

**Keeping Choir in Show Choir: A Qualitative Study on How a Select
Group of Public Secondary School Choral Directors from Various Regions
of the United States Incorporate Choral Methods in Competitive Show Choir**

by

Patrick James McCormick

A dissertation proposal submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Auburn University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Auburn, Alabama
December 9, 2023

Keywords: Choir, Show Choir, Qualitative, Choreography, Vocal

Copyright 2023 by Patrick James McCormick

Approved by

Dr. Jane Kuehne, Chair, Associate Professor of Music Education
Dr. Nancy Barry, Professor of Music Education
Dr. Guy Harrison, Assistant Professor, Violin/Viola, and String Music Education
Dr. Lucretia Octavia Tripp, Associate Professor, Elementary Education

Abstract

“Swing Choir” was first introduced by Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians via the phonograph, radio, synchronized sound, and television in 1949. Since its inception, the evolution of show choir has brought some controversy among music educators. This study aimed to learn how a select group of public secondary school choir and show choir directors from various regions of the United States incorporate choral methods in their respective competitive show choir programs. I recruited rural, suburban, and urban public secondary school choir and show choir directors from various regions of the United States (i.e., West, Midwest, South, and East). I used a semi-structured interview protocol using Zoom and recorded each interview. Data was transcribed and analyzed for codes using ATLAS.ti 9. The study found that participants utilized the same choral methods for both choir and show choir in a rehearsal and performance setting. Music educators hesitant to start or direct show choir because of their controversial views may be more willing to know that choral methods are still highly regarded with show choir.

Acknowledgments

“Our fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.” -Marianne Williamson

I would like to thank Dr. Jane Kuehne, my advisor, my advocate, and my mentor, for always being there for me throughout these past seven years at Auburn University. To my amazing committee members, thank you for always pushing me to the next level. Dr. Nancy Barry, your encouragement and scholarly advice throughout this journey are something that I will never forget. Dr. Guy Harrison, thank you for always supporting me and having the patience to show me how to properly arrange music. Dr. Lucretia Octavia Tripp, thank you for always encouraging me to think critically about everything in life.

To my wife Kaitlyn, thank you for your constant love and support. While the journey was tough at times, it made us stronger in the end. Finally, thank you to my family for your unwavering support.

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Acknowledgments.....	3
List of Tables	8
List of Figures.....	9
Chapter 1 Introduction	10
What is show choir?.....	12
Costumes	13
Repertoire	13
Arrangements.....	13
Accompaniment	14
Crew	14
Show Design.....	15
Choreography.....	16
Visual Design.....	16
Challenges Facing Show Choir Programs	17
Role of the Director.....	18
Need for Study and Research Questions	19
Chapter 2 Review of Related Literature.....	22
Choral Music in the United States	22
Show Choir in the United States.....	29
Chapter 3 Methods	35
Research Design.....	35

Participants	36
Data Collection Protocol	36
Reliability and Trustworthiness	37
Researcher Bias.....	37
Data Collection and Analysis	37
Chapter Four Findings.....	40
Participants	40
Research Question 1	40
Research Question 2: Methods, Instructional Approaches.....	47
Research Question 3.....	55
Production, Design, and Sound.....	55
Arranging and Arrangers	60
Choreography and Choreographers.....	63
Research Question 4.....	64
Making Show Choir a Part of Secondary Schools	65
Funding and Costs.....	70
Advice to Future Choir and Show Choir Directors.....	72
Summary and Conclusions	74
Chapter Five Discussion.....	76
Research Question 2.....	78
Research Question 3.....	79
Research Question 4.....	80
Final Conclusions.....	81

Recommendations for Future Study.....	82
References	84
Appendix B: IRB Information	93
IRB Approval Email.....	93
IRB Approved Invitation Email.....	94
Appendix C: Anonymized Transcripts.....	95
Participant 1 Transcript	95
Participant 2 Transcript	110
Participant 3 Transcript	146
Participant 4 Transcript	167
Participant 5 Transcript	186
Participant 6 Transcript	220
Participant 7 Transcript	239
Participant 8 Transcript	286
Participant 9 Transcript	316
Participant 10 Transcript	336
Appendix D: Anonymized Codes	365
Participant 1 Coding.....	365
Participant 2 Coding.....	367
Participant 3 Coding.....	370
Participant 4 Coding.....	371
Participant 5 Coding.....	373
Participant 6 Coding.....	376

Participant 7 Coding.....	377
Participant 8 Coding.....	380
Participant 9 Coding.....	382
Participant 10 Coding.....	383

List of Tables

Table 1 <i>Data Analysis Plan</i>	39
Table 2 <i>Ensemble Types</i>	47

List of Figures

Figure 1 <i>Public Secondary School Show Choir Programs in the United States by County</i>	11
Figure 2 <i>Dot Distribution of Secondary School Show Choir Programs in the United States.</i>	12
Figure 3 <i>Total Number of Show Choirs Versus Student Population</i>	47

Chapter 1

Introduction

In 2005, show choir became a part of my high school fine arts experience. The shows incorporated simple choreography from VHS videos and pop/holiday stock arrangements. In addition, we were a noncompetitive ensemble that performed for local functions such as Rotary and Lions Club annual events.

In 2018, my understanding of show choir grew through my professional experiences as the choir and show choir director at a rural middle and high school in northeast Alabama. For fifteen years, my musical experiences had been strictly formal choral methods, and it was challenging to change to this new method of musical instruction. My new responsibilities at the rural middle school incorporated a women's ensemble, a mixed ensemble, and a mixed competitive show choir. In addition, my responsibilities at the rural high school included a single-gender, noncompetitive show choir, a junior varsity competitive show choir, and a varsity competitive show choir. My past high school show choir experiences were reflected throughout my first year with poor show design, stock arrangements, and costumes. After watching numerous ensembles throughout our season, it was apparent that the show choir world had become much more than simple choreography and stock arrangements. Show choir has evolved drastically throughout the decades from swing choir to total production with costumes, lights, sets, fog machines, and more.

In 2009, the hit television series "Glee" was released, which heavily influenced the production aspect of show choirs in the United States (Chen, 2010). In 2015, a study found that only 2,307 public secondary schools with at least one show choir in the United States (Mogstad, 2015). The most recent data indicated 1,525 high school and 472 middle school show choirs in

the United States (Show Choir Community, 2002-2020). Figure 1 is a choropleth map, and 1.1 is a dot distribution map that depicts the density of show choirs by county and region throughout the United States as of November 2015.

Figure 1

Public Secondary School Show Choir Programs in the United States by County

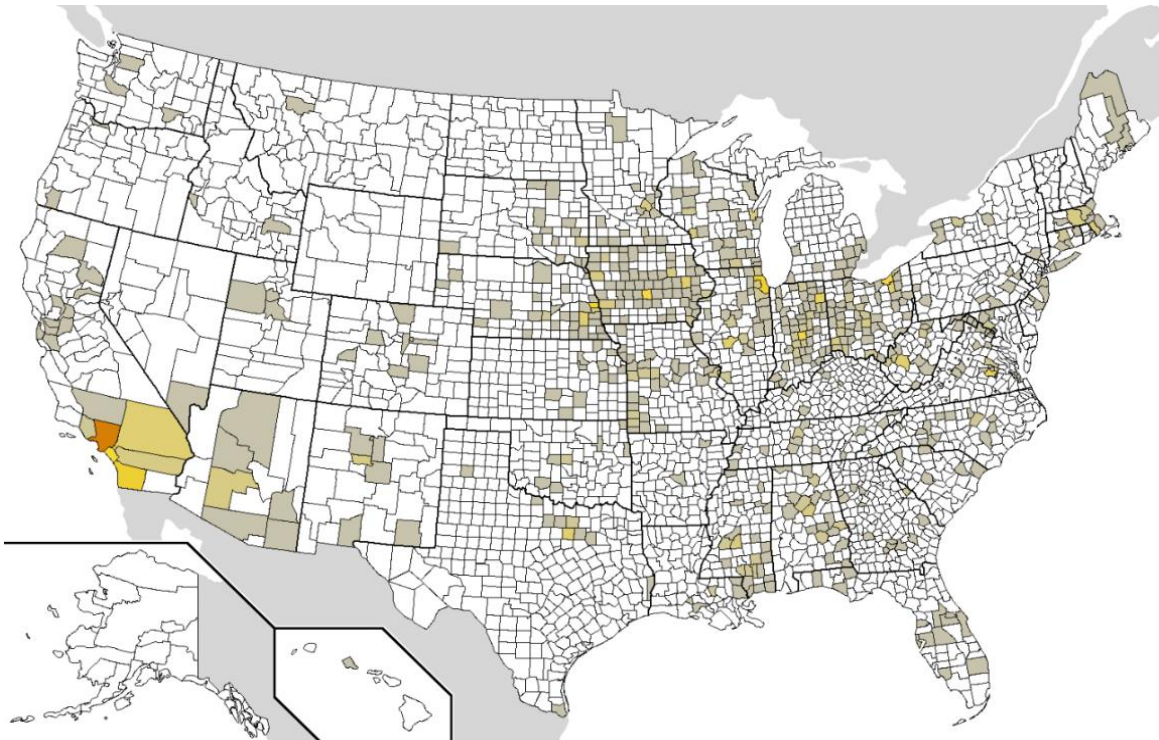
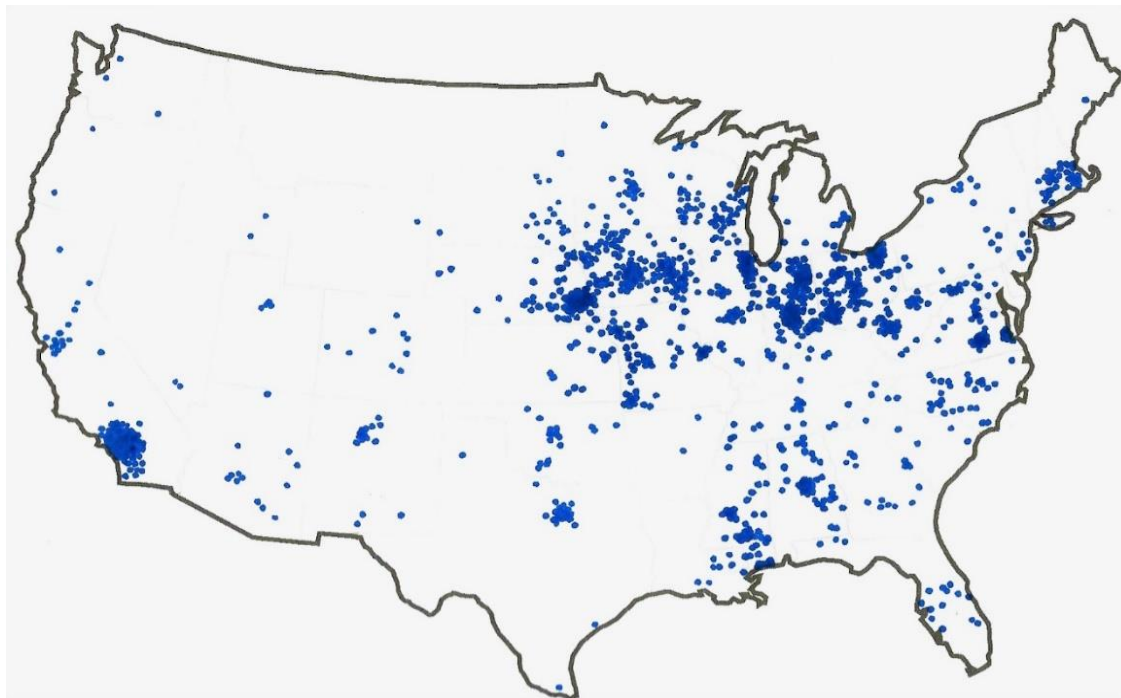


Figure 2

Dot Distribution of Secondary School Show Choir Programs in the United States.



