Score Study" and 3.1 "Preparing for Rehearsal".)

The Primary School choral teacher should have a sincere and infectious **enthusiasm for music, children, and teaching**. A genuine fondness of children this age is indispensable. They have to be respected as individuals and be challenged to attain their full potential – to be the best they can be.

The ability to use third-rate talent and to succeed in producing a second-rate performance is the mark of a good teacher. This refers to teachers who seem to be able to **extract greatness out of ordinary children** by touching their souls and inspiring them to reach for the outer limits of their ability.

The conducting and directing of a choir is an enormous human and musical responsibility. At the same time it is a most interesting, stimulating and rewarding task. Nevertheless, it is highly challenging and is definitely not for the faint-hearted, apathetic or lazy teacher.

1.3 Membership of the South African Choral Society

The successful choral teacher should have an attitude of intellectual curiosity and the potential to *continue to learn* in the field of choral singing. It is essential not to become complacent, but to continually develop, augment and broaden one's expertise by attending choral workshops, clinics or courses. This will result in greater competence in implementing the choral programme. By becoming a member of the South African Choral Society one receives their regular newsletter and information about upcoming choral events and courses. The South African Choral Society contact details are as follows:

Postal Address: SACS
P.O. Box 31950
Fichardtpark
BLOEMFONTEIN
9317

The e-mail address: sachoral@xsinet.co.za

Telephone number: 082 954 6637

Fax number: (051) 448 2003

1.4 Who will Sing in the Choir and how Large should the Choir be?

There are a number of elements to consider when deciding how to group choirs in the Primary School. The following are some important indicators that may influence the decision:

- Obviously, the **number of children** available to sing in the choir will have an impact on how the choirs are structured. Children, especially in the Foundation phase, are inhibited when they have to perform in a small group (less than 30 children). On the other hand, a large group (more than 60 members) may become difficult to handle which may lead to discipline problems.

- Child **development characteristics** need to be taken into account when different age groups are grouped together in the same choir. The age differential should not be too great. The maturity levels of the children will determine their interests and mental and physical abilities.

- The way in which the school's **timetable** is compiled may influence choir grouping because of the available rehearsal time. Extra-mural activities, likewise, may affect the decision.

The Primary School Choir should ideally be divided into two separate choirs, namely the Foundation Phase choir (i.e. grades 1-3, excluding the Reception year) and the Intermediate Phase choir (i.e. grades 4-6) with the grade 7s incorporated into either the Intermediate Phase Choir or the Senior School Choir. These groupings are by no means unalterably fixed, but have been found to be reasonably compatible. Should the school have a pre-school choir, it may prove to be a better arrangement to have the grade 1s singing in this particular choir. The grade 1's reading skills are undeveloped, especially at the beginning of the year, and this grouping may be more convenient. If the grade 1s, however, were grouped with the Foundation Phase Choir, one would have to spend extra time with them to help them learn the repertoire.

1.5 Financial Budget

If the school choir's conductor and accompanist are staff members from the particular school, then the choral programme is probably seen as their extra-curricular duty to the school or, alternatively, they volunteer their services and they are not remunerated for their time and effort. Should this not be the case, appropriate payment will have to be budgeted for.

Purchasing tentative **repertoire** selections for the year can be costly, but once the choir is established, the music library increases and subsequent additions incur less expense.

Duplicating costs for forms, letters, notices, certificates, etc. may be a significant cost and will have to be budgeted for. The school may provide this service. One would, however, have to give an estimate of this anticipated expenditure.

An interesting and dynamic choral programme in the primary school requires **posters**, **visual aids, and recordings** of choral singing. These may not be an urgent requirement but certainly would make it much more exciting and informative for the choristers.

Affiliation fees and/or **entry fees** for eisteddfodau, contests, festivals or concerts for the year need to be budgeted for. One needs to decide in advance which activities the choir is going to participate in, and determine the costs involved.

Copyright fees that are due to SARRAL (South African Recording Rights Association) or SAMRO (South African Music Rights Organisation) for recordings that the choir may wish to do or concerts for the public where an entrance fee is charged. Schools, universities, eisteddfod bodies, town and city halls usually have a general license that covers the performance of music on their properties. Should there be any uncertainty about these matters, SAMRO and/or SARRAL may be contacted for the necessary information at the following addresses or telephone numbers:

Postal Address: SAMRO
P.O. Box 31609
BRAAMFONTEIN
2017

Telephone number: (011) 489-5000

Fax number: (011) 403-1934

Postal Address: SARRAL
P.O. Box 31091
BRAAMFONTEIN
2017

Telephone number: (011) 339-1333

Fax number: (011) 339-1403

Transportation costs can be substantial if the school does not have a bus to help with the transport to and from performances. Parents may also be approached to help with transport, as this will greatly relieve the choral department's financial responsibilities. Another alternative is to charge the choristers bus fare if a bus has to be specially hired for transport. If there are children whose parents cannot afford the expense, this situation should be dealt with great solicitude and circumspection. In a letter to parents it could be mentioned that the school does not want any choristers deprived of choral performance experiences for financial reasons. Should parents therefore experience problems in contributing towards the travelling expense, they must feel free to come and discuss this with the teacher.

Large expenditures such as the purchase of a new piano, choral risers, stereo equipment, etc. may be covered in the budget for the entire school. If this were not the case, the choral teacher would have to draw up a written justification for the purchase. The educational benefits and experiences to the children need to be stressed. Information about suitable brands on the market and prices should also be furnished. Obtain brochures and specifications from manufacturers and/or dealers. Shop around so that an informed choice can be made. Do not sacrifice quality for lowest cost.

If the monies allocated for the choral programme are insufficient, consider the possibility of **fund-raising** projects like charging admission to a concert produced by the choir,

possibly in combination with the music department. The printed programme for the concert may contain advertising, which had been sold to interested parties. One could also approach companies to solicit corporate donations or grants. Each school, however, has its own fiscal policies in place and it is important to consult the principal first, before embarking on any fund raising campaign.

The choir budget needs to be implemented with considerable care and efficiency. Records need to be kept accurately and meticulously. Equipment and materials must be well looked after and frugal housekeeping needs to be the order of the day. If it becomes evident to the principal and the administration that the choral teacher is spending the allocated money wisely and that the equipment and materials are carefully looked after, they would be more inclined to grant a request for an increased budget.

1.6 Consultation with the School Principal and other Staff Members

The choir teacher should make every effort to build **positive co-operative relations** with the school principal and other staff members. Friendly and close working relationships with the school staff can be most beneficial throughout the year. Poor relationships, on the other hand, can be most unpleasant and prove to be a great disadvantage to the choir and the choral teacher. The use of a little tact and diplomacy will indeed pay rich dividends.

All school staff members need to become aware of the advantages, value and merit of the choir. The choral teacher should discuss the choir activities with other staff members and elicit their support. It is important to get to know the class teachers personally. They can often influence and encourage pupils to remain in the choir should they experience a difficult period. They may assist the pupils in their class in various ways to smooth the way for choir participation, like reminding them to attend choir rehearsals regularly and on time. The class teacher is better informed about the pupil's problems at school and at home and can thus inform one of potential problems the pupil may be having in the class, with peers or at home.

The choral teacher has to meet with the principal to discuss all the necessary arrangements and requirements of a choir. The choral teacher's enthusiasm and positive approach will go a long way in gaining the positive support necessary from the headmaster for a choral programme in the school. It would be expedient for the choral teacher to draw up a scheme for the choral programme which furnishes the following guidelines or criteria:

- A programme with high expectations;
- A programme that aims to produce quality performances;
- An activity that offers aesthetic and cultural enrichment to the pupils; and
- Other clearly observable results.

Support from the principal and time allocation for choir practices are bound to be forthcoming with a well-formulated and clearly defined strategy.

1.7 Rehearsal Time, Venue and Equipment

Finding a suitable rehearsal time may often prove to be difficult and frustrating. It is important that choir rehearsals are scheduled so that there are **no clashes** with other classes or activities, which may prevent some children from singing in the choir. Choristers should not be put in the position where they have to choose between choir participation and some other favourite activity. Ideally, the choir rehearsal should take place *during* school hours, rather than *before* or *after* school.

Physical conditions are important and one would like an attractive room that is large enough to accommodate the choir comfortably. Adequate and comfortable seating is essential. A black/whiteboard is indispensable for illustration and explanations. The overhead projector is more and more becoming a replacement for the blackboard and it has several advantages over the blackboard. For one thing, the teacher can face the choir while writing instead of having to turn his/her back on the group. Written examples can also be prepared in advance, thereby making optimum use of rehearsal time.

A **well-tuned piano** is a necessity; insist on having it tuned regularly. It is counter-productive to work with an inadequate instrument. The conductor should have a sturdy music stand that can be adjusted. Adequate storage space is essential, especially if the room is to be shared by other personnel.

1.8 Gaining Support and Public Relations

One of the best ways to gain support for the choir, to boost the morale of the choir and to gain a reputation as a capable choral educator is to present a **good first performance**. Arrange a short performance as soon as possible to be presented at a general school assembly and invite the parents. This serves to show the choir at work to other staff members, pupils and parents. It may even attract several prospective choir members. Use music that will be upbeat and attractive to the choristers as well as to the audience, but keep the quality high.

It is the duty of the choral educator to communicate the philosophy, goals and standards of the choir to the school staff, parents and the pupils. With dwindling budgets for the arts, the advocacy of music education and active participation in music making has to be approached with great urgency. The lobbying for the choral programme and the advocating of its value in the development of the children is an important responsibility of the choral educator. Only if the people concerned are aware of, and understand, the tremendous impact and value of a solid choral programme in the development of the youth, will they be able to support the endeavour.

Chapter 2

PLANNING AND ORGANISATION

2.1 Recruitment and Retention of Choristers

One of the most important requirements for obtaining recognition for the choir is to help the choristers feel successful. It is a good idea to schedule a **performance early in the year** in order to increase the motivation of the choristers and their parents. Towards the end of the first term the choir should have a short programme ready for performance. Performing this programme successfully will help to give the children and their parents a sense of achievement and positive reinforcement. Success breeds success and the choristers will be eager to dedicate themselves to a cause in which they experience a high level of accomplishment.

Recruiting and retaining **boys in the choir** requires extra ingenuity. Boys need to be convinced that choir is not a "sissy activity". Elicit the sport master's help (or that of another suitable male role model) and ask them to address the boys on this matter.

A very important component in preventing children leaving the choir, is to build healthy relationships with the choristers. Becoming a member of the school choir initially is often a novelty that is prestigious, challenging and interesting. It is important to point out to the children that singing in the choir is fun and can be most stimulating. However, it involves hard work and they may experience periods of frustration. Encourage them to **persevere through difficult times**. The rewards are inestimable. Hopefully they will ultimately enjoy choir participation so much that they get caught up in it and want to continue singing in the choir.

If a child wants to **quit choir**, one has to discuss this rationally with the child and find out what the true causes and reasons may be. Ask the child not to make a hasty decision that s/he may regret for years to come. A note or telephone call to parents to solicit their extra support and encouragement at this time would be most appropriate. Remind them of the valuable role that choral participation plays in the chorister's life, and the immense value it has on the child's overall intellectual development. (Refer to **Part II**, 1.1 "The Rationale for Choral Singing".)

Should one find that several children are quitting choir, then one has to re-evaluate the choir activities and one's teaching style. Some of the issues that need to be addressed are the following:

- Is the choir repertoire sufficiently appealing to and interesting for the children?
- Is the discipline in rehearsals conducive to developing learning?
- Does the discipline foster a sense of self-respect and security?
- Is one's teaching style too abrasive?

Knowing where there are areas that need improvement will help to remedy one's effectiveness in future.

2.2 Development of the Child Voice

The choral educator in the primary school needs to be well informed about the development of the child voice in order to structure an educationally and aesthetically discerning choral programme for the choristers' musical growth. This important knowledge is necessary to be able to, amongst other things, conduct auditions successfully or to select appropriate and relevant repertoire. (Refer to **Part II**, 2.4 "Auditions" and 2.5 "Selecting Appropriate Repertoire", below.)

Positive musical experiences must begin in early childhood with many opportunities for singing. The **pre-school years** are vitally important for the musical growth of the child. The pre-school child needs many opportunities to hear, feel and demonstrate the difference between speaking and singing. Research has confirmed that the use of one's singing voice is a learned, complex process (Phillips 1992). Children learn through imitation, and parents, teachers and others should present them with a good model of clear, soft, in-tune singing. Should they be singing loudly, the chest voice will be used and one specifically wants to encourage the cultivation of the head voice. The universal childhood chant, *soh-mi-lah*, should be used for many sing-song chants. Chant-like songs and other songs should be pitched between $d^1 - a^1$ (b^1). Below c^1 the chest voice is used. Songs should generally be short with much repetition of melodic and rhythmic patterns.

In grade 1 of the **Foundation phase** there is advancement from the pre-school years in the singing voice, although there will still be a wide diversity of singing abilities amongst the children. Several children can now sing in tune and the singing range for the group has extended from the pre-school stage which may now be from approximately $d^1 - d^2$ (McRae 1991: 43) or $c^1 - d^2$ (Swears 1985: 29). By the end of the Foundation phase, grade 3, the range is extended to include $c^1 - e^2$. (Refer to **Part II**, 2.5 "Selecting Appropriate Repertoire". Also refer to **Part I**, 3.2 "Choral Unit Standard: Intonation", Range Statement: "suitable range".)

The choristers in the Foundation phase enjoy imitating rhythms and melodies demonstrated by the teacher and they are able to remember longer rhythmic and tonal patterns than that which was possible in the pre-school years. Furthermore, language development and the child's widening interest allow for more demanding, and greater diversity in, song material.

In the Foundation phase the children become more aware of singing in-tune and are better able to sing in unison with the rest of the group. "Most children should be able to sing on pitch by ages eight or nine, and they understand the meaning of singing in tune with others" (McRae 1991: 44). The children should be encouraged to discover the expressive qualities of their voices by using varied dynamics, tempi, phrasing, and timbre. The singing in the Foundation phase should still be kept light and not too loud to encourage a light head-tone quality. Phillips (1992: 73) states that:

> The lower register should not be suppressed as it naturally emerges, but the singing should be kept light so as to minimise its predominance. The range of songs must be kept above middle C, below which the chest voice takes over.

By the 4th grade, **Intermediate phase**, children who have had good vocal instruction and numerous opportunities to sing will have voices developed in character and clarity. The emergence of a beautiful singing tone, which is so unique to the child voice, will be evident at this stage. McRae (1991: 46) states that:

> The child voice reaches its peak of development and, in boys, is its most brilliant just prior to change. The timbre is enhanced by more resonance throughout the range.

The vocal timbre of the head-voice should be developed to its full potential. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.7 "The Importance of Head Voice".) The children's sense of tonality is well-developed and part-singing (harmonising) should be commenced at the beginning of grade 4. (Refer to

Part II, 4.3 "Unison and Part Singing".) The vocal range for the group has expanded since the Foundation phase, both upwards and downwards and rich chest tones may also be developing. While vocal ranges vary, a range of two octaves is quite possible (i.e. $g - g^2$) with "many children sing(ing) accurately in a range from $b^{\square}$ to $f^{\,2}$" (Swears 1985: 31). (Refer to **Part II**, 6.6 "Children's Vocal Ranges and Registers".) Phillips (1992: 74) states that:

> Vocal development and beauty peaks in the child's voice in the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades. A range of up to two octaves (g to g^2) is possible, which results in a flutelike upper register, a warm lower register (below middle C) and a middle register (c^1 to c^2) that brings into balance the head and chest timbres.

The greater physical, intellectual (including musical) and emotional development of the child in the Intermediate phase makes it possible to sing more expressively and the expressive qualities should be emphasised. Several soloists will emerge in the Intermediate phase.

2.3 The Changing Voice

In grade 7 (and occasionally in grade 6) some boys may already experience the psychological and physiological changes, which occur during puberty, and the dramatic and sometimes very abrupt effect that these have on the vocal mechanism. Some boys may find it embarrassing when their voices start to "play tricks" on them when they are singing. Songs that could be sung with reasonable accuracy up to now all of a sudden present problems. The physiological change that is taking place involves the **larynx**, which is virtually doubling in size and the adjoining muscles and fibrous tissues which are thickening and becoming stronger. As a result, the vocal folds now produce tones that are lower in pitch and heavier in quality.

The choral tradition in Europe was rooted for centuries in the monasteries of the early Christian Church. These choirs consisted **entirely of male choristers** with boy sopranos being sought after for their celestially pure, bell-like timbres. Females were forbidden to sing in the churches until the early seventeenth century (Eshelman 1992). Young boys, from a variety of backgrounds, clamoured after positions in these cathedral choirs where they were fed, clothed, and given an education in both academic studies and in music, with the emphasis on singing. As soon as the boy's voice started changing, and could no longer sing the high notes, the boy

was discharged from the choir. They were instructed to stop singing altogether if they wanted to protect the developing adult voice.

Throughout the twentieth century several researchers made significant contributions to the study of the changing voice. Many started to criticise the practises of the traditional choral education that had been in place in Europe for several centuries. This resulted in choirs no longer dismissing boys with changing voices and allowing them to sing "through the change".

Several researchers claim that **both males and females experience vocal changes** during adolescence. The changing process is not nearly as noticeable or dramatic in females as it is in males, but females also experience a certain re-aligning of the voice (Phillips 1995, Hook 1998). During adolescence, the female vocal folds also increase in size that results in a general lowering in range capabilities combined with an upper limit that rises slightly. The new sound produced by the adolescent girl gains in richness and body. The vocal folds' increase in size in males is far more pronounced, however, than that of the females.

> A boy's larynx increases in length and width as he develops into an adult, while a girl's larynx increases only in length. In both sexes, the vocal cords thicken and lengthen, leading to a fuller, adult vocal quality (Friar 1999:28).

Some boys experience a gradual change and they could be accommodated in the treble choir by letting them sing the same part as those girls who have been assigned to the alto section. If the voice changes abruptly, the boy should be transferred to the Senior School Choir.

2.4 Auditions

Competition and selection are two basic elements that have to be dealt with throughout life. Not all the boys succeed in being selected for the first rugby or cricket team. The girls do not all qualify for the netball or swimming team. Some educators feel that the Junior School choir should be open to all the pupils and that one should not audition the children for the choir. This is a noble ideal that does not necessarily work in practice.

In the **class music milieu** *all* the pupils have the opportunity to sing and to receive a music education. It would be a good idea for the class music teacher to arrange performances for a class as a whole at a school general assembly or an inter-class singing competition. Every pupil is then expected to perform. The choral singing in this instance may be highly enthusiastic, but it is seldom of distinguished or notable quality.

Yet another possibility would be to establish a **"training" choir**. Pupils who do not succeed for the choir audition and are keen to sing, join this group. Remedial help for inaccurate singing and more individual attention is possible with this arrangement. These pupils can then be taken up into the main choir as soon as their development warrants this.

Choral educators may not, however, ignore the needs of the more talented pupils by denying them the opportunity to experience the aesthetics of choral art and truly well-performed music. Should one *not* audition pupils for a choir, one runs the risk of losing the musically talented pupils because the singing does not transcend the ordinary. The music performances by the choir need to challenge the pupils to greater musical achievement. They need to strive for a **performance that exceeds the mundane** – that rises above mediocrity. This cannot happen if there are choir members present that cannot sing expressively or even sing "in-tune". Furthermore, the musically gifted child should be learning more challenging, artistic choral music than that which is covered in the class music lessons.

If the auditions are handled properly, it does not have to be a devastating and traumatic experience for the unsuccessful candidates. One needs to keep the standards high for selection and inform the pupils as soon as possible as to the outcome of the audition. This will prevent the unsuccessful candidates from building up false expectations over an extended period, which may only magnify the disappointment. Tell the children that we cannot all run fast like the best athletes in school. We cannot all become "Miss South Africa" beauty queens or "Mr Iron Man" super-fit athletes. We are not all gifted Einsteins, neither are we all capable of singing like Pavarotti. We are all, however, good at something or other. Should somebody not qualify for the school choir, it is not the end of the world. The **voice and ear keeps on growing and improving** and they may possibly qualify at a later stage. They should keep on enjoying their singing and participate in the class-music lessons and develop their musicality.

The audition provides information about the child's personality, background, musicianship and vocal ability (i.e. vocal range and voice quality). This information will assist the teacher in placing the singers that qualify in the most suitable vocal section.

Auditioning for a Foundation Phase Choir (grades 1-3), the initial stage of the audition, i.e. the singing of "Happy Birthday", both with accompaniment and without, is probably sufficient for this early stage. (See example **II** - 2-2, below.)

The following **auditioning procedure** is suitable **for children in grades 4–7** or even an older group. It is essential to hold a general **pre-audition meeting** for all the children wanting to audition in order to explain and demonstrate the procedure. The children will then know exactly what to expect. It is important to establish a friendly, informal atmosphere and to set them at ease. Use this opportunity to discuss rehearsal and concert schedules and generally what is expected from a choir member. Point out to the children that singing in the choir is great fun but it involves hard work and is definitely not for those who want to fool around.

If there is a large turnout of children to audition for the choir, one could conduct a quick screening in order to eliminate the growling "teddy-bears". This would be similar to auditioning for the Foundation Phase Choir. Only those who can "carry a tune" and sing "Happy Birthday" on pitch, with the melody played on the piano, come back for the subsequent, more thorough audition.

The following aspects need to be covered in the pre-audition meeting:

- Tell the children to be auditioned that they will be expected to sing **"Happy Birthday"**. Practise this with them. (See example **II** - 2-2, below.) Caution them about the difficult leap in "Happy Birthday" and practise it with them. This is the octave leap between "*Happy*" and "*birth*" (end of bar 4 and the beginning of bar 5). Remind them that it takes effort to reach the top note. Demonstrate and practise this octave leap with the group.
- Another song that they can be expected to sing is **"Silent Night"**. (See example **II** - 2-3, below.) Alternatively, they may bring their own song, but then they must supply the sheet music for the song. Practise "Silent Night" with the group. Make sure that they all have a copy of the song or use an overhead projector with the song on a transparency. Tell them

that you will only play the bass accompaniment while they sing the melody, and practise it in this way with them.

- Divide the group in two and sing the round, **"Are You Sleeping?"** ("Brother John") with them. (See example **II - 2-4**, below.) Once more, supply a copy of the music. Remind them that it is important to concentrate on their own singing while at the same time listening to the other voice-part.

- The last exercise that needs to be covered in the pre-audition session is the **ascending scale passage** sung by the teacher and the second voice-part by the child. (See example **II - 2-5**, below.) Practise this a few times.

The children can now be auditioned privately, which will help to alleviate nervousness and avoid embarrassment. Arrange times for the children to come and audition. It saves time if they come in small groups and wait their turn with a person that is appointed to help with the auditioning. This could be a responsible senior choir pupil. **An assistant** to help at the audition would greatly contribute to the smooth running of the arrangements. The assistant can fill in the first part of the audition form while the children are waiting their turn to audition. They also facilitate a smooth flow of children in and out of the audition room.

The following is an example of an audition form (Form **II - 2-1a** and **II - 2-1b**, below):

CHOIR AUDITION FORM

(Section a)

Date_____

Name_____ Class_____

Parent or Guardian's Name_____

Address_____

_____

Tel. No. (h)_____ (w)_____

Cell phone_____ Fax No._____

Age_____ Birthday_____

Have you sung in a choir before? Yes__ No__ When? _____ Where? _____

Do you play a music instrument(s)? Yes__ No__ What instrument(s)? _____
How long have you taken music lessons? _____
Who is your teacher? _____

The following to be filled in by parent or guardian:
Would you be able to assist in any way with the management of the choir? _____

_____

Do either of the parents play a music instrument? (Please specify the instrument and indicate
if you would be prepared to assist with accompaniment or sectional rehearsals.)

_____

Form II - 2-1a Choir Audition form (Section a)

_____

CHOIR AUDITION FORM

(Section b)

(The following information is for the choral educator's information only)

Voice Quality: breathy _____ nasal _____ piercing _____

resonant _____ dark _____ light _____

small _____ big/strong _____

changing _____ soloist _____

Tonal Memory: excellent _____ good _____ fair _____ poor _____

Rhythmic Memory: excellent _____ good _____ fair _____ poor _____

Intonation: excellent _____ good _____ fair _____ poor _____

Vocal Independence: excellent _____ good _____ fair _____ poor _____
(singing in harmony)

Musicality: excellent _____ good _____ fair _____ poor _____

Choir Candidate: yes _____ no _____ try again at later stage _____

Vocal Range: _____ to _____

Tessitura: _____ to _____
(comfortable range)

Voice Part Allocation: S_1 _____ S_2 _____ A _____

Personality: enthusiastic _____ confident _____ lethargic _____ anxious _____

Comments: _____

_____

_____

Form II - 2-1b Choir Audition form (Section b)

The following procedures may be followed at the audition. These are by no means prescriptive and choral educators should feel free to develop their own auditioning procedures or, alternatively, only use some of these ideas.

Ask the child to sing "Happy Birthday" while you play the melody as accompaniment on the piano. (See example **II - 2-1**, below.) This will set the child at ease and also gives them a comfortable pitch for the song and establishes a moderate tempo. (Children are inclined to rush the tempo when singing "Happy Birthday".) One can also determine if the child is able to sing in tune with support from the piano.

Happy Birthday to You
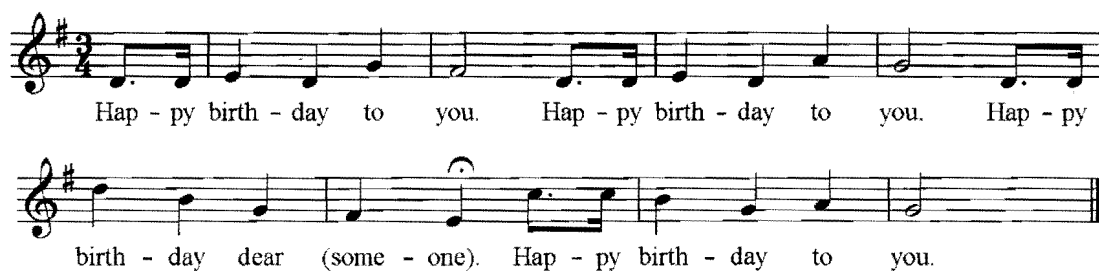
Example II - 2-1 Happy Birthday

Repeat the singing of "Happy Birthday" but without *any* accompaniment. Listen for pitch accuracy and the ability to stay in key. A "dependent" singer cannot sing on pitch when singing alone. One needs to focus and concentrate a little bit more in order to sing accurately by oneself.

The next step is to ask the child to sing "Silent Night" while you play chordal harmonic support, or the left-hand accompaniment only. It is important *not* to duplicate the melodic line on the piano. (See example **II - 2-2**, below.) The idea is to determine if the child can carry the melody while you are playing the harmony line beneath the melody. Listen for pitch accuracy (intonation) and vocal quality. Play a two bar introduction and the first bar of the song itself and continue with only the left-hand accompaniment. (Supply a copy of the words if necessary.)

Silent Night

Words by Joseph Mohr
Music by Frans Grüber
Arranged by Nita Wolff

Si – lent night.   Ho – ly night.   All   is calm,
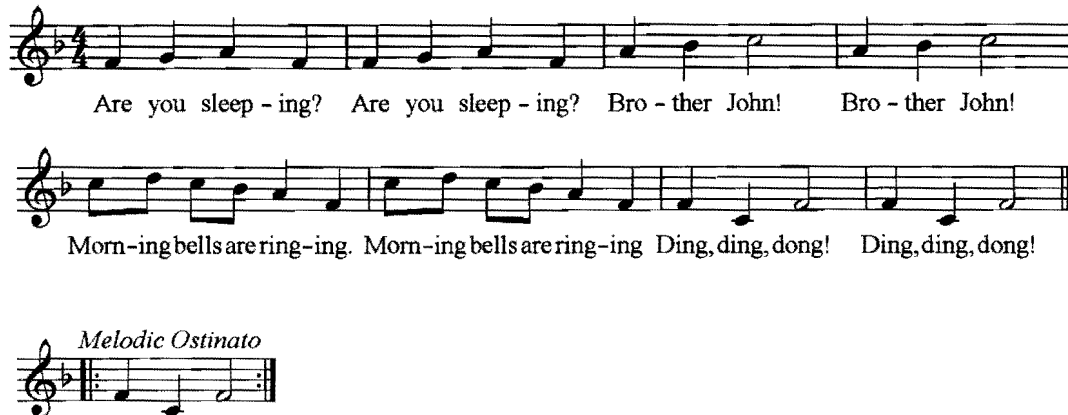
all   is bright.   Round yon vir – gin moth – er and child   Ho – ly in – fant so

ten –der and mild.   Sleep in heav–en–ly   peace___   Sleep_ in heav–en–ly peace

Example II - 2-2 Silent Night

Ask the child to sing a familiar round with you, e.g. "Are You Sleeping?" (See example **II -** 2-3, below.) Note how well the pupil carries his/her part. The child's vocal independence is thus assessed. If you wish, play a melodic ostinato softly to accompany the singing.

Are you sleeping?

Example II - 2-3 Are You Sleeping? (Brother John)

Another test for vocal independence is to ask the child to sing the second voice part in the following example (**II** - 2-4). Sing to a neutral syllable like "loo" or "lah".

Example II - 2-4 Ascending scale passage with a second voice-part

Have the child imitate/echo short melodic patterns, which you sing to a neutral syllable like "loo". These melodic patterns should progress in difficulty. (Refer to example **II** - 2-5, below.) This exercise serves to assess the child's melodic memory. Several researchers have found that children are more successful with melodic patterns and songs than with single tones or scales.

> Melodic patterns are inherently more musical and, thus, may captivate the child's attention, making the patterns easier to perform accurately (Goetze et al 1990: 25).

Example II - 2-5 Patterns to assess melodic memory

To assess the child's rhythmic memory, clap a rhythmic pattern once, which the child then echoes/imitates. Do a few of these rhythmic patterns, which should progress in difficulty. (Example **II** - 2-7, below.)

Example II - 2-6 Patterns to assess rhythmic memory

One has to determine both the extremes of the vocal range and the most comfortable singing range (tessitura). To determine the lower singing range extreme, ask the child to sing a descending arpeggio. (See example **II** - 2-7a, below.)   (An arpeggio, or broken chord, involves playing the notes of a chord in succession rather than simultaneously.) Proceed by

modulating each exercise, descending chromatically until the lowest comfortable note is reached. (A chromatic scale is one proceeding by half, or semi, tones.) Play the arpeggio on the piano (keyboard or melodica), and ask the child to sing it to a neutral syllable like "lah" or "loo" immediately afterwards. Ask the child not to be timid and to sing out when testing for range.

Example II - 2-7a Descending arpeggios to determine the lower singing range extreme

Reverse the process to establish the higher singing range extreme and ask the child to sing the following arpeggio. (See example **II - 2-7b**, below.) Modulate each exercise chromatically ascending until the highest comfortable note is reached. Play the arpeggio and ask the child to sing it to a neutral syllable like "lah" immediately afterwards. Ask the child to sing out when testing for range.

Example II - 2-7b Arpeggios to determine the higher singing range extreme

How critical one would be in selecting the choir members depends on what the size of the choir is to be. A small school, and/or a school that offers a host of extra-mural activities, might necessitate a low level of selectivity. In both instances, there will be fewer children auditioning for choir. The children have more options and are able to choose between several activities and there are thus fewer children available for choir participation. In the case of a

low level of selectivity, it is probably only necessary to test the ability to sing on pitch and the range so that the child could be assigned to the correct voice section.

The following vocal ranges serve as a guideline for assignment to the proper voice section. (See example **II** - 2-8, below.) In the primary school one seldom finds a genuine alto voice, the lower voices being mezzo-sopranos. One therefore has to choose the alto section from the mezzo-sopranos (second sopranos) that can manage the alto voice part.

First Soprano   Second Soprano   Alto

Example II - 2-8 Vocal ranges

It is beneficial to audition existing choir members two or three times per year to assess and celebrate their development regarding aural and vocal abilities and growth in self-confidence. Choristers should be informed and congratulated about their progress. This audition is also valuable in determining any changes in the chorister's vocal range and possible relocation to another voice group.

2.5 Selecting Appropriate Repertoire

Every choir conductor has the important task of selecting choir repertoire that is appropriate for that particular choir. This involves selecting music that does not only have entertainment value, but also has a basis for musical growth and education. Erkki Pohjola, the founder and former director of the world renowned Tapiola Choir from Finland, remarks on the choice of repertoire as follows:

> One of the first conditions for successful choir work is the ability to choose your program correctly. This is at the heart of the conductor's professional skills. One could almost say – tell me what you sing, and I'll tell you what sort of conductor you are (Pohjola 1992: 194).

We need to select material that challenges the choristers' intellectual, literary, emotional and musical abilities. "The students' technical readiness, maturity, and expressive capabilities must be accommodated" (Apfelstadt 2001: 33).

The following guidelines for the selection of repertoire are not exhaustive by any means; they merely serve as a point of departure.

When selecting repertoire, one needs to look at a **variety of styles, historical periods and musics of different cultures and languages.** The choice should be of the highest possible quality and that which would contribute to:

- the development of healthy vocal technique;
- basic skills of listening and sight-reading;
- music theory, history, and appreciation; and
- musical sensitivity, expression, and aesthetic response.