What is show choir?

In 2019, Kindle defined show choir as a well-rounded choral experience that exposed students to different musical genres while allowing for the inclusion of multiple disciplines like dance, band, and theatre (Kindle, 2019, p.8). A show choir ensemble typically consists of thirty to sixty singers and dancers. The school size or directors' preference may affect the size of the ensemble. In addition, schools with more extensive programs may have more than one competitive ensemble. Show choir performances incorporate costumes, live bands, stage crews, and more.

Many show choirs attend various annual competitions from January to April. The competitions are hosted by a high school or organization such as Heart of America and FAME. Competitions may incorporate a few groups from within the state to many groups from multiple

states. Competitions separate competing choirs into different divisions based on gender and ensemble size. In addition, competitions may include a preliminary round and a final round to determine the title of Grand Champion of the contest. Show choirs are judged by choir directors, choreographers, arrangers, or performers from Broadway-style musicals.

Costumes

Show choirs traditionally wear costumes that are representative of their respective show, and they can range from jeans and T-shirts to extravagant period costumes or flashy dancewear with shoes conducive to dancing. Directors and choreographers will typically incorporate two or more costumes in each show. Students often wear stage makeup, much like an actor or actress for a musical production, so their facials can be seen from a distance. Show choirs strive for uniformity with makeup, hair, costumes, and choreography. Many aspects of the show choir's performances are visual, but the ensemble's vocals at competition make up sixty percent of their overall score.

Repertoire

When choosing a repertoire for an upcoming show choir season, it is vital to understand the capabilities and limitations of the ensemble (Lanier & Thomas, 2007, p.36). The repertoire should be diverse and challenging while effectively highlighting the ensemble's talents. In addition, it should promote fluidity, create versatility, support musical growth, and provide the opportunity for a healthy choral blend (Powell, 2010, p.46).

Arrangements

Directors can choose whether to use stock or custom arrangements for their show. Stock arrangements come from music arrangement companies such as James Welsh Pepper and Sons, INC (Son, n.d.). While stock arrangements offer a less expensive route, they often do not support

fluidity and musicality within a show. Custom arrangements will be more expensive, but they will help the show's overall blend, fluidity, and musicality. The process for custom arrangements begins with Tresóna Multimedia, LLC. A director or arranger must obtain the rights to a piece before arranging it. If a director or arranger does not obtain the respective rights to the music, they will be subject to copyright infringement (Tresóna Music, n.d.). The copyright and arranger costs can range from a few hundred to a couple thousand dollars per song.

Accompaniment

Show choir directors and arrangers work collaboratively to create accompaniments to set their ensembles up for success. The accompaniments incorporate a live stage band or prerecorded instrumental tracks. In addition, some programs use a prerecorded instrumental track for rehearsal but work with a live stage band during their performance. There is no fair comparison between live and prerecorded music because professional recording techniques create an instrumental balance that no stage band can replicate. Live and prerecorded tracks can be problematic for ensembles because of the variances between live and prerecorded music.

Crew

The moving parts within a show choir performance call for a stage crew with most show choirs. The stage crew will oversee lighting, sound, and the stage setup so the performers can focus on their show. During a show, the crew may have numerous responsibilities, such as helping performers change costumes, managing props, handing out microphones, running special effects, and other duties in the show's design.

Show Design

Show design is a complex skill set that requires much thought and experience. In addition, show design incorporates show structure/organization, repertoire selection, arrangements, choreography, set design, and more. Directors and choreographers will spend hours creating a show that will highlight the many talents of their ensemble in all facets of the show choir. The show may be presented in many ways, from a more traditional approach to modern theatrical performances that depict an entire story. Competitive show choir shows are fifteen to twenty-five minutes with an overarching theme; therefore, they need to follow an order to ensure fluidity:

- Opener: A fast-tempo piece that introduces the show and gains the audience's attention.
- Supporting Piece: The piece bridges the gap between the opener and the ballad.
- Ballad: A chorally vital piece performed with little to no choreography to highlight the blend of the ensemble.
- Bass Piece: This piece is an opportunity to highlight the tenor and bass voices of the ensemble while allowing time for a costume change.
- Treble Piece: This piece will highlight the soprano and alto voices in the ensemble while allowing time for a costume change.
- Closer: The closer ties the entire show together, and it is an up-tempo song that will have everyone—including the judges—tapping their feet.
- Bows: The bows incorporate a short excerpt of a song from the show, and then the instrumental music will play as the ensemble exits.

In addition to fluidity, show design promotes musicality, facilitating a well-rounded choral performance. While the design of a show choir performance is essential, it is equally crucial for the director to select a repertoire that will adequately reinforce the basics of good vocal techniques (Alder & Mulvihill, 2016, p.125).

Choreography

Show choir choreography must create a visual design for the chosen repertoire. Students should be able to perform their music from memory before adding choreography. The purpose of choreography is to enhance the music without interfering with it. "The rhythmic and harmonic complexity of the music can dictate the level of movement the choir should be able to perform while singing" (Lanier & Thomas, 2007, p. 36). For example, a musical excerpt more vocally demanding of a show choir should use more simplistic choreography. Choir directors must be transparent with their choreographers to support and clear choir fundamentals (Dwiggins, 1984, pp.42-44).

Visual Design

A set is sometimes necessary to convey the theme of a show to the audience. Sets can be expensive, complex to transport, hard to set up, and clunky. In addition, the set design is typically not judged at competitions. The closest category that addresses the set is "design," which seems vague.

A well-designed and integrated set transcends the viewer to a new environment and world where the music is part of the magic. The story benefits from available sets that help the actors deliver the narrative. Thematic shows songs programmed with a connecting through-line can receive help from a more generic "decor" type set. In either case, incorporating a set into a competition show choir helps groups differentiate themselves. A set helps choirs to own the

playing area. This ownership is especially effective for an audience when watching numerous choirs performing back-to-back. Lastly, the use of a set is situational. The more specific the narrative (stylized or period costumes, lead characters, or plot points), the more a set would help the actors tell the story.

Challenges Facing Show Choir Programs

There are many challenges facing the idea of starting a show choir program. Regardless of location, all show choir programs need help. The three most critical obstacles are funding for the show, support from the school and community, and student commitment.

First, fundraising is crucial to the sustainment of a show choir program. Many programs require students to fundraise if they wish to take part. In some programs, parents pay a donation or show choir fee—which can be expensive—for their students to participate. The fees implemented by the school and the program's director may prevent or detour students from joining the show choir. Fundraisers and fees can be a stressful aspect of show choir for everyone involved: students, parents, and directors.

Second, support from parents, the community, and the school is another major catalyst in the sustainability of a show choir program. Community and school support will follow if a choir director can gain parent support. Show choir programs can quickly gain support by performing for various school and community functions. Supporters want to see what their hard-earned money supports rather than unquestioningly giving to some ambiguous program. Also, performances will allow prospective students to see the show, which will help with recruitment in the future.

For many high school students, competitive show choir is a year-round commitment. For some, show choir is part of the school curriculum and is a class taught during the day. For others, it is an extracurricular activity that requires practice to take place before or after school.

Role of the Director

The role of a show choir director needs to be understood. The many responsibilities—designing the show, directing the ensemble, and conducting the stage band—can be overwhelming. Many directors believe they must do everything to be successful, which proves impossible. A director must delegate various responsibilities. Once a director learns the art of delegation, he or she can focus primarily on his or her respective ensembles.

Directors play a vital role as leaders and visionaries. They bring music to life for the members of their ensembles and their audiences. Their artistic collaboration with the performers, composers, and arrangers redefines the music through the performance. An influential director will realize that, with the performers, they would have the opportunity to see their creative ideas come to life (Pendowski, 2019, pp.63-64). Therefore, one seeking to become a choral or show choir director must first understand his or her role as an individual, music educator, and leader. Being confident in oneself as a director will transfer to his or her students, who will then be able to display their confidence to the audience. Also, a director who can own his or her vulnerabilities is well-poised for internal and external growth as a person, educator, and musician.

Music is a communicative art. Directors should be bold in sharing their interpretation of and connection to the music with their ensembles. While the director's interpretation may differ from that of his or her students, sharing it will show them that their director commands a complete understanding of their repertoire. In 2021, Platte, Lauber, Willimann, Schuldt-Jensen,

and Gollhofer conducted a study that explored choir singers' breathing techniques and habits. Their study aimed to find potential correlations between students' breathing techniques and the preparatory gestures of the conductor (Platte et al., 2021, pp.1-2). The data from the study supported the ideology that a vast majority of singers associate conducting gestures with varied types of inhalations, which can influence singing technique and sound quality.

While the elements of show choir previously stated are equally important, they often precede the fundamental choral practices established by the Eurocentric canon. It is essential to reiterate the choral tendencies of the past so that future ensembles fully understand how to implement the basics of choral music in their show.

Need for Study and Research Questions

While there is a substantial amount of research regarding choral curriculum in music education, there needs to be more research on how those methods are incorporated in show choir. This study will discuss the purpose of the competitive show choir's role in the choral curriculum. Through virtual interviews, research will find how a select group of public secondary school choral directors from various regions of the United States incorporate choral methods in their respective competitive show choir programs. The following research questions will be a guide to a better understanding of show choir's role in music education:

- RQ1: To what degree have your experiences with concert and show choir ensembles shaped your career in music education?
- RQ2: Which foundational elements of traditional choral methods do you emphasize with your show choir?
- RQ3: Do the production aspects of show choir affect the choral sound?
- RQ4: How can show choir become more accessible to public secondary schools?

Limitations and Delimitations

This study yielded a non-random sample. The geographical locations of participants may present barriers and constraints that limit my ability to conduct the current study promptly. Using Zoom could have presented technical challenges during the interview. External characteristics such as mannerisms and time of day affect participants' responses. For example, an obligation following the interview could affect a participant's comfort level or ability to be thorough due to insufficient time.

As a delimitation, I recruited participants based on geographical location (i.e., North, South, East, and West), years of experience as a public secondary school music educator, and competitive show choir.

Definition of Terms

- **Conducting:** A non-verbal language of communication, used in both rehearsal and performance, allowing the body to vividly respond to the detailed expectation of the music, inviting the ensemble to follow unequivocally (Haithcock, Doyle, Gerald, & Schwiebert, 2020, pp.13-14).
- **Non-verbal Communication:** "Nonverbal communication—in the form of conducting, body language, and other physical or social cues—plays a powerful role in large ensemble classrooms. Even before conducting the first downbeat of a rehearsal or concert, nonverbal communication is at work" (Roseth, 2016, pp.85-86).
- **Verbal Communication:** "Talking about choral singing as a process of creating communication and accepting knowledge means trying to present the mutual relationship between the members of a choir, the pupils, and the conductor-teacher. Singing is an idealized speech that transmits ideas, thoughts, and information by

symbols. Choral singing stands for a system of communication (multi-personal and interactive) where several people-communicators, each one with their position, make a tie in a communicational net in which acquiring knowledge is achieved" (Biljana, 2011, p.1).

- **Show Choir:** A well-rounded choral experience that exposed students to different musical genres while allowing for the inclusion of multiple disciplines like dance, band, and theatre (Kindle, 2019, p.8).

Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

The study of choral methods has been researched to great lengths. Various facets of choral music education, such as show choir, have changed over the past few decades. The evolution of choral music education has forced music educators to realign their instructional approaches. This chapter includes literature regarding choral music education concerning competitive secondary school show choir.

The literature reviewed in this chapter was compiled by using the following.

Databases: Auburn Libraries, Google, Music Educators Journals, ERIC, JSTOR, The Choral Journal, The International Journal of Research, SAGE, Journal of Voice, Journal of Education and Learning, American Choral Directors Association, The Show Choir Community, and the Journal of Research in Music Education. Both broad and more precise search terms were used, including choral methods, show choir, rehearsal practices, choral director, choral music, choral setting, choral, students, choreography, conductor, conductor behavior, music education, ensemble types, extrinsic motivation, participation in music, motivation in music, motivation in choral music, music, participate in music, preference in music, preference in choral ensembles, preference in choirs, repertoire choral, show choir repertoire and arrangement.

Choral Music in the United States

We know that the Boston School Committee allowed Lowell Mason to teach music in the Hawes School in 1837, and it is regarded as the first-time music education was introduced to public schools in the United States (Howe, 1992, p.316). While there is substantial research regarding elements of choral methods in music education, there needs to be more research on how those methods are incorporated into show choir.

Music can be a universal language, but it speaks to everyone in separate ways. Choir and show choir ensembles allow individuals to find gratification in being a part of something bigger than themselves. It is vital to make instructional adjustments to all students' musical learning styles and abilities (Wagner-Yeung, 2017).

A 2003 study by Chorus America, an advocacy, research, and leadership organization, found that approximately 23.5 million adults sang for some choral organization (Gereben, 2011). Bell (2004) found a correlation between choral participation in grade school and adult choral participation (Bell, 2004, pp.42-43). Gereben (2011) found that adult participation in choral ensembles had almost doubled to 42.6 million (Gereben, 2011). While choral ensemble participation had grown over the past decades among adults, there needed to be more interest among adolescents.

The overarching goal is to connect schools and communities to engage the "whole student," both at school and in the community (University of South Florida & Snowden, 2003, p.7). Even with concerted efforts to encourage school and community support for the fine arts, there has been a considerable disconnect between young choir students and traditional choral music. Bridging that gap challenges music educators to successfully incorporate many learning styles into everyday instruction. The varying learning styles include but are not limited to visual, verbal, aural, physical, logical, social, and solitary (Gumm, 2003, pp.10-14). With elective educators having some of the largest classes in their respective schools, it is challenging to find each student's niche (Showchoir.com: The Show Choir Community, 2002). Music educators must make music more relevant to adolescents by incorporating innovative ideas and teaching methods.

For Example, Paul Hill developed a course that implemented a micro lesson into each choral rehearsal to enable the transfer of learning music more accurately within a rehearsal (Hill, 2009, pp.13-14). After several weeks, Hill noticed a considerable increase in application and musical understanding.

Choral rehearsals can be demanding, stressful, and unsuccessful without structure. There are numerous ways to structure a choral rehearsal, but only some universal approaches work for everyone. Rohwer (2011) conducted a study regarding rehearsal techniques that found splitting rehearsals into small, sequenced steps enhanced the understanding of musical concepts taught (Rohwer, 2011, pp.54-56). Rohwer broke down music to an understandable level, which created productive and successful learning. In addition, Hart & Weaver (2011) found that dividing a fifteen-minute warmup into five segments, each focusing on breath control, blend, and kinesthetic movement, kept students engaged and able to retain more information (Hart & Weaver, 2011).

In 2000, a study researched how a semi-structured rehearsal, combined with the conductor's people skills and the music's expressivity, can create a life-changing, aesthetic experience for students. In this light, student perception of these factors is crucial. Psychological research indicates lasting judgments about a particular person or context within the first few minutes (Ambady & Skowronski, 2008). If the challenge for conductors is to find ways to engage their singers to create meaningful art and experiences, the chosen structure of rehearsal priorities and approaches is critical.

Many directors focus on certain choral elements (i.e., balance/blend, diction, dynamics, interpretation/musicianship, intonation, rhythm, technique, and tone quality), one at a time, to achieve what they feel is the ideal choral product. This teaching style is a micro-macro approach,

starting from the musical details and moving to the whole picture (Cappadonia, 1970, pp.9-10). Other music educators begin with a more holistic macro-micro approach, addressing historical context, textual meaning, and overall aesthetics before attending to musical elements. Collins (1999) found that once an ensemble master's the essential choral musical elements, it can have aesthetic experiences with advanced practices, using artistic phrasing and precise intonation (Collins, 1999).

A 1993 study revealed a strong positive correlation between the emphasis on choral musical elements and the development of vocal attributes (Ulrich, 1993, pp.34-35). While much is about choral technique, there needs to be more research regarding musical elements used to create the choral sound in a rehearsal setting. Thurman (1977) found that phrasing, dynamics, and rhythmic time were the most emphasized elements in rehearsal, whereas tone color was the least (Thurman, 1977, pp.3-8). A study by Caldwell (1980) found that pitch was the essential element of music (Florida State University & Caldwell, 1980, pp.82-85). Moore (1995) conducted a study that concurred with Caldwell's findings that pitch was important, but he added the elements of timbre and rhythm (Moore, 1995, p.2). Moore (2008) suggested good reasons to study the technical and expressive elements of the choral rehearsal process. In examining the dichotomy between the two regarding successful choral ensemble experiences, he found that regardless of the element priorities or processes, the "simple idea of communicating those ideas successfully " was the overriding factor in creating a successful choral ensemble" (Moore, 2008).

In 2010, Ganschow conducted a pilot study to explore secondary school choral directors' fundamental choral rehearsal technique priorities. Ganschow found that, while listening to and performing choral music, participants reported intonation as an essential element and dynamics as the least essential element of focus (Ganschow, 2013, pp.52-63). Also, Ganschow found that

secondary school choral directors focused on the following seven fundamental choral elements: rhythm, pitch, dynamics, blend, balance, phrasing, and diction. Ganschow conducted a follow-up study researching the importance of fundamental choral elements from a student's point of view. Choir students were to evaluate four directors. Directors had eight minutes to rehearse a preselected piece of music. The students evaluated each director's rehearsal focus, strengths, weaknesses, and level of efficacy. This study found that vocal dynamics were the director's primary focus. Each director will focus on various choral fundamentals, but his or her intent must be communicated to the ensemble (Ganschow, 2013, pp.52-63).

A director's approach to rehearsal is a large aspect of the ensemble's success. Ganschow (2013) found that directors who use a macro-micro rehearsal approach tend to have a premeditated choral sound, while a director with a micro-macro approach does not have an excellent choral sound in mind. In addition, a micro-macro director brought the best choral sound to fruition by carefully working through the fundamentals. In 2013, Ganschow concluded, "Persistent demands for the acquisition of specific vocal techniques will result in a highly predictable quality of choral tone which will usually function more successfully with some musical styles than with others" (Ganschow, 2013, pp.52-63). These studies confirmed that repertoire choices correlate with emphasizing fundamental choral elements, including blend and balance, diction, dynamics, interpretations and musicianship, intonation, rhythm, technique, and tone quality.

Florida State University and Caldwell (1980) conducted a study on secondary school choral directors focusing primarily on intonation in daily rehearsals. The study directly compared verbal behavior and directors' time on pitch accuracy (Florida State University & Caldwell, 1980, p.82). The study found a consensus among experts in choral music that intonation is a

crucial factor in choral performance quality (Garretson, 1998). Choir and show choir requires abstract thinking regarding the music and work on—and ask for—elements not on the physical page (Taebel & Coker, 1980, p.252). It is crucial to understand how various musical elements impact each other. Gaier and Dellas (1971) conducted a study regarding secondary music educators' varied instructional choral approaches and practices. The study found that numerous secondary schools used a micro-macro approach. For example, middle school students need peer interaction and concept formation opportunities. As adolescents neurologically develop, middle school choral directors must provide a more comprehensive approach to music by implementing an experiential learning structure rather than an intricately detailed dissection of the music (Gaier & Dellas, pp.117-123).

Directors' priorities and approaches will often differ between various repertoires. Gaier & Dellas (1971) discovered an inverse relationship between the daily alteration of rehearsal priorities and the choice of repertoire based on a premeditated choral sound. Directors who changed their rehearsal priorities daily focused less on the consistency of the choral blend and more on their preconceived choral blend, which met the director's personal needs of the repertoire (Gaier & Dellas, pp.117-123).

Hoffer (2000) found directors' fundamental choral philosophies in their teaching behaviors and repertoire selection (Hoffer, 2000). In addition, directors chose a repertoire that would support their desires regarding tone quality and style. While practicing preferred tone quality and style, the directors rehearsed other choral elements that facilitated tone quality and stylistic growth. Additionally, Hoffer (2000) found that not all directors were on board with a varied repertoire approach, and they found it best for students to stay consistent because the choral sound supersedes the type of repertoire. The research from the consistent directors

triggered more thoughts to add to the ongoing academic conversation on performance practice ideas in a rehearsal setting (Hoffer, 2000). Killian & Wilkins (2009) researched various influences shaping how directors approached rehearsals. The research suggested that professional development conferences and continued education impacted most directors. Further research has exhibited that those who collaborate closely with a mentor are more effective teachers (Killian & Wilkins, 2009, pp.67-83).

"Professional influences" were not the only factor that played a role in the director's instructional methods, but they shaped whether directors continued in the profession (Killian & Wilkins, 2009, pp.67-83). All educators need to understand that, with teaching influences such as a mentor or co-teacher, they build upon their foundation with new knowledge that will allow them to create a classroom environment conducive to success. Prior research has found discrepancies between music educator attrition and the need for more support from veteran educators. In addition, differences were found between music educators with ten or more and fewer than ten years of teaching experience. The study found that directors with ten or more years of experience gained more from observations, conferences, and continued education. The less experienced directors (fewer than ten years) found that they were influenced the most by role models such as secondary school and college directors. These findings parallel extant research that supports the idea that teachers hold specific ideas about the profession based on their experiences as a pupil (Killian & Wilkins, 2009, pp.67-83).

Wagner & Strul (1979) researched an equal proportion of secondary school choral directors across the United States. Results were impacted by sample size and potential bias. The study found variances in a director's rehearsal behaviors and fundamental choral priorities with some similarities (Wagner & Strul, 1979, pp.113-125). By recognizing the rehearsal and choral

similarities, music educators can better meet the needs of their choir students. By understanding music educators' rehearsal tendencies, more time can be invested in educating preservice music educators. New knowledge brings new opportunities for educators to engage their students in higher-level thinking and rationalization.

Show Choir in the United States

Swing choir began primarily in the midwestern United States during the mid-1960s, but historians have been unable to identify a singular date and location of the first "true" show choir ensemble. In 1962, The Young Americans were the first touring swing choir ensemble, followed by Up with People in 1968, which traveled nationally and internationally in the 1960s and 1970s, performing shows like the show choir concept (Youngamericans.org: The Young Americans, 2022). The show choir concept quickly became appealing to students and directors.

In 1974, the first high school swing choir invitational was held at Bishop Luers High School in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and the school's swing choir hosted it called "The Minstrels" (Weaver & Hart, 2011). Bishop Luers hosted numerous show choir programs, but "The 26th Street Singers" from Marion High School, under the direction of teacher F. Ritchie Walton, took center stage by introducing a new style of show choir which incorporated drum breaks, transitions, and choreographed songs with modern, tap, and other dance styles. The Avant-Garde show choir concepts led the group to win the year's grand championship trophy at Bishop Luers (Weaver & Hart, 2011).

From 1975 to 1980, the show choir "movement" made its way across the United States, and it was met with resistance from music educators because of the potential uses and abuses (Tiboris, 1983, pp.21-31). In 1981, Gordon Paine categorized show choir in commercial music because of its use of microphones, costumes, sound reinforcement systems, popular music,

choreography, and other factors. This label questioned the show choir's role in music education (Paine, 1981, pp.5-6).