The musical menu should be varied and facilitate the **broadest educational experience** possible. The time and effort spent on critically and carefully selecting music of substance and quality which is appropriate to the age and understanding of the choristers, is of paramount importance. This task is often under-estimated and neglected. Should the choral educator, however, make this careful selection, it is bound to pay back liberally in satisfaction and success, knowing that it is an investment in the further musical, artistic and creative development of the choristers. Repertoire of high quality is described by Hilary Apfelstadt as music that possesses "craftsmanship" and "expressivity". She continues as follows:

> Well-written music finds that balance of tension and release, of structural symmetry and asymmetry, of expectancy and surprise, that makes listening and performing a worthwhile experience. Expressivity means that the music expresses in its form and content something of depth, something that draws humans to its artistic qualities (2001: 31).

The following aspects will influence the selection of repertoire:

- size of the choir;
- distribution of voices, e.g. unison, two or three-part arrangements;

- performance commitments and opportunities;
- amount of rehearsal time available; and
- budget available for the purchase of repertoire.

The choral educator must also bear in mind the objectives, goals, and philosophy that underpin the choral programme.

One should **refrain from repeating repertoire from year to year**. There is such a wealth of choral repertoire to explore and choose from, which adds to the challenge, fascination and excitement of choir work. Besides, the choristers are in one's care for a very limited period and one owes them the opportunity to learn as wide a range of fine choral music as possible.

In selecting repertoire, one needs to have high standards and one has to strive to attain them. The **repertoire should be meaningful and challenging, while at the same time it has to be accessible and successful and commensurate with the potential of the choristers**. The art is in finding the correct balance. One must not consistently select music which is very easy for the choristers simply because they will be able to learn it quickly; in the process quality may be sacrificed. Music which is essentially easy and that has a supposed popular appeal, i.e. music that is *trite*, is simply not challenging. Do not under-estimate the children's potential, or your own, for that matter. Choristers can just about learn to perform any song (which has been carefully researched and wisely chosen) that a confident and competent choral teacher presents to them. Having said that, it needs to be pointed out that, should we make a haphazard choice and select music that is far too difficult, it can result in feelings of anxiety or frustration.

Initially one has to select music that is appropriate to the choristers' current level of musical development. Slowly but surely one can then **increase the level of difficulty** to a more challenging level. One of the basic tenets of teaching, namely, meet the choristers where they are and take them to places yet unvisited, is applicable here. The choral teacher's choice of repertoire determines the musical growth of the choristers.

Choral educators have the crucially important task of enhancing the choristers' perceptions of musical meanings and how those meanings relate to their lives. One has to be very careful not to put **undue emphasis on pop music**. In an age where instant and shallow gratification is more the rule than the exception, it is absolutely imperative that aesthetic value is not

compromised. One needs to offer the members in one's choir only that which is truly beautiful: music that has depth and substance and is intellectually significant. Do not limit the choice to songs that are transparent, light and entertaining. One has to select music with qualities that are lasting and will help the choristers to grow musically. The Americans use a term that describes third rate music as "fluff". Music which is "here today and gone tomorrow". Choral educators are, first and foremost, educators and we may not resort to including only music that has immediate appeal to pupils and the mission of solely being entertainers.

As regards **the text**, one has to decide whether the children can understand its general meaning and if it has value or significance for the choristers. One has to decide if it is meaningful, appropriate and relevant to the particular age group. Love song texts are, on the whole, inappropriate for both the Foundation and Intermediate phase child. It would also be inadvisable to choose a song with a text that is too childish for the Intermediate phase. The text should not be trite and poorly constructed but rather have poetic merit, literary integrity and value. (Refer to **Part II**, 4.4.2 "Expression of Text".)

Folk music represents an excellent and valuable source of material and can be considered as a safe choice to be included in the choir's repertoire. It is absolutely essential that children learn the folk songs from their own culture and also be exposed to the traditional music from other cultures within this country's diverse and rich cultural heritage. As the choristers' horizons expand, they are also introduced to some of the folk songs of other countries. (Refer to **Part I**, 3.2 "Choral Unit Standard: Intonation", Range Statement: "varied repertoire"; 3.7 "Choral Unit Standard: Stylistic Authenticity"; and **Part II**, 4.9 "Historical/Stylistic Guidelines and Cultural Context".)

In the Foundation phase, the choristers are introduced to **songs from various South African language groups** that have simple language texts and preferably with a text refrain that repeats. This would be more accessible than songs that contain many different verses. (Refer to **Part II**, 7.8 "Compiling a Programme".) In the Intermediate phase, in addition to the Western repertoire and songs/works from other South African languages and cultures, International repertoire with simple **foreign language texts** is introduced. (Refer to **Part I**, 3.2 "Choral Unit Standard: Intonation", Range Statement: "varied repertoire".) Because the

pronunciation in Latin is relatively easy (although it is no longer a spoken language), this is a good starting place. Texts in foreign languages are an excellent way of introducing choristers to the global village. It is vitally important that the choristers fully understand the *meaning* of the foreign text. One also has to make absolutely sure that the pronunciation is correct. (Refer to **Part II**, 4.9 "Historical/Stylistic Guidelines and Cultural Context".)

The **range and tessitura** of the voice parts has to be appropriate for the choristers and their level of development; i.e. neither too high, nor too low. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.6 "Children's Vocal Ranges and Registers".) The tessitura of *the voice* refers to the *core* of the voice; i.e. where it is most comfortable for the choristers to sing and where the most efficient sound is produced. The tessitura of *a song* refers to the song's prevailing register, or the pitch of the majority of the notes. The following are the recommended tessituras and ranges for songs in the Foundation and Intermediate phases:

- In the Foundation phase, the tessitura for repertoire (in grade 3) should lie between $\mathbf{d^1 - c^2}$. The range lies between $\mathbf{c^1 - e^2}$. ($\mathbf{c^1}$ = **middle C**). (Refer to **Part I**, 3.2 "Choral Unit Standard: Intonation", Range Statement: "suitable range". Also refer to **Part II**, 6.6 "Children's Vocal Ranges and Registers".)

- In the Intermediate phase, the tessitura for repertoire should lie between $\mathbf{d^1 - d^2}$. A range of two octaves is possible at this stage. Vocal ranges, however, vary, and thus the separation of the recommended range for alto and soprano. The range for alto is from $\mathbf{a} - \mathbf{e^2}$ ($\mathbf{a}$ = 1½ tones below **middle C**) and for soprano from $\mathbf{c^1 - g^2}$. In the alto part there should only be a very occasional $\mathbf{a}$ (1½ tones below **middle C**) as this is the lowest extreme for most Intermediate phase choristers. In the soprano part there should only be a few high f's and g's and vowel modification should be implemented for the bright vowel sounds (i.e. [ɛ] "e" and [i] "i") on these high notes. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.8 "Italian Basic Pure Vowels, Uniform Vowel Colours and Vowel Modification.)

For most Intermediate phase choristers, the music should definitely not go below the $\mathbf{a}$, 1½ tones below **middle C**, or above $\mathbf{g^2}$. (Refer to **Part I**, 3.2 "Choral Unit Standard: Intonation", Range Statement: "suitable range". Also refer to **Part II**, 6.6 "Children's Vocal Ranges and Registers".) The choristers, however, will be better able to project if the vocal line is centred in the middle to upper part of their voices which allows them to use their head register. One

should avoid repertoire where the vocal line remains extremely high or low for too prolonged a period.

Do not hesitate to **transpose the song** to a key that is more suitable for the children's voices. More often than not, this involves transposing into a higher key. One should not immediately transpose a song into a lower key simply because there are a few high notes within the melody. If these high notes occur on the darker, open vowels ([u] "u", [ɔ] "o" and [ɑ] "a"), and the general tessitura is acceptable, there should be no problem, provided the jaw is relaxed and dropped. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.8 "Italian Basic Pure Vowels, Uniform Vowel Colours and Vowel Modification" and 6.5 "Resonance"). Should the choir be participating at a competition, it is important to enquire in advance to ascertain if it is permissible to transpose repertoire. This is specifically important in the case of *prescribed* repertoire.

The **melodic lines** should be melodious, i.e. conjunct rather than disjunct or angular. Avoid songs with too many awkward or difficult intervals. In both the Foundation and the Intermediate phase, melodies which contain extensive use of chromaticism should be avoided. Diatonic melodies with predictable patterns are more appropriate for the Foundation phase. In the Intermediate phase occasional chromaticism may be attempted.

Avoid choosing repertoire with themes and motives that repeat with slight variation; i.e. themes and motives that are similar, but not *exactly* the same. These are confusing for the children. It is better to have **the themes and motives as exact repetition** consistently throughout a selection.

The length of the musical line and the **choristers' breath support ability** has to be considered. (Refer to **Part I**, 3.3 "Choral Unit Standard: Phrasing". Also refer to **Part II**, 6.4 "Breath Management".) The tempo of the work will also be a contributing factor as to whether or not the length of the musical line will be appropriate for the young choristers.

The music has to be intellectually and aesthetically pleasing. **The accompaniment** (if applicable) should be interesting and well written to enhance the meaning of the text. (Refer to **Part I**, 3.2 "Choral Unit Standard: Intonation", "Western Music Specifics" number 2.) The voice parts and the accompaniment must form a cohesive whole. The accompaniment must be

musically interesting on its own without confusing the singers. Try to avoid accompaniments that consistently double the melodic line or over-shadow the singing. Voices need to hold their own independent musical lines as much as possible. Another aspect that one needs to address relates to the accompaniment and whether it is within the capabilities of the accompanist. (Refer to **Part II**, 3.14 "Accompaniment and the Role of the Accompanist".)

In the selection of repertoire, it is imperative to include a cappella (unaccompanied) songs or works. The singing of unaccompanied pieces enables the development of good intonation without being dependent on the piano. (Refer to **Part II**, 7.8 "Compiling a Programme", and 3.13 "Use of the Piano".)

Choral educators are responsible for the aesthetic development and growth of their choir members. It is their duty to put the choristers in touch with music that matters and gradually leads them to a higher degree of refinement.

> Quality repertoire encourages young singers to become better at what they do. It stimulates their imaginations, expands their appreciation, and refines their musical skills. It challenges them intellectually, whets their appetite for further challenge, and motivates them to excel (Brunner 1992: 32).

There is a vast amount of good quality choral literature, both historical and contemporary, that can be stimulating and challenging to the choristers in the Primary school. Careful selection of, and diligence in the presentation of this literature will ensure choral rehearsals and concerts that are "life-enriching" occurrences.

2.6 Involving Parents

A school/children's choir mission or endeavour cannot be successful without the support of the parents. Parents should be informed about the immense value music has in the positive development of their child. The investment of time, effort and energy in music will produce lifelong dividends. If the parents are informed, they will be more involved, and the child is more likely to take the responsibility with a greater degree of dedication. It is essential to inform parents about choir activities and to give adequate advance notice of performances.

Send a letter home to parents whose children have been selected for the choir and congratulate them. Inform them about the benefits of singing in the choir and ask for their co-operation and support. At a later stage you will find that parents of choristers who are contemplating quitting the choir will, in most cases, support your efforts to keep their child in the choir if they are convinced about the benefits this involves. It is vitally important that children develop a habit of persistence that will help them through difficult, trying or tough times in life; skills that will help them stay on course when it would be easier to quit. The following is a letter that may be used to send to parents of children that qualified for choir membership:

Dear Parents,

I am writing to congratulate you on (*name of chorister*)'s selection for the (*name of choir*). I set high expectations for choir participation. Choir is a commitment that requires dedication and hard work. The benefits and rewards, however, are inestimable and extend far beyond the performance. Allow me to point out some of these:

- Choristers learn vitally essential life orientation skills like cohesiveness in being part of a close-knit group and the ability to work with others. Through musical experiences they grow in self-understanding by developing sensitivity to inner feelings and self-esteem. They also gain composure and confidence in appearing before others in performance or leadership roles.
- They learn self-discipline and co-operation or suffer the disapproval of their fellow-choristers (or the choral teacher!). The commitment to regular attendance and individual responsibility to the success of the group inculcates a discipline that is self-directed.
- Singing in the choir makes children aware of the tremendous effort that is required for success. It teaches them the value of hard work and perseverance. It whets their appetite for further challenge and motivates them to excel.
- Introverted or shy children are helped in performance through the support system of the group. Within the group, they can explore their vocal abilities without fear of personal failure.
- The choir improves a chorister's general musicianship and aural skills, and helps to develop good basic singing habits.
- Singing in the choir builds a vocal repertoire of quality music from a variety of periods and styles (i.e. folk songs, art songs, sacred songs, songs of other cultures, and songs of the current genre).
- Children in the choir experience a vast store of emotional release in music, i.e. joy, sorrow, love, protest, worship, entertainment, etc. This has an important part to play in creating a set of personal values that allow a successful and fulfilling journey through life.
- Choristers learn to identify and appreciate their own cultural heritage. They also learn to adapt to and respect the musical heritage of other cultures and this helps to diminish racial and language differences and softens national boundaries.

- Singing in the choir helps to bridge the gap between the verbal and the non-verbal; that which is important to feel, but nearly impossible to say. It helps to develop intuition, it challenges the intellect, stimulates the imagination and may inculcate a lifelong need and love for musical participation. The aesthetic benefits gained through positive musical experiences in the choir are invaluable in forming sensitive and beauty-loving human beings.

Regarding the commitment to the choir, I need to point out that a choir member is required to attend choir practice on a (*specify the day*) from (*specify the time*). I am requesting parents to please assist me in this and not to make arrangements necessitating pupils missing part or all of a practice.

The choir cannot attain good results without your co-operation and support. The parents' attitude towards the choir is reflected in the choir members and determines, to a large extent, a good morale within the choir. I seek your help in ensuring a wonderful experience for your child. By working together, we can make choral participation a memorable and most valuable adventure for him/her.

I am fully aware that you are faced with an incredibly busy schedule in your personal and professional life, but the importance of your presence at the choir's performances is in the interest of your child. It means so much to a chorister to have their parents and family present at a performance. The choir's performance at a concert or festival should be a family affair that gives the family members an opportunity to celebrate the child's musical talent.

The absence of a single choir member at either a choir rehearsal or a performance is noticeable. A choir is a team and cannot function without *all* the players. I need your support in this.

Please feel free to come and discuss any problem(s) you may encounter regarding your child's participation in the choir. I am looking forward to meeting you.

Kind regards,

(*Name of choral educator*)

Form II - 2-2 Letter to Parents

Some choral teachers may need to canvass parents that are prepared to help with the numerous tasks involved with the running of a choir. The various tasks and responsibilities may include some (or all) of the following:

- Parent Committee;
  - Chairperson

- Secretary (to be in charge of a choir newsletter, letters to parents informing them about upcoming performances, invitations, and surveys)
- Bursar (handles all financial matters)
- Music;
  - Accompaniment (should there be a parent available to fulfil this role)
  - Assisting in the teaching of parts in sectional practices
- Supervision of choristers during and after a concert;
- Choir camp (or week-end away for choir rehearsals);
  - Organising/steering committee
  - Supervision
  - Entertainment and games
  - Meals and refreshments
  - First aid
- Choir tours;
- Choir outings (attending concerts, movies and other social events);
- Concerts;
  - Publicity (printing, posters, notices, photographs, programmes and tickets)
  - Ticket sales
  - Ushers/usherettes
  - Video or audio recording
  - Refreshments
  - Decoration/flower arrangements for stage and foyer
- Fund raising (soliciting corporate donations, grants, etc.)
- Performance attire
  - Sewing and making of outfits
  - Maintenance
  - Swop shop.

The choral teacher may have to (or wish to) fulfil all the above functions without assistance from parents. The feasibility of such an arrangement would depend on the profile of the choir and the number of performances that are scheduled in any one year.

2.7 Planning Performances

It is important to schedule performances early in the year. This will prevent last minute panic, mishaps and tension and will ensure adequate preparation time and attention to detail. Planning performances well in advance ensures better co-ordination between all the other school activities. This has the added advantage of ensuring better attendance at the choir's performances. Parents will also appreciate the advance notification, which enables them to schedule their children's commitments. It is inevitable, however, for the choir to receive invitations to perform at functions that were not included in the scheduled performances earlier on. Should these performances hold educational promise for the choristers, it would be a pity to miss out on them simply because they did not appear in the schedule that was drawn up earlier in the year. This needs to be explained to parents in a special letter.

The choir should perform as often as possible, provided that they are adequately prepared. According to Paul Roe (1970:328):

> Preparing for performances maintains interest and keeps the choir members in the mood for work. A group that performs very little, or not at all, is usually a dying organization, because the desire for perfection and feelings of accomplishment and organizational pride are not aroused.

Chapter 3

PRE-REHEARSAL AND NON-VOCAL REHEARSAL PROCEDURES

3.1 Preparing for Rehearsal

Rehearsal time is precious and the available time needs to be structured in the most efficient and productive way, making sure that sequential learning takes place. One needs to have clear and specific goals and attainable objectives. Furthermore, one must ensure that healthy vocal technique is employed and that the singers think, feel and sing musically. The conductor that fails to plan for significant, efficient and educational rehearsals, plans to fail. Successful, exciting and meaningful rehearsals do not happen by chance. One has to take cognisance of what the children know, and structure the learning process so that the choristers make musical progress. The choral educator that plans the rehearsal meticulously will have choristers that work harder, have a more positive attitude, and give a better performance.

> Remember also that luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity and that luck has a peculiar habit of favouring those who don't depend on it! (Bartle 1988: 148).

Another way of expressing this idea, is that "the harder the teacher works at preparing for the choral rehearsal, the luckier (s)he becomes".

3.2 Score Study

The single most important thing one can do for the choir is to be exceptionally well prepared by studying the score thoroughly. According to Margaret Hillis, "all music starts from score study" (Shrock 1991: 12). Through preparatory score study, troublesome or difficult spots (like intricate rhythms or unusual intervals) in the music can be anticipated and minimised, thereby saving time and avoiding frustration. This is absolutely crucial and will help tremendously in ensuring the success of a productive rehearsal. Thorough score study has the

added advantage of giving one the opportunity to internalise and memorise the score more easily.

It is a great help if one can listen to several **recordings** of the work that one intends to study. This is a tremendous aid in studying various types of interpretation and it broadens one's musical horizons.

Read through the word **text** of the selection to determine what the ideas are and to find out if there is a message contained within it. Will the children understand it or does it require some explanation? It is important to read the text aloud to help determine the correct breathing places for the choir. Decide if extra or alternative breathing places are necessary for the young voices, to avoid them running out of breath. It is very important to mark in advance both the breathing places and releases for the choir. Also mark the exact placement of final consonants. (Refer to **Part II**, 5.8 "Attacks and Releases".)

Reading the text aloud will also help to clarify the expressive content and atmosphere of the text. We need to identify:

- interpretative nuances;
- natural text accents;
- phrasing (tensions, climaxes and resolutions); and
- places where the music and text reinforce one another to achieve a dynamic climax.

It is important to **number all the bars** at the beginning of each system. This has to be done in the scores of the conductor, the accompanist and the choristers. Stopping the choir in rehearsal and having to pick up at a certain musical location is greatly facilitated if all concerned can quickly find the place by referring to the bar numbers.

One has to study the musical score and identify the compositional structure of the selection. Analyse **the form** of the music. Are there repeated sections? Should there be phrases or sections that are alike, but not exactly the same, these should be analysed so that the differences can be high-lighted. Take special note of the phrase structure. Where does each phrase begin, peak and end? Both the text and the melody should guide us to correct and logical phrasing. (Refer to **Part II**, 4.4.3 "The Musical Phrase".)

It is important to establish correct **rhythms, pitches, and pronunciation**. Make sure that you can sing all the vocal parts correctly. Anticipate problematic passages and devise solutions. One's aural preparation will be greatly assisted by singing one part, while at the same time playing one or more other parts on the piano or keyboard. This will help to hear the interval relationships between the parts. Decide in advance where vowel modification needs to be employed. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.8 "Italian Basic Pure Vowels, Uniform Vowel Colours and Vowel Modification".)

One has to decide if the **tempo indication** is suitable; does it convey the mood of the music? Who decided on the tempo suggestion, the composer or the music editor? Some songs may lend themselves to interpretative license. Would *rubato* be suitable and where should it be applied?

Sometimes it may be useful to high-light existing features in the score that one is inclined to miss. It is also important to determine whether it is necessary to add any **other interpretative markings** to the existing ones already in the score. The dynamics have to be studied. Determine whether you agree with those that are given. Should you decide on alternative or extra dynamic markings, these need to be justifiable, and need to be marked. Implementing major changes is not advisable as this may not be fair to the work or the composer.

When studying the score, we examine it thoroughly in order to determine the intentions of the composer and then adhere to it strictly. Sometimes, however, the musical arrangement needs a few **minor modifications** to make it work better for one's particular environment or circumstances. In making these minor alterations, one has to be very careful not to jeopardise the integrity and general character of the music. (Refer to **Part II**, 2.5 "Selecting Appropriate Repertoire", and 7.8 "Compiling a Programme".)

In studying the score, one also has to determine any **potential vocal problems** which may arise. Decide in advance which vocalise(s) would be most appropriate for that particular musical requirement. Vocalises are most effective if they directly relate to a particular problem spot within a selection being studied. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.11 "Use of Vocalises".) Should there be any distinctive rhythmic or melodic motives that one could use to devise exercises for the warm-ups, this will facilitate the tone production and expedite the learning of the new selection in rehearsal.

One has to make a considerable effort to conceptualise one's own mental aural ideal of a particular work. This aural ideal is also referred to as an **"aural understanding"**, "soundscape", or "aural template". This involves forming a detailed aural image of what the work should sound like in performance. Planning the way one is going to conduct in order to obtain that particular sound from the choir, is also essential.

To create a successful, productive and musical choral programme, the choral educator should not neglect meticulous score study. All teachers have extremely busy schedules, but score study is not an option, it is an absolute necessity.

3.3 Attendance Record and Award System

An attendance policy needs to be in place. If a merit or award system is to be used, it has to be simple to control. Choose a record keeping system that suits your own situation and keep accurate records. Points may be awarded for attendance at rehearsals and performances, and for conduct and diligence. All the choristers should receive a certificate in recognition of their participation. Once a certain number of points is attained, the chorister qualifies for a special award like a pin or a badge. This may provide additional incentive to the choristers. It is imperative to keep a meticulous record of attendance and to administer the conduct and diligence point system in a fair and objective way.

The choristers need to be informed at the outset about the award system and how it operates. A minimum requirement needs to be stated for choir attendance; this refers to both rehearsals and performances. The attendance requirement should be non-negotiable as it becomes extremely intricate and subjective to determine which "excuses" are legitimate.

A reward is not necessarily only for individuals but could involve the whole group. A group-photograph of the choir, taken at the end of the year, which is framed or block mounted, and hung in the rehearsal room is a lovely memento. Choristers in the primary school, especially, are interested in photographs that include themselves and their peers. Recording the years' work on CD is another memento that is not only appreciated by the choristers, but by parents,

grandparents and the school community at large. This is also a tremendous incentive to work towards and can be used to raise funds.

The awards could be presented at a special choir assembly where the choir sings a short programme to the school and the choristers are then presented with their certificates and special awards. Alternatively, one could arrange a special party at the end of the year and invite parents and the school principal to a short performance and the prize giving. Thank the parents, principal, accompanist and anybody else publicly for their assistance and support, because without them the choir could not be successful. Even if they are not as supportive as you would like them to be, this may serve to change their attitude in future.

3.4 Creating an Environment Conducive to Music Making

It is of paramount importance that choral educators create a friendly, pleasant, musically rewarding, and productive rehearsal environment. An atmosphere that allows for lots of encouragement, co-operation, constructive criticism, and positive reinforcement is vital for the development of each individual child's positive self-esteem. Choristers should feel safe to take creative risks. The children's communication with the choral teacher should be greatly encouraged. A teacher who intimidates, is highly impatient, and is excessively tyrannical or condescending, destroys a congenial atmosphere of mutual respect. We need to nurture the children and make them feel proud and competent.

The general pride and esprit de corps of the choir will also thrive in a kind, warm and harmonious atmosphere. Each choir member should be made to feel that his or her contributions are valued and respected. We must respond to the needs and actions of our choir members, individually and collectively. A nod of approval, a smile or winking an eye to commend or encourage a wavering or insecure chorister, does wonders to boost his/her morale. Children require a constant sense of well-being and accomplishment.

The chairs or choir risers and all other equipment need to be in place when the children arrive. This will save time at the beginning of the rehearsal. To create an initially pleasant atmosphere, the rehearsal room should be inviting, purposeful, attractive and visually pleasing;

commanding attention. The room should stimulate musical learning through its visual appeal. Pictures with music themes can greatly enhance the appearance of the rehearsal room. The children will be more inclined to participate and learn more readily. Should the rehearsal venue not have sufficient light and ventilation, this will not be conducive to maximum effort from both the conductor and the choristers.

3.5 Humour in the Rehearsal

Cultivate a sense of humour; it is a wonderful stress reliever and makes learning fun for the group. Humour, when properly used, can help in the solution of many behavioural problems. The successful choral educator understands and appreciates the children's humour. Utilise humorous situations which develop in rehearsal, especially if these have bearing on the teacher (most definitely not at the expense of one of the choristers). In other words, lighten up and don't take yourself too seriously; be prepared to poke fun at yourself.

3.6 Pace of Rehearsal

The choral educator needs to set a stimulating, rapid and challenging pace in the rehearsal. This will not only prevent discipline problems but will ensure an interesting and stimulating rehearsal. The rehearsal should be conducted with ingenuity and inventiveness so that, although the pupils understand the established routines, they are kept guessing. The lesson should **never be totally predictable** – the element of surprise, awe and fascination should occur frequently. This will motivate the choristers and create a desire to learn.

Do not **start the rehearsal** with tedious work. We need to "welcome" the pupils to the rehearsal. It would be far better to start the rehearsal with a faster paced activity such as singing through a fairly familiar, enjoyable song that needs review or polish. The middle portion of the rehearsal should be devoted to the slower-paced, detailed, analytical learning of new repertoire. An enthusiastic, efficient and knowledgeable conductor can be successful in maintaining the choir members' attention even during the treadmill task of "note bashing" of a difficult song. We need to **frequently change the pace** of the rehearsal by alternating familiar

music with new music and easy with difficult works, i.e. alternate plodding work with more enjoyable tasks. The choristers will become bored if they have to work on the same selection for too long a period.

Instructions should be given in a **clear, brief and enthusiastic** manner. A teacher who talks excessively causes a decrease in the choristers' attentiveness. Long-winded tirades are boring; it is better to let the *music* do the talking.

When giving an instruction, it is essential to make sure that *all* the choristers are listening, to avoid having to repeat it. Wait for absolute **silence before you start talking.** Should the group be noisy, doing a few quick echo-clapping exercises will instantly focus their attention. If something has to be repeated because the children do not understand, then it has to be explained in a different way.

The children are going to learn more by "doing", i.e. **active learning**. Every time the choir is stopped or a passage is repeated, give reasons for the interruption and why a passage has to be repeated. It is of no use whatsoever if passages are repeated in exactly the same way again.

As previously stated, careful and meticulous planning is absolutely essential for a successful rehearsal. (Refer to **Part II**, 3.1 "Preparing for Rehearsal".) The choral teacher, however, also needs the ability to think on his/her feet; to keep a clear head and to rely on "gut-feel" when a problem surfaces that needs to be solved instantly and there is no time for laborious, rational analysis. One has to be flexible and be prepared to **alter a rehearsal plan** if the choir's needs call for a new direction to be followed.

The rehearsal plan serves to plot the main route and this is necessary for smooth and efficient operation. The "instant-decisions" are the minor detours that are called for. Both the mood or emotional tone of the group and the demands of the music being learned, may call for this necessary "detour". One has to be sensitive to the choir's attitude and be prepared to alter the course of the rehearsal if this is not proving to be successful. Similarly, one has to learn to rely on one's musical intuition and to change an interpretative idea within the music, should this be called for.

Make use of **focussing techniques** to enliven the rehearsal. Examples of these are:

- use of a dramatic pause for emphasis in your speech;
- sudden change in tone, volume or speed in the speech, e.g. whispering or shouting;
- clapping hands to create more energy in the singing or to gain the choristers' attention; and
- snapping the fingers to provide a beat, keep the tempo or to make a point (do not employ finger snapping to the beat throughout the rehearsal).

Visual aids should be **prepared in advance** to prevent pacing lags in the rehearsal; e.g. writing out an example on the board. These interruptions, more often than not, lead to discipline problems. Have all equipment, music and materials readily at hand. Music should be distributed in an efficient way.

The choir teacher sets the example in terms of work habit. If the work at hand is approached with a sense of urgency and the time is used efficiently, the choristers will realise that what they are doing really matters and that quality is important. It is important to **start and finish rehearsals on time**. The choir members will sense that you are a disciplined and committed person who respects their time and they will have a more positive attitude.

Conclude the rehearsal on a "high" by singing, once more, a favourite, well-known song, or one that the choir rehearsed earlier and should now be able to sing with greater confidence. It is important that the rehearsal ends on a positive note with the children being highly motivated and leaving with a sense of accomplishment, no matter how small. This lends positive closure to the choral activity and leaves the pupils with a desire to return to the next rehearsal.

3.7 Movement

Using physical movement, gesture or pantomime in a choral performance to visually enhance the text or mood is referred to as "choralography". Choralography is often employed by traditional African choral ensembles. The difference between *choralography* and *choreography* is that in choreography a further step is taken in that it uses larger movements like dancing, for instance. The visual aspect of choreography is as important as the aural

aspect. In choreography the use of staging, props and costumes are typical. The following discussion relates to choralography as opposed to choreography in performance.

Choralography needs to be done with great discretion. It needs to be **appropriate and complement** rather than detract from the choral work. One should only employ movement in the performance of a choral selection that has already attained a high performance standard and only to enhance or illuminate an idea. The movement should be an integral part of the music. Many African traditional songs demand authentic traditional movements and form a component part of the performance. These movements are often very specific and vary from region to region.

Under no circumstances should we employ movement in the performance of a choral selection in an attempt to conceal inferior singing. The following are a few possible choralography gestures that may be used in performance:

- Foot tapping, hand clapping, finger snapping, etc. may occasionally be used to inject rhythmic vitality to a choral work or section thereof;
- A distinctive facial expression to high-light nuance in the music or text; or
- Body stance (attitude) or gesture, like shrugging of shoulders, head nodding, or arms reaching upward and outward.

In *rehearsal* the use of movement can often prove to be most beneficial. Asking choristers to implement certain physical **movements or gestures in the rehearsal** as a means of demonstrating a required musical expression can be of great value and can help, amongst other things to:

- gain a higher perception of musical events and better comprehension of music concepts;
- renew interest, enthusiasm and alertness;
- release tension; and
- inject rhythmic vitality.

The choral teacher should carefully consider the physical gesture which the choristers are required to employ in order to elicit the desired musical response and to **illustrate expressive**

musical ideas. Examples of gestures that may be used by choristers in rehearsal to enhance musical expression are:

- Tracing an arc in the air to visually demonstrate a musical phrase;

- Walking around or walking on the spot to the steady beat. The manner of walking will be dictated by the music, e.g. light and bouncy or heavy and ponderous;

- Snapping fingers, tapping the fingers of one hand lightly on the palm of the other, or tapping feet to the beat of the music, facilitates the internalising of the underlying musical pulse of a composition. Both the speed and the quality of the pulse should be specified, i.e. should the tapping be heavy with a strong downward emphasis or light with an emphasis on the rebound;

- Problematic rhythmic patterns can often be corrected by echo clapping;

- Choristers may indicate dynamic contrast by standing for loud passages and sitting for soft passages; and

- The voice part that sings the main melody stands, while those that have the harmonising (supporting) function, sit down.

Other physical movement activities in the rehearsal would involve something like **alternating between standing and sitting**. Allow the choristers to frequently alternate between standing and sitting. Inform them that you require them to stand, not because you want to punish them, but because they sing/sound so much better. Do not, however, keep primary school children standing for too long; ten minutes is, more or less, the maximum. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.3 "Correct Singing Posture".)

Varying the physical placement of the choristers may also help to keep them more alert and responsive. Try rehearsing the choir in a circle occasionally if they normally rehearse in block formation. Alterations in the seating and standing arrangement of the group may increase the attentiveness of the choristers because it enables them to experience the relationship between the voice parts in the music in a new way. The choral teacher is also able to hear the music in a new way.

The **conductor** also needs to occasionally **move away from the usual central place in front of the choir** to shift the chorister's attention, both aurally and visually. For instance, one could

move over to the alto section to assist in a problem they may experience. Another opportunity is to move away from the stand to talk to the choristers, then move back in front of the stand to conduct. The conductor, not standing in the same place all the time, will help prevent monotony. Move around the room and among the choristers to listen to various sections or to individuals. This should not be done in a threatening way. Remember that smiling conveys the message that the children are liked and that singing is fun.

3.8 Motivating the Choristers

It is of the utmost importance that choral educators create a nurturing and caring environment in the choral rehearsal. **Positive reinforcement of every accomplishment** is the key to success. We need to make more positive (approval) comments than negative (disapproval) comments. That, however, does not mean that one must accept mediocre work, but rather praise the choristers every time they achieve a significant accomplishment. We need to communicate to the choristers our appreciation of their efforts and encourage them to continue to work to their full potential and to improve.