During the 1980s, show choir had many uses, but it had abuses, too. Music educators viewed show choir as an excellent way to showcase an ensemble's talent, but it promoted improper vocal technique (Tiboris, 1983, pp.21-31). In 2011, Rob Lawrence and Karen Dollins stated that a show choir is like a "front porch," and there is not one "front porch" that will look the same as another (Lawrence & Dollins, 2011, p. 53). Show choir may place unnecessary stress on students to win, which can put them in a position to fail. For this reason, some music educators question the role of show choir's role in music education.

While show choir can have a "dark side," it can help young choir students. Kirby Shaw and Ken Thomas (2007) discussed show choir and the benefits of competitions for choir students and music education. Shaw was adamant that, as a teaching tool, competitions are not conducive to success for two reasons. "First, music is a gift of life and expression which should foster self-discovery instead of the feeling of defeat. Secondly, Shaw found competitions incredibly biased, which does not facilitate the mindset young choristers should have about choral music—or music in general (Shaw & Thomas, 2005, p. 107). Thomas posed his inquiries with much thought, allowing readers to understand Shaw's point of view even if they disagreed (Shaw & Thomas, 2005, pp. 107-109).

The American Choral Directors Association constitution, Article II, number 4, states, "To foster and promote the organization and development of choral groups of all types in schools and colleges." (Spradling, 2000) In the summer of 1999, at Show Choir Camps of America, 300 choir directors from thirty states discussed "activities of the repertoire and standards chaired to date on behalf of show choirs, ways to continue to open the lines of communication between ACDA and

show choir directors, advocacy, and the need for show choir national standards of excellence." (Spradling, 2000, pp.39-41) Participants incorporated in the discussion brought to light the following important issues surrounding show choir: "1. The show choir movement stemmed from the Fred Warring organization, and it did not parallel the roots of marching band. 2. Show choir is the only training ground for college-bound students pursuing musical theater or commercial music. 3. Schools expect choir directors to have prior knowledge about show choir. 4. More musical integrity is needed from instrumentalists and singers. 5. The idea that all-state show choirs are part of the choral landscape 6. Show choir directors need to be visible. 7. Choral directors should attend festivals so that the quality of their choral program may be observed." (Spradling, 2000, pp.39-41)

In 2005, the American Choral Directors Association convention, held in Los Angeles, California, properly showcased show choir on stage for the first time. The convention manifested a long-term perspective regarding the future role of show choir in music education (Shaw & Thomas, 2005, pp. 107-109).

In the years that followed the convention, the demand for show choir increased because of popular shows such as Glee, American Idol, and The Voice. Even so, show choir is not offered in most public secondary schools in the United States because of the lack of financial support and time.

In 2006, Ken Thomas published an article in *The Choral Journal* titled "Show Choirs: Another Choir? How About a Show Choir?" Thomas provided valuable advice to novice show choir directors regarding "how to" incorporate a show choir in their respective choral programs. Thomas gave the following suggestions to choral directors with show choirs: "Audition your singers, focus on the group's strengths, always put music first, use appropriate staging and

choreography, decide instrumentation, choose appropriate performance attire, stage presence, and communication, and always be disciplined. Thomas found that choir directors are afraid to step outside of the box away from traditional choir. He challenged choral directors by stating, "You will never know what a show choir can do for your choral program until you give it a try." (Thomas, 2006, pp.45-46)

Alder (2012) found that the show choir genre is not incorporated in the choral music education curriculum (Alder, 2012). Most first-year secondary public school choral directors are well-versed in various musical genres and techniques to perform those genres. However, they are thrust into show choir programs with no prior experience. The lack of experience creates a problematic environment for the first-year choral director and students who expect an artistic product to be made in this "new American modern choral genre" (Alder, 2012). Alder (2012) suggested that young directors should reach out to veteran show choir directors who have established themselves in the show choir world so that they may learn "how to" do show choir properly.

In 2020, Jen Randall published her book called *The Art of Competitive Show Choir: The Why, What, and How of Making Better Musicians and Humans*. Randall defined a *show choir* as "a mid-sized ensemble, often mixed, that includes both singing and dancing to choral music" (Randall, 2020). Also, Randall found that the following were key ingredients for a successful choral program: "1. Pop music can be used as a tool to teach stylized singing and harmonies, intervals, and rhythmic patterns less common to traditional choral music. 2. Give your program an ensemble that uses widely known commercial music to draw in your community and audiences for more than just a "pop show." 3. Show choir creates social and emotional connections and experiences that support all facets of your program, not just show choir."

(Randall, 2020) Furthermore, Randall (2020) discussed how elements of show choir, such as "stylized vocals, ear training, and sight reading," advocated for better musicianship among show choir students. In addition, Randall (2020) found that "music literacy is declining, people cannot learn if they are not present, and concert attendance rises with pop event additions." (Randall, 2020) Lastly, Randall stated, "The amount of time in rehearsal and style of work in show choir lends itself to bonding and teamwork in a way that is hard to replicate in other choral forms." (Randall, 2020) Show choir offers students life skills. However, they will never have the opportunity if their directors do not take the advice of Thomas (2006) and "give it a try" (Thomas, 2006, pp.45-46).

In 2021, John Paul Stephens explored how members of a choir navigated through times when they felt that their collective performance was fragmented or falling apart. Stephens found that choirs can adapt their behaviors by being more attentive and aware, which facilitates an aesthetic experience and collective performance for everyone. In addition, Stephens stated, "embodied forms of cognition complement accounts of how representational forms of knowledge facilitate real-time adaptation in groups." (Stephens, 2021, p.1)

Conclusion

This review of related literature regarding competitive secondary school show choir has broadly defined and examined show choir's role in music education. This study aimed to understand better how to intertwine choral methods and competitive show choir while bridging the gap between traditional concert choir and competitive show choir programs. Choral methods have been researched in depth over the past decades but show choir has made it challenging for researchers to stay current with the latest data because it is constantly evolving each year. In addition, there has been little or no research regarding how prominent secondary show choir

directors incorporate choral methods in their respective competitive show choir programs. The lack of research pertaining to show choir is the reason that this study was executed.

Chapter 3

Methods

The purpose of this study was to discuss how a select group of public secondary school choral directors from various regions of the United States incorporate choral methods in their respective competitive show choir programs. This study used a qualitative research approach through semi-structured interviews. This chapter outlines the methodology used in this current study, beginning with a research description. Next, the participants are discussed, followed by an overview of the data collection instrument, a discussion of reliability and trustworthiness, and a description of the data collection administration. The chapter concludes with a detailed overview of the analysis methods.

Research Design

This study used qualitative research methods to transcribe, code, and analyze data collected from a scheduled semi-structured web-based interview. Denzin (2001) found that using a qualitative research approach provided a more detailed description of participants' emotions, opinions, and experiences while interpreting their actions (Denzin, 2001). Klein & Myers (1999) found that qualitative research incorporates many epistemological viewpoints, research methods, and interpretive techniques for understanding human experiences. The interpretive approach is ideographic research, which analyzes individual cases that understand various voices and meanings (Klein & Myers, 1999, p.67).

While the qualitative research approach has many advantages, it can sometimes be challenging to define because it needs its theory, paradigm, or set of methods and practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The disadvantages of qualitative research start with dismissing potential contextual sensitivities while focusing on meaning and experiences. Scholars view

qualitative research as having low credibility and disregarding social and cultural constructions of the variables incorporated in the study. Another disadvantage of qualitative research is the smaller sample size, which introduces the issue of generalizability to the entire population (Rahman, 2016, p.102; Thomson, 2011, pp.77-82). Flick (2015) found that transcribing and coding for each interview can take considerable time, with results representing only a fragment of the entire population (Flick, 2015).

Participants

In March 2021, I dispersed a feeler email to prospective participants regarding the potential opportunity to be incorporated into this study. Following our discussions, I established two criteria for participating in this study. Participants needed (a) 10 or more years teaching choir in a secondary-level school and (b) 10 or more years teaching/directing competitive show choir. In addition, this study employed purposive sampling to recruit directors. The sample size of ten preselected participants from various regions of the United States presents potential bias because their responses may need to align with other directors in their respective regions. Also, external factors such as mannerisms and time of day may affect the participants' responses.

Data Collection Protocol

I gathered the information needed for this study through a semi-structured web-based interview. The interview included four overarching research questions that discussed the participant's experiences with choir and show choir, instructional choral methods, production aspects, choral sound and show choir accessibility.

I used a web-based interview due to the varied geographical location of the participants. In addition, using Zoom Video Communications promoted convenience for both the participant and me.

Reliability and Trustworthiness

Creswell & Poth (2017) found that reliability in qualitative research is based on the consistency of responses from many data set coders. Furthermore, thorough field notes, recording equipment, and transcription software, such as ATLAS.ti 9, could improve reliability. Lincoln, Guba, and Pilotta stated that trustworthiness was achieved by "credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in qualitative research" (Lincoln et al., 1985, p. 438). This study demonstrated reliability and trustworthiness through narrative analysis, member checking, and phenomenological research approach (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Furthermore, a thick description was employed to ensure the findings could be transferred between the participant and myself.

Researcher Bias

The interview protocol was meticulously followed to avoid researcher bias. Furthermore, I reduced my bias by asking the stated research questions and sub-categorical research questions without editing them based on participant. Researcher bias was also considered as I read through and analyzed the data. I attempted to set aside my thoughts during this phase to ensure data were analyzed with an objective lens.

Data Collection and Analysis

The interviews took place over two weeks. A month before the interviews, I sent prospective participants an invitation email, including an information letter, an estimated interview completion time, interview protocol, and the Google form link that will allow the participant to schedule their interview formally.

The interviews were conducted in my office behind closed doors with participants at varying locations. The interview video and audio recordings were stored on a password-protected

personal laptop. This qualitative study did not pose any ethical threats, but it did present a slight risk of breach of confidentiality regarding the location of the interview and data storage.

Participants did not receive compensation for their time in this study.

The data collected was downloaded from Zoom into an MPEG Audio Layer-3 (MP3) file and transcribed using the auto-text from Zoom. I then corrected the text based on listening to the recordings. I used ATLAS.ti 9 to analyze the data.

First, I transcribed the data from each interview. Next, I sent the transcripts to each participant for member checking and verification purposes to ensure that their words were accurately represented in the interview and transcription. Once the participants approved their respective transcripts, I attempted to use the software's auto-coding feature to determine a starting point. I then read the data twice more, coding each time, and I compared my codes with the software-generated codes and determined which codes were valid and which were not. Finally, I took codes and grouped them by what I thought were themes in the data, paying careful attention to the research questions I was hoping to answer.

Narrative, content, and discourse analysis were used to describe results. Narrative analysis focuses on reporting the personal experiences of people (Creswell & Baez, 2021; Silverman, 2013). Discourse analysis focuses on the conversation, the "talk," as a social process (Potter, J.). On the micro level, content analysis identifies existing words, themes, or categories found in the data, allowing for counting the instances throughout the data (Silverman, 2013). More specifically, I used narrative analysis for RQ1 (To what degree have your experiences with concert and show choir ensembles shaped your career in music education?) To analyze RQ2 (Which foundational elements of traditional choral methods do you emphasize with your show choir?), I used content analysis to categorize verbal or behavioral to summarize data. In addition,

I used discourse analysis to summarize specific topics that naturally occurred throughout this portion of the interviews. Content analysis was also used for RQ3 (Do the production aspects of show choir affect the choral sound?) to determine how directors communicate the idea of a healthy choral sound with their respective choreographers. Narrative, discourse, and content analysis were used to analyze RQ4 (RQ4: How can show choir become more accessible to public secondary schools?). See Table 1 for a summary of the research questions, interview protocol questions, type of data, and data analysis procedure.

Table 1

Data Analysis Plan

Research Question:	Interview Protocol Question:	Data Analysis Procedure:
RQ1: To what degree have your experiences with concert and show choir ensembles shaped your career in music education?	1.1 Briefly discuss your educational and professional experiences regarding secondary music education. 1.2 How many ensembles do you direct? 1.3 Are your ensembles mixed or single gender?	<i>ATLAS.ti 9-</i> Narrative Analysis
RQ2: Which foundational elements of traditional choral methods do you emphasize with your show choir?	2.1. What instructional approaches do you use during rehearsals? 2.2. Does your instructional approach differ between concert and show choir instruction? 2.3. What is your yearly process for each of your ensembles?	<i>ATLAS.ti 9-</i> Content and Discourse Analysis
RQ3: Do the production aspects of show choir affect the choral sound?	3.1 How do you discuss choral technique and sound with your choreographer? 3.2 Why is show design important in show choir? 3.3 In what ways do you use visual design to convey the theme or message of your show? 3.4 What is your process for music arrangements?	<i>ATLAS.ti 9-</i> Content Analysis
RQ4: How can show choir become more accessible to public secondary schools?	4.1: Why is show choir an asset to public secondary music education? 4.2: Why do you think most public secondary schools do not have a show choir? 4.3: How have you funded and sustained your program? 4.4 What is your advice to future concert and show choir directors?	<i>ATLAS.ti 9-</i> Narrative, Content, and Discourse Analysis

Chapter Four

Findings

This study aimed to determine how a select group of public secondary school choir and show choir directors from various regions of the United States incorporate choral methods in their respective competitive show choir programs. The study was also designed to educate and advocate for show choir in public secondary music education throughout the United States.

Participants

A total of ten participants participated in this study. The researcher conducted interviews through Zoom using a semi-structured interview protocol prepared by the investigator (see Appendix A). This study included participants from various regions throughout the United States. The interview transcripts were transcribed and coded using ATLAS.ti 9. Once transcribed, the transcripts were sent to all participants so they could review them for accuracy. By reviewing the transcripts, participants could add or strike anything from the interview. All participants verified their transcripts, and the only corrections made to the transcripts were minor grammatical errors during the transcription process.

Research Question 1

The first research question was, *To what degree have your experiences with concert and show choir ensembles shaped your career in music education?* Data for the first sub-categorical research question (*Can you briefly discuss your educational and professional experiences regarding secondary music education?*) indicated that, when combined, participants had over two hundred years of educational and professional experience. In addition, all participants obtained a bachelor's degree, and five of the ten participants received a master's degree or higher from varying colleges and universities throughout the United States. For most participants,

becoming a music educator was the plan the entire time, but some participants were either professional musicians or bi-vocational before entering the classroom. Regardless of a participant's path to music education, their educational and professional experiences as a student, teacher, and musician contributed to their success as a music educator. Data for the second and third sub-categorical questions research questions (*How many ensembles do you direct? and Are your ensembles mixed or single gender?*) revealed that each participant had between one to four mixed, treble, and bass ensembles. In addition, three of the ten participants directed four ensembles with an even split of two mixed and two treble or bass.

Participant One's journey to becoming a music educator began in the Fall of 1970. The participant stated,

I am the poster child of taking my time and not realizing what I wanted to do. I attended several different universities and educational institutions, and I think it was the last year and a half that I called my mom and said, you know, I want to be a teacher.

Before becoming a music educator, this person worked in the church. Specifically, Participant One led many revivals and evangelical concerts in the church, but their professional performance experience was described as "minimal" with some musical theatre. The experiences of the past allowed Participant One to have great success in leading two mixed show choirs throughout their career as a music educator.

Participant Two had a similar path to Participant One in that they both did not become music educators at first in their careers. Participant Two's track incorporated numerous experiences that would equip them to become a successful music educator. Participant Two went back in time to discuss where it all started,

I should start by saying I was in a highly effective high school program, and I was a member of a very comprehensive choral and instrumental program. During that time, I was fortunate to be able to do both band and choir because it sometimes was unusual in some schools scheduling-wise, but I was very fortunate. I had great instructors, and we were exposed to different music. We did show choir, but we did a little bit of everything, too, such as vocal jazz, baroque music, you name it. We did it. I got a great start, and I always credit a lot of, I think, who I am as a conductor in terms of myself to my high school choral director.

In high school, Participant Two began working professionally with studio and live music recording for industrial, corporate, and local shows. Following high school, Participant Two discussed undergraduate school, stating,

Originally, I went to ____ University for commercial music, which is arranging, producing, and performing kind of all wrapped up into one. I was there for a year, and I did not feel like I was growing. I ended up moving to _____, TN, where I became a Union pianist and vocalist in studios and live performances with some shows and things.

Participant Two discussed their experience in Tennessee as a professional musician by saying, "...you know, you really learn in that environment when you get thrown into it, you just learn what you need to do and what the parameters are. It certainly was a big education for me."

Following a few years as a professional musician, this person returned to college and obtained a license to teach. They mentioned,

I was doing a lot of work with friends, choral programs that I had grown up with that would invite me in to come in and do a clinic or a workshop or something, but I did not have the piece of paper that said I could do it on my own. I went to Graduate School at

___ University. In their master's choral conducting program while I was there, I took on a part-time high school job that I was reluctant to do, but I loved it, and they said, would you stay another year, like a full year instead of part-time? I said yes! And the next thing I know, I have been there six years.

Participant Two has since moved on from the first opportunity in the Midwest to directing one mixed and two treble ensembles on the West Coast for the past twenty years. Prior to March 2020, Participant Two was directing a total of seven ensembles each show choir season.

Participant Three indicated that they had just finished year eighteen in music education. The participants' primary focus has been choir over the past eighteen years, but they "have taught other classes like class piano, rock history, percussion methods, band, and a bunch of other things." In addition, they hold a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Vocal Music Performance. "I have a Bachelor of Fine Arts in vocal music performance and a Master of Arts in Educational Policy and Administration" and "I had a brief stint of having an additional elementary assignment added to my teaching schedule for a couple of years where I did elementary music, but it has been by and large, high school music. Participant Three currently directs four choirs in total, with one mixed, one treble or bass show choir, and two concert choirs.

Participant Four indicated that they had directed choirs, show choirs, and musicals for over thirty years as a music educator. In addition, Participant Four stated, "I went to my first teaching job, which is teaching 6th-12th in a small town in Iowa for ten years, and then following that, I moved to _____ High School in _____, Nebraska and just finished year 25." The participant reflected on the past year, stating, "I mean, it has all been in the schools, you know, directing choirs and show choirs and musicals and all that fun stuff." Currently, the participant directs two concert choirs, with one auditioned and two show choirs, with both auditioned. In

addition, the participant directs a freshman choir that is open to anyone who wishes to participate. In total, the participant's school has two mixed show choirs, one treble show choir, and a concert choir that competes at state assessment.

Participant Five indicated they double majored in vocal performance and music education. In addition, they hold a degree in leadership and administration with no desire to become an administrator because becoming an administrator would focus on "Everything about teaching that I do not like, which is all of the red tape and rules and bureaucracy, and not anything that I do like, which is the time with the kids." Following graduation, Participant Five started their career teaching middle school in Arizona at "a brand-new school that had just opened, and so they did not really have much of a program yet because everything had just started." Following teaching in the Southwest for 14 years, Participant Five moved to the Midwest in 2013 to pursue a high school opportunity in central Midwest. Aside from teaching, Participant Five has sung professionally numerous times for Hal Leonard, Shawnee Press, and Alfred as a studio singer.

Furthermore, Participant Five discussed some of the various gigs acquired throughout the years,

I did a lot of like commercial Jingle work and movie soundtrack work in terms of like being within sometimes singing with a choir and sometimes with just solo work on little radio spots or things like that where they just needed like the Jingle to whatever was being advertised or plugged. There were quite a few recording studios in ____ and _____. Many people from California would come over and hire people from Arizona to do their recording in Arizona because it was just within a drive. And it was a lot cheaper than in California."

Currently, Participant Five is part of a team of three music educators that split into ten groups of approximately 440 students.

Participant Six indicated they had performed as a musician but needed to gain directing experience before their current position, which they began right out of undergraduate school. In the present, the participant has been a music educator for seventeen years. In addition, they direct four ensembles and assist with two others. The participant expounded upon the number of choral ensemble opportunities, defining the exact number of ensembles at the school, "an intermediate show choir and a beginning show choir as well, so four competitive show choirs and, sorry, three competitive concert choirs, one treble, one mixed, one tenor bass."

Participant Seven indicated, "My mother is a music educator, and I grew up singing in the Episcopal Church under her leadership as my section leader." In addition, Participant Seven stated that their college required students to take a "show choir methods" course. The participant stated, "My foundation is this love of classical music, the fundamentals of music education, and the show choir element. As a learner, I was exposed to a wide variety of the best of the world of music, especially in education, and that helped to focus my dream." Currently, the participant has spent seventeen years teaching. The program incorporates seven ensembles in total, with two being led by participants and seven assistant directors.

Participant Eight indicated that "I have been involved in secondary choral music, since obviously being a student and then being a university student, and I have been teaching in secondary classrooms since 2003." In addition, "show choir, acapella ensembles, madrigals, all pretty much every genre of choral music" were a part of their musical experiences. Participant Eight attended college for music education and musical theatre. Participant Eight minored in

musical theatre while majoring in music education. In the present, the participant directs five ensembles, with three being concert choirs and four of the five requiring students to audition.

Participant Nine indicated, "Educationally, I have a bachelor's in music education and, a master's in music education, and 38 plus years of teaching experience." Currently, Participant Nine is the director of the fine arts for the district, which incorporates grades 6th-12th. In addition, the participant directs three competitive show choirs with one mixed, one treble, and one bass ensemble.

Participant Ten indicated, "I started at _____ State Junior College just because I did not know what I wanted to do. I took music theory for fun because that is what people do when they have not a lot of music background." In addition, they stated, "I had the opportunity to study voice with an amazing voice teacher who was an artist in residence at my University and retired professional opera singer. It completely changed everything for me." This past season, Participant Ten directed two competitive show choirs, one mixed and one single, while his assistant directed a third mixed show choir.

Participants discussed their respective show choir ensembles following their educational background and reason for becoming a music educator. Table 2 is a summary of the number of mixed and single-gender ensembles versus the student population of the respective school. As a visual descriptor for this population, I used participants' ensemble types. I created a scatterplot (Figure 3) portraying the relationship between the number of show choirs and the school's student population.