Choral educators are sometimes so busy correcting errors that they are inclined to forget to recognise improvement and to praise the children. The choral teacher must be demanding, but patient and sensitive to the choristers' rate of progress. The choristers have to be motivated to work, to learn, and to excel.

Aside from the choral educator's praise and recognition of success in motivating the group, **praise from outsiders**, however, can often mean even more. It is a good idea to sometimes invite the school principal to come and listen to a beautiful rendition of a song in rehearsal. The school administration needs to be involved in the progress of the choir. Sincere praise from parents, the community and especially the choristers' non-choir peers is a powerful motivator.

We need to **recognise all choir members' personal contributions and their individual significance** within the choir. They must never feel anonymous within the context of the larger group. There are often many children in the choir that are trying hard, singing well and

listening carefully but because of the size of the group do not get sufficient recognition. Making eye contact during rehearsal and just smiling or winking can make them feel valued and appreciated. (Refer to **Part II**, 3.4 "Creating an Environment Conducive to Music Making".) One needs to constantly make the children aware of the fact that *every* member of the choir is important and that one values their contribution. A choir is like a sports team where everyone's effort is important to the success of the entire group.

It is important to always correct the choristers in a **respectful and positive way**. Under no circumstances should we humiliate the group when we demonstrate what we do *not* want them to do. Mimicking a fault the choir made in a grossly exaggerated fashion with the intent of ridiculing them, will only lead to a negative response. If the imitation of a fault, however, is done in a convivial and companionable spirit, the choristers are far more likely to co-operate. A better way of correcting the choir would be to sing the problem phrase incorrectly and then correctly. Ask the choristers to choose the better and more musical of the two and then have them imitate the desired response.

The choral **conductor's physical appearance** needs to be neat and professional because it suggests a seriousness of purpose and commands respect. A sloppy appearance seems to convey the message that the conductor does not regard the task at hand seriously. The golden rule here appears to be that, should we want our choir to *sound* professional, we need to *look* professional.

Another very important motivational tool, is the **selection of repertoire** that is significant and interesting to the children. (Refer to **Part II**, 2.5 "Selecting Appropriate Repertoire".) The children will become bored if the repertoire is mediocre and expectations are low. We need to set high goals but at the same time plan carefully for their successful achievement. The songs should challenge the choristers' musical ability, but not be so difficult as to frustrate them and jeopardise a successful performance. If the children like the music, they are naturally motivated to make improvements and to develop their musicianship. They will also be more animated, energetic and enthusiastic in the rehearsal and the performance.

The choral educator's role is also that of a facilitator; providing the necessary leadership to enable the children to inquire and discover for themselves. Try to make a habit of asking the

choristers' opinions before issuing directives or offering advice about interpretation. When the choristers understand why they are being asked to do something, they are far more likely to co-operate. The choristers need to feel a part of the learning process and share responsibility as co-creators in the musical process. This is more likely to ensure "ownership" of the particular work by the choir members and results in greater pride and responsibility. They are then more likely to co-operate because they are not mere passive recipients of the teacher's knowledge.

It is imperative that we start rehearsals with a **definite sense of purpose**. Make eye contact with the choir and insist on having everyone's attention before starting. A casual approach does not succeed in conveying the sense of urgency – the foundation for concentration is not laid down. The conductor's energy and enthusiasm right from the beginning of the rehearsal will inspire the choristers to put personal problems and distractions aside and to focus their attention on the work which has to be covered.

All the choir members should be fully aware of the conduct expected from them and the few rules that have to be adhered to. It is more beneficial to have a **few rules** that are consistently enforced, than to have an extremely intricate system. Try to ignore minor infractions and concentrate on the music-making process.

The choral teacher's enthusiasm for music and the art of choral singing is one of the most essential characteristics necessary to stimulate motivation, and to excite the choristers. The teacher's enthusiasm will ensure more positive chorister attitudes, greater chorister effort and determination and increased levels of achievement.

3.9 Seating/Standing Arrangement and Placement of Voices

The height of choristers needs to be considered so that each chorister has an unobstructed view of the conductor; and vice versa, the conductor should be able to see each chorister's face clearly. Visual appeal also needs to be considered. The appearance of a choir is important in creating a positive effect before they start singing. Some choral directors insist on tapering the choir's height in a strictly uniform manner, no matter what, by having:

- the tallest choristers in the middle and the shorter ones on the sides, resulting in a < > formation; or vice versa,

- the shortest choristers in the middle and the taller ones on the sides, resulting in a > < formation.

One could organise the choristers *initially* by height, but then start mixing them for certain musical considerations. Visual appeal takes second place to considerations like balance, blend and intonation that may influence the tonal quality. It is important to, well ahead of the performance, seat/stand choristers in rehearsal in the same places they will occupy when they are performing.

The possibility of **discipline problems** also needs to be taken into account when seating the choristers in rehearsal. Over-talkative choristers or those who are apt to be more mischievous, should be separated from their "buddies". One also needs to separate two choristers that clash and are inclined to disagree and squabble.

The front row should be some distance away from the conductor, the minimum distance being ± 3 metres. This distance, obviously, will differ, depending on the size of the choir; the bigger the size of the choir, the further away the conductor has to stand. If the conductor is **standing too close** to the front row, the children will have to raise their chins to look at the conductor. (Refer to Figure II - 6-8, "Undesirable tension in the throat area, with the chin jutting out and up".) Another disadvantage of standing too close to the choir, is that the conductor cannot see the choristers at either end of the line.

Carefully **placing individual voices** within each section could have an impressive effect on the overall sound of the choir. The strongest and best singers can be placed towards the rear and the middle of the section. This will ensure that they are heard by the weaker singers in front and around them. Having said that, it is also important to judiciously intersperse solo-quality (clear, focussed or strong) voices throughout the choir so as to give weaker singers the opportunity to hear themselves and not always be over-shadowed by stronger singers. Avoid placing two strong singers ("leaders") next to each other. Weaker voices ("followers"), or voices without soloistic qualities, but good voices nevertheless, that blend easily, help to smooth out the individual characteristics of the solo-quality voices and this ensures better

overall choral blend. The stronger voices, on the other hand, enhance weaker voices, which can lead to greater confidence levels for the "followers". These "followers" are then more secure and inclined to make a more positive musical contribution. One needs to rearrange the individual choristers' seating, or standing order, until a satisfactory blend is achieved. (Refer to **Part** II, 4.8 "Balance and Blend".)

If the choir is experiencing pitch problems, it often helps to change the positioning of individual choristers. The combination of two specific adjacent voices may be experiencing an over-tone mismatch. By separating them, the pitch problems may be solved. Some voices blend together better than others because of the tone quality of each voice. Choristers that are consistently inclined to drag the pitch down, should be placed between two strong, secure choristers. If these chronic "flatters" are seated together, the problem is magnified and it will adversely affect the intonation of the choir as a whole.

Choristers who sing with animated, interesting faces need to be placed in prominent places. Allow for ample spacing between choristers. If the choristers are cramped and standing on top of each other, their sound will be smaller. (Refer to **Part II**, 7.7 "Acoustics".)

Experimenting with seating arrangements for the different sections in the choir, can have a dramatic effect on the overall sound in such areas as balance, blend and intonation. When one has an imbalance in the number of singers to a part, one could place the smaller group (usually the altos in two-part singing) in the middle, with the bigger group on either side of them. The following formation would then be the result:
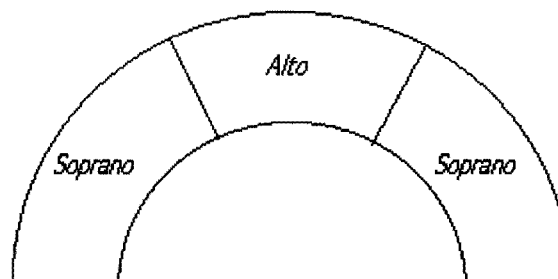
Figure II - 3-1 Formation for a treble choir with the smaller group in the middle and the

bigger group (split up) on either side

Dividing the bigger group like this will help to reduce their prominence, which would greatly assist balance in the choir. (Refer to **Part II**, 4.8 "Balance and Blend".) Standing in a semi-circle allows the choristers to better hear each other and the other parts as well.

The formations illustrated in figures **II** - 3-2a and **II** - 3-2b are commonly used with treble choirs that have a strong and secure soprano 2 section.
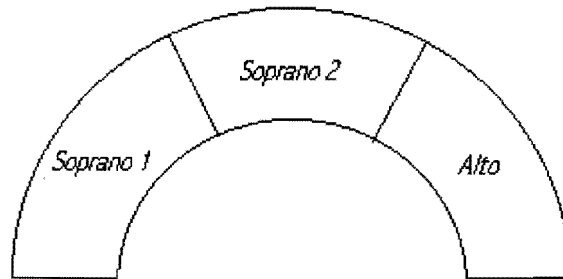
Figure II - 3-2a Formation for a treble choir singing in three parts, with a strong and secure soprano 2 section
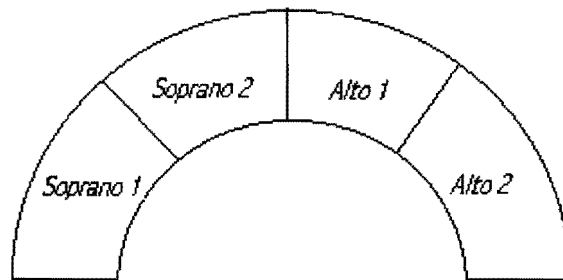
Figure II - 3-2b Formation for a treble choir singing in four parts, with a strong and secure soprano 2 section

Should the soprano 2 section not be strong enough, one would have to move them away from the altos and place them where they hear the soprano 1 section clearly and the altos only faintly. The second sopranos can thus harmonise more readily with the first sopranos. The outer voices, S_1 and A, are together and can also tune the chord better. (Refer to figures **II** - 3-3a and **II** - 3-3b, below.)
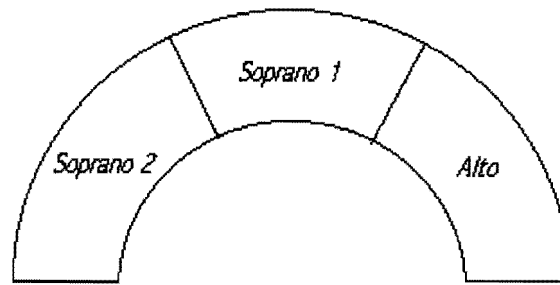
Figure II-3-3a Formation for a treble choir singing in three parts, with a weaker and insecure soprano 2 section
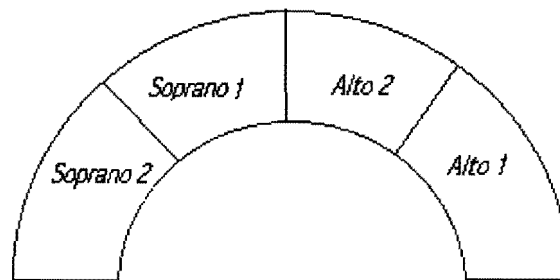
Figure II – 3-3b Formation for a treble choir singing in four parts, with a weaker and insecure soprano 2 section

Placing the outer voice parts in S_1 S_2 A_1 A_2 (i.e. S_1 and A_2) next to each other may promote better intonation because they can better hear each other and tune up. (Refer to figure **II** - 3-3b, above.)

Below, in figure **II** - 3-4, is an alternative seating arrangement for a treble choir singing in four parts.
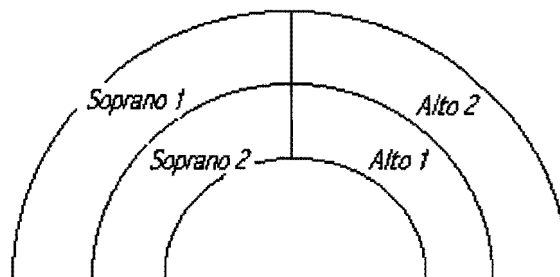
Figure II - 3-4 Alternative choir formation for a treble choir singing in four parts

After one has decided on a seating plan, and each chorister has been placed, one could designate letters to the rows. Let's assume there are four rows; these are then called A, B, C, and D. From left to right they are then numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.. Figure **II** - 3-5, below, illustrates this idea.

D 1 2 3 4 5 …etc.

C 1 2 3 4 5 …etc.

B 1 2 3 4 5 …etc.

A 1 2 3 4 5 …etc.

Figure II - 3-5 Designating each chorister with a number in a particular row

Each chorister must remember his/her number, e.g. A 4. Draw up a seating chart with little blocks on a large A_3 sheet with each chorister's name in the correct block. This is also a tremendous help for the teacher in learning the names of all the choristers.

3.10 Routine Rehearsal Plan

One needs a fairly consistent routine in the rehearsals, but something new or unexpected adds interest to each rehearsal and the choristers should continually be stimulated by fresh ideas and variety. Boredom sets in if the choristers know exactly what to expect and the teacher's approach to rehearsing has become too predictable. A variety of teaching strategies and musical experiences will prevent monotony.

There are certain aspects that should always be in place and certain rules and routines that do not change, like having the chairs for seating or the choral risers in place when the choristers arrive and each chorister entering the rehearsal room quietly and going straight to their assigned place. As previously stated, it is better to have a few rules that have to be adhered to and are non-negotiable than to have a highly intricate discipline system that is not consistently enforced. (Refer to **Part II**, 3.8 "Motivating the Choristers".)

Rehearsals should begin and end on time. If the teacher consistently starts the rehearsals promptly, the choristers will be more inclined to be make haste to be on time for the rehearsal. The rehearsal should start with a definite sense of urgency and seriousness. (Refer to **Part II**, 3.6 "Pace of Rehearsal".) The teacher should, likewise, make every effort to finish rehearsals on time. Choristers are more likely to be motivated and work hard for the duration of the rehearsal if they know that the teacher respects their time.

It is absolutely essential that a balance is maintained within the rehearsal between the demands of performance and the responsibility to the long-term development of the choristers. The preparation for performance should not take precedence over the education of the children. This principle should consistently be applied in the planning of rehearsals.

3.11 Behaviour Management in Rehearsal

Behavioural guidelines and expectations should be made very clear and these have to be implemented consistently and tactfully. If these guidelines are fair and the teacher reinforces them in a positive way, the children will respond enthusiastically and with confidence. Disruptive behaviour should be corrected, but choristers should not be belittled in the process. The choristers have to be respected as individuals. A choral educator's role is to nurture; not to injure. We should all strive to acquire greater competence in communication with our choristers and hence become less abrasive and less provocative. The ideal is to be firm, fair, consistent, understanding and professional in one's dealings with the choir members and to show sincere interest in every child.

Positive reinforcement works wonders with the children. Use comments such as, "Anna, you are singing with a wonderfully animated expression!" or "Peter, you are standing tall like a prince!" and watch the impact it has on those standing next to the person you are praising.

3.12 Audio and Video Aids

Listening to a recording of the choir's own performance provides an added dimension of critical appraisal because the choristers can hear themselves objectively; i.e. choristers can

concentrate on listening without other distractions. The use of a tape recorder during rehearsal is an exceptionally beneficial means of improving the interpretation of a selection. Recordings are most unkind and are inclined to "exaggerate" mistakes. On listening to the playback of the tape recording, choristers, and teachers for that matter, are often surprised at the flagrant mistakes that went unnoticed during the rehearsal.

The use of the tape recorder can be an exceptionally valuable means of facilitating the choristers' musical development. The choristers are fascinated when they hear themselves sing on a recording. The idea is to play it back to them for evaluation. Ask questions that require critical listening skills and musical judgement. Compliment them on their performance and then challenge them to improve further. Solicit their suggestions for improvement. It is important to then immediately implement the suggested changes. The conductor also has the opportunity to listen more objectively to the performance and can re-run the tape in order to study and analyse it in detail.

Comparing two (or more) recordings of the same work is a valuable aid in developing the evaluating skills of the choristers. This procedure is especially beneficial if this is a recording of a song that the choir is about to learn or has already learnt. (Refer to **Part II**, 4.4 "Presenting New Repertoire".)

Video taping presents us with all the advantages of an audio tape but also affords us the extra dimension of vision and gives the choristers the opportunity of assessing their body stance or attitude, movements and facial expressions. Are all the choristers watching the conductor closely? Do the eyes convey the expression of the music and the text by being focussed and alert, or are the eyes glazed over or perhaps roving all over the place?

3.13 Use of the Piano

If we spend most of the choral rehearsal time teaching from behind the piano, we will produce choristers who cannot sing in tune without the aid of the piano. The piano hides many instances of poor intonation. Neither the choristers nor the teacher can hear small mistakes when the piano is sounding. *A cappella* (unaccompanied) singing reveals mistakes that the piano covers. In order to improve the choir's intonation, one has to move away from the piano

and rehearse without accompaniment whenever possible. This will encourage the choristers to rely on their own aural abilities. (Refer to **Part II**, 2.5 "Selecting Appropriate Repertoire" and 7.8 "Compiling a Programme".)

The choir only truly knows a selection if they can sing it without the assistance of the piano. They must be able to hear mentally instead of depending upon the piano to give the pitches.

3.14 Accompaniment and the Role of the Accompanist

In the Foundation phase, dissonant or complex multi-chord progressions in the accompaniment may jeopardise melodic accuracy. In the Intermediate phase, the instrumental accompaniment may be more dissonant and complex. (Refer to **Part I**, 3.2 "Choral Unit Standard: Intonation", "Western Music Specifics" No. 2.)

The piano is a traditional accompaniment instrument, but there are many instruments that lend harmonic support and are suitable accompanying instruments for the treble voice choir. Examples of this type of instrument are: the guitar, autoharp, harp, accordion, pipe organ and instrumental ensembles. Suitable, appropriate accompaniment to a selection **adds another element of interest** for the listener. It is resourceful to select repertoire for a performance programme that includes both a variety of styles of accompaniment and *a cappella* singing. The percussive timbre of the piano may be rendered less so by the *addition* of a flute, recorder, clarinet, oboe or stringed instrument, playing a counter-melody. These additional instruments lend renewed interest and make for more fascinating and engaging listening by providing timbre variation to a programme. (Refer to **Part II**, 7.8 "Compiling a Programme".)

Children's choirs do not have a **bass line** and the accompaniment thus has to fulfil this role. Adding a bass instrument like a cello or a bassoon may lend greater balance to the overall harmonic structure, which in turn will facilitate better intonation. Judicious enhancement of the bass in the piano accompaniment will also contribute to better intonation by the choir.

The children's choir requires an accompanist that is particularly sensitive to the **balance between the accompaniment and the vocal line**. To avoid covering the vocal line, the accompaniment should be played lightly and without over-pedalling. The piano

accompaniment should support and add colour and harmony to the singing, but it should not overshadow. There is a fine balance between how much colour and vitality will *support* a choir but not *cover up* the voices. A skilled and sensitive accompanist will know when to emphasise a particular melodic line or rhythmic accent in the accompaniment to enhance the overall effect.

A choir that has an accompanist is most fortunate indeed. It **frees the conductor** to move around and also paves the way for better communication with the choristers. Another advantage is that the conductor can listen more acutely and with greater discrimination, away from the piano. Should a staff member from the school not be available as an accompanist, one might consider approaching the parent body and try to establish if there happens to be a skilful pianist amongst them that would be prepared to act as an accompanist. (Refer to the section that the parents have to fill in on the *Choir Audition* form, Example **II** - 2-1a.)

Unless the accompanist is an exceptional sight-reader, the music needs to be given to him/her well in advance to ensure proficiency. The accompaniment should be played accurately and expressively. The choral teacher needs to meet with the accompanist **before the rehearsal starts** to discuss expressive aspects like tempi, dynamics, phrasing as well as breathing and any modifications in the score.

A good, susceptive and supportive accompanist will be **as one with the choir** by breathing and phrasing with them. They realise when the choristers are faltering in a performance and will immediately give the necessary remedial support. They have the ability to follow the conductor's directions and learn to anticipate the conductor's actions and reactions. Furthermore, they can adapt quickly to the unexpected. Their ability to sight-read is excellent and it is an added bonus if they can transpose with ease.

The following are some personal characteristics of accompanists that are most desirable:
- Dependability and punctuality are absolutely essential. Nothing is more nerve-wracking than waiting for an accompanist who is late, with the performance about to start;
- A co-operative colleague who is always willing to help;
- The ability to use sensible initiative in unforeseen, problematic situations that may arise;
- Fondness of children; and

- A good sense of humour in rehearsal which can often help to alleviate tension.

A good accompanist is vitally essential to the success of the choir. The choral teacher would be well advised to cultivate a good relationship with the accompanist. It is absolutely essential to give due recognition to this valuable member of the choral team.

3.15 Guidelines for Dismissal from the Choir

Very little learning will take place in a chaotic environment where children do exactly as they please. One needs a manageable environment and *constant* disruptive behaviour from any particular child should not be tolerated. However, there is a difference between occasional mischief, and genuine, incessantly disruptive behaviour.

Occasionally one may find a child that is totally uninterested with a poor attitude which negatively affects the atmosphere in rehearsals, or a child that continually distracts the other children and refuses to come to terms with choir discipline. Speak privately and frankly to the child and ask him/her to co-operate. Should the disruptive behaviour continue, it may be best to advise the pupil to leave the choir.

No child should be dismissed from the choir because their singing is no longer acceptable. Once they have been accepted, after the audition, they must be confident in knowing that they are a valuable asset to the choir. Choir members should only be dismissed in rare circumstances where their behaviour proves to be totally unacceptable.

Chapter 4

REHEARSING THE CHOIR

4.1 The Choral Teacher's Voice as a Role Model

Male choral educators of children's choirs find it difficult to provide an appropriate model for treble singers because the man's normal singing voice has a different timbre and sounds an octave lower than children's voices. Research investigating the effects of male and female models on children's vocal accuracy has shown that children are most successful when matching female voices as opposed to male voices. (Refer to **Part I**, 2.3.2 "Male Vocal Modelling with Children".)

> Children have been shown to sing most accurately with a female model. However, this should not be construed to imply that children cannot learn to match pitches sung by a male model, but rather that this may be more difficult (Goetze et al 1990: 31).

> Studies examining the issue of male vocal modelling with children are consistent in reporting greater vocal accuracy when a male teacher models in the treble octave singing with minimal vibrato (Dunn 2000: 54).

> Researchers have also found that children respond more accurately to a female model than to a piano or oscillator (Hermanson, 1971/1972), a flute (Petzold, 1966), or a male model (Green, 1990; Sims, Moore, & Kuhn, 1982) (Price et al 1994: 270-271).

Children find it difficult to reproduce tones that they hear in a register other than that in which their voices lie. Male teachers should therefore resort to either:

- using a child in the choir as a model to demonstrate pitch-matching activities;
- using an instrument like a recorder;
- using falsetto to provide the pitches for singing; or
- recording songs and patterns with a female model for introducing songs.

The choral teacher's voice does not have to be a remarkable solo voice, but rather a voice that is well modulated and a model for the children. (Refer to **Part II**, 1.2.1 "Musical Skills" of the effective choral educator.) There should be no excessive vibrato or heaviness of sound. The children are inclined to follow an example directly and the teacher's voice should therefore present good singing habits and accurate intonation at all times.

4.2 Intonation

Intonation refers to the preciseness of pitch or the extent to which a singer is in tune. (Refer to **Part I**, 3.2 "Choral Unit Standard: Intonation".) It refers to the ability to listen to another voice or instrument and to match (reproduce) the pitch exactly. Faulty intonation is probably the single most annoying aspect that can ruin a choral performance. It is therefore extremely important that the choir sings in tune. Explain to the children that singing "flat" means that they are singing slightly under (or below) the pitch and that singing "sharp" means singing slightly above (or higher than) the pitch. Choirs are more inclined to singing flat than sharp.

The choral conductor has to insist on good intonation at all times. If one repeatedly ignores, or skims over any poor intonation, it may become a habit. The following strategies may prove to be expedient:

- Stop the choir as soon as intonation becomes a problem. Identify the cause of the intonation problem and find a remedy;
- Tell the singers to stand tall, to sing it softly once more and to listen to themselves *very* carefully. Singing too loudly inhibits the listening process. Do not use the piano in this instance so that both the conductor and the choristers are encouraged to rely on their own ears to a greater extent. Likewise, it is a good idea to often sing an accompanied work without any accompaniment during the rehearsal. We want to wean the singers from constant accompaniment, and specifically from the piano, as much as possible, as this encourages finer listening skills.
- Use physical metaphor. Ask the choristers to physically pick up the pitch with their hands as though they were picking up a small object. This is an aid to lifting the pitch.

Poor posture is often the cause of bad intonation. The reason for this is that poor posture is an impediment to good breath management. Problems with breath management have a dramatic effect on pitch accuracy. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.3 "Correct Singing Posture", and 6.4 "Breath Management".) When the choristers are not using sufficient breath, the pitch will usually become flat.

Vowels that are not sung uniformly may also contribute to intonation problems. Both the pitch and the vowels have to be tuned. One has to constantly work on the **uniformity of vowels** because fine intonation cannot be achieved unless the vowels are unified. "Dark" vowels tend to cause flat singing, whereas "bright" vowels tend to lead to sharp singing. (Refer to Figure II - 6-14, "Dark to bright vowel sounds".) If one section of the choir is singing flat, the choral teacher can help to remedy this by having that section slightly modify the vowel sound. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.8 "Italian Basic Pure Vowels, Uniform Vowel Colours and Vowel Modification".)

A **throaty quality**, which is caused by poor tone production, leads to flatting in general. More often than not, this involves rigidity in and around the base of the tongue. This can be avoided by:

- relaxing and dropping the jaw;
- relaxing the tongue and lightly resting the tip at the bottom of the lower front teeth;
- singing with correct vocal embouchure; and
- arching the soft palate.

(Refer to **Part II**, 6.2 "Choral Tone Quality", and 6.5 "Resonance".)

Temperature and humidity affect intonation significantly. If the rehearsal room, or performance area, is too hot, flatting often occurs. Open the windows to ensure that the room is better ventilated. High humidity in the atmosphere has a depressive effect. The choristers will lack vitality and feel lethargic. To counter-act this, the choral teacher has to direct with extra vitality. Stress the importance of good posture and correct, deep breathing.

Rehearsals or performances **early in the morning** are inadvisable because the voices are "cold". This will adversely affect intonation. The ideal time for rehearsals is in the late morning or early afternoon.

The **acoustics of a room** have an effect on pitch. Hard surfaces result in a reverberating or echo effect, whereas drapes, carpeting, audience, etc. absorb the vibrations and the sound is then less resounding. "Dead" or "dry" acoustics in a room or performance area will tend to cause flatting. The choristers cannot hear each other properly. It will help to let them stand closer to one another. The tempi should also be slightly faster in dry acoustics. If you are fortunate enough to sing in a venue where the acoustics are live, the spacing between the choristers should be further apart and the tempi can be more relaxed. If the area is excessively reverberating, the tempi should be quite a bit slower to prevent the tone from becoming sharp.

Fatigue may cause intonation problems. Ask yourself: have the choristers been sitting or standing too long? Sometimes a few physical stretches to release tension in the shoulders, head and neck will help to revitalise tired muscles. When the choristers are tired, the teacher needs to demonstrate extra vitality and sparkle that will energise the group and restore some of the alertness. Vocal fatigue may also set in if the choristers have been working on the same music for too long a period in the rehearsal. The best thing to do then is to change to a less demanding or strenuous selection.

When the **tessitura** of a song is too high and remains uncomfortably high in pitch for an extended period, the choir will, more often than not, start singing flat, because the laryngeal muscles become fatigued. The result is that the intonation suffers. In this instance, it may help to transpose the selection down into a more suitable key. It is important to select repertoire that has a suitable range and tessitura. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.6 "Children's Vocal Ranges and Registers", and 2.5 "Selecting Appropriate Repertoire" .) Sometimes, however, it may be that the piece is in an inappropriate key and by transposing it up a semi-tone, the key is brighter and more suitable. F major often presents this problem, but one can easily transpose this up to $F^{\square}$ major.

"Key fatigue" results when singing in one key for too long. The order of the selections to be rehearsed or performed should be chosen to include a variety of keys and tempos. The ear needs key relief to avoid becoming "lazy" with resultant flatting.

Repeated notes tend to become flat. To avoid the tone from sagging, tell the choristers to "think up" as they sing the repeated tones. **Sustained tones** are also inclined to become flat. Keep the tone supported, vibrant and alive right to the end. There is a saying: "the pitch will sag if the music drags". On the final chord, the conductor should assist the sound, and prevent the pitch from sagging, with a slight upward movement of the arms and hands.

The **3rd degree** of the scale, *mi*, and the **7th degree**, *ti*, are particularly susceptible to intonation problems. Should these occur, they have to be remedied immediately. More often than not choristers sing the *mi* or the *ti* flat. Tell them to think the tone(s) slightly higher and practise this until the tones are completely secure. Occasionally, however, the *mi* and the *ti* are sung sharper. In this instance, one would remedy the intonation problem by telling choristers that the tone(s) is too high and that they must think it slightly lower. Once again, practise this until the tones are absolutely secure.

There are **certain notes in each voice range** that are inclined to cause problems. In the soprano range these are from **d^2** (on the 4th line of the treble clef) to **f^2** or **f** ^{2}(on the 5th line). In the alto range they are from **a^1** (in the 2nd space of the treble clef) to the **c^2** or **c** ^{2} (3rd space of the treble clef). Should any intonation problems occur, they have to be set right immediately.

Any **special accidentals** (that are not part of the key signature) in a selection, need to be sung with extra care. These accidentals cause a temporary modulation into a new key and this may confuse the ear. Sharp signs need to be sung higher than would seem correct in the original key, and flat signs, lower. The natural sign should be sung higher in a key with flats, and lower in a key with sharps.

Sometimes the **pitch is inclined to become flat on a descending passage**. The conductor may help to prevent this by using a gradual *upward* motion of the hands and arms as the passage descends. Alternatively, one could point upwards while singing a descending line. When singing a descending passage, the following suggestion may prove to be effective: tell the singers to take narrow (small) steps down as they are descending; and vice versa, when singing an ascending passage, the singers must take wide (big) steps up. For a more vivid illustration, suggest walking upstairs or downstairs "in the dark". When the pitch becomes flat, it may also help to brighten the vowel sound in order to sharpen the pitch.

It is absolutely essential to **energise** (support) singing to a greater degree when the choir is **singing softly**. Very soft dynamics require excellent breath control and may, more often than not, cause flatting of the pitch if one is not very careful. It is usually a better idea to ask for "hushed" singing rather than "soft" singing. This will result in the singing being more focussed, vibrant and alive. When singing a **diminuendo** (gradually singing softer) one also has to be extremely circumspect not to start singing flat. It is important to point this out to the children and to be extra careful to avoid flatting.

If the choristers are not sufficiently **secure with the music**, intonation problems may occur. Should the choristers learn their individual vocal lines more thoroughly, their ability to sing with better intonation will improve. Part-independence can be made more secure by asking the choristers to sing their particular part while the other part(s) are played on the piano.

The opposite of not knowing the music well enough may also happen. This is when a selection has been "hammered to death" and **the piece has become stale**. It is not wise to repeat a selection over and over again, rehearsal after rehearsal, and to expect the choristers to maintain their enthusiasm. Should boredom set in, it is best to leave off practising that particular selection for a period and to resume it at a later stage with fresh, new approaches. One should not "peak" with a work too long before a performance. The rehearsals should be efficiently planned, spaced and timed to ensure that the choristers "peak" for the performance itself.

Nervousness has the tendency to cause the choir to become sharp. This is mainly due to shallow breathing. The choral teacher must calm and reassure the choristers before the performance and do a few deep-breathing exercises, which help to steady the nerves.

4.3 Unison and Part-Singing

In the Foundation phase the choristers only sing unison songs because they are still learning to pitch accurately. Until the choristers can sing perfectly in tune, it is a waste of time to attempt part-singing. An introduction to singing in harmony could begin towards the end of grade 3, and certainly by the beginning of grade 4. One could start by initially singing simple ostinato

patterns to familiar melodies and then proceed to the singing of simple rounds. Because of their harmonic structure, rounds are well-suited to ostinato patterns. Apart from using rounds as part of the repertoire, one could also use rounds for warm-up purposes. Rounds improve part-singing and they are a valuable aid in developing aural acuity.

There are certain basic principles that are a prerequisite for successful part-singing:

- Choristers should know their part well and be able to sing it without any assistance from the teacher or an instrument;
- Choristers will be better able to sing their own part and listen simultaneously to the other part(s), should they initially sing *mezzo piano* only. Singing softly enables them to listen more carefully and to tune to the other part(s) while singing their own part; and
- As a first step to introducing the actual part-singing, the teacher should sing the harmony part while the choristers sing the melody. Once the choristers understand the relationship between the melody and the harmony, they can proceed with singing their respective parts.

For part-singing in the Intermediate phase, it is important to know that the upper part (melody line) in two-part music is easier to sing than the lower part. The choristers find harmonising below a melody a greater challenge than singing a descant above a known melody. When new part-singing repertoire is studied, it is advisable that the lower part is learned first to make the learning process less onerous. (Refer to **Part I**, 3.2 "Choral Unit Standard: Intonation", "Range Statements and Assessment Criteria" number 3, "Vocal independence with pitch accuracy in part-singing".) Singing in three parts should not be attempted until the choir is confidently singing in two parts. In three-part singing, the middle part is the most difficult to pitch.

In part-singing in the Intermediate phase, the second (or third) voice part should be structured in such a way that the part is sufficiently interesting and sounds like a melody. Rounds, counter-melodies and ostinatos are particularly useful because they maintain their own independent melodic line. Choristers at this stage find it difficult to sing in parallel thirds or sixths. The second (or third) part should not constantly have the same contour, rhythm and text as the melody, like in a second part written in parallel thirds or sixths. Inexperienced

choristers easily become confused when singing parallel thirds or sixths and wander back to the main melody.

4.4 Presenting New Repertoire

In order to inspire the choristers, the choral teacher needs to be enthusiastic about the new choral work. When presenting a new work to the choir, the teacher has to "sell" the music to them. The score has to be brought to life for the choristers and this has to be done in an exciting and enthusiastic way. The teacher has to know the music well, be a hundred percent convinced about the aesthetic value of the composition and be very enthusiastic about the music. Only then can the teacher transmit his/her enthusiasm about a new work to the choristers.

In the Intermediate phase one should give the choristers background information about the song/work so that they have a better total concept of the music. (Refer to **Part I**, 3.7 "Choral Unit Standard: Stylistic Authenticity".) The following are some possibilities:

- Tell them something about the style of the song/work;
- Give them the name of the composer and some relevant/interesting information about the composer and/or the cultural background of the song/work;
- Discuss the historical period in which the song/work was composed;
- Indicate on a map the country of origin;
- Discuss the mood of the music; etc.

The choir members have to be made aware of the fact that one cannot love something without knowing it. If it is at all possible to obtain a good recording of the new work, this may be an excellent opportunity for guided, critical listening. This is particularly beneficial if the performance is by a children's choir because the choristers identify more keenly with the choral sound. Playing a recording to the group gives them an overall concept or an initial sense of the character of the work. That does not mean that a choral recording should be slavishly imitated. It is merely suggested that it is a most useful way of introducing a new

work to the choristers. After they have gained an overall impression of the new work, they can then proceed to study the various sections in detail.

4.4.1 Song Acquisition

In the Foundation phase one would, first of all, read the text expressively to the children. Ask questions about the content and meaning of the text and explain difficult words. When the choristers know what the song is all about, have them read through the text with you. Next, working with four-bar phrases, read each phrase with exaggerated, clear diction, and have the choristers repeat after you. (Refer to **Part II**, 4.4.2 "Expression of Text", below.)

Sing the song through for the choristers with (piano) accompaniment if possible, taking special care that you sing the way you want them to perform eventually. First impressions are very important. Children are exceptionally perceptive and will mimic your performance. Proceed by teaching the song phrase by phrase. First sing the phrase to the choristers and then have them repeat it. Mistakes need to be corrected consistently. At this stage one works with both melody and words. Have the choristers sing the song through from beginning to end.

At a subsequent rehearsal, separate the words and the melody. Say the words to the rhythm of the music, being very precise about enunciation and articulation of consonants. Sing the melody to a neutral syllable like "moo", "noo", or "loo", making sure that all intervals are pitched correctly. Combine the words and the melody again and point out expressive elements. Do not postpone the expressive interpretation of the song/work to a later stage. This should be a continual process, starting right from the beginning. Try to use the piano as little as possible at this stage and focus on correct singing. At the conclusion of the rehearsal, one could have a "mock performance" and sing the song through with accompaniment, only stopping if there is a major problem. This gives the choristers a tremendous feeling of accomplishment. Remember to be liberal with praise and to look for positive elements in the "performance".

The following procedures apply mostly to song acquisition in the Intermediate phase. Read the text through with the choristers. (Refer to **Part II**, 4.4.2 "Expression of Text", below.) Constantly remind choristers to have a pencil and their sheet music ready for marking the score. Discuss and ask questions about the textual content and explain difficult words. It is essential to explain the organisation of the music score to the choristers. Make sure that they understand and know how to follow their specific part in the maze of music notation. It may be expedient to place a mark before the line they are to sing in each system or to mark their part with a highlighter pen. Use different colours for each voice part.

One could use a melodic pattern from the song as a warm-up exercise. If there is a refrain or section in the selection that repeats a few times, this should be attempted first, because in this way the choristers learn a substantial part of the song/work relatively quickly.

In a two-part selection, teach a segment of the alto part first, the same segment of the soprano part next, and then combine the two parts together in that segment. If one of the sections is experiencing difficulties, that part should be isolated and rehearsed. The other section should then either study their part by following the notation and listening to it in relation to the other part or they could hum their part softly. Another possibility is for them to sing their part to "loo", while the section that needs special attention, sings their part to words with the piano reinforcing its pitches. Do not let one section of the choir sit and wait for a long time while you are rehearsing another voice-part. Work with short segments of the song/work at a time, switching back and forth between parts and combining the parts as soon as the choristers are secure in their own part.

One could also divide the choir up for a short sectional rehearsal, with the accompanist (and/or parent volunteer) taking one section and the (choir) teacher taking the other. Each part is then worked out separately. The two sections are then combined again to sing the two parts together. Should the accompanist (or parent volunteer) not be available for this, sectional rehearsals may be scheduled before or after school. Even if

all the choristers within the section do not attend, those present will be able to assist the others who are unable to attend, to learn more quickly.

Expressive singing relies on several elements and some of these will now be discussed under the following headings: "Expression of Text", "The Musical Phrase", and "Rhythm and Pitch".

4.4.2   Expression of Text

The conductor has to be completely familiar with both the text and the music.

> Choral music represents the essence of the human experience because
> it fuses two distinct yet inseparable elements into one creation: music –
> the language of the soul – and word – the communicator of our
> thoughts, feelings, dreams, and experiences (Dickson 1993:19).

Textual expression has to be taught right from the start. Before they start to learn the notes, the choristers need to understand the meaning, mood and message of the words. Do not assume that the children understand the text even if it is in their own language. In the discussion of the text, the choristers' should be encouraged to offer their interpretations or understanding of the meaning or message contained within the text.

Read the text aloud as a poem to the choristers. Pinpoint specific phrases and analyse them for:

- correct enunciation;
- the rise and fall of emotion (communicative potential); and
- appropriate articulation.

No two syllables or words should receive equal emphasis and the choristers need to find out which are the most important (essential) words and syllables.

Ask the choristers to determine which descriptive words in the lyrics could be used for "word painting". Word painting involves giving special attention to consonants and

vowels of descriptive words for dramatic impact, thereby creating a "sound picture", for example:

- in the words "love" and "soft", the initial consonants are treated smoothly by "leaning" into the words (or elongating the consonants rather than quickly articulating them);
- in the words "glory" and "roar", the initial consonants should be stressed emphatically.

These key words should each have a special emotional interpretation, colour, weight or texture and must be sung descriptively with imagination and discretion. The meaning, atmosphere, and significance of the word should be drawn out or "painted" for the listener; i.e. the manner in which the word is pronounced should conjure up an image in the listeners' mind:

- "Peace" should have a completely different colour or texture to "fight";
- "Love" should not sound like "hate";
- "Beautiful" not like "monstrosity"; and
- "Dark" not like "light".

It is essential that each and every chorister is executing the "word painting" together and to the same degree. Obviously, facial expressions that mirror word meanings, contribute tremendously to the expressive result.

The teacher has to provide a vivid explanation of the text by using carefully chosen images and metaphors to stimulate the choristers' imaginations. When the children understand the emotional content of a composition, that content is more likely to be conveyed to the audience.

4.4.3 The Musical Phrase

Music does not consist of a flow of formless sound. It can be divided into musical phrases and these can be compared to a sentences in speech. The text and the melody

indicate appropriate, logical phrasing. Phrases in music vary in length; some are short, others are long. A musical phrase is usually sung in one breath, unless it is too long, in which case "staggered breathing" is used in choral singing. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.4.3 "Staggered Breathing".)

Should we break a phrase in the wrong place by taking an unnecessary breath, the meaning could be obscured, or even changed. One should also refrain from taking unnecessary breaths between short word phrases. For instance, the song "Happy Birthday", consists of 4 word phrases. The first two lines may be grouped together and sung as one musical phrase; likewise with the last two lines. Take a breath where it makes sense, both musically and textually. (The ˇ represents a breath mark.)

> Happy birthday to you,
> Happy birthday to you,ˇ
> Happy birthday dear Someone,
> Happy birthday to you.

The phrase structure needs to be pointed out to the choristers: where does the phrase start, where does it peak (climax), and where does it end? A phrase starts with a forward momentum (or surge, or swell) and moves towards a peak (or climax), before it subsides. The analogy that may be used here is that of a wave that swells bigger and bigger up to a peak, before it breaks and then washes out to shore.

Tempo rubato refers to the elasticity or the flexibility of the time within a bar or phrase. A literal translation from Italian would be "robbed time". This refers to a "give and take" allocation or distribution whereby robbing time from one note (or group of notes) and adding it to another in order to compensate. This is done to heighten the expressive power of the music and the expressive nuances of text. By hastening a segment of the phrase, the forward momentum is intensified. Likewise, the subsiding of the phrase is achieved by a relaxing of the mathematical precision of pulse by the lengthening of some notes. *Tempo rubato* has to be used with utmost discretion and taste.

One should refrain from working "just with the notes in isolation" as this will lead to a dull and lifeless interpretation. Phrases need to be shaped expressively to reflect the

intentions of the composer. In the interpretation of a phrase, it is absolutely essential that there is a strong sense of *drive* in the "building of the wave" or the forward momentum towards the climax, after which the tranquil, subsiding winding-down of the phrase follows. This results in a *tension* and *relaxation* or *release* effect. A musical phrase should never be stagnant; it should always suggest direction, energy and vitality.

In some instances, the climax of the phrase occurs close to the beginning, and in other instances, nearer the end. In most instances, however, the climax occurs towards the middle of the phrase, creating a kind of arch-effect. This melodic flow could be illustrated by using diagrams as follows:

- In the first example, the last two word phrases (or the last musical phrase) of "Happy birthday" is used. The climax of this phrase occurs close to the beginning of the phrase. (Refer to Figure **II** - 4-1, below.)

Hap-py birth-day dear some-one, hap-py birth-day to you
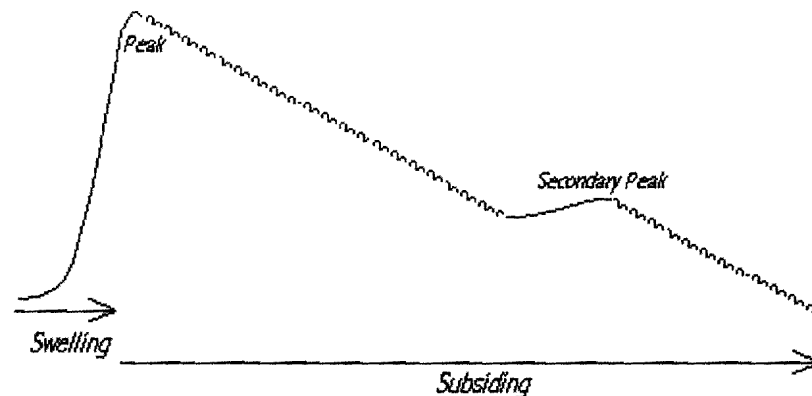
Figure II - 4-1 Climax close to the beginning of the phrase: "Happy Birthday"

- In the song, "Silent Night", two short word phrases are combined to form one musical phrase. The climax of the phrase occurs, more or less, in the middle of the musical phrase. (Refer to Figure **II** - 4-2, below.)
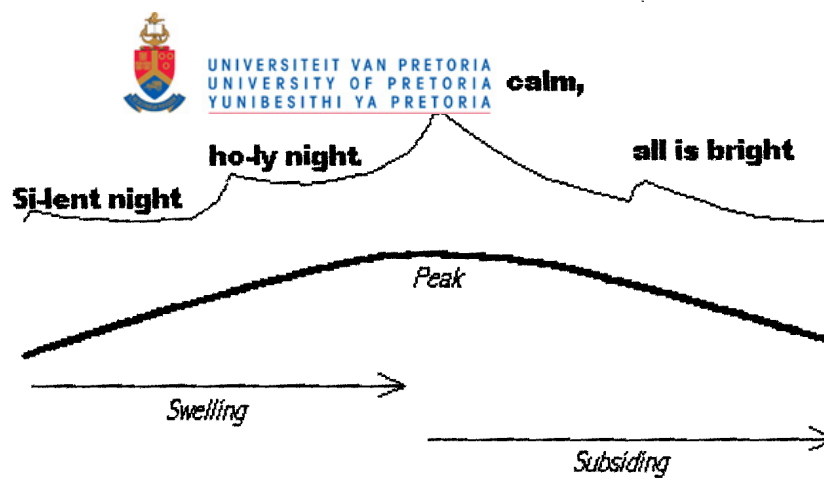
Figure II - 4-2   Climax more or less in the middle of the phrase: "Silent Night"

- In the third example, an extract from the South African National Anthem, the climax of the phrase occurs near the end of the phrase. Two short word phrases have been combined to form one musical phrase. (Refer to Figure **II** - 4-3, below.)
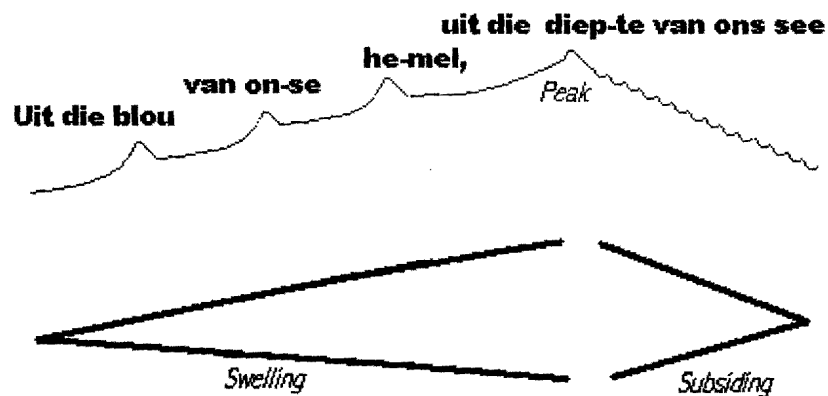
Figure II - 4-3   Climax near the end of the phrase: "South African National Anthem"

Donald Neuen (1992:16) states that:

> Every note, every syllable, every word, will function within a crescendo or within a diminuendo. In real music making, there never will be the sterile, stagnant, boring sound of equally emphasised consecutive pitches. Within a long crescendo/diminuendo, there may be several lesser ones:

There should never be static plateaux of sameness, unless in exceptional instances where the word text specifically demands this.

Choristers need to know exactly where to begin singing louder and where to end off a *decrescendo* in order to create smooth, effective *crescendos* and *diminuendos*. Avoid undue vocal strain by aiming for too loud passages with young voices. To create successful dynamic contrasts with choristers in the Foundation and Intermediate phases, remember that dynamics are relative. It is better to compensate on the "*piano*" side of the vocal dynamic spectrum and to aim for softer singing than to attempt to force louder singing on the "*forte*" side of the vocal dynamic spectrum.

In the singing of a *diminuendo* (*decrescendo*), it is important to ensure that choristers maintain a good singing posture and support the tone to the end, in order to avoid "flatting". Tell the choristers to "energise" the tone right up to the end. (Refer to **Part II**, 4.2 "Intonation", above.)

4.4.4   Rhythm and Pitch

The choral conductor needs to remain faithful to the score and constantly has to listen for incorrect rhythm and pitch. One has to determine exactly where the mistake was. This has to be corrected immediately – it does not set itself right. Rhythmic and pitch accuracy may be improved by initially rehearsing a fast work at a slower tempo. Difficult or unusual intervals may be played on the piano, keyboard or melodica, with the choristers responding. Ensure that all choristers perform rhythmic passages accurately. Long notes must be held for their full value.

It often helps to lead the group in echo clapping the rhythm of a passage that presents a problem. Proceed by having the choristers speaking the text in the correct rhythm. This may improve both diction and rhythm.

It is essential for the choral educator to be as patient as Job with all the mistakes and fumbles. The secret is to find the most appropriate remedial devices and to persist until success is attained. Success needs to be liberally rewarded.

4.5 Polishing and Interpreting Music

Once the music has been learnt by the choristers, conductors continually seek ways to shape the performance with a sense of style appropriate to the cultural and historical aspects of the work. More important than anything else, however, are the attempts to find that which is beyond the printed notes on the page, namely the expressive intent of the music – to let the composer speak. We have to compare our pre-determined aural soundscape, aural template, or aural ideal, with the actual sound the choir is producing and provide critical feedback.

Facial expression and body attitude/language can suggest excitement or boredom about the music. It is important to convey the poetic aspects of the text to the listener in an interesting and distinctive way. Dead-pan, expressionless faces and passive body attitudes render a dull performance. Choristers need constant reminders about the importance of singing with vitally animated faces and performing the selection with complete emotional involvement both with regard to the musical and textual qualities. Under no circumstances may we as performers bore the audience. The drama within the music has to be conveyed to the audience. The face, and especially the eyes, are very important in conveying thoughts and feelings.

Misaligned vowels and poor articulation of consonants will result in a dreary and poor performance. When we sing we have to form the vowels uniquely. This is not necessarily the case when we speak. Should we have a casual approach to vowel formation when we sing, the tone will be anaemic and dull, and diction will be poor. This will result in a boring delivery of the text and the audience will not be able to understand the meaning of the text. (Refer to **Part II, 6.8** "Italian Basic Pure Vowels, Uniform Vowel Colours and Vowel Modification" and 6.9 "Diction".)

Do not start singing a song right from the beginning every time it is to be repeated in rehearsal. **Trouble spots** need to be isolated and dealt with first. We need to discriminate between sections of the work that are difficult and those that are less difficult or easy to grasp.

Refuse to accept a **poor, dreary performance in rehearsal**. We need to tell the choristers when their work is not acceptable. At times this may mean a reprimand. Most of the time, however, one should coax, cajole, charm and inspire them to reach for greater heights. Either way, one needs to demonstrate that standards matter. It is a tremendous challenge to help the children to continually find new meaning in the music and to remain involved each time they rehearse or perform the song.

Teach the choristers to sing in a manner that will enchant their audience. They need to be reminded that even in rehearsal their performance has to be energetic and alive; the way the choir sings in rehearsal is the way they will sing in performance. The singing must be filled with abundant spirit and vitality. Selections that are sustained and in a slow tempo can often sound very dreary when children sing them. In this type of song it is imperative to stress the need to energise the singing and to maintain the energy level so as not to bore the audience. The choristers need to be mentally focussed and physically vibrant.

Physical movement should be encouraged. If the choristers stand like pillars, the music they make will be drab and lifeless. Facial expression and gentle movements of the head will add to the vitality of the music. This is not something that one can add at a later stage. Should the choir in rehearsal consistently sing with **facial and physical involvement** to reflect the text and mood of the music, that is the energised and captivating rendering of the work one can most likely expect to ultimately obtain from them in the performance.

It is essential to perform a selection in the appropriate **tempo**, otherwise the mood of the music can be detrimentally affected. The conductor needs to compare his/her own tempo concept with the suggested metronome marking. The metronome marking does not have to be adhered to exactly, but it certainly gives one a very good idea of the composer's (or arranger's) intent.

A fine line exists between learning a song thoroughly and **over-rehearsing** it. Should you find that the song is now at a standstill because of over-familiarity and has thus become stale, then it may prove to be a good idea to put it on hold for a while, even if it is only for one or two rehearsals. When the song is then re-introduced, one may find that there is a renewed focus and vitality.

Exaggeration can be an excellent teaching tool to improve dynamic expression. Ask the children to exaggerate a *crescendo* (or *diminuendo*) to the absolute extreme. It then becomes an easy task to chisel it down to the desired effect.

Children in the primary school often want to sing too loudly. They have to be reminded that they may never sing so loudly that it no longer sounds beautiful. We have to teach them restraint; to learn to **sing with intensity, but without yelling**.

Messa di voce refers to the technique of creating a *crescendo* and *diminuendo* on a single sustained tone; i.e. swelling and diminishing on a sustained tone. The musical expressiveness of a song/work can be greatly enhanced if this technique is mastered and applied with discretion.

The key to the magic and wonder of music making lies in artistic expression. The choristers need to experience what it is like to be true musicians. They will only wholeheartedly dedicate themselves to a choral programme if they feel successful and experience a high level of accomplishment and artistic development.

4.6 Memorising the Music

The conductor should be able to conduct a fair amount of a song/work from memory. This prevents him/her from having to constantly refer to the score and will ensure greater eye-contact with the choristers. Children, especially, rely heavily on the conductor's eye-contact and facial expressions.

It is advisable for the choristers to memorise the repertoire that is to be performed. This may, however, exclude a very difficult, extended work. The main advantage of memorising, is that the choristers are free to maintain eye-contact with the conductor.

4.7 Mouthing the Words

The choral teacher should refrain from singing while conducting as this will, for one thing, diminish the ability to listen to the choir's performance. Another consideration for not singing with the choristers, is that the conductor's voice will not blend with the children's choral sound. The result is that the listener hears it as a separate sound source, which distorts the choral tone colour and may prove to be disturbing. The occasional soundless mouthing of words, however, is often necessary in the singing of memorised selections, especially when working with children.

4.8 Balance and Blend

Balance between different vocal sections in the choir is important. Balance refers to the equalisation of dynamic weight of sound between vocal sections. One section should only be louder than another because the music demands it at that particular moment. In an attempt to achieve satisfactory balance, the number of singers on each vocal part may have to be changed and one may have to redistribute some of the voices and place them with the weaker group. (Refer to **Part II**, 3.9 "Seating/Standing Arrangement and Placement of Voices". Also refer to **Part I**, 3.6 "Choral Unit Standard: Balance & Blend".)

In the Foundation phase "balance" between voice parts is not really applicable because they sing in unison. Balance is, however, relevant as regards the "balance" between the choral singing and the accompaniment.

"Blend", on the other hand, is a concept that has to be explained to all choristers at all levels. In order to produce a beautiful choral quality, all the voices should blend in well with the rest of the ensemble and no one's voice may stand out. Remind choristers that they are singing too loudly if they cannot hear their neighbour singing, which would show a lack of ensemble awareness. Some of the young choristers are inclined to think that singing in the choir involves showing off their singing capabilities and they try to sing as loudly as possible and with a forced tone. They should be told that the choir is a team and that no voice should stand out; they must never sing louder than that which is beautiful.

Uniformity in vowel production is essential to a good blend. Demonstrate to the choristers exactly how you want the vowel to be pronounced and ensure that vowels are produced identically throughout the choir. Vowel modification in the upper range needs careful attention in order to ensure good choral blend in the upper range. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.8 "Italian Basic Pure Vowels, Uniform Vowel Colours and Vowel Modification".)

4.9 Historical/Stylistic Guidelines and Cultural Context

In the Foundation phase the choristers are introduced to the names of at least two master composers and they listen to an extract from a work or a song by each of them. (Refer to **Part I**, 3.7 "Choral Unit Standard: Stylistic Authenticity", "Range Statements and Assessment Criteria" number 1 for Foundation phase.) If this is performed by a good children's choir, live or on a recording, the choristers have the opportunity to identify more keenly with the choral sound. There are numerous recordings of excellent children's choirs available.

The text should be explained and discussed with the children. If the text is in a foreign or a local language that the children do not understand, one should give them a translation. Take special care and ensure that the pronunciation is correct. (Refer to **Part II**, 2.5 "Selecting Appropriate Repertoire", and 7.8 "Compiling a Programme".) Any distinctive cultural background information that may prove to be relevant and interesting to the age group will help to make the choristers' aware and sow the seeds of an elementary understanding of other cultures' musical heritage. (Refer to **Part II**, 1.1.2 "Non-Musical Benefits" of choral singing.) Apart from listening to other choirs performing, the choir could, obviously, also *sing* a song by a master composer. Songs from various South African language groups should also be attempted.

In the Intermediate phase the choristers must know the names of at least four master composers and listen to (or sing) an extract from a work or a complete song by each of them. (Refer to **Part I**, 3.7 "Choral Unit Standard: Stylistic Authenticity", "Range Statements and Assessment Criteria" number 1, Intermediate phase.) The choristers are given short historical background information to the song/work that they are learning or listening to. This helps to put the material presented into a historical context. Choristers are guided into classifying musical

historical periods with one or two representative composer(s) in each. The following is an example of the basic information that can be provided:

- Baroque period, approximately 1600-1750. The harpsichord was a very popular keyboard instrument of this period. The music is highly ornate with turns and trills decorating the melody. The most important composers of the Baroque period are Bach and Handel.

- Classical period, approximately 1750-1820. The piano gradually replaced the harpsichord. The music has a definite and distinct formal structure and the style is delicate, elegant and formal. The most important composers are Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven.

- The Romantic period encompasses the 19th century. There is a rebellion against the emphasis on form, which was characteristic of the Classical period. Composers express intense, uninhibited and individual ideas and emotions in their music. The music is very expressive and appeals strongly to the listener's imagination. Choral music thrived in the Romantic period. Some of the most important composers of the Romantic period are Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms.

- Twentieth-Century music is characterised by an extremely wide diversity of styles and has a variety of types of new choral music. Art music is reflected by a more dissonant (in some cases extremely dissonant) and fragmented style. To accommodate the variety of innovative choral techniques, new notational devices are used. Many composers utilise popular music as a means of serious expression. There is a large number of composers who write choral music specifically for children's choirs, with special consideration to the limitations of the child's voice regarding vocal technique, range and tessitura and dynamics.

The choir interprets the music in a distinctive way so that it represents the composer's intentions and the performance practice at the time it was written. To achieve stylistic accuracy, differences in style between historical periods, nationalities and genres must be taken into account.

The following points are some which need to be considered for stylistic authenticity:

- metre,
- stress,

- tempo,

- dynamics,

- texture,

- number of singers per part,

- desired tone quality,

- ornamentation, and

- phrasing.

Music is a mirror of life within a specific culture. Cultural context information advances an interest in, and understanding of, other cultures. The choristers are informed about the distinguishing characteristics of cultures and their choral tradition, e.g. Western, African and Indian within the South African milieu. Through discussion, listening and performance, the choristers develop an understanding of the similarities and differences between choral styles.

Chapter 5

DEVELOPING CONDUCTING SKILLS

5.1 Body Posture of the Conductor

One's conducting style is closely linked to one's personality. It is essential to practise conducting in front of a mirror (preferably full-length) to assess posture and facial expressions. The conductor has to stand tall and proud, without any tension in the neck, shoulders, and chest area. The tone quality of the choir will be detrimentally influenced by tension in the conductor's body. It is absolutely essential that the conductor assumes an exemplary, correct body posture, because the choristers will mimic (mirror) what they see. The correct basic posture of a conductor is exactly that which we want to inculcate in the choristers themselves. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.3 "Correct Singing Posture".)

When standing in front of the choir to conduct, one must convey an attitude of authority, confidence and relaxed, but focused, attention. This does not, by any means, suggest an *intimidating* demeanour, but rather, conveying the message of being in control and inviting the choristers to participate.

In Figure **II** - 5-1a, below, the elbows are drawn in too close to the body. This stance is not conducive to communicating the desired energy, vitality and concentration required from the choristers. It does not command attention. Freedom of movement is inhibited, and the movements tend to become too horizontal, with the result that the hands are then inclined to move out to the sides too much. Inexperienced conductors are more inclined to not hold the arms up sufficiently.

Figure II - 5-1a Elbows too close to the body

In Figure **II** - 5-1b, below, the elbows are raised excessively high. The stance looks extremely awkward and uncomfortable and would cause conducting movements to conceal facial expressions. The shoulders are not relaxed and both the conductor and the choristers will be too tense, because, as has previously been stated, the choristers will mirror the stance of the conductor. Nervousness may cause a conductor to conduct "too high".
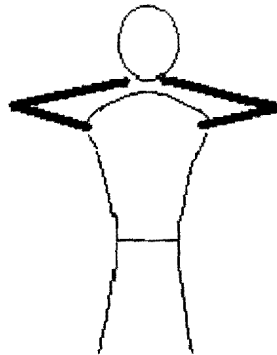
Figure II - 5-1b Elbows raised excessively high

In Figure **II** - 5-1c, below, the shoulders are relaxed and the elbows are raised slightly sideways, below shoulder height. The hands should be well away from the body, and the upper- and forearms form an angle of approximately 90 degrees at the elbows, as seen from above. (The angle is more acute in the frontal view of the figure below.)
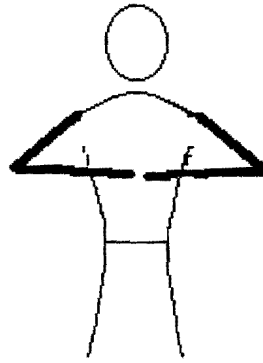
Figure II – 5-1c Shoulders relaxed and elbows raised slightly sideways

The palms of the hands should be facing down with the fingers slightly curved, relaxed and touching. The thumb is slightly separated from the index finger. The hands should be held at chest level, about two to three times the width of a hand away from the body. The exact distance will be dependent on the height of each individual person. The wrist should be more or less set (but not rigid) so as not to flap up and down.

5.2 Clear Conducting Gestures

The conductor's task is to interpret the music for the choristers. The skill of conducting is developed throughout one's career. Choral educators need to constantly modify their skill and technique in order to improve. One should try to attend as many choir-conducting workshops and lectures as possible and to read extensively. In due course, the conducting skill will improve and one's efforts will be rewarded.

Conducting is a potent non-verbal form of quick and efficient communication. The conductor transmits the vitality and mood of the music to the choristers through his/her body stance, facial expressions and hand gestures. Clear conducting gestures save time in rehearsal and improve the musical interpretation of the selection. Try to make musical interpretative corrections via your conducting gestures first; resort to verbal instructions only if a correct conducting gesture fails. The choral educator uses both verbal and non-verbal forms of communication in rehearsals. Verbosity should be avoided at all costs. Give short, clear and concise instructions. One should strive towards "less talk and more music".

Gestures should be descriptive of the music without any ineffectual, ungainly or distracting mannerisms. One of the ways one could improve conducting is to videotape oneself while conducting in rehearsal. Watching the tape a few times will quickly point to the areas that need to be improved.

Clarity and expressiveness are the cornerstones of effective conducting. The conductor makes use of facial expressions as well as head, hand and body motions to express the nuances within the music or to emphasise a point. If the conducting movements/gestures do not communicate the conductor's expressive interpretation of the music, then they should either be modified or discarded; the conducting movements should not be extraneous or distracting.

Should the choristers not be singing a particular passage well, one needs to analyse one's conducting gestures to determine if one is showing the choristers exactly what is required. In fact, one should assume that all errors the choir makes, or problems they have regarding the interpretation of the work, stem from obscure, ineffective or confusing conducting gestures. Obviously not all errors are the conductor's fault, but certainly *most* are.

5.3 Conducting with/without a Baton

It has become common practice for the choral conductor to conduct without a baton. Without the baton, both hands and ten fingers are available. The hand and fingers are far better capable of interpreting and expressing the emotion, articulation and nuances within the music than a baton. The choral conductor's close proximity to the choir results in a more intimate rapport and a closer and more personal bond with the choristers. This intimate rapport is not possible (to the same degree) with a conductor and a full orchestra. The choir usually memorises the selection and is therefore able to follow the conductor more closely, with the result that the finer nuances of which the hand is capable of, are an added advantage. Helmuth Rilling maintains that:

> the empty hand is apt to function as a more natural human connection to the voice
> and can show specific vocal nuances, such as consonant endings and vowel
> shapes. It can assist in shaping balance and emphasizing certain aspects of
> language (Hansen 1997: 56).

The use of a baton is necessary, however, should an orchestra be accompanying the choir. The members of the orchestra need to be able to follow the movements of the conductor out of the corner of their eyes, because they are playing from the score. Furthermore, some of the orchestra players are simply seated too far from the conductor to see the movements of the hand clearly enough. The choir members may also be standing further away from the conductor than is normally the case.

The baton is an apparatus which came into use as the size of the orchestra was increased. Similarly, a large massed choir, with some of the choristers standing far away from the conductor, may also find the use of a baton beneficial.

5.4 Standard/Basic Conducting Patterns

The choral teacher has to master and be completely familiar and comfortable with conducting in various basic, internationally accepted, beat patterns. These standard conducting patterns should be familiar to the extent that they become an automatic, habitual response. The beat must be well defined and within the range of the expressive qualities of the work. The beat pattern is executed in the area between the waist and the shoulders. The wrist must not "flap around" but should be firm; not rigid. Floppiness of the wrist is not only inelegant and distracting, but also lessens precision in the conducting movements.

The first beat in a bar is called the *downbeat* and represents the primary accent. This is always a strong, vertically downward movement, in front and in the middle of the body. The other beats are to the right and/or left of this centre line. The secondary accent or strong beat, e.g. beat 3 in quadruple metre (4/4) or beat 4 in slow compound duple (6/8) metre, is executed to the outside (i.e. to the right of the centre line). The point in the pattern where the beat occurs is called the throb or *ictus*. The beat pattern is conducted with the right hand. The patterns for both hands, however, are illustrated so as to assist the teacher in using mirror image when teaching these patterns to the choristers. The "stick-figure" patterns for metre in 2, 3 and 4 are illustrated to simplify the teaching of these patterns to the choristers. (Refer to **Part II**, 5.11 "Getting Children to Watch the Conductor".)

The standard conducting patterns in common metres are illustrated below:

- The **two-beat pattern** involves a strong downbeat, which is followed by a rebound on 2. It is used for music in 2/4, 2/2, moderate or fast moving 6/8 and fast moving 4/8.