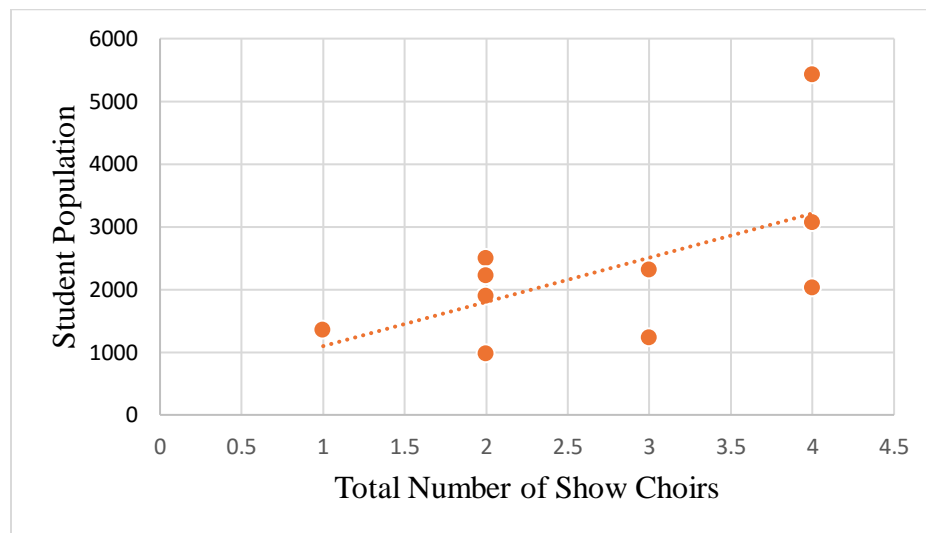
Table 2

Ensemble Types

Number of Mixed Show Choirs:	Number of Single Gender Show Choirs:	Total Number of Show Choirs:	Student Population (Public School Review, 2023):
2	2	4	3064
1	1	2	1886
1	2	3	2309
1	0	1	1349
2	2	4	2025
1	1	2	2495
2	0	2	969
2	2	4	5414
2	1	3	1223
1	1	2	2216

Figure 3

Total Number of Show Choirs Versus Student Population



Research Question 2: Methods, Instructional Approaches

The second research question was, *Which foundational elements of traditional choral methods do you emphasize with your show choir?* Data for the first sub-categorical question (*What instructional approaches do you use during rehearsals?*) showed that participants had similar instructional methods regarding the structure of their respective rehearsals, but

instructional time varied because of schedules ranging from 35-120 minutes. Some of the rehearsal commonalities found amongst participants were vocal warmup, sight reading, and repertoire practice. Data for the second sub-categorical question (*Does your instructional approach differ between concert and show choir instruction?*) revealed that most participants stated that their instructional approaches were consistent between concert and show choir. However, some mentioned they might curtail a warmup to achieve a specific song's sound. Data for the third sub-categorical question (*What is your yearly process for each of your ensembles?*) indicated that being a secondary school choral director has minimal breaks throughout the year. One participant discussed how the audition process for the upcoming year will begin in January before the current year's show choir season starts. For most participants, the audition process started in April or May. Following auditions, the summer provided opportunities for directors to conduct workshops, retreats, and camps for the new ensembles.

Participant One stated that show choir is "more unison and common than we think. In addition, show choir directors try to separate the two into two different categories of genres. It is more unified, much like a concert choir. I have often been told that the difference between choir and show choir is just a matter of putting the legs to use." Regarding rehearsal structure, they said,

I am very strict when the bell rings. Students should have music in their hands ready to rehearse on the risers. In show choir, we do not do warmups probably if I do in concert choir because it is just a matter of time element there. The show choir combines choreography and vocals almost every day, but some days we spend the whole period on just vocals or choreography.

Participant One's year starts with auditions in the spring for the following year, then they have a big Christmas production in December to acclimate students to the stage, lights, and audience. Participant One stated, "Show choir never stops; it does not. Even the concert choir performs approximately five times each year."

Participant Two stated about the rehearsal instructional approaches,

Every day is different. It should be. The only template that you should use is one that has a lot of modeling. There must be imagery. There must be self-assessment. Sometimes, it is great to have the students say what they are hearing. My approach is based on core technique, a core system which is directly related to bel canto technique, which is a very well-known technique that is super healthy.

Participant Three's year starts with technique,

the first few weeks of school we work solely on vocal technique and very little on the repertoire. I have choirs that typically only sing a vowel for a few weeks. We are like on the vowel channel, you will find something other than 24/7 vowels. This attention to detail will instill a lot of the Bel Canto technique.

Participant Three stated the following regarding how they approach fine-tuning choral techniques,

choral objectives that we know like breathing, tone placement, focus of tone, and free tension are the things that we are covering in choir class during the day, and then our show choir is extracurricular. We have it at night, so it is a hope to build upon that, you know, to build upon what we have been working on.

Participant Three discussed their annual process by stating, "The 22-23 season ends in June, but the 23-24 season has already started by that time." This is similar to Participant One in that the

yearly show choir process is continuous. Also, Participant Three shared that at the beginning of the year, the ensembles learn music and choreography for a show in April. Regarding the when they begin rehearsing their competition show, Participant Three stated,

We usually cruise into Christmas break with at least half of the show, and then we kind of figured it out. We do the second half of the show very quickly in January and compete the second or third weekend in January. The show choir seems to thrive on the pressure of putting stuff together at the last minute, and the reason things come together at the last minute so often is because we really want it to be right.

Regarding the instructional approach, Participant Four said,

Good singing is good singing, so I kind of take the same approach with both choir and show choir. Now, all our show choir students are required to be in a concert choir, so I do not usually have to go into as much detail in depth when I am teaching vocal technique. It is more of an application in the show choir room. We require them to be in that concert choir because that is where they will get the technique. That is where they get the information that they need to build on for the show choir. So, I can reference different topics and remind them how to implement them.

Participant Four starts the work for the upcoming year with auditions in April, and then students learn about the competition show in the Fall. When school starts back following Christmas break, Participant Four stated, "We kind of hit the ground running early in January. We compete six times from January to March, and the process starts again."

Regarding instructional approach, Participant Five, stated

I come at every single choral rehearsal from a vocal pedagogy standpoint. So, I teach all my classes like a big group voice lesson. I did a ton of work at the very beginning of the

school year on vocal anatomy and vocal pedagogy. The healthy approach to what is going on with their mechanism, I am a firm believer that if students do not understand what is happening with their actual instrument, there is no way they know how to use it the correct way. They should be able to sing Arias, country, bluegrass, musical theater, and rock.

When describing the yearly process for the program, Participant Five stated, "Our year here never ends here." The program that Participant Five leads is constantly doing something from July to July every year.

Participant Six found it imperative to start rehearsal with "a standard vocal rehearsal like class period for me would start with a sight-reading example." Furthermore, Participant Six, regarding differences in instructional approach, stated,

Format and structure are the same in a choir and show choir, but my approach would be different in the ask of technique. I would say it changes for every single song. What are you doing based on what style? You are collaborating with it because the style and the technique would change with any different genre of music. So yes, there would be some slight differences between my work on show choir and pop music. You know, if I am not working on something that has a big, rich, open, dark classical vibrato sound, then I would not warm it up that way. You know, I would not be expecting that technique from them. Through the rehearsal process, if they are doing some. Contemporary pop acapella, straight-tone situation. You know I would be approaching the technique very differently, but the structure would stay the same as how I run rehearsals for the most part." The annual process for Participant Six is year-round, but they start learning their competition show choir set in October. Participant Six had an interesting approach regarding the

students learning the music, stating, "I do not really like that students learn things outside of rehearsal. In addition, I do not expect them to take music home and learn it.

Regarding the instructional approach, Participant Seven stated,

I believe in setting goals always; everything is about goal setting. So, we review what we are going to accomplish. Depending on what the task is at hand. I typically pull many students down around the piano. I like my kids as nice and close, and the environment feels, especially post-pandemic, like they like being around each other. They can hear each other well; I do what I call power circles.

When asked about differentiating choral sound between choir and show choir, Participant Seven stated,

Every piece calls for its sound, and if it is good, healthful singing. Also, every stylistic piece needs to like it calls for a different level of diversity, and you want to create the most diverse palette of musicians that you can.

Each year, participant seven starts with technique, stating, "we hit show choir with like a good vocal and choreography workshop. I will send them into sectionals or place them together in groups for choreography with the prospective captains for the new year." Following the start of the year, participant seven, much like other participants, teaches the show choir competition in late Fall in preparation for the upcoming season.

Participant Eight indicated,

We do a lot of listening and sight reading, work less in our show choirs because they are getting it in their curricular ensembles as well because those are all Co-curricular. It would be best if you were involved in a daytime choir to be involved in the extracurricular choir, but site reading components we work on every day in class. In

addition, we spend more time on the theory side of things with our concert choir ensembles and more on the performance side. Of course, on the show choir side of the ensembles, I structure the classes similarly. There are just elements more related to movement when you get to show choir.

Participant Eight discussed their yearly process, stating,

I spent a lot of time during the first semester working on individual sight reading along with pieces for the Fall concert. We do like sectionals outside the school day for that and give them extra opportunities to rehearse outside of their voice lessons in their own time. We do a winter concert with our middle school feeders in December, and when we come around the corner into January, we start working on things for the contest. Lastly, we end the year with a pop show.

This was the participant's eighth year directing this program, so the yearly process was new for the participant and the students.

Regarding instructional approach, Participant Nine, stated,

Well, from a music standpoint, I am pretty much fully in control of all that aspect. I do trust my section leaders, too. Handle section work and individual work. We have a pass-off system that I have used for many years. Passing off is a term we use faithfully. It means that they demonstrate mastery of a certain piece of music. They must hand me their music, and I read their music and mark any problems they have, and they must go back and fix problems, come back, and try again. That process repeats two or three times, however often it takes until they have perfected the using, and then turn around.

Participant Nine's show choir season annually started in July with a choreography camp for the upcoming season. However, the primary focus during the Fall semester was on their annual Christmas Spectacular which incorporated traditional choral repertoire for the first half and choreographed show choir repertoire for the second half.

Participant Ten, stated,

The first thing I think is one of the most important things for rehearsal is for students to know that you acknowledge them. I am big about taking advantage of the time you have at school because if you squander that away, that is more times you have to ask those kids to be away from other responsibilities.

The year for Participant Ten starts with auditions before the start of the upcoming year.

In the Fall, we stop working on competition repertoire to focus on the Fall show. Once the show choir returns from Christmas break in January, we bust it. The day before we come back for the break from the break, we have a 12-hour rehearsal, and I just get former students to come in and clean choreography for all three groups all day. It ends up being 10 hours because you do 3 hours, and then you must have lunch and dinner breaks, but that is a tough day for them. We only do one-night rehearsal a week in January. The harder your working class, the more you get it done. Following the third competition, we just move on and start doing stuff for the spring show, and once again, the Spring show can be anything and everything.

The start of the school year was similar for most participants. However, two participants took time to focus for a couple of weeks on vocal pedagogy, which reiterated former knowledge of proper choral fundamentals—the Fall semester for most participants consisted of fundraisers, vocal clinics, choreography camps, and Fall/Winter concerts. The Spring semester for nine of the

ten participants starts with final preparations for the show choir season, which will run from January to March. The participant from California stated that their season begins in February and runs through April. Spring showcases and pop shows follow the show choir competition season. The end of the year incorporates awards ceremonies and announcing the students' respective ensembles for the following year.

Research Question 3

The third research question was, *Do the production aspects of show choir affect the choral sound?* Data for the first sub-categorical question (*How do you discuss choral technique and sound with your choreographer?*) revealed that most participants trusted their choreographer's educational and professional experiences regarding incorporating proper vocal techniques with choreography. Data for second sub-categorical question (*Why is show design important in show choir?*) showed that it is essential to the show's success to make a team effort to discuss ideas with arrangers, choreographers, assistant directors, and more. Responses for the third sub-categorical question (*In what ways do you use visual design to convey the theme or message of your show?*) indicated that visual design should primarily focus on clean choreography and costuming. Participants discussed utilizing props and atmospheric effects when they supported the show. Finally, data for the fourth sub-categorical question (*What is your process for music arrangements?*) showed that participants discussed ideas with their arrangers before selecting repertoire. Then, they purchased the rights to the music via Tresóna Music.

Production, Design, and Sound

Participants spoke about elements of show choir production and sound, including choral sound. Participant One stated the following regarding the production aspects of show choir affecting the choral sound,

I had a clinician come do a little clinic with us, and he told the kids, ‘I will be honest with you; I do not care what you wear. I do not care what your sets look like or even if you even have one at all. Can you sing? Can you dance?’ That statement struck a chord with me, and I have utilized it for years.