Stick-figure   Flowing   Stick-figure   Flowing
pattern   pattern   pattern   pattern

Left Hand   **Right Hand**
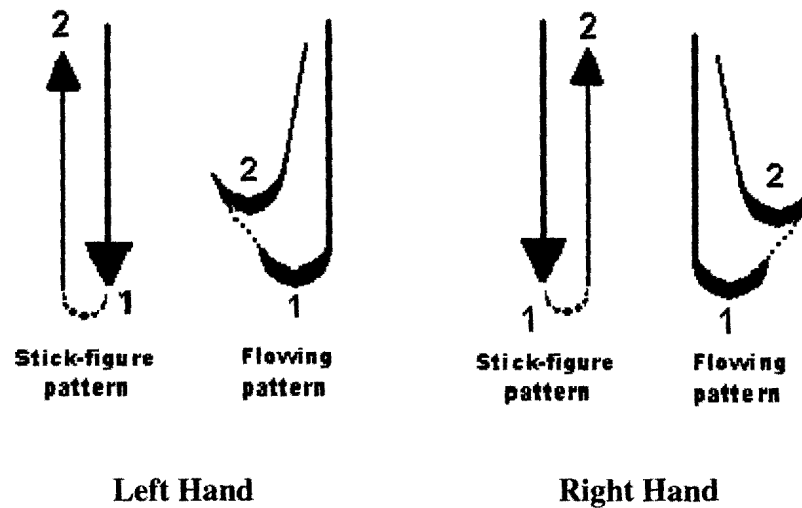
Figure II - 5-2 Conducting a two-beat pattern (both hands)

- The **three-beat pattern** involves a strong downward beat, followed by a weaker beat to the right and a final, light upbeat. (These movements refer specifically to the right hand.) It is used for 3/4, 3/2, 9/8 and *adagio* 3/8 time.

Stick-figure   Flowing
pattern   pattern
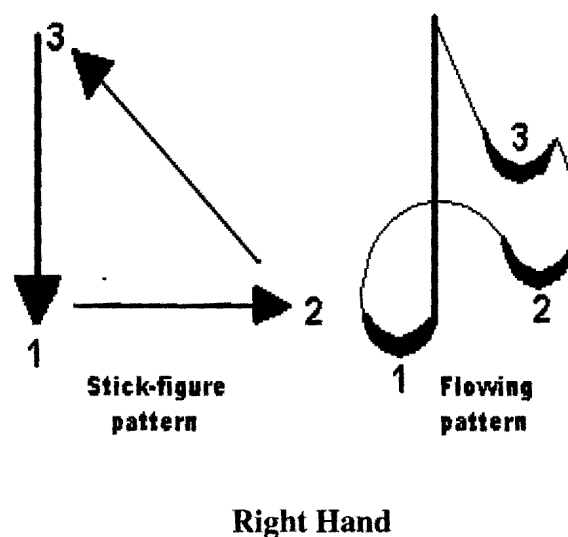
Right Hand

Figure II - 5-3a Conducting a three-beat pattern (right hand)

Stick-figure pattern   **Flowing pattern**
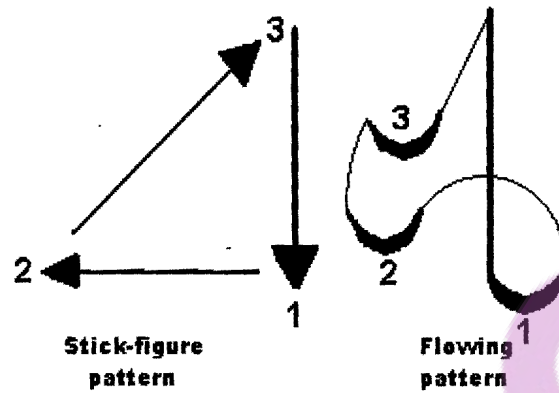
Left Hand

Figure II - 5-3b Conducting a three-beat pattern (left hand)

- The **four-beat pattern** is the most commonly used and is often designated by a **C** for "common time". Beat 1 is a strong downward movement, beat 2 is a weaker movement to the left, beat 3 crosses the mid-point to the right, and 4 is up, to the left, returning to the position where beat 1 started. (These movements refer specifically to the right hand.) The four-beat pattern is used for 4/4, 4/8, 12/8 and *adagio* 2/2 metre.

Stick-figure pattern   **Flowing pattern**
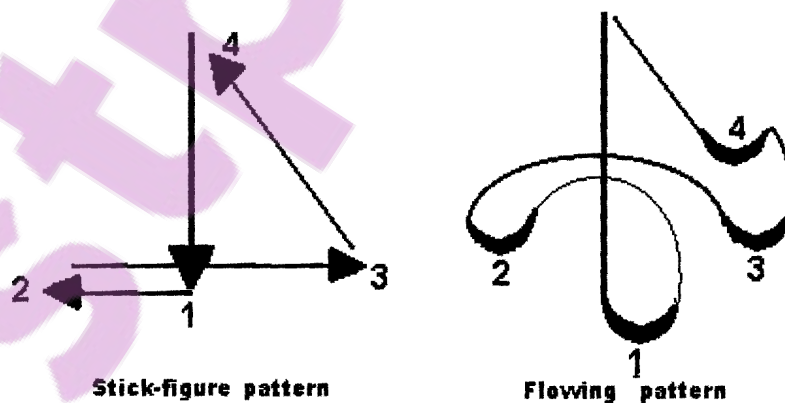
Right Hand

Figure II - 5-4a Conducting a four-beat pattern (right hand)

Stick-figure pattern   Flowing pattern
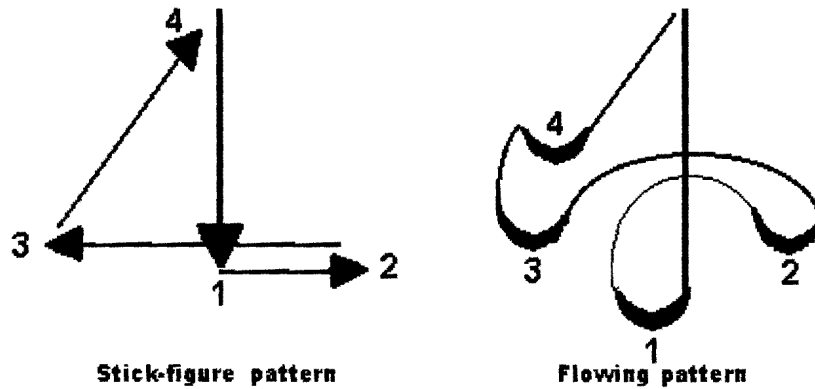
Left Hand

Figure II - 5-4b Conducting a four-beat pattern (left hand)

- The **five-beat pattern** is an a-symmetrical metre and breaks down into either (3+2) or (2+3), depending on the general structure of the music in a bar. In the first example (3+2), the secondary strong beat occurs on 4, whereas in the second example (2+3), the secondary strong beat occurs on 3. The secondary strong beat is executed to the outside, i.e. to the right of the centre line. (These movements refer specifically to the right hand.)

Left Hand   Right Hand
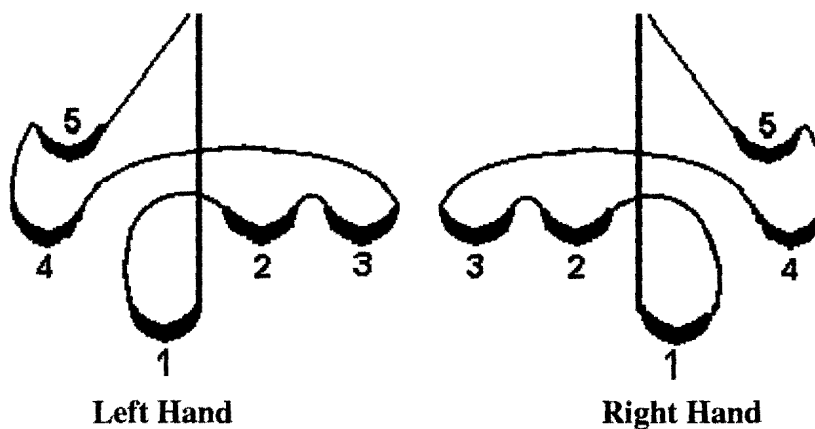
Figure II - 5-5a Conducting a five-beat pattern (3+2) (both hands)

Left Hand   **Right Hand**
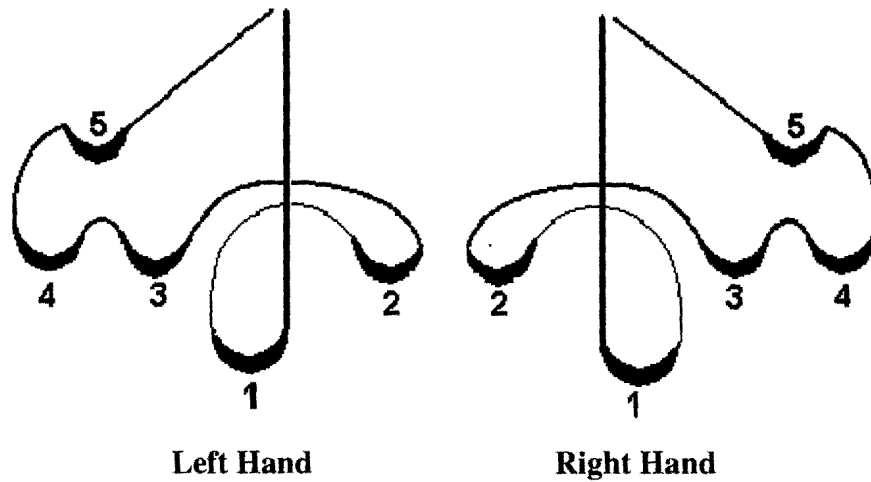
Figure II - 5-5b Conducting a five-beat pattern (2+3) (both hands)

- **Compound duple** (6/8 or 6/4) time is usually conducted in two, unless the music is in a slow tempo, in which case the pattern below should be used. It consists of a strong downward movement; two small movements to the left on beats 2 and 3; a stronger and longer movement to the right (past the mid-point) on the secondary strong beat of 4; a short movement to the right for beat 5; and a final upbeat for 6. (These movements refer specifically to the right hand.)

Left Hand   **Right Hand**
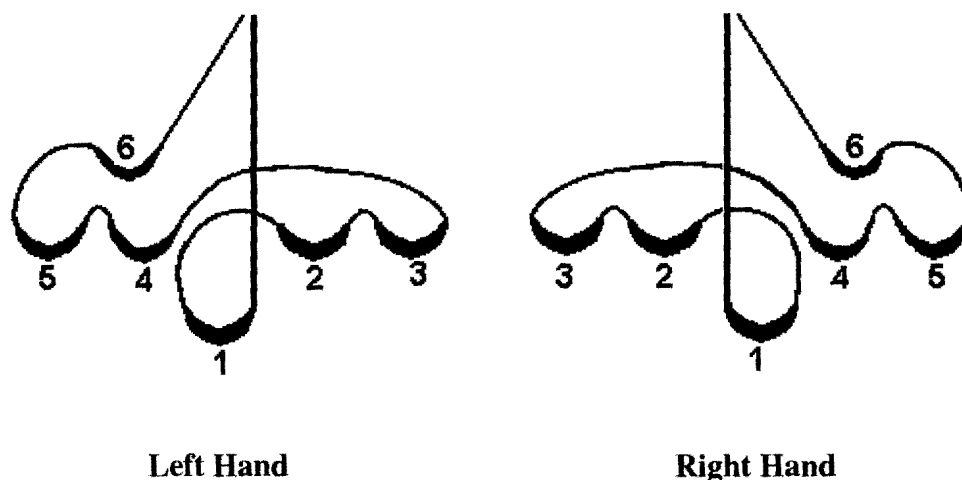
Figure II - 5-6 Conducting a six-beat pattern (both hands)

- Occasionally, a fast duple (2/4) or triple (3/4 or 3/8) metre only requires **one beat** per bar. The beat pattern is then as illustrated below. The pattern is conducted as an elliptical circle. However, should the bars be grouped in fours (as is usually the case), it may prove to be more satisfying to conduct one beat per bar, but using the four-beat pattern.

Right Hand

Figure II - 5-7 Conducting one beat per bar (right hand)

These standard/fundamental conducting patterns may be slightly modified to suit a personal style. They should, however, be executed so that they will not lose directional integrity and will always be clearly identifiable. The mood and style of the selection will most certainly have an effect on the movements, e.g. in a *legato* style, continuous, flowing movements are required, whereas a *staccato* style requires crisp, detached movements. The conductor may deviate from the basic pattern for some special interpretative effect, but should return to the basic pattern after a bar or two.

On the last note or chord, at the conclusion of a section, or the selection itself, the beat-pattern should cease. It is essential, however, that the conductor's hands do not come to a complete standstill in mid-air whilst the final note/chord is still sounding. A gesture that suggests continuous movement should be used, e.g. an expanded horizontal movement or a longer sustained vertical upward gesture. By using an upward/outward movement of the hands, the release is executed at a height that is clearly visible to all.

5.5 Height Level and Size of the Conducting Movements

The height of the conducting movements is, generally, between the shoulders and the waist. If the conducting movements are too high, the choristers' breathing will be influenced detrimentally in that they will resort to shallow, clavicular breathing. It will also cause tenseness in the shoulders and throat area.

There are several aspects and considerations affecting the size of conducting movements. One of these is the **size of the choir**. If it is a large choir, the movements need to be bigger so as to be visible to all the choristers and visa versa; a small choir only requires small movements because they are standing nearer the conductor.

The **tempo** of a selection also influences the size of the conducting patterns. The faster the tempo, the smaller the movements will be. For fast tempi the movements will be crisp, clean and bouncing with less upper-arm movement. In a slow tempo, the movements will generally be larger and more flowing (as if conducting under water).

Dynamics also have a substantial effect on the size and weight of the conducting movements. Generally speaking, the movements become larger and broader when the music is loud, and relatively smaller when the music is soft. Loud dynamics in the music can further be assisted by conducting with greater strength and muscular tension, by holding the chin further down, and moving the left hand up and outward with the palm facing up. Should an extra strong sound be required, the use of two clenched fists (to indicate intensity) may even be employed. This, however, should be used with extreme discretion.

Softness in the music can also be promoted and reflected by holding the head up and relaxed (to suggest lightness) with the left palm facing *down*. The beat will be conducted further away from the body. An exception to this would be when a *diminuendo* or hushed effect is indicated, in which case the hands will move back towards the body with the elbows hugging the torso. It is essential to conduct soft passages with lightness and small movements but at the same time to increase the vitality of the conducting movements to assist the choristers in energising and supporting their singing. Soft passages require greater support in order to

prevent a colourless, dull and boring result, which can lead to flatting. (Refer to **Part II**, 4.2 "Intonation".)

5.6 Using the Left Hand for Cueing and Interpretation

The left hand is used for a variety of expressive purposes. These include shaping and moulding of dynamics, suggesting accents, and indicating various nuances and fluidity of phrases. The left hand should not, as a general rule, duplicate the beat pattern of the right hand. Beginner conductors, however, initially use both hands to learn the conducting movements.

To indicate a louder dynamic, it was previously stated that the right hand should increase the size of the beat pattern; and vice versa, the size of the beat pattern should be decreased to indicate a softer dynamic. (Refer to **Part II**, 5.4 "Standard/Basic Conducting Patterns".) The left hand, however, should be used to supplement or reinforce the dynamics. A crescendo, for instance, may be indicated by slowly lifting the left arm upward and outward with the palm up.

For conducting to be effective, it is crucial that cueing gestures always *precede* the musical event or the specific beat on which the desired response is to take place. One of the most common conducting mistakes is that the cueing gesture takes place too late. If the cueing gesture takes place *on* the beat, it is too late for the choristers to respond. The tempo of the choral work will determine how long in advance the cueing gesture should be given. The cue should include an alerting signal, which will prepare the choristers for their entry and ensure precision of attacks and the required musical interpretation. This generally involves a timely look in the direction of the appropriate vocal section (or person).

There are several effective and accepted ways to give clear cues to the choristers. Sometimes a very slight signal will suffice and at other times a more vigorous movement is required. The head may be used by nodding toward a particular vocal section (or person). The use of facial expressions (like a smile, a wink or the lifting of the eyebrows) can be very effective with subtle entrances. When the entire choir has to be cued, both hands should normally be used.

Uncertain entrances and cut-offs often occur due to the conductor failing to cue the choir effectively. In rehearsal the conducting gestures should be adjusted and practised to rectify the problem. If the choristers were at fault, point out the inaccuracy and rehearse it until the problem has been corrected.

The conductor needs to grab the attention of the choristers for an entrance with a breathing upbeat along with eye contact. A cue given with both eye contact and breath receives a much stronger response. Attacks should be cued with both the preparatory beat of the right hand *and* the left hand. These left hand cues must be prepared. The left hand should be lifted to chest height in anticipation one beat before the entry. The cue is then executed intentionally with a decisive, deliberate movement downward and slightly forward. It may facilitate the cue if the index (or middle) finger and the thumb are held together during the lifting of the hand, and released for the attack on the downward movement.

The left hand may also be employed to improve tone quality. Visual reinforcement for the use of the head voice, for instance, could be executed by poising the left hand in the air, cupped, with the palm down. This suggests a high arch in the roof of the mouth.

5.7 The Preparatory Beat

The preliminary beat that the conductor gives before the choristers start singing is called the *preparatory beat*. This prepares the singers and/or accompanist and it should set the mood and tempo of the work. The preparatory beat is also used for a new section in the music or after a *fermata* that ends in a complete break in sound.

Before giving the preparatory beat, the conductor must assume a self-confident, commanding and authoritative stance. This initial body stance should suggest a purposeful readiness to begin singing and to intensify the choristers' concentration. Stand tall and proud, with the shoulders relaxed, back and down. Extend the arms with the elbows slightly bent, and away from the body. (Refer to **Part II**, 5.1 "Body Posture of the Conductor".)

The position that the conductor assumes when s/he is ready to start conducting, with the arms raised and in position, is referred to as the *conductor's set*. It should be maintained long enough to ensure that all the choristers are giving their undivided attention. Establish rapport with the choristers through eye contact, and do not start until each and every choir member's attention is focussed on you.

Prior to executing the preparatory beat, the conductor must establish a clear idea of the mood and tempo of the music because the preparatory beat must characterise every aspect of the musical entry. Take a moment to mentally construct the mood and tempo (as well as the opening dynamic requirement) *before* the appropriate preparatory movement is executed.

The movement that is used for the preparatory beat is that which is used for the beat that immediately precedes the note on which the music starts. If, for example, a selection starts on the 1st beat in metre in 3, then the preparatory beat will be the upward movement used on the 3rd beat. Alternatively, if a selection starts on the 2nd beat in metre in 4, then the preparatory beat will be the downward movement on the 1st beat. It is important that the preparatory beat is executed with absolute clarity, decisiveness and precision. Note that the preparatory beat involves a *single* beat. It is unacceptable for the conductor to conduct a whole bar, or bars, before the music starts.

In moderate and slower tempi, the preparatory beat also gives the singers the cue to take a synchronised breath and start singing together. In faster tempi, however, the breath inhalation will have to take place *before* the preparatory beat, with the conductor inhaling and at the same time showing with the arms and hands, with a slight swooping movement, down and up. Helmuth Rilling explains it as follows:

> Every preparatory beat should contain the idea of a preparatory breath. Actually, a breath is the best upbeat. Too small a preparatory beat – and no breath – can confuse the ensemble. Prepare with a body gesture and breath which allows the ensemble to breathe with you naturally (Hansen 1997: 52).

5.8 Attacks and Releases

Problematic attacks and releases need to be isolated and carefully rehearsed. Exact pronunciation of attacks and releases should be established. Initial and final consonants need special care. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.9 "Diction".) All choristers should be watching the conductor attentively to ensure precision of attacks and releases. (Refer to **Part I**, 3.4 "Choral Unit Standard: Diction".) For greater precision in attacks, the choral conductor should breathe with the choristers. This breath should be taken with the mouth shaped in the form of the vowel on which they will enter. This is referred to as "vowel breathing". The conductor thus mirrors the correct breathing for the choristers.

A tidy ending in any choral selection is important because it completes and rounds off the performance and leaves a positive impression in the listener's mind. The movement that the conductor uses for the release should be decisive and clear so that the choristers are not confused in any way.

The final note or chord should not normally be "beat out" for the full duration. Only the first beat is given and the rest is then sustained on the rebound until *both* hands give the release signal. There are obviously many possible effective ways and signals that may be used to end off a music selection. The following procedure for the release is a mere suggestion. On the final note/chord, the first beat is conducted and the hands should then move away from the body in a continual, slow, pulling and gradual upward direction, and continue to move for the duration of the note/chord.

The upward rising movement of the hands intensifies the choristers' focus which is essential for maintaining the pitch and support/vitality of the tone right to the end. The release signal is then executed by a small preparatory upward movement, which precedes the decisive downward movement for the release. The style, velocity, dynamics and mood of the music will determine the size of the release movement. Generally, music that is soft and subdued requires a small release movement, whereas the release for loud, dramatic music necessitates a larger movement. The size of the choir will also have an influence on the size of the release movement. To ensure greater precision in the release, the conductor forms the consonant with

the mouth. The following diagram (Figure **II** - 5-8a) illustrates the movement of the right hand for the release signal.
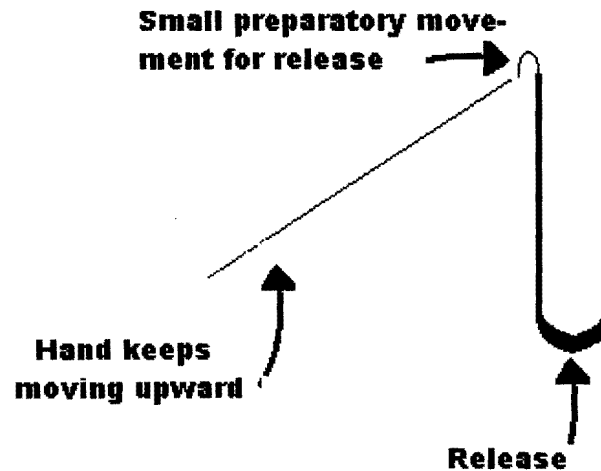
Figure II - 5-8a Release signal for a voiceless consonant (right hand)

The release action, above, is suitable for words that end with a vowel or a voiceless (unpitched) consonant, e.g. *p, h, s, k* and *t*. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.9.4 "Voiceless and Voiced Consonants".) A slightly altered release action is required for words ending with a voiced (pitched/tuned) consonant, e.g. *m, n, ng, l, r* and *z*. This involves the thumb and forefinger-tip touching momentarily at the conclusion of the rebound movement, which will signal the termination of sound altogether. This release action is illustrated in Figure **II** - 5-8b, below. The rebound movement must be slower than would be the case for a voiceless consonant.
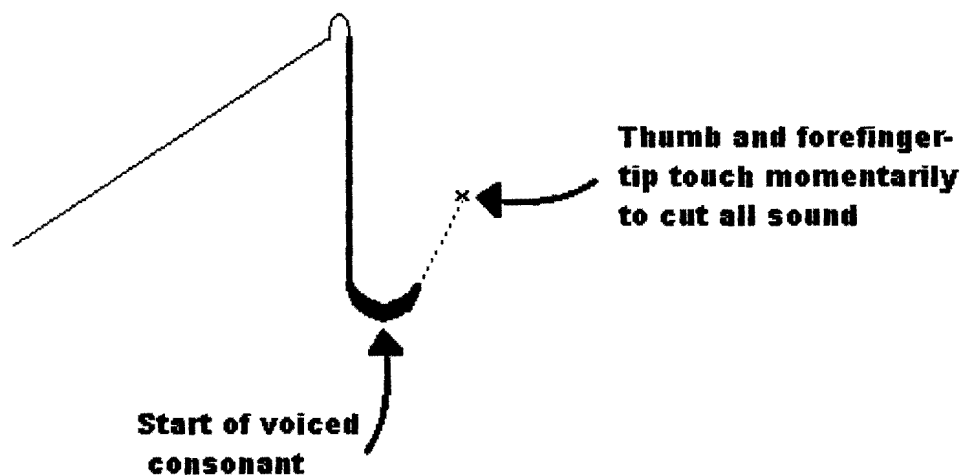
Figure II - 5-8b Release signal for a voiced consonant (right hand)

5.9 Rehearsal and Performance Gestures Differ

In performance, dramatic and excessive gesticulation is undesirable. The conducting gestures should rather be expressive, controlled and concise. Smaller movements that are executed with vitality, compel the choristers to watch the conductor more intently. It is important to remember that the conducting gestures are there for the choristers' benefit and not for the audience. The conductor's movements should not distract the audience's attention from the beauty of the music itself. The choristers should be able to interpret the gestures and facial expressions of the conductor and these should be consistent to ensure an optimum response from the children.

In performance, the conductor should be standing comfortably and remain in the same place and not walk around in front of the choir. (In African choirs the conductor often starts off the performance by standing in front of the choir and then joins the choristers by moving away to the side during the performance. Towards the end the conductor then moves back to the front of the choir to conclude the selection.) The distance from the front row of the choir should be sufficient for the conductor to see all the choristers at either end of the rows. The conducting movements/gestures in performance should only be executed by the upper body. From the waist down, the body should generally be kept still. The knees may not bob up and down to the beat of the music, and there should be no foot tapping either.

5.10 *Fermatas*

A *fermata* indicates a pause (or hold) on a specific note (or chord) for an indefinite length of time. It is used to intensify or increase the emotional qualities of the music and it adds suspense. The exact duration of a *fermata* will depend on the tempo, style and inherent dramatic qualities of the music. The ability to determine exactly how long to hold the *fermata* requires musical maturity and experience. Inexperienced conductors are, generally, hesitant to hold it long enough.

The suspension of the steady beat pattern and its resumption after the *fermata*, requires clear conducting gestures if precision in performance is to be attained. A slight *ritardando* usually

precedes a *fermata*. This requires a slowing down of the conducting pattern, which may be implemented by enlarging the beat pattern slightly. This will gain the attention of the choristers and prepare them for the *fermata*.

While holding the *fermata*, the conductor's hands should not remain stationary in mid-air, but rather continue to move slowly upward and outward (until the release) because the musical tone moves and is not static. This will assist the choristers in maintaining an even, steady flow of breath to support the tone.

The release for the *fermata* may be handled in two different ways, depending on the interpretative effect that follows. If there is to be a complete break in sound after the *fermata*, a release signal is given, which flows into the preparatory beat (accompanied by a breath inhalation) for the next note. (Refer to **Part II**, 5.7 "The Preparatory Beat", and 5.8 "Attacks and Releases".)

If the tone is to be carried over to the succeeding phrase without a break in the flow of breath, then one could treat the *fermata* as a kind of *ritardando* on that particular note or chord. The beat pattern is kept intact, but with a longer and slower "pull" on the *fermata*. After the *fermata*, the conductor merely proceeds with the beat pattern.

5.11 Getting Children to Watch the Conductor

It is a difficult and ongoing task to get the choristers to constantly watch the conductor. The skill of understanding the conductor has to be taught to the children. The most commonly used conducting gestures need to be explained:

- The beat pattern is conducted with the conductor's right hand;
- Louder dynamics are indicated by the use of larger movements and softer dynamics by smaller movements; and
- Release signals.

Teach the basic conducting patterns for metre in two, three and four to the choristers. If they know the patterns, they will understand better and will therefore be better able to follow. Tell

Chapter 6

VOCAL PEDAGOGY AND MUSICIANSHIP SKILLS

6.1 The Vocal Instrument

Vocal pedagogy, the teaching of singing, is vitally important to a successful choral programme. Singing is a complex process that involves the whole body, as well as the mind, and the choral teacher needs to know how the vocal/singing mechanism works. Choral educators aim to develop good basic vocal skills in all the choristers and this can only be achieved if they have a clear understanding of the basic structure, function and strategies of the vocal instrument.

It is not necessary to burden the choristers in the Foundation phase with great detail about the anatomy and physiology of the vocal mechanism. The choristers produce good choral tone at this stage mostly as a result of imitating and following the choral educator's instruction and modelling in rehearsal. It is sufficient to ensure that the choristers are singing with a relaxed, dropped jaw, with the lips slightly flared (like the bell of a trumpet). (Refer to Figure **II - 6-1**, below.)
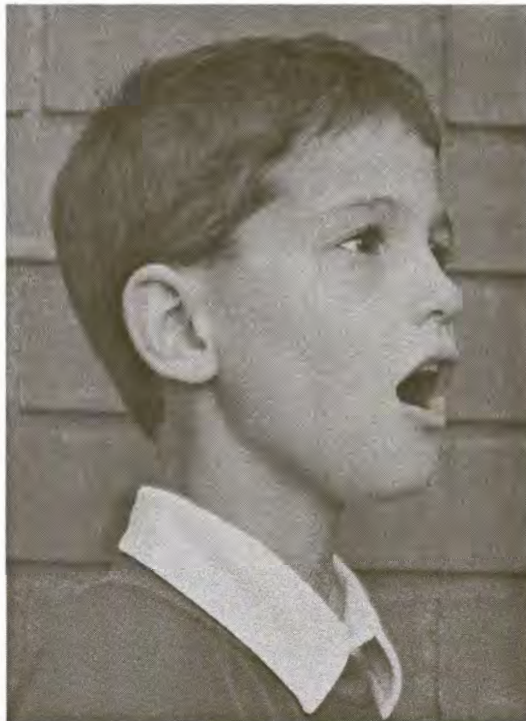
Figure II - 6-1 Vertical mouth position with the lips slightly flared (vocal "embouchure")

This mouth position for singing is occasionally referred to as vocal "embouchure" (Jordanoff & Page 1994: 8).

In the Intermediate phase the choristers should be better informed about the physiological aspects of singing and the vocal mechanism. The vocal instrument includes those parts of the body with which we breathe, the larynx (or voice box) and the resonators.

Musical sounds are produced in the following way:

- From the lungs a stream of air flows up the trachea (wind pipe) and passes between the vocal folds (or cords), which in turn causes them to vibrate.
- This vibration creates a sound, which has pitch.
- For the pitch to have intensity and quality, the sound waves (which have been caused by the vibration of the vocal folds) depend on resonating space. (Refer to Figure **II** - 6-2, below.)
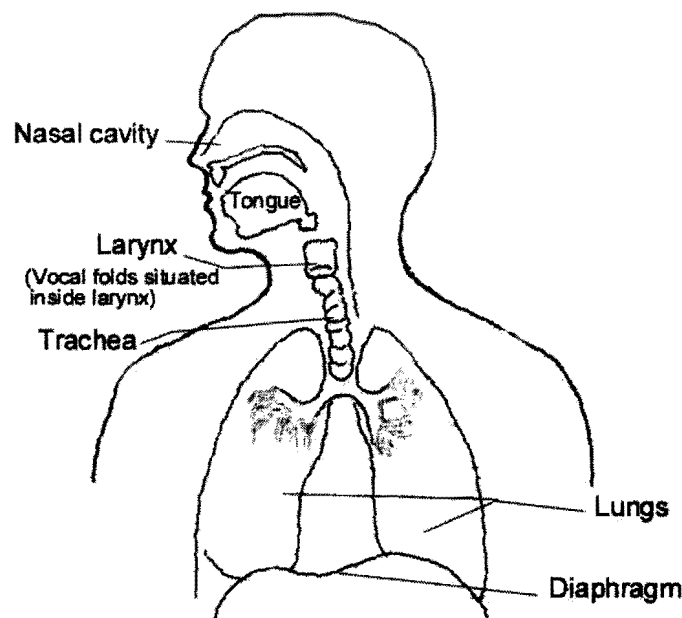
Figure II - 6-2 The vocal instrument

Without the breath as power source, the vocal folds cannot vibrate and no sound is possible. The lungs can thus be seen as the sound generator. When we breathe in correctly, the diaphragm moves down and out and the lungs are filled with air. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.4 "Breath Management".)

The larynx (or Adam's apple) is the hard area, which can be seen and felt in the throat, at the top of the trachea (wind pipe). The two vocal folds are situated inside the larynx and they are the origin of phonation (tone or sound production) for both singing and speaking. The rise and fall of the pitch depends upon the length, tension and thickness of the vocal folds and how fast they vibrate. To produce a high pitch, the folds become tenser, thinner and they vibrate faster. In order to produce a low pitch, the folds become less tense, thicker and they vibrate more slowly. This can be compared to plucking a streched elastic band; when it is taut, it produces a higher tone than plucking it when it is slacker.

The major resonators of the human voice are in the mouth, the pharynx and nasal cavity. The pharynx refers to the cavity above the larynx that extends upward behind the mouth and the nose. (Refer to Figure II - 6-5, "Resonance areas", below.) The shape/size and condition of the resonance cavities determine the tone colour (timbre). The position of the jaw and the movement of the tongue can modify the *shape/size* of these resonators. The *condition* of the resonating cavities refers to the healthy state, or the congestion from an infection or allergic reaction. A large, relaxed resonating space within the mouth and the pharynx area is conducive to good singing. Hence the oft repeated instruction: "sing with a relaxed, open throat". This is obtained by a relaxed, dropped jaw, the tongue in a forward, relaxed position (the tip of the tongue lightly resting at the base of the lower front teeth) and the soft palate slightly raised. (Refer to Figure II - 6-3, below.)
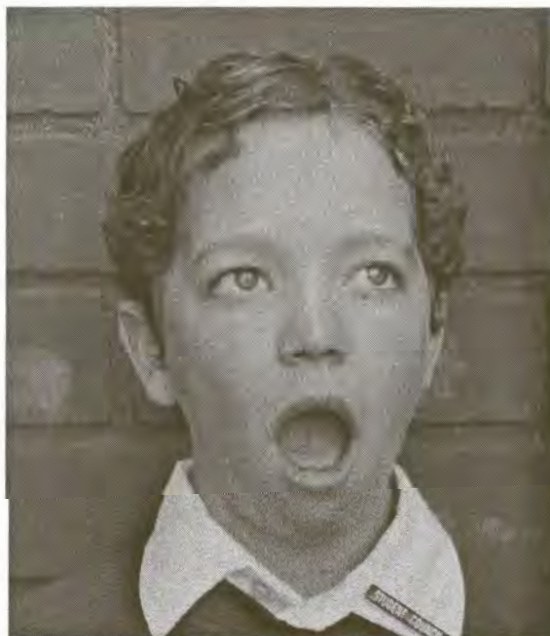
Figure II - 6-3 Tongue resting lightly at the base of the lower front teeth

Any rigidity will cause constriction, which will minimise the vocal tract's resonating space. (Refer to Figure **II** - 6-4, below.)

Figure II - 6-4 Incorrect pulling back of the tongue

Singing or speaking is not complete without articulation. The articulators are the lips, teeth, tongue and palate. They are used to articulate the consonants, resulting in words being formed. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.9 "Diction".)

The act of singing requires greater exertion from the voice than does normal speech and the voice, therefore, has to be conditioned through training, to meet the demand. One could compare this to running, which necessitates greater exertion from the body than walking. To attain singing success, one has to practise and train extensively in order to meet the additional demand on the vocal mechanism and the body.

6.2 Choral Tone Quality

The choral educator should, first of all, have a mental concept of an ideal choral soundscape, tone quality or aural image, and then aim to re-create this in the choir. This process is a

perpetual quest. One stands to gain immensely by listening to other choirs performing both on recordings and in live performances.

The treble voice children's choir should have a distinct buoyancy and ethereal or uniquely clear, pure and resonant choral tone quality. The children are not yet able to produce a big sound and one therefore aims for quality of tone. The goal is a light, forward sound that is full of energy, vitality and personality. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.7 "The Importance of Head Voice".) There should be a total absence of harsh nasality or muffled throatiness. Forced singing, in an attempt to create a big sound, should be avoided at all costs because the sound becomes strident, rough and harsh. As the child grows, the vocal tract becomes longer and the quantity/volume of sound (depth and resonance) will increase.

The children must constantly think of singing with true beauty of tone. This is especially necessary when they are singing loudly. They should never sing louder than that which is beautiful. As they sing an ascending line, they should always try to reduce the volume of sound as they ascend into the top of their range. This should help to avoid a pinched, strident, tense or screeching tone.

A good choral tone quality in a children's choir is promoted, for the most part, by the following components:
- correct singing posture;
- proper breath management;
- tall/vertical, uniform vowel colours (refer to **Part II**, 6.8 "Italian Basic Pure Vowels, Uniform Vowel Colours and Vowel Modification");
- optimum use of resonating cavities;
- use of the head voice or register (light mechanism) (refer to **Part II**, 6.6 "Children's Vocal Ranges and Registers", and 6.7 "The Importance of Head Voice");
- the ability to use the voice with great agility and flexibility; and
- clear diction.

The resonating cavities are important for a beautiful tone. The pharynx (throat) and the mouth are the major resonators of the voice, but they are not the only ones. The chest, larynx, nasal cavity and sinuses also contribute to vocal resonance. Make the choristers aware of these

resonating cavities by asking them to hum on *"n"* or *"ng"* and to feel the vibration by placing the hand or fingers on the cheeks, bridge of the nose and the area of the larynx (Adam's apple) in the throat.

The pharynx is the cavity above the larynx and extends further up behind the mouth and the nasal cavity. There are thus three pharyngeal areas:

- the laryngo-pharynx (the area above the larynx, below the tongue),
- the oro-pharynx (the area behind the mouth and tongue), and
- the naso-pharynx (the area behind the nasal cavity, above the soft palate).

(Refer to Figure **II** - 6-5, "Resonance areas", below.)
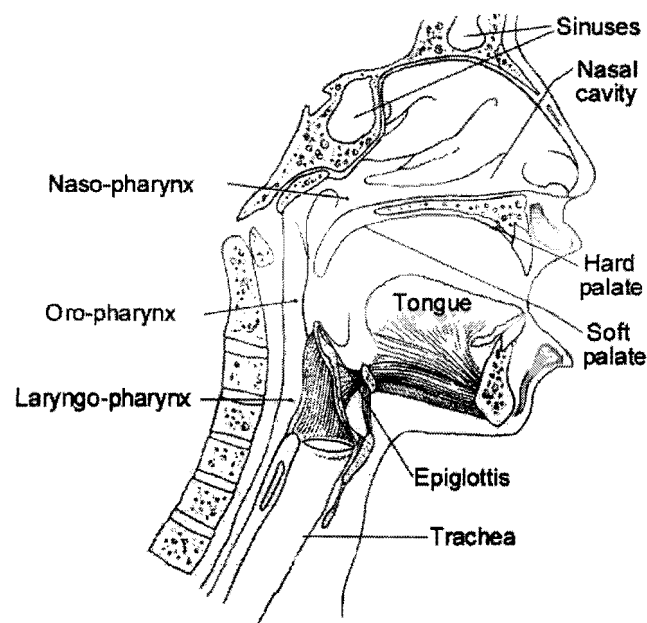
Figure II - 6-5 Resonance areas

6.3 Correct Singing Posture

The children need to be made aware of the fact that a correct body posture is absolutely essential for good breath management and hence, beautiful singing. Tell and show them to stand tall, proud and alert. The stance should be erect, but not "military-style" rigid. The entire body must be free and relaxed.

The feet should be comfortably (approximately shoulder width) apart, with one foot slightly ahead of the other and the weight balanced on both feet. The body weight should be distributed slightly forward, like a person who is "ready for action". Another way of describing this to the choristers, is to tell them that "each chorister must have ten toes touching the floor" (this is to ensure that the weight is on the front part of the feet).

The knees must not be locked, but should be relaxed. Locking the knees impedes the blood flow and may cause people to faint. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.13 "Maintaining Vocal Health".) The chest must be held high (the sternum lifted) with the spinal column stretched. (Another way of expressing this, is to tell the choristers that *the rib cage should be lifted*.) Ask the choristers to stand "tall and proud". This should not be accompanied by any tension but should rather suggest a feeling of spaciousness ("tallness") in the midriff area. The shoulders have to be in a natural position, i.e. down, back and relaxed. The arms hang loosely and relaxed at the sides. (Refer to Figures **II** - 6-6 and **II** - 6-7, below, for the correct singing posture.)

Figure II - 6-6 Correct posture for singing when standing (front view)

Figure II - 6-7 Correct posture for singing when standing (side view)

The head should be vertically aligned with the spine, and not tilted back. The neck and shoulder area must be very relaxed. The chin may not project out and up, but the head should be tilted ever so slightly forward so that the chin is a little down (but not tucked in). A chin that projects, is an indication of undesirable vocal tension. (Refer to Figure **II - 6-8**, below.)

Figure II - 6-8 Undesirable tension in the throat area, with the chin jutting out and up

Overall, the body posture has to look poised, confident, intelligent, alert, energetic, buoyant and ready for action like an athlete anticipating the gunshot for the race. The choral educator must constantly model and monitor the correct body posture for singing and insist on everybody maintaining it while singing.

The following procedure may be used to promote good posture for singing. Ask the choristers to stand as if a string is attached from the crown of the head to the ceiling. This string is holding the head up like that of a marionette. Pull the imaginary string up and tell them that the string will break if the head or body should slouch or sag and that we want to maintain this posture.

Another procedure is to ask the choristers to stand with their back against the wall. The head, the shoulders, the small of the back and the heels should also touch the wall. Some choristers may have to move the head slightly away from the wall to avoid tenseness in the neck area. Step away from the wall and maintain this erect posture without any rigidity or tenseness.

When the choristers are sitting down, they should sit on the front half of the chair with the feet flat on the floor, maintaining the same erect position from the waist up. The legs should not cross at the knees or ankles. (Refer to Figure **II - 6-9a**, below.) It is important to allow the choristers to sit back and relax in the chairs between periods of singing.

The music folder should be held so that the chorister can comfortably see the conductor without lifting the head. The folder should never touch the body. Place one hand under the open music folder and the other hand on top to turn the pages and control the angle and height. The chorister should not hold the folder so high that it blocks the face. If the music is held too high, the audience and the conductor cannot see the mouth and face and the sound is cut off to some extent. Should the music folder be held too low, the correct singing posture cannot be maintained because the head is tilted down. The chorister will then be less inclined to watch the conductor because it involves too much effort to move the head up and down. In this case the sound will be directed towards the floor, instead of towards the audience and the audience will see the top of the singer's head instead of the face and the eyes. Should the chorister be sitting down, s/he must hold the folder *up and out* so that it does not touch the lap.

Figure II - 6-9a Correct posture for singing when sitting

Figure II - 6-9b Slouching, incorrect posture for singing when sitting

Good singing posture does not only *feel* good, it also *looks* good. A buoyant, vitalised singing posture not only ensures beautiful tone, but also contributes to general mental alertness and prevents the body from tiring too soon. Choristers will slump from time to time and they need to be constantly reminded about maintaining a good posture when singing. (Obviously, the teacher needs to model a good posture at all times.) Draw the choristers' attention to the fact that good posture is associated with self-confidence and success; two attributes much sought after in the corporate world.

6.4   Breath Management

Correct breath management is fundamental to good choral tone. The choristers in the Foundation phase should not be burdened with long explanations of anatomy and the physiological process of the breathing mechanism. At this stage the learning takes place mostly through imitating the example, and following the instructions of the choral teacher. In the Intermediate phase, however, the anatomy and function of the breathing process needs to be explained. (Refer to **Part I**, 3.5 "Choral Unit Standard: Voice/Tone Production", General Outcomes number 4.)

The muscles of the upper chest and shoulders should be relaxed to prevent tension of the neck muscles around the larynx. The muscles around the mid-section of the body, i.e. the diaphragm, abdominal and inter-costal muscles, are the primary muscles used for correct breathing in singing. The exhaled air/breath has to be supported and controlled to ensure a steady and continuous flow.

When we sing, there are three different types of breathing that are employed:
- deep and full diaphragmatic-abdominal breathing;
- catch (or snatch) breathing; and
- staggered breathing.

These will now be discussed under separate headings.

6.4.1 Deep and Full Diaphragmatic-Abdominal Breathing

The diaphragm is dome-shaped and is situated under the lungs. One becomes aware of its action by placing the hand horizontally under the breastbone and giving a few sharp puffs in succession on "ch", "ph" or "sh". Alternatively, one could ask the children to pant like a dog for a few seconds.

When one breathes in, the diaphragm moves downward, allowing the air to flow into the lungs. The abdominal muscles relax and the waist area expands. For singing we inhale rapidly and exhale slowly and evenly. Breathing out, the abdominal muscles gradually contract while the diaphragm slowly relaxes and pushes up against the lungs, causing the air to flow out. (Refer to Figure **II** - 6-10, below.)
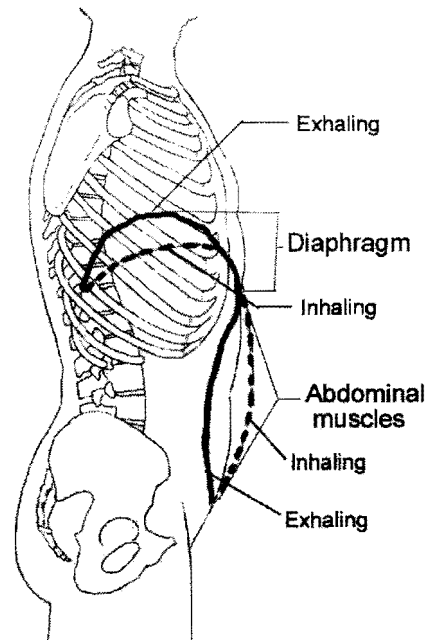
Figure II - 6-10 Position of the diaphragm when inhaling and exhaling

Before we can start singing, a deep breath has to be taken. Proper breath management for singing is essential for a well-supported, resonant tone that rings out. The children are inclined to breathe in the upper chest when they are singing. They often do not attain the deep and full diaphragmatic-abdominal breathing necessary for good support in singing. Shallow or clavicular (collar bone) breathing is evident when a child lifts the shoulders while inhaling. This must be corrected. Refrain from asking choristers to

take a "big" breath as this may result in clavicular breathing. Rather use the terms "deep breath" or "full breath".

Tell the children that they need to fill their lungs with air all the way from the bottom up. One does not want to use only the upper part of the lungs. In teaching children in the Foundation phase to breathe correctly, one could use the analogy of having to inflate a tube around the waist (belt area) when they inhale. Ask the children to stand tall and to imagine that they are inhaling through their belly-buttons. Should they place their hands around their waist, they will feel the tube being inflated. This will promote the desired effect of low breathing as opposed to shallow, upper chest or clavicular breathing which can lead to muscular tension in the throat area. Remind the choristers that you do not want to hear them taking a breath.

In the Intermediate phase, ask the choristers to bend over from the waist with their hands around the waist. They should be able to feel the expansion of the abdomen and lower back areas during inhalation. Another way of making the choristers aware of low, abdominal breathing is to ask them to lie down on the floor, on their backs, with their hands placed horizontally just above their waists. Their shoulders are relaxed and it is impossible to slouch or to raise the shoulders when they inhale. If they take a deep breath, they will feel the expansion around the waist and abdominal area. They then breathe out slowly on a long, unbroken "ph" or "ss" sound, to the count of 10. Repeat this a few times and increase the count by 5 every time, taking it up to 25 or 30. Alternatively, chant the words of a well-known song or rhyme on one pitch.

When the pupils come to the choral rehearsal, their minds are pre-occupied with a plethora of incidents, commitments and problems that fill their (busy) lives. Before they can start singing, they need to warm up some muscles and clear their minds so that they can focus on musical learning. Any choral warm-up exercise that one selects should have a clear and specific purpose.

In order to produce a focussed, quiet atmosphere that is conducive to work and to attain better abdominal, low breathing, ask the choristers to spread out in the room. They must find sufficient space, at least an arm's length apart, so that they will not touch

each other when they raise their arms. Remind them to stand tall, with the feet slightly apart and the arms hanging loosely next to their sides. Ask them to take a deep breath in through the nose and mouth *without* making a sound, like at the beginning of a yawn. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.7 "The Importance of Head Voice".) At the same time, they raise their arms (sideways), over their heads, while you slowly count four. (The raising of the arms will prevent undesirable lifting of the shoulders.) Hold the breath for four counts while the arms are held above the head with the thumbs or hands linked. Release the hands and slowly exhale to a long, even "ph" or "ss" for eight counts whilst the arms are slowly lowered to the sides, keeping them straight and extended. Do this exercise four times. Remember to stand tall and proud with the shoulders back and relaxed and keeping the sternum (chest bone) high when they exhale; i.e. do not let the chest/rib cage collapse during the exhaling process. Nobody may talk and everybody strives to clear his or her mind of all extraneous clutter and to focus on the breathing exercise. The choristers are warming-up, both physically and mentally.

When we sing, we need to learn to support a consistent, energised flow of air in order to sustain phrases and to vary the intensity of the tone. In other words, the breath must be *controlled* as it is exhaled. To practise this, ask the children to blow the air slowly and steadily onto their hand, which is held up in front of the face, about 15cm away. We ask the choristers to blow onto their hand in order to *feel* the air as it is exhaled.

Deep breathing must become a habit if the choristers are to reach their full vocal potential. The choral teacher should constantly work on correct breathing and it may take a while before every choir member masters the technique. The choral teacher's correct breathing needs to set a good example for the choristers. Furthermore, they need constant, gentle reminders about correct breathing measures.

6.4.2 Catch (or Snatch) Breathing

When there is not enough time to take a deep breath, and there is a need to continue the vocal line without a definite break, the singer will have to "snatch" a breath. This involves a quick, light, partial breath being taken.

6.4.3 Staggered Breathing

When a phrase in choral singing is too long to sing with a single breath, a special technique, *staggered breathing*, can be employed. Staggered breathing is also occasionally referred to as "choral breathing". It is advisable to introduce staggered-breathing only in the Intermediate phase.

Staggered breathing involves the choristers breathing in turn and catching a quick new breath before running low on breath supply. Each chorister breathes at a different time so as not to interrupt the flow of the phrase. This should be done without any audible inhalation. The singer will take a quick snatch breath, preferably on a vowel sound. The mouth stays in the same position, during inhalation, and the singing comes back in on the same vowel that was left fleetingly. It is important to come back in softly, so as not to disturb the musical line. The listener should not be able to detect when a particular chorister is taking a breath. Remind the choristers that the idea is not to breathe when one's neighbour is breathing and not to interrupt the flow of the musical phrase. The tone should not become harsh or strained and the volume should remain even.

6.5   Resonance

Children often sing as if they have "lockjaw". They do not even realise that they are singing with their jaws tense/tight and their mouths relatively closed, resulting in a thin, shallow and insipid sound. Beautiful singing requires optimum resonance and we aim to expand and open the resonators as much as possible. The following procedures will promote greater resonance:

- Relax and loosely drop the lower jaw.
- The lips and facial muscles should be relaxed. The lips must never be spread or drawn back but rather be slightly flared, similar to the bell of a trumpet. (Refer to Figure **II** - 6-1, above.)
- Arch or lift the soft palate.

- The tongue should lie relaxed and comfortably low; not be pulled back and humped up in the back of the mouth, diminishing the space in the pharynx. The tip of the tongue should rest lightly at the base of the lower front teeth. (Refer to Figure **II** - 6-3, above.)
- There must be no undue constriction of the swallowing muscles.

These measures will enlarge the resonating space inside the mouth and result in an open, relaxed throat, which will enhance the tone.

Under no circumstances should the jaw be tense and jutting out; i.e. lifting the chin, thereby stretching and tightening the neck muscles. Tenseness in the throat area adversely affects the tone. (Refer to Figure **II** - 6-8, above.)

The following singing exercise (Example **II** - 6-1, below) may be used to demonstrate how the jaw feels when it is operating correctly and how dramatically the tone improves. Ask the choristers to put their index finger on their chins to ensure that they are dropping the lower jaw, when singing the second syllable, "nah". Should the choristers repeat an exercise by singing it incorrectly and not dropping the lower jaw or arching the soft palate, they will marvel at the dramatic deterioration in the tone. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.8 "Italian Basic Pure Vowels, Uniform Vowel Colours and Vowel Modification".) The exercise is sung to some of the following neutral syllables:

- "moo-nah", "noo-nah", "loo-nah", for the [u] "u" (oo) vowel sound;
- "moh-nah", "noh-nah", "loh-nah", for the [ɔ] "o" (oh) vowel sound;
- "mah-nah", "nah-nah", "lah-nah", for the [ɑ] "a" (ah) vowel sound;
- "meh-nah", "neh-nah", "leh-nah", for the [ɛ] "e" (eh) vowel sound; and
- "mee-nah", "nee-nah", "lee-nah", for the [i] "i" (ee) vowel sound.

The jaw is in its lowest position for the [ɑ] "a" (ah) vowel, which is the most suitable vowel sound for opening up the vocal tract. The exercises are preceded with an *m, n* and *l*, alternatively, to bring the sound upward and forward and not to let it sound back in the throat. The "nah" syllable serves to achieve high, forward focus, and to develop a good head resonance. Repeat the exercise by ascending a semitone every time.

moo - nah   moo - nah   moo - nah   moo - nah   moo - nah

Sing on the following vowels: 1. "U" vowel: moo-nah
                                              noo-nah
                                              loo-nah

                              2. "O" vowel: moh-nah
                                              noh-nah
                                              loh-nah

                              3. "A" vowel: mah-nah
                                              nah-nah
                                              lah-nah

                              4. "E" vowel: meh-nah
                                              neh-nah
                                              leh-nah

                              5. "I" vowel: mee-nah
                                              nee-nah
                                              lee-nah

Example II - 6-1 Exercise to demonstrate how the jaw feels when it is operating correctly and how dramatically the tone improves

The exercises in Examples **II** - 6-2a and **II** - 6-2b, used and recommended by Professor Petru Gräbe (1999), are most useful for promoting resonance:

- When singing the exercise in Example **II** - 6-2a, ensure that the facial muscles are completely relaxed. The skin of the face is thought of as a "mask". The sound is projected into the mask; i.e. the tone is focussed in the frontal resonance chambers. The concept of singing in the mask is most conducive to creating head resonance. The transition from the *m, d,* and *l* to the vowels following these consonants should be very smooth. The vowel sounds should be the basic, pure Italian vowel sounds. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.8 "Italian Basic Pure Vowels, Uniform Vowel Colours and Vowel Modification".) The exercise should be sung *piano*. Repeat the exercise by ascending a semi-tone every time.
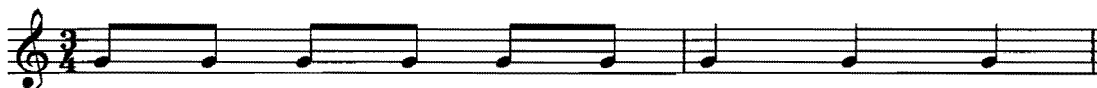
1. Mung	-	e,	mong	-	e,	mang	-	e,	meng,	ming,	ming.
2. Dung	-	e.	dong	-	e,	dang	-	e,	deng,	ding,	ding.
3. Lung	-	e,	long		e,	lang	-	e,	leng,	ling,	ling.

Example II - 6-2a Exercise promoting resonance (Gräbe 1999)

- The exercise in Example **II - 6-2b** should be sung legato with a strong suggestion of a "halo" above the singer's head. The resonance on the first note should "bloom" before gliding to the next note.

1. Mu - o _____ mu - o _____
2. Lu - ah _____ lu - ah _____

Example II - 6-2b Additional exercise for promoting resonance (Gräbe 1999)

The use of an elastic or rubber band, stretched vertically, is a most useful visual aid to represent the dropped, relaxed jaw. (Refer to Figure **II – 6-11a**, below.) Should the elastic/rubber band be stretched in a horizontal direction, and the choristers also follow the example by "spreading" the sound, they will quickly become aware of the shrillness that ensues. (Refer to Figure **II - 6-11b**, below.) (The discussion on obtaining optimum resonance, above, and "Italian Basic Pure Vowels, Uniform Vowel Colours and Vowel Modification" in 6.8, below, inevitably have areas that overlap.)

Figure II - 6-11a Elastic band stretched vertically, representing the dropped, relaxed jaw for tall vowel sounds

Figure II - 6-11b Elastic band stretched horizontally, representing an incorrect "East-West" mouth position

6.6 Children's Vocal Ranges and Registers

The musical vocal range involves all the pitches, from the lowest to the highest, that a person can sing. This musical vocal range expands with age, experience and training. The voice can be divided into three registers:

- chest voice register (also known as the "lower adjustment", "heavy mechanism", or "modal register");

- middle voice register (also known as the "middle adjustment"); and

- head voice register (also known as the "upper adjustment", "light mechanism" or "loft register").

The lower third of the vocal range, the chest voice register, is the speaking register. It is also used for loud singing. This chest voice register is well developed because it receives ample exercise as it is used for speaking. The chest voice is used for singing below **middle C** (Phillips 1992:43). Should the chest voice be used in higher pitches, it sounds coarse and heavy. If the chest voice is consistently over-used, vocal damage and the development of vocal nodules may be the result because of severe vocal fold collision. The chest voice involves the vocal folds coming into contact within their full length and width.

The middle register is used from $c^1 - c^2$, i.e. **middle C** to the c, one octave higher. The head register is used from c^2 and higher (Phillips 1992: 43). This is the vocal register that is the most restful and the one that safeguards against vocal damage. The head voice requires the vocal folds to only make contact within their inner edges. The upper, lighter head voice register needs to be extended and gives us the most beautiful tone quality in children's voices. Many children follow the example of pop singers and use the chest voice exclusively for singing which results in a heavy, lustreless tone quality. The head voice register is developed through singing and needs extra practice. By using vocalises that move downward, the head voice quality is brought further down into the middle register, lightening the weight of the voice as it descends.

A competent singer should pass from one register to the next without a noticeable break or unevenness in the quality. The chest voice and the head voice are blended in the middle register. The following exercises may be used to extend and develop the range upward.

(See Examples **II - 6-3a, II - 6-3b** and **II - 6-3c,** below.) Relax and drop the jaw for the upper register. Repeat each exercise by ascending a semitone every time it is sung. Remember to relax and drop the lower jaw even more on the high note. A larger resonating space is required for higher tones to avoid a pinched and shrill tone.

The moon shines at night.

Example II - 6-3a Exercise to extend and develop the range upward (1ˢᵗ Ex.)

O - pen the door_____ please.

Example II - 6-3b Additional exercise to extend and develop the range upward (2ⁿᵈ Ex.)

We like to laugh_____

Example II - 6-3c Additional exercise to extend and develop the range upward (3ʳᵈ Ex.)

6.7 The Importance of Head Voice

In the Intermediate phase, the head voice needs to be developed to its full potential. The head voice involves the idea of placing the tone in the upper and front part of the head to produce a brilliant, focused, resonant sound. Imagery is the key to success here. Tell the choristers to imagine a column of air floating up the back of the neck on its way to the top of the head. The sound then resonates throughout the top of the entire head. The resonant, high, forward sound is then sent out from the area between the eyes and, like serving a tennis ball across the court, projected to the back of the hall. (Refer to Part II, 6.12 "Use of Imagery".) Throughout this

process, the throat remains relaxed, free and open, while the singers imagine they are producing all sounds above the cheekbones. By telling the children that we want them to imagine "the sound above the cheekbones", we are aiming for an open throat by having an arched soft palate and a relaxed tongue. The term, "singing with space", may also be used.

The following imaginative suggestions may also be helpful in maximising the vocal tract. Ask the choristers to think of an "inner smile" as they are singing. It is important to make them aware of the arched (raised) soft palate and the relaxed, dropped jaw and to sustain this spacious quality while they are singing.

A similar idea would be to try a wide-eyed, open-mouthed, pleasantly surprised "ah". As they are doing this, draw their attention to the idea of trying to raise or lift the upper back molars while inhaling. Tell the choristers to concentrate on this lifting sensation and to maintain the feeling of space in the throat and mouth.

Another analogy that may be employed in teaching the concept of singing with space is to have the choristers inhale the smell of a fragrant flower. Constantly remind them to concentrate on the physical sensation of the arched soft palate that occurs in the mouth and throat and to maintain this free and open feeling while they are singing.

Similar to this, would be to ask the choristers to inhale like at the beginning of a yawn. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.4.1 "Deep and Full Diaphragmatic-Abdominal Breathing".) A yawn arches (raises) the soft palate and maximises the space in the pharynx. Tell them to maintain this open-throat, yawning sensation as they sing. This is coupled with the feeling of the dropped jaw. Watch their cheekbones lift and the nostrils flare ever so slightly.

6.8 Italian Basic Pure Vowels, Uniform Vowel Colours and Vowel Modification

The five basic pure vowel sounds in Italian each has a single sound, i.e. there are no diphthongs or mixture of sounds. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.9.5 "Diphthongs and Triphthongs", below.) In Table **II - 6-1**, below, the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols are given, together with simplified phonetic spelling and English equivalents. A knowledge of the International Phonetic Alphabet will be useful to the choral educator in establishing exact

pronunciations. Choristers in the Intermediate phase need to know the basic vowel sounds.

IPA	English Equivalent	Simplified Phonetic Spelling
[u]	"u" is pronounced long as in tr*ue*, thr*ough*, y*ou*, d*o*, wh*o*, etc.	(oo)
[ɔ]	"o" is pronounced long as in f*or*, gl*o*ry, m*o*re, l*aw*, *a*ll, etc.	(oh)
[ɑ]	"a" is pronounced long as in f*a*ther, *a*rmy, f*ar*, h*ea*rt, etc	(ah)
[ɛ]	"e" is pronounced short as in *e*ducate, *e*nter, *e*ver, *e*nd, etc.	(eh)
[i]	"i" is pronounced long as in *ea*t, gl*ee*, fr*ee*, gr*ee*n, f*ee*t, etc.	(ee)

Table II – 6-1 Italian basic pure vowels

One of the most important aspects of a good choral tone is a homogeneous sound. Uniform vowel formation is a vital contributing factor in obtaining this sought after sound. The vowels carry the choral sound and we aim for tall, vertical vowels. Most choristers do not realise that we need more space in the mouth and throat when we sing, than when we talk. They sing with their mouths in a horizontal (East-West) position as in Figure **II - 6-12a**, below. (Also refer to Figure **II - 6-11b**, above.) This causes the soft palate to drop, which in turn causes a nasal tone. The vowels then have an excessively strident and shallow sound because there is not sufficient space in the mouth and throat for resonant tall, rounded vowels.

Figure II - 6-12a Horizontal, East-West,
mouth position

Figure II - 6-12b Vertical, North-South,
mouth position

Resonating, tall vowels are achieved by relaxing and dropping the lower jaw and having the mouth in a vertical, North-South, position as in Figure **II -6-12b**, above. (Also refer to Figure **II - 6-11a**, above.) The soft palate lifts and this enlarges the resonating space in the mouth and throat. The result is a warm, resonating and mature sound with vitality. One should constantly strive for this vertical positioning of vowels. To assist choristers with the tall, vertical

positioning of vowels, make sure that the lips are slightly flared and not spread in a horizontal position. Ask them to relax and drop the jaw and do one of the following:

• Place the index fingers gently on the cheeks, next to the corners of the mouth. (Refer to Figure **II** - 6-13a, below.) Relax the jaw and tongue as much as possible.
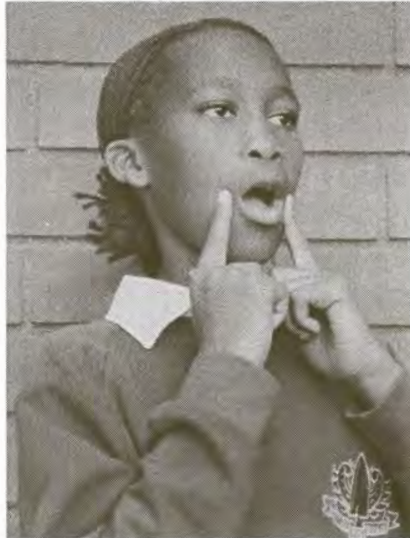
Figure II - 6-13a Index fingers gently at the corners of the mouth, promoting a vertical mouth position for tall vowels

• Place two fingers on the cheeks and ever so slightly press the corners of the mouth in. (Refer to Figure **II** - 6-13a, below.)

Figure II - 6-13b Two fingers on cheeks, promoting a vertical mouth position for tall vowels

- Gently place the fists on the cheeks with the knuckles resting under the cheekbones promoting a vertical mouth position for tall vowels. (Refer to Figure **II** - 6-13c, below.)

Figure II - 6-13c Fists on cheeks, promoting a vertical mouth position for tall vowels

- Use one hand with the fingers and thumb on either side of the mouth and the palm of the hand holding the chin. (Refer to Figure **II** - 6-13d, below.)

Figure II - 6-13d One hand, with fingers and thumb on either side of the mouth, promoting a vertical mouth position for tall vowels

Vowel sounds vary in colour from dark to bright. The darkest vowel sound, [u] "u" (oo), is the one that is produced furthest back in the mouth area. The [ɔ] "o" (oh) originates from a position slightly more forward in the mouth. The jaw is at its lowest and the tongue most relaxed on the [ɑ] "a" (ah) vowel, which is formed in the roof area of the mouth. The [ɛ]□ "e" (eh) vowel sound is formed more forward in the mouth. The brightest vowel sound, [i] □"i" (ee), is formed in the front part of the mouth. Hence, the dome-like illustration in Figure **II -** 6-14, representing the mouth opening from the inside, with the [u] "u" (oo) in the back of the mouth area and the [i] "i" (ee) closer to the lips.
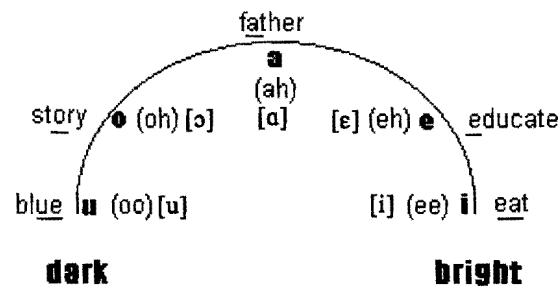
Figure II - 6-14 Dark to bright vowel sounds

This could be simplified for the choristers by using physical metaphor. Ask the choristers to hold a hand up with the palm facing down and fingers curved (forming a dome) so that the hand represents the roof of the mouth. The [u] "u" (oo) vowel sound will fall at the wrist, the [ɑ] "a" (ah) at the highest point of the hand and the [i] "i" (ee) vowel sound occurs at the finger tips. Allow the choristers to feel the progression of the placement of the vowels from the back of the mouth to the front, at the same time indicating the position on their hands.