Participant Four discussed the following process for acquiring show choir arrangements, the arranger composes the entire show for our show choirs because the arranger and I have built a high level of trust and understanding over time. Before 2019, I did it all myself, but starting in 2019, I partnered with _____, and it was the best thing I ever did because I had a certain formula that I would like to design the show and essentially was changing the songs out every year. I was rehashing the same show repeatedly, and that was not working anymore. So, I have given up much control of that to _____. I trust _____ knows my kids, he knows my program, he knows me.

Participants also talked about production and vocal/choral sound. Participant Two specifically stated,

...show choir production aspects do not generally affect how the choir sounds. If you are talking about fog machines, they do not change how the choir sounds. Video screens do not change how you sound. Lights do not change how you sound. If it takes away from the time you had to rehearse on the show, obviously, or does something, you know, if they are having to move things around on the stage while they are performing and it is causing them to not sing, then there can be an impact there. I think the most dangerous part of all the visual design and production situations happens when directors allow themselves to get distracted from vocal technique and style and so forth.

Participant Three stated.

The approach to show design, I think, for me, always starts making sure that there is an idea. It does not have to be a complex idea, but there is an idea, a central focus, that is, maybe even you could call it a theme. I started digging for music, and the music was really. The music has been a hit, and the music has it. You got to be able to sell it to the Kids, you must sell it to your choreographer. Then, you must be able to sell it to your community. Finally, you must be able to sell it to the panel of judges that you face every weekend.

Furthermore, Participant Three talked about production budgeting,

So, if there is a way in my mind, if there is a way that we can figure out how to do things like that without breaking the bank because it is expensive to do show choir here at South, it is expensive to do show choir everywhere and. I am mindful. Of the budget, and I also really 100% believe you cannot buy your way into winning, like your kids can sing lights out and dance lights out, and your band is hot. Alternatively, they are not. And then the other stuff is just like cherries on the top of the Sunday.

Regarding show design, Participant Five stated,

It is like writing a novel or writing a new song like it is fun. I compare show design to iron chefs, where you have all these ingredients. Now, what are you going to create? I love getting to open it up every year with the students. I must create something new. How is this going to work? We are still singing and dancing, so I am writing something other than brand-new music. It is the same stuff that everybody else does. I am just trying something other than trying to figure out a way to make it fresh and exciting for the students and not to win some trophy. The goal is for them to be inspired, and it feels unique to them. So, I love the challenge of trying to produce something new and trying to

design something that is going to end up being exciting for the whole year. Now, on the other side, it is overwhelming to a lot of directors, and they think that they must produce some amazing theme, have immaculate costumes, and create giant sets. That is one of the reasons why people sometimes say, 'Forget it, we are not doing that this year.' One thing that I would caution people about is being too complex. If you have picked good quality music that gives your kids a wide variety of styles that showcase them singing well, then it will be a successful show design. Heck, I do not care. I mean, if they are up there in the same costume for 15 minutes straight, singing their faces off in a great way, dancing strong. I am good with that, but I have still been entertained. So, I think designing a show that is going to showcase the talents of your kids to the best of their ability, and it is going to be exciting to watch and listen to is what is important.

Participant six said talked about how vital show design is:

Our show design is a team effort. It is my husband, ____, who helps with so many things in the show design process, as well as our arranger. They are all very invested in what we are doing next year, and I have ideas. Once we get a show concept going, everyone is throwing out ideas and putting them in. There are always a lot of ideas to work with, and then it is kind of just refining those as a team coming together to make a show work.

Participant Seven stated the following regarding show choir design,

I look for ideas, themes, stories that inspire me and that I believe will be assets to my students in their educational profile. I believe in a good time, and I want my shows to be a good time. I do not want them to be too heavy." Furthermore, Participant Seven, regarding discussing choral techniques with their choreographer, stated, "I do not have to discuss it with him because he is a music educator too. One of the best things is that we

were in the show choir methods class together in college. We got the same choral education. I was in some different ensembles. I was in ___ Singers, which was like the ___ chamber ensemble, but he did more like musicals, operas, and things than We got differentiated experiences, but the same overall expectation of excellence in choral singing." Also, the participant discussed their arrangement process, stating, "I have a very good arranger that I trust implicitly, but when I have a specific design, like the arranger that I used to work with was one of my terrific friends, and he did anything I wanted. I would physically give him everything I know, and then he would manipulate it. I still do that with some numbers where I have a specific other thing. I am just like you go play like you do.

Participant Nine stated the following regarding the production aspects of show choir affecting the choral sound,

I feel when groups started going to television screens. It was a distraction for me. I have used them myself. Nevertheless, I have never tried to fill up the back wall with them, where you are so distracted watching what is going on back there that you miss what is happening on the stage. So yes, I think the video stuff has been a distraction for the last ten years or so. The set is an actor, just like any actor can steal the show.

Participant Ten stated the following regarding the production aspects of show choir affecting the choral sound,

Vocal technique is my thing. I do not want to micromanage. A choreographer when they come to me. I know I have a face that says. I am unhappy, and they will ask me about it when they leave. I am smart enough to know we cannot do that. Let us change it. Sometimes, I must have just been in the beginning stages when we did not know each

other that well. I would have to go. That is just less is more sometimes. Nevertheless, the key is that when you have a choreographer who understands vocal technique, it helps a lot.

Participant Ten discussed show design, stating,

I feel like it is a sliding scale. People like story shows or this kind of show, but there is nothing on a score sheet that says it must be a story show. My themes are always so loosely themed that they are precise in my brain what they mean. I know my brain works differently than others, so I think that the show design for me is important. It makes sense why you did that. I think the old Midwest way of doing things was an opener, a novelty number, a boy's number, a girl's number, and a ballad. It was fun, but you did not have to think. Also, it was the greatest kind of show choir for a popcorn-eating audience member. As you know from seeing my shows over the years, I do not typically buy into backdrops as something you need to have, but I do backdrops when backdrops help the show. I think that visually, the choreography and vocally having the music going at you should be able to convey everything.

Arranging and Arrangers

Participants spoke about how they use arrangers. Participant One discussed various experiences with arrangers,

My Arrangers are the ones I have used for some time. They take the songs that we have chosen, and I communicate with them by telling them what I am looking for in the music. I have had some good arrangers and some not-so-good arrangers. In all my 20 years, I have always created our show myself, and I have never asked the arranger to produce my theme.

Participant Two stated,

It varies from year to year. I have a relationship with my arrangers to the point that I do not have to do a lot of that, though when I am doing clinic workshops with other schools, I find myself invariably doing a lot of little edits and little things. I have a good friend who does a lot of arranging, and when it came to his choir, I felt strange, like wanting to rewrite his arrangements in front of him, but he was such a good sport about it, and I did not rewrite them. I did make major structural changes or big moments changes that, and he was like totally into it, you know. One of the things that I learned a long time ago was that it never hurts to try out an arrangement in a couple of different keys and never hurts to hit the transpose on the keyboard and just take it up a half step or take it down a half step if something is not singing right. You may address the issue, and then suddenly, you will find some magic.

Participant Three said,

We have been going on six years now, and every year it is different. You know, there have been years where ___ like, you know what we need to do? We need to do this show, and I am like, great. Let me get to work on finding songs. It is exciting and gives me focus, and then there is the other time where, as I will say to the guys, we need to do this kind of show, and then they both start pitching songs, and I start building the playlist, and we kind of work together. You know, for me, the songs have-to the songs have first to be incredible.

Participant Eight stated the following regarding the production aspects of show choir affecting the choral sound and how they arrange music.

So, I love to arrange, but I should not say the word arrange. I need a different word for it, but I like to edit my pieces before they go to the arranger because I am someone who knows what I want. I can hear it; I know where I want the mash with song splits. I know I want it to speed up here. I know this key needs to be changed here. I want this to be just tenor and bass, so working with me from an arranging standpoint, I know, is less fun. Sometimes I say, hey, I know, I want these two songs. I trust you will go for it, but because I have been doing it for so long, I generally know what I want. To like, I will take the pieces, and I will edit them in my music software to start, and so I can give myself kind of an overview of like the original song but mix the way I would want it to be, and then I will send that to my arranger and say this is kind of what I am thinking. My arrangers usually go beyond that, like they will take it and they will run with it in the best way, which is impressive. So, for me, that is how I like to do it.

Participant Nine discussed their process for getting musical arrangements, stating,

I have four or five good quality arrangers that I have just relied on through the years. The process is me taking existing music and mashing it up, cutting it up. The way that I want it. Getting it into the hands of my arranger and saying, this is how I want it to happen. I need you to fill in eight measures here. I need two measures of drums here. I need a dance break. I do not know what to do here. If you can produce sixteen measures, you know we will talk through it. The best arranger out there, I think, by far, is _____. So much so that my show this year, this coming year, my mixed group show, I went with _____ catalog and just picked songs. That he had already done, that made sense to go together, and then I put the story together. I have never done that before, so that is a new

way, but I wanted to use his music because it is such good quality. Also, part of the process is. Knowing who your singers are, you will have the next year.

Choreography and Choreographers

Several participants talked about choreography and choreographers. Participant Four stated,

I am lucky in that my choreographer has a master's in vocal performance and has an undergraduate degree in musical theater, lots of voice training, and he gets it. He understands so he gets where the big vocal moments are and how to choreograph. So, things lead up to that. So, I never really feel like it. I always feel like he is giving them the right amount of choreography that is allowing them to sing, but also part of it is just, you know, the stamina that they build up and how they get to that process. We have had some other choreographers that we have had to talk to because they are too foot heavy. If the choreography becomes too aerobic, then the kids are not able to do it.

Participant Five stated the following regarding the choreography of show choir affecting the choral sound,

Well, I am fortunate because ____ is one of our main choreographers, and he is a great musician, so I know he gets it. We use a lot of different choreographers with our other groups, but I do not have a discussion with them about choral technique. I do discuss sections of the music where students cannot be doing such an athletic movement because of what is going on in the choral texture. We may simplify choreography to have a better match between vocals and visuals. I do think that if you are using a choreographer that is good, then they will know what does and does not work well. Some show choir directors will quickly blame the choreographer for the kids not singing well. You can only ask

someone to do so much, like cardio, before they need a break. I honestly think that most of the time, it has to do with the choral director not giving those kids a foundation to use their breath support. I have seen what we have all seen like Broadway shows with these humongous like tap sequences. Like, I think of Sutton Foster at the end of Anything Goes, where she does this crazy, like 4-minute aggressive tap routine. And then, after all of it, she does anything good and takes a big breath and still hits that big note. That is an example of a great technique. Why is she able to do that? She can do that because she breathes the entire time, and a foundation is established underneath her.

Participant Six stated the following regarding the choreography and choral sound,

Well, I mean, a lot of it is like relationship building. I love our choreographers' work, process, and product. We have a vision of what we want, and the teaching process is excellent for the kids. We always think about the following: Are the kids going to get a lot out of it? Is it going to be positive? Will it be enjoyable, and will they want to do it? In the end, is the overall product? Does it benefit the show the way that it needs to? Is it going to help us be successful and competitive? So, I am looking at all those things, and _____ fits all of those, as do many other choreographers that I would be happy to work with, but so much of it is just a relationship.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question was, *How can show choir becomes more accessible to public secondary schools?* Data for the first sub-categorical question (*Why is show choir an asset to public secondary music education?*) showed that show choir provided students with an opportunity to build valuable life skills such as teamwork, personal responsibility, self-discipline, and diligence. In addition, the community aspect of the choir and show choir is inclusive, and it

builds confidence. Data for the second sub-categorical question (*Why do you think most public secondary schools do not have a show choir?*) revealed that time and financial commitment were crucial factors in deciding to either have or not have a show choir. Data for the third sub-categorical question (*How have you funded and sustained your program?*) showed that most participants' programs still need to receive annual funding from their respective schools or school systems. In addition, participants stated that their primary source of income was from fundraising and hosting competitions. The study found that the sustainability of a program is dependent on financial management by the director and support from parents, the school, the school system, and the community. Data for the fourth sub-categorical question (*What is your advice to a future concert and show choir directors?*) indicated that novice music educators should, have a passion for music education, find a mentor, become proficient at piano, expose themselves to prominent choir and show choir programs, keep sharpening their tools to equip students better, be diligent, and communicate with everyone (parents, principals, choreographer, arrangers, etc.).