The vowel sounds that are most likely to spread into a horizontal, East-West, mouth position are the bright vowels, [ɛ] "e" (eh) and [i] "i" (ee). Remind and encourage the choristers to:

- relax and drop the jaw;
- arch the soft palate;
- sing with a relaxed tongue lightly touching the lower front teeth;
- sing with slightly flared lips (correct vocal "embouchure"); and

- sing with a vertical, North-South, mouth position.

Ask them to think [u] "u" (oo) but to sing [ɛ] "e" (eh) or [i] "i" (ee). (Refer below to Figure II - 6-15d for the [ɛ] "e" (eh) and Figure II - 6-15e for the [i] "i" (ee) vowel mouth positions.)

Choristers sometimes tend to make the [ɑ] "a" (ah) vowel sound too shallow. Once again, this can be corrected by employing the above suggestions and thinking an [ɔ] "o" (oh) into the sound. (Refer to Figure II - 6-15c, below, for the [ɑ] "a" (ah) vowel mouth position.)

Choristers often tense the lips for the [ɔ] "o" (oh) vowel sound. Remind them to relax the lips and to drop the jaw. (Refer to Figure II - 6-15b, below, for the [ɔ] "o" (oh) vowel mouth position.)
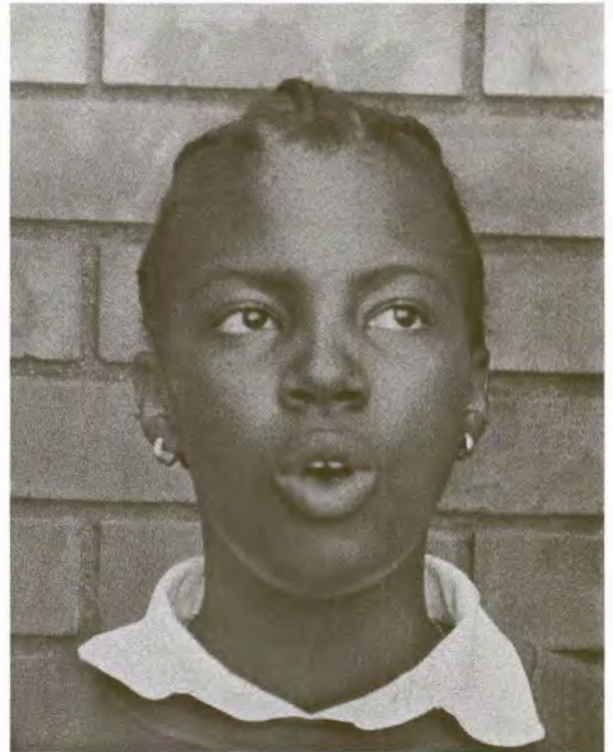
Figure II - 6-15a Mouth position for [u] "u" (oo)

Figure II - 6-15b Mouth position for [ɔ] "o" (oh)

Figure II - 6-15c Mouth position for [ɑ] "a" (ah)

Figure II - 6-15d Mouth position for [ɛ] "e" (eh)

Figure II - 6-15e Mouth position for [i] "i" (ee)

Vowel Modification refers to the practice in singing of adjusting vowels. Spoken vowels often have to be modified or adjusted for singing, i.e. one cannot always sing the vowel that the spoken word requires. When singing an ascending line, one needs to consider the vowels that are sung in the upper range and employ vowel modification. This is to ensure that the quality of sound is uniform throughout the vocal range and to avoid a tense, pinched, or strident tone in the upper range; i.e. adding more head tone to the vowel sound. Vowel modification is also employed to ensure good intonation and diction.

The front (bright or lateral) vowels [i] "i" (ee) and [ɛ] "e" (eh) are compromised toward the darker [ɑ] "a" (ah) vowel-sound in the upper range of the voice. For instance, the word "men" on a high note will sound too strident if vowel modification is not employed. One should, therefore, compromise the vowel towards the "ah" vowel-sound and will thus sing "men" as "mahn", creating an aural illusion. The listener hears the "mahn" as "men" because the vowel that is sung migrates on a high frequency.

The choristers need to relax and drop the lower jaw more as the melodic line ascends. This will lift the soft palate. Encourage the children to find the soft palate by gently sliding the index fingertip backward along the roof of the mouth. Remind them to keep the tongue relaxed with the tip of the tongue lightly touching the fleshy ridge at the base of the lower front teeth for all vowel sounds. If the tongue is not relaxed and is pulled back, it reduces the space in the mouth and throat and interferes with the tone. Choristers are inclined to spread the corners of the mouth in a horizontal position and to pull the tongue back for the bright [i] "i" (ee) and the [ɛ] "e" (eh) vowel sounds. (Refer to Figures **II** - 6-11a and **II** - 6-11b, as well as **II** - 6-12a and **II** - 6-12b, above.)

Modifying vowels is necessary to produce a free and resonant tone. In the middle of the vocal range, less vowel modification is necessary and the vowels will remain more true to the spoken word.

6.9   Diction

Good diction is a prerequisite for a good singer. Diction is the means by which the words of a
song are conveyed by the performer to the listener. In the Foundation phase, choristers
demonstrate good diction mostly as a result of following, imitating and repeating the choral
director's instruction and modelling in rehearsal. The choristers' input in rehearsal, however,
should be regularly sought in order to develop independent ability in good diction. At this
stage the skill is mostly demonstrated because of "rote learning" (or skill gained through
imitation and repetition). In the Intermediate phase, however, the choristers' greater maturity
level requires a more informed procedure. (Refer to **Part I**, 3.4 "Choral Unit Standard:
Diction".)

6.9.1   Pronunciation

Pronunciation refers to the manner of uttering the words, and the rhythmic grouping of
words and syllables within a phrase, i.e. the stressed syllables and word accents.
Correct pronunciation is important for the text to be intelligible to the listeners.

Choirs should not sing with regional, colloquial accents but rather conform to standard,
professional, universally accepted pronunciation, which has for some time been
accepted as the norm. This does not apply to songs that may need a dialectical
treatment in order to maintain authenticity in performance, like in regional folksongs
for instance.

6.9.2   Enunciation of Vowels and Articulation of Consonants

Good diction refers to the clarity with which the vowels are enunciated and the
consonants are articulated. It is often said that vowels carry the sound, while
consonants convey the sense; i.e. the intelligibility of the text is primarily dependent on
clear articulation of the consonants. When we sustain a pitch, it is the vowel which is
sustained. In fact, singers must sustain the vowel sound as long as possible and not

move to the consonant too quickly. When one sings, the elongation of vowel sounds can obscure the meaning of the text. One therefore has to exaggerate articulation of the consonants so that the audience can understand the words.

In the Intermediate phase, the enunciation of vowels and the articulation of consonants can be explained to the choristers by writing the following words on a board: "lips, teeth, tip of the tongue." Ask the children to say it only on the vowels. They will quickly understand that we need the consonants for it to be intelligible.

6.9.3 Clear Articulation of Consonants

To ensure that consonants are clearly articulated, ask the children to "spit out" their consonants. This applies to both the beginning and the ending of words. Tell the choristers to exaggerate every consonant to the point of silliness. Should they overdo this, it is easy to soften the consonants in order to obtain the desired effect. With aggressive articulation, the words become clearer and the placement of the tone is brought forward in the mouth.

Some music requires energetic, rhythmic precision, and for this, exceptionally well-articulated consonants are required. Music that requires a smooth *legato* line, needs some consonants to be minimised so as not to disrupt the vocal *legato* line too much. Final consonants of all words need to be clearly articulated, without becoming obtrusive.

A fine line exits between consonants that are clearly articulated and consonants that are overdone. If the consonants are exaggerated too much it will interfere with the smooth line of the sound. The consonants should be clear without being obtrusive. They should be pronounced quickly and distinctly to preserve the *legato* line as much as possible.

Even if the audience does not understand the language of the work being sung, they can still hear the difference between careless and precise articulation. Consonants are

formed with the lips, teeth, tongue and both the hard and soft palates. In the Intermediate phase, the following exercise may be used to promote more precise articulation. (See Example **II - 6-4**, below.) Repeat it a few times by ascending by a semi-tone each time.

Lips, teeth, tip of the tongue Lips, teeth, tip of the tongue

Lips, teeth, tip of the tongue Lips, teeth, tip of the tongue
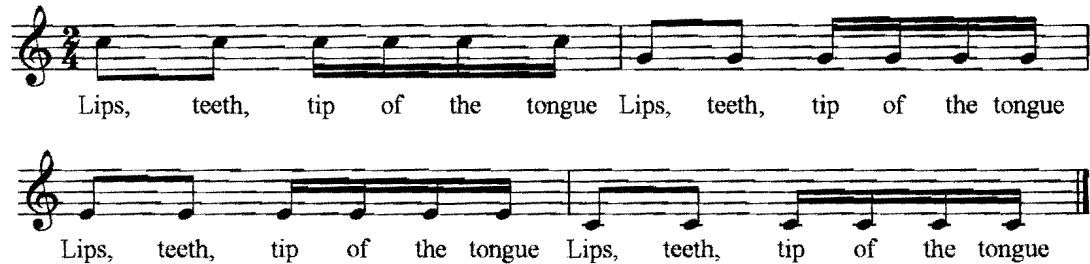
Example II - 6-4 Exercise to promote clear articulation of consonants

The consonant "r" at the end of a word (e.g. fair, dear, poor, where, more) or when it occurs just before another consonant (e.g. Lord) is omitted or, alternatively, we just "think" the "r". If a word demands more intensity, the "r" is rolled (e.g. cruel, praise, rage).

Another potential problem is the "s" sound at the end of a word as it may produce a series of hisses within choral singing. Sing the "s" very short, quickly and rhythmically to avoid this hissing, especially at the end of a phrase, i.e. everybody coming off at the precise moment with the "s" sound.

The release at the end of a phrase, ending on a consonant, needs extra special care. (Refer to **Part II**, 5.8 "Attacks and Releases".) The choristers should watch the conductor very carefully in order to obtain complete precision in the final release of the consonant. "T, d, p, k" and "f" are consonants that need particular emphasis. Ask the choristers to sing the word "toot" on a specific pitch and insist on meticulous attack and release on the "t". The choir has to come off *as one* on the final "t". Practise this a few times. The following rhyme spoken or sung may also be used to practise the final release. (See Example **II - 6-5**, below.) The final "t" occurs on the rest.

Here   comes   the   big   fat   cat.

Example II - 6-5 Final release of consonant at end of phrase

6.9.4 Voiceless and Voiced Consonants

Consonants are either voiceless (unpitched) or voiced (pitched/tuned). A voiceless or unpitched consonant requires aspiration (blowing) without sound, e.g. "p, h, s, k, t" and "f". A voiced or pitched consonant can actually be sung and the sound elongated instead of being aspirated. Hum "m, n, ng, l, r, z, v", for instance, and you will detect a pitch. The vocal folds are drawn together and set into vibration for a voiced consonant. One can test for voiceless or voiced consonants by placing a finger gently on the larynx (Adam's apple). If vibration can be felt when the consonant is pronounced softly, it is a voiced consonant. There is no perceptible movement of the vocal folds for voiceless consonants.

Inexperienced/untrained choirs often scoop on initial voiced (pitched) consonants; i.e. the consonant is being sung at a different pitch from the vowel which follows, resulting in an unacceptable "scoop" (see Example **II** - 6-6b, below). For instance:

Man

Example II - 6-6a Singing of initial voiced consonant

is sung as:

M___ an
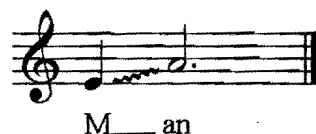
Example II - 6-6b Scooping of initial voiced consonant

This can be avoided if the choristers are told to take a breath with the mouth shaped for the vowel which follows the consonant. The consonant is then quickly articulated before the vowel is sounded.

6.9.5 Diphthongs and Triphthongs

In the Foundation phase, choristers demonstrate skills mostly as a result of "rote learning"; i.e. they learn mostly through imitating and repeating the teacher's example. In the Intermediate phase, the concepts are explained to the choristers and their own recommendations and input are expected to a greater degree.

A diphthong (pronounced: diff-thong) is a compound vowel which consists of two sounds; one sustained, the other vanishing. The word "sky", is pronounced as *skah+ee*. The "ah" is the sustained sound and the "ee", which is quickly sung at the end of the tone, is the vanishing sound.

The following are diphthong examples where the vanishing sound is at the end:

- how, brown, bound, round = [ɑ+u] "a+u" (ah+oo);
- I, like, my, right, they, lie = [ɑ+i] "a+i" (ah+ee);
- boy, toy, toil, noise = [ɔ+i] "o+i" (oh+ee); and
- say, may = [ɛ+i] "e+i" (eh+ee).

An exception to this is the [i+u] "i+u" (ee+oo) sound, in which the vanishing sound is at the beginning and the sustained sound is at the end. One has to quickly move from the [i] "i"(ee) to the [u] "u" (*oo*) sound. The following are examples of this: new, few, dew, beauty, view.

Particularly on notes that are sustained for several beats, all the choristers should be sustaining the same vowel sound. When the choir sings, it is important to ensure that

all the choristers sustain the correct sound and that the final, vanishing sound is performed quickly at the termination of the syllable.

A triphthong (pronounced: triff-thong) is a compound vowel which is made up of three sounds. The vowel sounds in the word "choir", is pronounced as [ɑ+i+ə] *ah+ee+uh*. The first vowel sound, [ɑ] *ah*, should be sustained and the other two vowel sounds, [i+ə] *ee+uh*, treated as vanishing sounds. (The schwa [ə], or neutral vowel, is found in words like fath<u>e</u>r, r<u>e</u>frig<u>e</u>rator, vow<u>e</u>l, heav<u>e</u>n.)

(Compare these diphthongs, or compound vowel sounds with the pure or primary vowels as they are pronounced in Italian. Refer to **Part II**, 6.8 "Italian Basic Pure Vowels, Uniform Vowel Colours and Vowel Modification".)

6.10 Agility and Flexibility

A pre-requisite for vocal flexibility, is lack of strain and tension. Fast-moving passages that demand vocal agility and flexibility require the use of a light "touch". Head tones that are well developed, but not forced, give greater flexibility to the voice. Agility and flexibility may be improved by well-chosen singing exercises (vocalises). (Refer to **Part II**, 6.11 "Use of Vocalises", and specifically the exercise in Example II - 6-9.) Agility and flexibility, furthermore, increase with physical and mental maturity; choristers in the Intermediate phase will have greater facility in vocal agility and flexibility than choristers in the Foundation phase.

6.11 Use of Vocalises

Vocalises, or vocal exercises, ideally, should be directly related to problems within the music being learnt. Vocalises are only introduced in the Intermediate phase. It is, more or less, standard practice to do vocalises for about five minutes at the beginning of every rehearsal, in order to warm up the voices gradually, to increase vocal flexibility, and to build vocal technique. One should, however, guard against this becoming mere routine and unrelated to the music being studied. The repeated use of a particular exercise may result in a loss of

effectiveness. It is therefore essential to customise vocal exercises according to the demands of the repertoire being studied. Rehearsals could also commence with the singing of a song/work and then introduce a specific vocalisation technique if a problem presents itself.

Before starting with voice exercises, correct body posture for singing and good breath management has to be established. Physical exercises to address this may be included and this should lead to an alert mental attitude. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.3 "Correct Singing Posture" and 6.4 "Breath Management".)

It is important that both the conductor and the choristers know exactly what the aim of a particular vocal exercise is. Every vocal exercise should have a specific purpose, musical goal or intention, and the choristers should be well-aware of that purpose. In order to vary vocal exercises according to the demands of the repertoire being studied, either one of the following two ways may be implemented:

- Common warm-up patterns in use may be altered or adjusted to mirror the general characteristics, like articulation, dynamics, rhythm or tonality of the repertoire being studied; or
- A passage (from the repertoire being studied) that presents either rhythmic or pitch problems could be isolated and an exercise devised around it. Do not devise/write an exercise by combining a complicated pitch sequence with an intricate rhythm. Separate the two musical elements and even out the complexity: e.g. complicated pitch sequence + simple rhythmic pattern, or intricate rhythm + simple pitch sequence.

All the choristers should apply themselves to productive vocal exercising and nobody may fool around. The children's voices should not be strained in any way whatsoever.

The exercises in Examples **II** - 6-7a and **II** - 6-7b, below, are used specifically to focus on correct vocal embouchure, i.e. with the lips relaxed and slightly flared. The lower jaw must be relaxed and dropped and the soft palate arched. The [u] "u" and the [ɔ] "o" vowel sounds are used because they are functional aids for a low, relaxed larynx position. Sing these exercises slowly and repeat a semi-tone higher each time. The range may also be extended upward.

1. Moo_____
2. Loo_____
3. Noo_____
4. Moh_____
5. Loh_____
6. Noh_____

Example II - 6-7a Exercise to focus on correct vocal embouchure

1. Moo	moh	moo	moh	moo
2. Loo	loh	loo	loh	loo
3. Noo	noh	noo	nah	noo
4. Moo	moh	mah	meh	mee

etc.

Example II - 6-7b Additional exercise to focus on correct vocal embouchure

The following two exercises (Examples **II - 6-8a** and **II - 6-8b**, below) may be used to extend the range upward. Every time the exercise is repeated, raise it by a semi-tone. Take this up to G (or even A$^{\flat}$) major. Use different neutral syllables alternatively, like:

- "moo", "moh", "mah";

- "noo", "noh", "nah";

- "loo", "loh", "lah";

- "zoo", "zoh", "zah";

- "boo", "boh", "bah"; and

- "doo", "doh", "dah".

1. Moo_____	Moo_____	Moo.
2. Moh_____	Moh_____	Moh.
3. Mah_____	Mah_____	Mah.

Example II - 6-8a Exercise to extend the range upward

1. Moo_____ moo_____
2. Moh_____ moh_____
3. Mah_____ mah_____
4. Noo_____ noo_____
5. Loo_____ loo_____

Example II - 6-8b Additional exercise to extend the range upward

The following exercise (Example **II -** 6-9, below) may be used to improve vocal agility and flexibility that are required for fast passages. Every time the exercise is repeated, raise it by a semi-tone. The exercise is also useful for extending the range upward. Gradually increase the tempo and sing it to neutral syllables like: "doo-bee", "mi-nah", "lo-rah", etc.

1. Doo - bee, doo - bee, doo - bee, doo - bee, doo bee, doo bee, doo bee, doo bee,
2. Mi - nah, mi - nah, mi - nah, mi - nah, mi nah, mi-nah, mi-nah, mi-nah,
3. Lo - rah, lo - rah, lo - rah, lo - rah, lo rah, lo-rah, lo-rah, lo-rah,

doo bee, doo - bee, doo - bee, doo - bee, doo.
mi nah, mi - nah, mi - nah, mi - nah, mi.
lo rah, lo - rah, lo - rah, lo - rah, lo.

Example II - 6-9 Exercise to improve vocal agility and flexibility that are required for fast passages

The following two exercises (Examples **II -** 6-10a and **II -** 6-10b, below) will aid agility and loosen the tongue. Every time the exercise is repeated, raise it by a semi-tone.

Rrah, rrah, rrah, rrah, rrah.

Example II - 6-10a Exercise to aid agility and loosen the tongue

Nee - noh, nee - noh, nee - noh, nee - noh, nee - noh, nee - noh, nee.
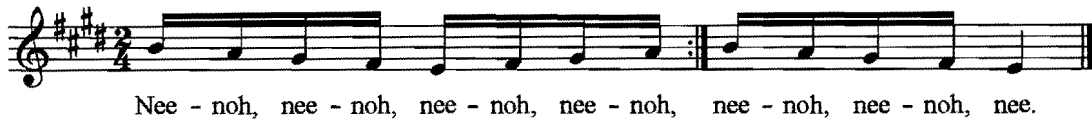
Example II - 6-10b Additional exercise to aid agility and loosen the tongue

6.12 Use of Imagery

The conductor has to find a myriad of techniques to explain the abstract, technical concepts that are inherently present in the music. The use of imagery-laden, colourful language and mental suggestion, i.e. imagery, metaphor, simile and analogies, achieves dramatic and instant results with children. It conveys ideas in a clear, meaningful way and leads to a greater understanding of the music. The imaginative idea that works for one pupil, however, may prove to be not as successful with another. One therefore has to employ several imaginative suggestions in order to reach all the choristers.

The use of physical metaphor would involve identifying a gesture or activity that describes the essence of the musical idea, e.g. "use your fingers to lift the pitch", when the choir is singing flat. In certain instances this may prove to be more meaningful than just asking them to "raise the pitch". When the choir is inclined to go flat on a descending passage, ask them to slowly raise their hand as the passage is descending. In performance they must think "up" whilst singing the descending passage. The opposite is also applicable, i.e. think "down" when singing an ascending passage that is inclined to become sharp. Physical metaphor thus relates to:

> any gesture or movement that is able to get at the essence of the musical idea and involve singers in a concrete, bodily way. Like verbal metaphor, physical metaphor capitalizes on the natural predisposition of the human mind to connect experiences – concrete with abstract, known with unknown – but does so in a more natural, meaningful, and enjoyable way (Wis 1999: 25).

The use of a rubber band, stretched vertically, to represent the dropped, relaxed jaw for better resonance in the higher register, is an effective visual metaphor. One could also refer to this as the sought-after "North-South" mouth position. (Refer to Figure **II - 6-11a**, above.) Should

one stretch the rubber band horizontally, the sound "spreads". This could be referred to as the undesirable "East-West" mouth position. (Refer to Figure **II** - 6-11b, above.)

Another example would be to ask the choristers to "serve the voice, like a tennis ball, right to the back of the hall" when you want the choir to project their voices. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.7 "The Importance of Head Voice".) This, again, may produce a better result than the straightforward instruction, "project your voice".

The use of physical metaphor has many advantages. For one thing, the choristers are more involved with the "polishing" of the selection that they are learning and they take greater ownership of the creative process. The most important advantage, however, is that it helps both the choristers and the conductor to discover more about the music itself and the interpretative possibilities that are inherent in the selection.

6.13 Maintaining Vocal Health

The voice has to be treated with great deference as this is the singer's prized instrument. The choral teacher needs to give the choristers guidance regarding vocal health so that they know how to adequately take care of their voices. Choristers who are indisposed because of a cold, hoarseness or sore throat, must refrain from singing. They should, however, attend the rehearsal in order to learn the music. This, obviously, does not apply in severe cases, which require bed rest.

Under no circumstances should choristers be yelling and screaming at school athletics or other sport events. They need to be informed about the highly detrimental effect this abuse of the vocal mechanism can have on the voice.

One needs adequate rest to ensure optimum vocal health. Physical fatigue and mental stress can have a detrimental effect on the singing voice. Choristers should have ample rest in the afternoon if they are performing in the evening.

It is important to eat a well-balanced diet of food and to drink plenty of water since it contributes to overall good health and maintaining vocal health. If the body is well hydrated, the mucous linings of the vocal tract are adequately lubricated, thereby reducing friction. A well-lubricated vocal tract also reduces one's susceptibility to colds and sore throats. Choristers should be encouraged to bring a bottle of water to the rehearsal so that they can sip water whenever an opportunity arises. The water has to be at room temperature since cold liquids before and during singing should be avoided as it tends to constrict the vocal tract muscles.

Dairy products should be avoided shortly before a performance as they are inclined to thicken mucous secretions and this can affect singing performance. Remind the choristers to only eat a light meal before a performance.

During a performance choristers sometimes have to stand for an extended period. Should choristers start feeling dizzy, they need to sit down immediately and put their heads down between the legs. This will allow the blood to flow to the head. In order to prevent dizziness or fainting during rehearsal or performance, choristers should be reminded to:

- Keep their knees flexed, which will ensure proper blood circulation. The knees should never be rigid, stiff or locked.
- Occasionally wriggle the toes and exercise non-locomotor leg movements like tensing the muscles in the thighs and calves. Between choral selections and audience applause, choristers should avail themselves of the opportunity for movement by shifting their body weight alternately from one foot to the other. These movements help to facilitate the pumping of blood back to the heart and prevent blood from pooling in the lower extremities of the body.

Excessive harsh throat clearing and coughing causes damage to the vocal folds and should be avoided. By repeatedly clearing the throat or coughing, one can actually rupture blood vessels.

The adolescent voice change and its ramifications need to be discussed with the children in the Intermediate phase. It is not just the boys' voices that undergo this change. The girls' voices

CONCERT PREPARATION

7.1 Pre-Concert Rehearsals

Approximately two weeks before the performance is an opportune time to make a video or audio recording for the choristers and the teacher to evaluate themselves. (Refer to **Part II**, 3.12 "Audio and Video Aids".) Watch and/or listen carefully for aspects that need extra attention and set these right. One is often pressed for time at this stage and often feels that there is no time to look at a video (or listen to a tape) with the choristers. It is well worth the effort and time, though. The videoing process does not take up any extra rehearsal time as this is done while the choristers are actually rehearsing. Suggest to the choristers that they come before or after school or even during break to watch the video (or listen to the tape) with you. They will be quite willing to give up their break to watch (or listen to) themselves performing. Be sure to solicit their suggestions for improvement.

At this stage, provided the teacher planned the previous rehearsals well, there should be a minimum of major problems to be corrected. It would probably only involve a few last-minute finishing touches. The choir should now be performing in its concert formation so that the choristers are completely familiar with it.

7.2 The Final Rehearsal

It is important to congratulate the choristers at this final rehearsal on how hard they have worked. The children like to know that their efforts are appreciated. Tell them that they know the songs well, and now all that remains is to share this beautiful music with the audience.

The ideal would be to have the final rehearsal in the venue where the performance is to take place. This, however, is not always possible. The alternative is for the choir to arrive early for the performance so that they can have a quick practice in order to familiarise themselves with

the environment and to adjust to the acoustics in the venue. One has to prepare the choristers for the unexpected and for singing in circumstances that may not be as conducive as those to which they are accustomed. It is also necessary to practise the leading on and off the risers so that this may be accomplished with maximum efficiency.

One would be placing oneself in a precarious position should one attempt to implement radical changes at the final rehearsal. It is more beneficial for the children to be secure in what they have been practising during the preceding weeks. Should any alterations be called for, these must be minor. The final rehearsal should boost the choristers' confidence and not destroy it.

With a primary school choir, it is advisable to sing through the entire programme without stopping. This is necessary to acquaint the choristers with the order of the selections and the flow of the programme. A well-organised final rehearsal that is conducted with competence, efficiency and thoroughness will have a positive effect on the self-esteem of the choristers and the conductor. This will decidedly have a beneficial effect on the performance.

The rationale behind the saying "a poor rehearsal means a good performance" is that the choristers and the conductor, being aware of the poor rehearsal, will as a result be super-alert and they will try extra-hard in the performance. The opposite, namely "a good rehearsal can lead to a poor performance", has also been said. Here, it is inferred that the choristers would be too relaxed or casual, and would not be trying hard enough in the performance. This is not necessarily true by any means. A competent conductor would have planned the preceding rehearsals in such a way that the choir is neither under- nor over-rehearsed, and that the final rehearsal is the last rung of the ladder that leads to the platform of success. The teacher should, however, guard against allowing the choristers to become over-excited or tense in this final rehearsal. The choir should peak in the performance.

Towards the end of the rehearsal, the choristers need to be informed about final arrangements. Remind them that they should rest before the concert and that they should avoid all dairy products as these are inclined to produce a short-term build-up of phlegm in the throat. (Refer to **Part II**, 6.13 "Maintaining Vocal Health".) Tell the choristers that they represent the school and that they have to exhibit exemplary behaviour and not let the school down. This involves their behaviour both on and offstage. They must be well-behaved and absolutely quiet

backstage while they are waiting their turn to lead on for the performance. Remind them about being correctly dressed, transport arrangements, arrival time before the concert, and any other applicable points of information.

7.3 Pre-Concert Activities

Shortly before the choir has to perform, the choristers should assemble in a rehearsal room to focus and prepare themselves mentally and emotionally for the actual performance. With Foundation phase children it is also necessary to remind them to go to the toilet before they go on stage. Physical tension and tightness should be lessened by a few loosening-up exercises. These may include:

- raising the shoulders excessively high and dropping them a few times;
- rotating the shoulders;
- choir members massaging each other's shoulder and back muscles;
- dropping the chin to the chest and rolling the head slowly and gently in a circular motion from side to side;
- raising and lowering the heels;
- stretching by standing on tip-toe, trying to reach the ceiling, and kneeling down into a small bundle;
- shaking the hands vigorously;
- shaking the arms vigorously, first separately, then simultaneously;
- shaking the legs vigorously;
- taking a few deep breaths, holding in and then slowly exhaling to a "ph" sound, while the teacher is steadily counting, etc.

These exercises will help to promote relaxation and good posture. It is essential to do these exercises in silence so as not to over-excite the choristers and to ensure that everybody is focussing on the task ahead.

Unless the performance is taking place in the early part of the morning, a few, short vocal warm-up exercises will suffice. These exercises also contribute to focus energy, both mentally and emotionally.

It is essential to review the general procedure for the choristers. They need to be informed about the order of the selections and the specific mood required for each. It may be advantageous to start each selection and sing the first phrase or two. Should the choristers be apprehensive about the performance, they should be re-assured and calmed and reminded that it is essential to relax and *enjoy* the performance.

7.4 Performance Attire

It is taken for granted that the quality of the repertoire and the singing are the most important aspects of the choir's performance. If the choir, however, looks good on stage, it provides a psychological boost to both the choristers and the audience. The choristers should be tidy, well groomed, and uniformly attired. Uniformity of dress contributes to creating a unified and cohesive whole. This adds to the musical uniformity that every choral group strives to attain.

It is most definitely not essential to have a special or extravagant choir outfit. A school choir may as well wear their regulation school uniform. The main considerations are, "uniformity" of dress, and tidiness. The clothing should be conducive to singing and not distract from the performance. If the choristers are uniformly dressed, they will feel more professional and consequently be more confident. This can only have a positive effect on their performance.

7.5 Stage Deportment

Attitude and deportment of the choristers as they enter and leave the stage are important. The entrance and exit procedure of the choir should be practised several times beforehand until it flows smoothly. From the time the choristers walk on stage until the time they walk off, they are "on show". It is essential to stress the need to walk with purpose and not to amble along. The choristers should look proud, confident, dignified, and happy to be on stage. The audience/adjudicator forms an opinion of the choir before a note has been sung, based on their stage deportment and their appearance. "To work a posture miracle on choir entrances, have each student draw in a deep breath, hold it, and walk briskly into place on the stage" (Roe 1970: 351).

Formation and spacing of choristers on stage should be functionally optimal, both visually and aurally. It is customary for the front row to enter first and to remain standing in front of the risers. In this way they will "shield" the entrance of the rest of the choristers. The front row is followed by the back row and then the other rows. On leaving the stage, the front row will move a step forward and remain standing in their arranged order to, once more, act as a screen for the other rows. The second row will lead off first, followed by the third, etc., with the front row leading off last.

The accompanist enters after the choir and sits down at the piano or other accompaniment instrument. The conductor should be the last person to come on stage. Walk briskly and confidently, look friendly and take a bow as a form of "greeting the audience". Turn around and face the choir with an encouraging smile. Wait for the audience to settle. Raise the arms in a "conductor's set" position to gain the choristers' attention. Do not begin until all the choristers are focussed and ready to start. Establish fleeting eye contact with the accompanist and give the preparatory beat. (Refer to **Part II**, 5.7 "The Preparatory Beat".)

Remind the choristers that one of the most important aspects of their performance is to show the audience that they are fully "involved" and that they enjoy their singing. By relating an interesting "story" to the audience and capturing their imaginations, the choristers are displaying total involvement. They need to reflect the mood of the music through their body attitudes and their facial expressions. Their faces, and especially their eyes, need to be animated; otherwise the "story" would become dull and boring. They have to capture the audience's attention from the very beginning of the song, right up to the end. The performance is an extraordinary, precious, wonderful and exciting opportunity and the choristers need to show the audience that they are happy about this.

The choristers should not react by waving or talking to parents, grannies or friends in the audience. They need to be reminded that they must watch the conductor very carefully and that there should not be any casting of furtive glances towards the audience while they are singing. They must maintain their correct, proud posture throughout the performance and constantly watch the conductor and give their unqualified attention and dedication while they are performing. (Refer to **Part I**, 3.9 "Choral Unit Standard: Timing", "General Outcomes" number 5.)

They must behave like professionals and not call attention to any mistakes by losing poise or momentum. They have to remain quiet between the selections and stand tall and proud because the audience is constantly watching them while they are standing on stage. Talking or fidgeting, of any description, is strictly forbidden. They must refrain from any uncalled for sprucing activities like pulling up of socks or tidying of hair. After the performance, the choristers must leave the performance area in a quiet and orderly fashion. The performance has only ended once the last person leaves the stage. It is important to stress the point that absolutely impeccable behaviour has to be maintained even after the performance. A successful performance should not be spoiled backstage by one or two choristers who do not know how to behave appropriately.

The conductor must also practise to acknowledge applause graciously. The accompanist(s), soloist(s) and the choir should be included in this process. The conductor steps to the side and includes them, alternately, with a sweep of the arm, pointing with an outstretched hand towards them, as they take a bow.

7.6 Placement of the Piano

The correct balance between the piano and the choir is important. It may be necessary to move the piano to another position in order to secure a better balance. The conductor must ensure that the choristers can all hear the piano well enough to retain pitch. Should a grand piano be available, it may prove expedient to place the piano just off centre and in front of the choir so that, should the lid be partially lifted, it opens towards the choir. (Refer to Figure **II** - 7-1, below.)
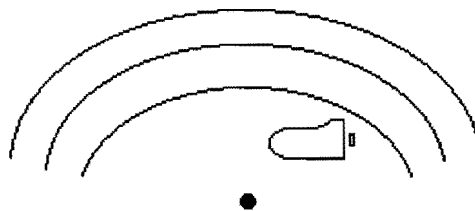
Figure II - 7-1 Placement of grand piano

The choristers are in a better position to hear the piano and it is less likely to overpower the choral sound. Should it be deemed necessary to open the lid by using the full, or even half stick, the piano will have to be moved further to the right, so as not to conceal some of the

choristers. In most instances the lid of a grand piano will not have to be lifted. It may, however, prove expedient to, instead of closing the lid completely, to place an eraser, a book or a little wooden block under the lid to keep it slightly open, thereby giving better support.

It may be best to place an upright piano in the centre, between the choristers, where the accompanist can still see the conductor comfortably. In this instance, one would have to divide the choir more or less in half. (Refer to Figure **II** - 7-2, below.)
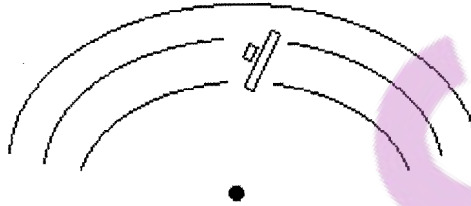
Figure II - 7-2 Placement of upright piano

7.7 Acoustics

The acoustical properties of the performance venue have an important influence on the effectiveness of a performance. (Refer to **Part II**, 4.2, "Intonation"; also to **Part I**, 3.9 "Choral Unit Standard: Timing", "General Outcomes" number 3.) An empty hall will have more reverberation than when the audience is seated. In a hall with dry acoustics (little reverberation), there will be insufficient connection between the various tones in a phrase, and this generally results in a lifeless tone quality. In such a case it would be advisable to perform the music at a slightly faster tempo. Consonants in dry acoustics need to be articulated with more emphasis. The choristers should also stand slightly closer to each other so that they can better hear each other. This will help to boost their confidence levels.

Conversely, when the choir has to perform in a venue with live acoustical properties (substantial reverberation), the tempi may have to be slightly restrained to accommodate the echo effect. Enunciation should be intensified and the choristers spaced slightly further apart. When performing on a stage which has a high roof and heavy curtains, the sound is inclined to be absorbed by the curtains or it "evaporates" into the roof of the stage. Try to move the choir as far forward as possible on the stage, so that the sound will be projected to the audience. It

may even be necessary to put a strong, solid table in front of the stage to serve as a podium for the conductor to stand on. This is to avoid standing too close to the choir.

If the final rehearsal is held in the performance venue, it is essential to listen to the choir from the back of the hall or auditorium to assess the balance, blend and general effect. (Refer to **Part II**, 4.8 "Balance and Blend".) Both the balance between sections within the choir and the balance between the choir and the piano (or other accompaniment instruments) need to be assessed.

7.8 Compiling a Programme

When choosing a programme for a performance, one has to be attuned to the needs of the audience. The mood of the music must also be appropriate to the occasion. (Refer to **Part I**, 3.9 "Choral Unit Standard: Timing", "General Outcomes" number 4.) Choose repertoire that you personally find exciting and rewarding so that you can, in turn, stimulate and inspire the choristers, who then can communicate this interest to the audience. One strives to compile a programme that is both entertaining and educational, and provides emotional and aesthetic experiences for the audience. Angela Broeker (2000: 29) compares a programme for performance to "a musical journey". She continues as follows: "It is up to the conductor to program a concert that takes listeners on an expedition through many musical landscapes with different hues and terrain."

In the Foundation phase, one may very well include a song from one of the other South African language groups, provided the text is not too complicated. (Refer to **Part II**, 2.5 "Selecting Appropriate Repertoire" also to **Part I**, 3.2, "Choral Unit Standard: Intonation", "General Outcomes" number 1.) In the Intermediate phase, apart from selections from other South African language groups, it is always a good idea to include a song in a foreign language. (Refer to **Part I**, 3.2 "Choral Unit Standard: Intonation", Range Statement: "varied repertoire"; also **Part II**, 2.5 "Selecting Appropriate Repertoire" and 4.9 "Historical/Stylistic Guidelines and Cultural Context".) It is, however, absolutely essential to ensure that, both in the local and the foreign selection, the pronunciation is correct. One could ask a teacher at the school that teaches that particular language or a parent that speaks the language, to help with

the pronunciation. It is a good idea to provide the audience with translations or explanations for works in a foreign language.

It is not wise to choose pieces that are performed often and have become hackneyed. One should select repertoire that has aesthetic merit, but which has not been performed too frequently as this would prove to be more interesting for the adjudicator and/or the audience.

The programme needs to provide variety in pacing. A sense of flow and momentum is closely related to the different tempi and moods of the songs. Differences in rhythmic intensity will also lend greater contrast between feelings of tension and release. The programme should sustain attention by alternating moments of momentum (lively, exciting, crisp songs) with moments of repose (slower, peaceful, lyrical songs). One has to select music representing a variety of styles, composers, and periods. The choir should be able to perform a variety of music confidently and with a good sense of style.

It is, furthermore, essential to select songs that contrast in mode, key and metre. The keys should not be too unrelated. One should also guard against the choir singing in the same key for too long: key fatigue may set in, which often results in intonation problems. (Refer to **Part II**, 4.2 "Intonation".) Similarly, the choir may experience intonation problems with the second selection, if two consecutive selections are either a half tone or a tri-tone apart, e.g. $e^\flat$ to **e** is a half tone apart, and $e^\flat$ to **a** is a tri-tone apart.

Variations in the type of accompaniment greatly enhance the appeal of a choir programme. One could also include a solo (or small group of singers) within a composition. It is always a good idea to include a song that is sung without accompaniment (*a cappella* singing). (Refer to **Part II**, 2.5 "Selecting Appropriate Repertoire".) One could also consider using classroom instruments, recorders or non-melodic percussion to enhance the performance.

It may be a good idea to start and end the programme with the two songs that the choir performs best. The first selection is important because it is during this time that the choir adjusts to the performance area. This selection, furthermore, has to "capture" the audience's attention. The concert opener should demonstrate the strengths of the choir and the enthusiasm of the choristers. The final selection, especially, needs to be climactic and memorable, giving

an aesthetic conclusion to the programme. This is the aural impression that the audience is inclined to remember most clearly and it concludes the programme with an aesthetic, thrilling result.

When planning the programme, bear in mind that it is more or less accepted practice in choral performance to move from sacred to secular music, in addition to going from serious compositions to music of a lighter quality. There is, however, no definite ruling on this and there are many possibilities.

When selecting repertoire for a contest, it is always better to select music that the choir will be able to perform with relative ease, enthusiasm and expression. The idea is to show what the choir can do; not what they cannot do, or are still struggling with.

When the choir is participating in a contest, it is essential to inform the adjudicator should there be even a *slight* alteration or deviation from the score. This would include transposition into a different key, adding a non-melodic percussion part, deleting a voice part, omitting the repetition of a section, or altering the music in any way. A short note to the adjudicator would suffice. It is important to stress that the choral director certainly does not have the liberty to implement major changes to a selection and may certainly not change the notation without the consent of the composer.

7.9 Contests, Eisteddfodau and Festivals

Despite the fact that the school choral programme is inherently performance based, choral teachers must realise that they are primarily educators and that the responsibility to a total, all-round music education programme is paramount. This should not be jeopardised for the end result in the form of an immaculate and perfect performance.

To excel at a contest, at *any* cost, is contrary to a sound music education programme. Presenting a perfect, flawless performance and winning the first prize at a competition is a remarkable achievement, but this significance is lost when it is accomplished at the expense of a well-rounded choral curriculum. School principals should never put undue pressure on choral teachers to win the competition at all costs. The emphasis should not be on winning,

but on the experience itself. Linda Swears (1985: 183/4) remarks most eloquently on this issue:

> [the] key to success in such situations is to value the quality of experience for your students above perfection in performance. When you work toward a positive experience for your students instead of impressing the audience, you are likely to accomplish both.

Participation in music contests, eisteddfodau and festivals have many advantages that form a worthy educational medium, if implemented in the right spirit. These "platforms" provide the choristers and the choral educator the opportunity to hear other choirs and they find out how their own particular choir compares with other choirs. This broadens their perspective on choral music, in general, and on their own efforts, in particular. Both the choral teacher and the choristers have the opportunity to hear a wide variety of choral repertoire. Music contests allow the choristers and the teacher the experience and the excitement of competition. Every choir needs the stimulus of public performance. Most choristers enjoy the "spot light" and look forward to, and thoroughly enjoy performing in concerts. These festivals/contests allow extra opportunities for the choir to display the results of their hard work in a concert situation.

Performance challenges both the singers and the conductor to improve, to move away from the ordinary and mundane to that which is on a higher, exalted, superior plane. The performance gives them a goal to work toward, and this lends extra inspiration and drive to work for excellence. The choral teacher has to ensure that the choir's repertoire for the performance is *thoroughly* prepared.

Choral teachers need to impress upon the children that winning a prize or some other rating, should not be the end goal, but rather, striving to perform the music in the most beautiful way and to the best of their ability. The most important "prize" that one can hope to attain from participating in a contest is the personal satisfaction gained from knowing one has satisfactorily met a challenge. It is also necessary to prepare the choristers to be receptive to responsible, professional and constructive feedback. Only then can one strive to achieve superior levels of musical depth and artistry.

After the performance or contest, it is important to follow up on the experience with the choristers. Share the adjudicator's comments with them and find out what they thought of their own performance. What have they learnt from listening and watching other choirs perform? A group discussion of an adjudicator's assessment and commentary and general review of what has transpired in the performance, may prove to be most beneficial for musical development, artistic refinement and choral education. One should use the performance experience to educate and to enhance the choristers' musical development.

PART III

Conclusion

Chapter 1

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1   Conclusions

The conclusions are structured as replies to the "Research Question" and the sub-questions in **Part I**, 1.3. Both the research question and the sub-questions have been placed in separate boxes to facilitate the reading process.

> How can curricular recognition be given for choral singing in South African primary schools?

The implementation of Choral Unit Standards and Assessment Criteria will place the choral fraternity in a more powerful position to compete for recognition, support, time and resources. Naturally, Choral Unit Standards and Assessment Criteria are not "ends" in themselves, but merely serve as "means" to an end. The end result is:

- Well-rounded and better educated learners in South Africa;
- Recognition of the children's choir as an instrument of aesthetic and artistic excellence; and
- Re-establishing the joy of singing in South African culture.

With the Choral Unit Standards in place, it becomes obvious that the choral programme is challenging and based on learning specific skills and knowledge, and choristers should be able to earn academic credits for their participation. The new Choral framework will advance the process of dispelling misconceptions like the following:

- The role of choral performance is "entertainment";
- The choir exists only as a vehicle for promoting public relations for the school (or other institution);
- The choir merely provides relaxation and offers breathing-space from serious academic pursuits; and
- The choral programme is just a frill.

Greater accountability to stakeholders also results in increased acknowledgement and finer perception of the choral programme as an important medium for promoting the educational process, enhancing the quality of life, and giving children the opportunity to grow musically through the study and performance of quality choral music. (Refer to **Part II**, 1.1 "The Rationale for Choral Singing".)

How can the choral director in the Primary school be guided in a constructive and meaningful way to address the issue of quality in structuring a comprehensive, balanced and sequenced choral programme?

A choral programme built on the Choral Unit Standards' framework should provide greater accountability to stakeholders and would ensure greater acknowledgement from educational authorities and the community at large. Choral educators in the Primary school should find sufficient coordinated guidelines in the Choral Unit Standards (**Part I**, chapter 3) and the support material in **Part II** in order to implement an effective, purposeful and comprehensive choral programme.

How can a formal procedure for assessment of results be provided to ensure greater accountability to the choral director, choristers, parents, school governing body, government educational administrators, and the community at large?

There is a necessity for greater accountability by monitoring musical development and progress through formal and informal assessment of choristers. Implementation of the Choral Unit Standards gives the choral educator guidance as to the required criteria and standards for assessment purposes.

What support (resource) material does the general classroom teacher (who is responsible for the Primary School Choir) need to direct the choir effectively, with innovation and purpose. Furthermore, how can this essential support material, that addresses the challenge of choral directing in South African primary schools specifically, be made readily available at an affordable rate for a South African teacher?

The choral directing support material for teachers in **Part II** of this thesis has been generated with the express purpose of making the task lighter and more meaningful for the teacher in the Primary School who wishes to or even "has to" direct the school choir. This material should be made more readily available to teachers and students in training and at a far more affordable price. Two of the books (*Lifeline for Children's Choir Directors* by Jean Ashworth Bartle, and *Directing the Children's Choir* by Shirley McRae) that were discussed in **Part I**, 2.1.1 and 2.1.2, respectively, are out of print. In **Part I**, 1.5 "The South African Cost Factor", a comparative price analysis of the two books, *Teaching Kids to Sing* by K.H. Phillips and *Teaching the Elementary School Chorus* by Linda Swears is supplied. As is evident from that analysis, the cost of the two books is well out of reach for most choral educators in South Africa. A South African publication of similar size and content can be produced at a considerably reduced sum, and **Part II** of this thesis can be published and made available to choral educators.

How can a common foundation or framework for all choirs throughout the country and at all levels of development be generated?

The Generic Unit Standards and the General Outcomes of the Choral Unit Standards apply to all cultural groups and every level of development. (Refer to **Part I**, Chapter 3 "Generating Choral Unit Standards".) This will contribute to a common foundation for all choirs in South Africa. The Choral Unit Standards spell out what every chorister from whatever culture and at all levels of development should know and be able to demonstrate; it thereby creates a common foundation for all choirs. Should these Choral Unit Standards be implemented, it would greatly assist in the crossing of cultural barriers and the unifying process of the "Rainbow Nation" that this country so desperately needs.

Are there critical cross-field linkages/articulation possibilities with other learning experiences and career opportunities?

In **Part I**, 4.2 "Critical Cross-Field Linkages/Articulation Possibilities", some of the numerous trans-disciplinary learning experiences and career opportunities are mentioned. It becomes evident that by participating in a well-structured, balanced choral programme, choristers gain skills that enable them to function optimally, not only in the classroom, but also in the world outside the school environment, i.e. learning about ways of doing things in life in order to survive and flourish. Qualities such as analytical skills, self-discipline, communication skills and creative thinking are the cornerstones of the choral programme. These qualities are essential for success and fulfilment in life. The choral experience helps choristers to become independent thinkers, who constantly apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills learnt to:

- a continuously expanding set of musical experiences;
- other learning areas at school; and
- life in general.

The choristers are thus encouraged to engage in higher level thinking skills by transferring and applying previous knowledge to new situations.

1.2 Recommendations

Education policy makers, heads of schools, school boards and choral educators will have to make substantial investments with regard to resources and opportunities for the choral programme if it is to be effectively implemented. The following are examples of resources and opportunities that need to be addressed:

- Suitable and adequate rehearsal time;
- Acceptable rehearsal venues;
- Effective and beneficial materials and equipment; and
- Opportunities for teachers to attend choral in-service training courses, intensive workshops, seminars and clinics.

Recommendations regarding the feasibility of effectively implementing the choral unit standards are as follows:

- Pre-service education and training of teachers (PRESET): additional choral directing training at tertiary level is essential in order to successfully implement choral unit standards. Music educators in the primary school need course offerings in child voice pedagogy, repertory, and choral conducting emphasis.
- In-service education and training of teachers (INSET): teachers would be far more amenable to implementing choral unit standards if they had the necessary expertise. In-service choral training courses will significantly increase music and choral teaching skills. A teacher's interest, ability and sense of responsibility have a direct bearing on his/her effectiveness in the task(s) that are assigned to them. When a general classroom teacher is assigned the task of directing the choir, that teacher's interest, ability in and sense of responsibility for choral singing will have an immense influence on the effective and meaningful implementation of the choral unit standards. Without the necessary training, some teachers may find the implementing of the choral unit standards beyond their level of comfort, interest or even ability.
- Resources: materials and equipment. Providing appropriate materials and equipment for the choral programme requires increased financial investment. This, however, does not present a challenge to the same extent as having to purchase expensive

instruments, because each chorister comes already equipped with the necessary instrument (the voice).

- Suitable and adequate rehearsal time: every effort should be made to meet these essential requisites.
- Support material for teachers in choral directing: in designing unit standards for the choral programme, an increased awareness of a need for support material has become evident. This is a necessity in order to minimize a casual or haphazard approach as to what is taught in the choral programme.

As was mentioned in **Part II,** 6.14 "Aural and Music-Reading Skills", the ability to read and notate music is a tremendous asset for choristers. Should they not receive the necessary instruction, the choral director will have to incorporate this into the choral programme. This thesis does not provide guidelines for reading and notating of music and it is recommended that a music literacy series for the choral programme is developed by future research.

In **Part I,** 1.6 "The General Music Appraisal Programme", it is explained that the Unit Standards for Choral Singing are linked to the General Music Appraisal Programme (GMAP) which has been generated by Grové (2001). Choir Performance is thus an extension of GMAP and the minimum suggested credit allocation is 3 credits. This refers to *school choirs* specifically. The 9 Unit Standards in Choral Singing are integrated into one core cluster for Choir Performance. Should a chorister, however, sing in a more advanced choir like a *regional choir* for instance, a different credit allocation should be devised. This may require allocating 1 credit per Choral Unit Standard, which will then add up to a minimum of 9 credits. This aspect is outside the scope of this thesis and it is recommended that this is developed by future research.

There is a need for the compiling of an instructional choral video series for the South African choral educator which demonstrates choral directing techniques like the following:

- Conducting gestures;
- Warm-ups;
- Specialised exercises teaching relaxation;

- Correct singing posture;

- Breath management; and

- Vocalises for group vocal technique.

The children's choir in the Primary school represents the future of choral music in South Africa. By lending support to, and advancing the cause of the children's choir, the quality and future of Secondary, Tertiary, professional and community choirs are directly influenced.

APPENDIX

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH MUSIC EDUCATION:
A GENERAL MUSIC APPRAISAL PROGAMME (GMAP)
FOR ALL LEARNERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

by

Petro Grové

1.　　RATIONALE FOR A GMAP

In South Africa's culturally diverse society, the challenge in music education is to provide a broad basis of music knowledge while at the same time preserving the uniqueness of the different musics in context. It is therefore not desirable for music to be subsumed in a pot-pourri of general arts. According to Fletcher (1987:94) "multi-culturalism is often thought of as implying cultural integration"; however, "to attempt to integrate the *arts* of different cultures is usually to weaken them".

To enable all people to make informed career choices and positively consider music as an opportunity and viable option, Music Education should be accessible to *all* learners from an early age. The result could be a more music literate and aesthetically sensitive society that cuts across all relevant cultural groups.

To accomplish this the **General Music Appraisal Programme** (GMAP) has been compiled by the author of this article with the support of the MEUSSA (Music Education Unit Standards for Southern Africa) research team at the University of Pretoria. The aim of this programme in schools should be to empower all learners with music skills and knowledge that will lead to lifelong active involvement in a variety of music practices, thus educating a future music audience. In his paper entitled *Preparing Teachers for a Curriculum that Includes Arts Education Across the Arts*, Nierman (Leong 1997:134) underlines the fact that

> The need to reach more students with more rigorous programmes that include the development of critical thinking skills seems central to the role of education in general and to arts education in particular.

The aim of the GMAP is to provide "successful, active encounters with art mediums" (Leong 1997:135), in this instance, music, through which a solid knowledge base can result in the learners being able "to develop competence in perceiving and analyzing the fundamental elements of the arts and in understanding the cultural and historical contexts of the arts" (Leong 1997:135).

Music educators such as Bergethon et al (1986), Bessom et al (1980), Choksy et al (1986), Mark (1978), Nye & Nye (1985), and Swanwick (1994), to name but a few, agree that the essence of music and its teaching lies in the forming of music concepts such as melody, tempo, timbre, texture, harmony, rhythm and form. The way by which the forming of concepts is facilitated may differ, for example Carl Orff favoured instrumental playing, Dalcroze concentrated on movement and Kodály emphasised singing. However, Southern African general music education specialists of the past fifteen years such as Cruywagen (1991), Grové (1993 & 1996), Markgraaff (1992), Oberholzer (1990), Potgieter (1990), Schoeman (1999) and Van Aswegen & Vermeulen (1993, 1995 & 1996) focused on a combined activities approach, also favoured by Reimer (1989). This approach has the potential to become a big success in Southern Africa as it could combine the arts in the sub-field of Music – music being the bonding factor.

2. THE GMAP

In providing the opportunity for learners to acquire general musical skills and knowledge through listening, conceptualising, contextualising, analysing and notation in a wide variety of musical styles and practices, the option of specialization at a later stage can easily be accommodated.

> In music education the main aim is surely to bring musical conversation from the background of our awareness to the foreground. The question of `what is music's function?' is therefore best subordinated to the question `how does it function?' (Swanwick 1999:35).

The GMAP may support and be extended in extra-curricular cultural activities relating to music such as:

o   singing in the school choir or revue group

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- o playing in the school band, orchestra or ensemble
- o playing a solo instrument.

It is possible that extra credits may be earned for the above. If added then to the total of the proposed allocation of 9 credits for the GMAP, including the supporting activities as an extension may bring the total possible credits to be earned to 15. A learner could therefore acquire credit for these additional activities.

Based on research done in the U.S.A., Nierman & Veak (1997:390) state the following:

> There is a suggested body of skills and knowledge that each young student should master. Classes that demand active participation (e.g., band, chorus and orchestra) have frequently been used by music educators to achieve mastery of musical skills and knowledge. However, this approach has failed to attract a significant number of participants.

Taking this into consideration, the GMAP core provides the formal and structured background for obtaining music skills and knowledge at NQF (National Qualifications Framework) level 1 which is equal to grade 9 in schools. These core units could be broken down and implemented in the earlier grades, but without the compulsory additional activities. However, giving learners the opportunity to obtain additional credits for extra-curricular activities outside formal schooling may motivate them to continue their general music studies beyond the Foundation Phase (Grade 1 to 3), into the Intermediate Phase (Grade 4 to 6), and possibly further into the Senior Phase (Grade 7 to 9). It would be interesting to see whether such a development would increase the number of participants in music programmes in South Africa.

3. COMPONENTS OF THE GMAP

As South Africa is a multi-cultural country, the GMAP should include a wide variety of music styles and practices. In structuring the music encounters for GMAP, a wide variety of music practices of Southern Africa, as well as the rest of the world, should be included. It is only when the learner applies music knowledge in different contexts that he/she can demonstrate discriminative skills in music listening and analysis. However, although the music context plays a very important role, there are always

points of common ground in different music practices. Swanwick (1999:106-107) is of the opinion that,

> While recognizing the social roots of all music we may sometimes have to cut off cultural labels and help shift out of the way some of the barriers of tribal possessiveness and exclusiveness. One strategy is to recognise that … we can still identify elements which though they appear in quite different contexts, are common to much music.

These elements referred to by Swanwick and contextualised by Grové for the Southern African situation are mapped according to the MEUSSA Model (Grové 2001:3-18) in Figure 1 below. The essential or fundamental elements of the GMAP are mapped in the central combined square. The coloured blocks each represent a separate unit of the GMAP at NQF level 1 (Grade 9). It is suggested that the fundamental elements of the GMAP be presented and evaluated as an integrated core cluster of interwoven unit standards in a GMAP learning programme.

The blocks on the outside of the core cluster, represent elective music activities that may be chosen from and included as an extension of the programme to make up 6 credits. However, these extensions of the GMAP are not addressed in this article.

Figure 1 - Modeling the General Music Appraisal Programme

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Grové, J.P. 2001. Empowerment through Music Education:
A General Music Appraisal Programme(GMAP) for all Learners in Southern Africa.
Unpublished article, U.P.: Pretoria.
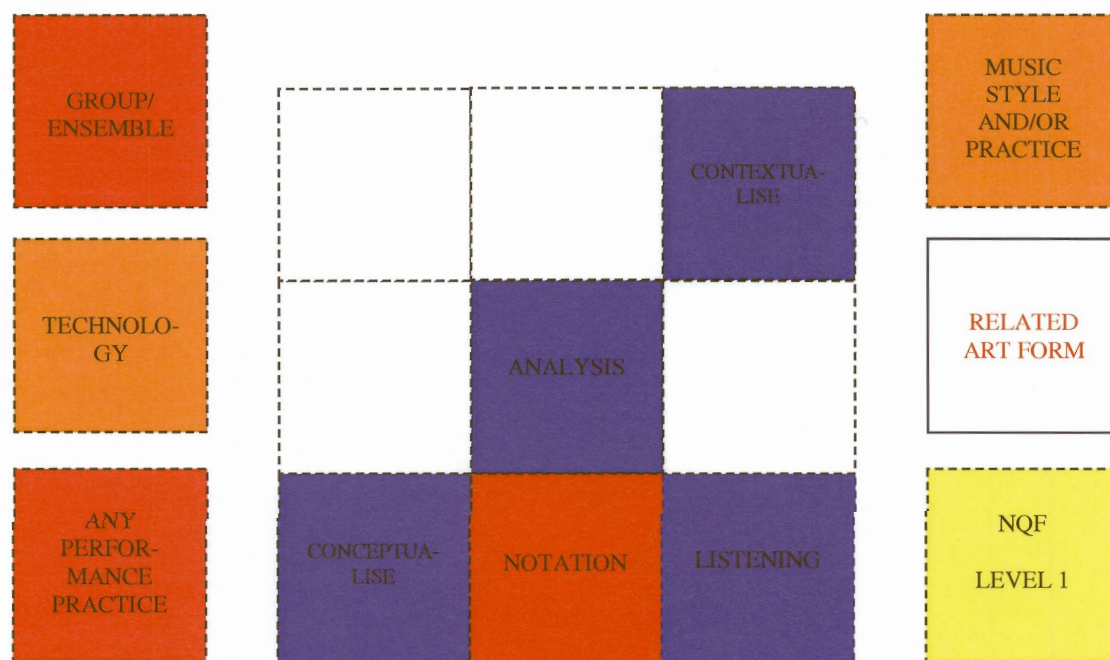
4.   CREDIT STRUCTURE OF THE GMAP AT NQF LEVEL 1

The above mapping (Figure 1) implies that there are two integrated areas to be covered, namely the core cluster on the one side and the electives on the other. The core units are to be facilitated and learned during school hours by practical experience in an integrated way. Swanwick (1988:35) stresses that:

> Musical encounter is always the ultimate and general aim of music educators: but within classrooms it is essential to be able to recognize and respond to the specific details of musical experience, sensitively and positively. Music teaching can be effective only when the nature of the music itself is understood and the development of the students respected.

The practical experience of the core music learning material, could be extended to include extra-curricular activities, such as participation in the choir, band, ensemble, as well as any solo instrument(s). In the sub-field of music, music-specific activities are compulsory, although some credits may be earned by participating in some other art form.

5. STRUCTURE OF THE GMAP – CREDIT ALLOCATION

According to SAQA guidelines, maximum credits obtainable by the learner will be allocated to unit standards according to notional hours: 1 credit = 10 notional hours. Credits are "the recognition that a learner has achieved a unit standard" (RSA 1998).

At a formal educational institution, 3 periods per week of 30 minutes each, or 2 periods of 45 minutes may be allocated to the programme. This brings the total hours of formal tutoring to 45 hours (if there are 30 tutoring weeks in a year). Add an estimate of 45 hours needed for extra projects, practicing and homework and it comes to 90 notional hours = 9 credits. These credits will be divided between the different segments of the GMAP (see Figure 1) that may be obtained by participation in music activities such as singing, playing, moving and creating in the classroom. The remaining 6 credits must be obtained by participating actively in at least one practice outside the classroom (see Table 1). A maximum of 3 credits can also be earned by participating in another art form.

_____ 5

Table 1 - GMAP credit allocation

GMAP – 16 CREDITS			
A minimum of 9 credits must be obtained for the learner to include the GMAP as part of a national certificate. The allocation of minimum credits is indicated in brackets.			
Unit standards for GMAP Maximum credits: 10 (Minimum credits : 5) No specific order		**Electives** Credits not limited: 6+ (Minimum credits : 4) At least 3 music specific credits	
The following credits can be obtained *only by* practical participation in music-specific activities such as singing, playing, creating and moving during tutoring.		Although there is a choice in performance practice, a minimum of 4 credits has to be earned and this is compulsory to pass the programme.	
Listening Conceptualising Contextualising Analysis Notation/Literacy* * Not only the reading and writing of music, but also developing a vocabulary that can describe the nature of music and encourage informed music choices.	(minimum) 2 credits (1) 2 credits (1) 2 credits (1) 2 credits (1) 2 credits (1)	**Music- specific activities** At least 3 credits	
		Group participation o Choir o Band o Revue o Operetta o Ensemble Solo instrument at NQF level 1+	(minimum) 3 credits (2) 3 credits (2) 3 credits (2) 3 credits (2) 3 credits (2) 6+ credits
		Other art form (optional) A maximum of 3 credits	
		o Dance o Drama o Art	(minimum) 3 credits (1) 3 credits (1) 3 credits (1)

6. OUTCOMES OF THE GMAP CORE CLUSTER

The GMAP consists of five units regarding listening skills, conceptualising, contextualising, analysis and notation within the framework of world music. Each component is supported by specific outcome-statements and their assessment criteria. Table 2 is a condensed version of the suggested core and compulsory unit standards to be included in the GMAP. Although they are presented as different units, the ideal is to integrate them with each other.

Table 2 - GMAP core cluster

GENERAL MUSIC APPRAISAL PROGRAMME & ASSESSMENT: NQF LEVEL 1 / 9 CREDITS TOTAL				
SEGMENT	**CREDITS**	**GENERIC UNIT STANDARD**	**SPECIFIC OUTCOMES**	**ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**
Listening	**2 (1)**	Demonstrate critical aural perception skills.	1. The learners must recognise and describe the following concepts aurally: o Melody o Rhythm o Dynamics o Texture o Tempo o Timbre (tone colour) o Harmony o Form. 2. Recall and reproduce a music excerpt accurately or improvise appropriately using any music means.	1. Recognise and describe music concepts of any music practice by: o Verbal response o Written response. 2. Imitate, reproduce and recall and/or improvise melody and/or rhythm as required after an aural stimulus using any accepted music practice.
Conceptualising	**2 (1)**	Demonstrate understanding of music materials and their relation to each other.	1. Know (recognise), identify, understand, describe and objectify the following concepts: o Melody o Rhythm o Tempo o Dynamics o Timbre o Texture o Harmony o Form. 2. Analyse and describe any given music excerpt according to music concepts.	1. Recognise, identify and describe the following music concepts and their relation to each other: o Melody – contour and shape; steps, leaps and repeats; intervals o Rhythm – notate and/or reproduce a rhythmic pattern of 4 bars. (Specify note values) o Tempo – use of appropriate descriptive music terminology or reproduction in different music contexts o Dynamics – various levels and the changing of dynamic levels in a specific sound context o Timbre – differently sounding instruments and instrumental groups within a specific style o Texture – thick / thin; homophonic / polyphonic o Harmony – be sensitive to harmonic unity and/or changing harmonic progressions o Form – repetition, variation and contrast.

Grové, J.P. 2001. Empowerment through Music Education:

A General Music Appraisal Programme(GMAP) for all Learners in Southern Africa.

Unpublished article, U.P.: Pretoria.

Contextualising	2 (1)	Know and understand musical materials within their milieu.	Know, understand and apply knowledge of any TWO of the following in relation to music practices in Southern Africa: o Music Style & Practice o Historical background o Social context.	The learner will apply 2 of the following to at least 3 different music practices: o Identify the chosen styles & practices aurally o Classify various styles & practices according to similarities and/or differences o Describe the characteristics of the musical style & practice verbally or in written form after aural identification o Explain the social function of the relevant music style and practice o Value, respect and appreciate a variety of musics.

Analysis	2 (1)	Demonstrate an understanding of constituent music materials and their synthesis.	Analyse at least 5 music excerpts of various styles including two indigenous practices of Southern Africa. Apply integrated knowledge of the following segments:
			
			- Context
			- Concepts
			
			o Differentiate between music excerpts according to context
			o Understand music practice in context
			o Simplify music materials according to music concepts
			o Co-ordinate music materials in order to synthesise.
				The learner will be able to (via oral or written response, based on aural discrimination):
				o Identify the following music styles aurally and motivate:
				  - Folk Music
				  - Pop Music
				  - Art Music
				  - S.A. Music
				  - Jazz
				  - Indian Music
				o Interpret the performance practice involved
				o Compare and analyse different music styles & practices with each other based on concepts and context.

Notation/ Literacy	2 (1)	Use symbols to facilitate musical communication.	Interpret and apply at least TWO of the following, one being graphic notation: o graphic notation o staff notation o solfa notation (melody only and/or melody and rhythm integrated) o French rhythm names.	Read and write music notation in relation to aural stimuli o Graphic notation – read & write graphic symbols within a specific sound context o Staff notation – read and write pitch and rhythm accurately according to widely accepted theory rules, including key-signature, time-signature and grouping o Solfa notation – read and write notation of rhythm and relative pitch on a moveable do o French rhythm names – read & apply French rhythm names.

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