Making Show Choir a Part of Secondary Schools

Participant One discussed how show choir might become more accessible to public secondary schools by stating,

It has that element of getting on stage under the lights and performing, singing, and dancing. The kids are just thrilled over that. In fact, they go into mourning most of the time when they graduate because most colleges do not have show choir, so they always miss it. In addition, students feel like they are in showbiz, and the excitement of that, the lights and so forth make show choir an asset to music education.

Participant One also talked about how future teachers are trained,

I am going to be honest with you. I think some of it falls on the director and their lack of not knowing what to do. Do they get trained in that University? They were trained in concert choir, so that has an element. Also, I think the cost of show choir plays into it.

Participant Two discussed how show choir might become more accessible to public secondary schools by stating,

Well, I mean, I think any vocal ensemble can be wonderful for a school, so show choir is just one of those things that's kind of a little flashy and the pop style is interesting to students. Also, I think the show choir can be a great advertisement for the choir program in the school. The show choir can be an asset because it is also a gateway drug to many other forms of group singing.

Participant Three discussed how show choir is an asset to public secondary schools in terms of public relations,

My show choir is the most visible element of the entire music program, and you must ride your best horse in every race. It speaks volumes that 120-odd kids are involved in two show choirs, which shows the community that show choir is in a good place at your school.

They felt some public secondary schools might not have a show choir programs because,

I think choir directors would prefer not to be that committed to an extracurricular activity. The directors of programs that do not have a show choir probably have a better work-life balance than I do. A work-life balance is important, and it is something that, like all of us, need to continue to work on, but I would challenge those choir directors to try show choir.

Participant Four discussed how show choir may be an asset to public secondary schools by stating,

If you get the kids in the door, then I can teach them Mozart. In addition, I can teach them other things to get them excited about singing. Good singing is good singing. Show choir is a motivating factor for students being drawn to the program. Eventually, show choir will become the tail that wags the dog.

Participant Five discussed how show choir might become more available in public secondary schools, "Show choir can hook young students into something that feels more relevant. In addition, show choir creates an opportunity for students to be engaged in learning because you are doing modern music that they are used to hearing off the radio or something."

About why there is a lack of show choir programs throughout the United States, Participant Five stated, "I think some of it has to do with the awareness of what it is. You know, I think that when you see another school doing something, then of course, you are like, oh, I could maybe do that, but then there is also the intimidation factor that when you see it usually by the time you are seeing it, it is polished and done. When a show choir show is all polished and done, it is intimidating because it is like, "How in the world do I get to that final product?" People need to realize all the steps along the way to the final product, and so part of it is just a lack of understanding of the process. Also, there are not a lot of collegiate-level music education programs doing anything regarding show choir education. In addition, there is an aspect of snobbery with some collegiate-level music educators' poo-pooing on show choir education. They think that show choir is not healthy singing, which is a very misguided view of what it is. Most of the time, that misguided view comes from people who have not been in a classroom with high school students in an exceptionally long time.

Participant Six discussed how show choir might become more accessible to public secondary schools,

I feel like show choir is an asset to your program because it is often like the flagship thing that people see like it is the thing that draws people in more so than other things. Some of our kids are doing show choir because they want to be in an advanced concert choir. They are like, I will do all this dancing stuff, but my real passion is singing. Other kids are like, I want to dance, and I want to perform, and my cost of admission is that I must sing. So, it has been official for our program in that way, and then, therefore, it is inherently beneficial for a school.

Participant Seven focused on show choir's community aspect,

As show choir sets goals, it teaches students about the foundation of community, teamwork, and respect. It is physical, living, musical theater, art, and it speaks to so many different sensibilities, and it helps to build a community of performers that all have different strengths to create what children need at this time of their lives.

They felt that show choir is beneficial for students. However, they thought that most schools do not have a show choir program because of a lack of exposure and also the difficulty for directors with work-life balance,

Some of my most successful colleagues pour a lot of their time and lives into what this is, and what I have realized in their success is that they create the community of the people that they love the most, that they work with, and so their work life and there is their home.

Participant Eight discussed that show choir might not be in schools because music in general is being discontinued, and that only certain types of choral singing has been traditional.

We spent much of the time on American choral music in the schools at the detriment of all other forms of corporate singing. A lot of school districts have abandoned other musical experiences for their students, so bringing show choir back is important." About why schools do not have show choir, Participant Eight stated, "If your director has not experienced show choir themselves, then they are not going to do it. Also, there is a level of terror attached to it because people are like, 'I cannot dance.' I am like, no one is asking you to dance. Hire someone to do it. In the secondary choral world in the last 50 years, 70 years, we have pushed so hard this notion of bel canto and this Eastern European art song way of doing things that most of us were only trained in. We do not have a training background for anything pop or contemporary, and it seems scary.

Participant Nine discussed how show choir might not be included because directors just do not want to have them.

Well, the schools that have not discovered show choir do not know what they are missing regarding recruitment for the program. I see directors on forums all the time complaining about the school cutting their class size. Most choir directors do not get show choir, and they do not want to get it.

Participant Ten talked about show choir and how kids can develop confidence,

I think show choir does something to create a place where these kids can gain more confidence than they do in the concert choir need to learn to have kids from all walks of life. Show choir sparks the interest of students with a variety of genres that encourage students to invest time in it.

Regarding a lack of public secondary schools having a show choir, Participant Ten stated,

Directors are afraid of show choir, and some are lazy. They do not want to put the work in, and I had a director tell me that said, 'Yes, we started a show choir for our school, and thank goodness it did not take off.' I just thought. Yes, you just needed to put the work into it. Also, schools are reluctant to have a show choir program because of proximity, and they know there are only certain pockets throughout the southeast that have programs that are close to each other.

Funding and Costs

Participant One stated that funding may play a part in sustaining a show choir program,

Well, the cost has elevated over the years. I mean, there is just no doubt about it. I mean, everything has, but I mean, show choir has gone up. The fee this past year was \$1800, but it included a trip. We do a fundraiser per month, and we try to do things that are going to make money for them. We do not do car washing and stuff like that, but things like that, the calendar where the people are buying a day, and you know we have the prizes for the winners. We allow everybody to survive if the fee is too much.

Participant Two stated that show choir can be expensive,

I think that competitive show choir is expensive, and you know it is effortless for them to monopolize a comprehensive program resource. I will give you an example. My program budget from the school at ___ was perfect proof of what I just said that the competition group could monopolize the traditional program resources. In 1990, the school district gave us a budget of approximately \$30,000, as well as a transportation budget of about \$15,000 to pay for buses to go to festivals and things. And today, that would be a lot, yes. I can tell you that almost the entirety of that money was used by our choir. So, I could charge the students \$300.00 for show choir for the year, which covered everything.

They also talked about recent changes to the policy in California and its effects,

We are no longer allowed to force students to pay for anything that is considered educationally enriching. So, anything that is connected to the school and is enriching, let us say your French club wants to go to Paris. Well, that could fall under that category, and you could be forced to take students who do not pay to Paris with you. In California, everything must be donations, and it is challenging.

Participant Four discussed the financial situation in their program, stating,

The biggest expense when we first started was probably paying the choreographer because you had one costume, arrangements from Hal Leonard, and things were not as expensive. Regarding student fees, Nebraska passed a law that stated, 'If a student receives a credit toward graduation for the respective, then you could not charge a fee.' So, I have been unable to charge my kids a show choir fee for 18 to 20 years. We raise funds through large fundraising events such as our cabaret and competition.

Participant Six talked about the choral program board of directors creating a non-profit status stated to support funding, "The board of directors created a 501(c)(3) to help support the choir program, and over the years, it has just grown in its ability to do more things to raise more funds for the students."

Participant Nine talked about how funding has to develop over time, and what directors have to be willing to do to support a show choir program.

You can do it without the funding to start, and the funding will come once the school system, school board principals, everybody gets on board. Listen, I hate everything about fundraising, but it is a necessary evil. I produced one fundraiser with expensive items on it. I pitched it to the parents and the kids, and I said, I promise I am not going to send you

out with suckers, candy bars, T-shirts, lanterns, candles, you name it. You are going to sell cheesecakes. Most people do not know that the fundraising company will tailor a brochure for your respective group. In my brochure, I only allow them to have something on it at least \$20. In this past year, we made right at about \$20,000 profit.

Advice to Future Choir and Show Choir Directors

Participant One had the following advice to future choir and show choir directors,

I think that the advice I give is to go to competitions, pick brains, and find you a mentor. I think that for every new director, if you do not think you need help, then you are going to fail.

Participant Two said,

The biggest advice is to find a mentor and find several. If you can find people that you trust that you respect what they do and try to see if you can get them to share some of their best advice.

Participant Three advice to future music educators was,

You need to learn how to play the piano because you are going to have to play it a lot. If you are teaching in high school with dreams of being like your college professor and conducting a choir, then that is not going to happen in high school. There is no conducting except on the day of the concert. Most of the time, I am at the piano, plunking out parts, playing the accompaniment until the accompanist flies in the day of the concert to ensure we know what we are doing.

Participant Four's advice to new teachers included starting in smaller programs,

I think one of the things is that all these first-year teachers around here are getting huge jobs and programs. They do not have the opportunity to make mistakes. I would encourage them to start somewhere small to get their feet wet.

Participant Five's advice to future music educators focused on time and resources,

Being a music educator is going to require a lot more time and work than you realize. If you are up for it, then it can be so exciting and gratifying. Consistently use every possible resource to find out more, stay fresh, and stay on top of things.

Participant Six's advice talked about being passionate about the work and finding support.

Make sure you are doing what you are passionate about, and if you are not passionate about it, do not do it. Also, build a team of people around you that you want to work with because it will make the process so much better. In addition, find people who will help you do things, so you do not have to do them all. Do not be afraid of change because sometimes changing things is great. If you are evolving, then your program will evolve. Lastly, find balance in your personal life and your program.

Participant Seven's advice to future music educators included,

You are not going to be twenty-three forever. Being twenty-three and starting a brand-new program from scratch, you are working with parents that are your parent's age. You are creating something that you know with booster presidents from other schools that have more experience in a high school setting than you do, but you have the education, you have the dream, and you have the passion. If you just give yourself time, then you can build whatever legacy you dream.

Participant Eight gave the following advice to future music educators included being real about self-expectations, especially in the early years.

You are going to be bad at this for a couple of years. The number one thing I say to kids all the time coming out of college is to remember those extensive choral experiences they had in high school. They were incredible, and that is why they went into this, right, these tremendous memories and these big ideas. These giant experiences they have had are probably not going to happen for you in the first two years. It will probably be a mess, and you will screw some things up badly, but remember that you are returning to scratch, starting like a student again.

Participant Nine's advice for future educators interested in starting a show choir included,

If they have a job, and they are interested in starting a show choir, then the very first and most important thing I would say do is get your principal to allow you to bring an excellent show choir to your school and do a show for the entire school.

Finally, Participant Ten gave the following advice for future music educators, "I would tell myself to stop and enjoy it because it is over before you know it."

Summary and Conclusions

In summary and conclusion, the study incorporated participants with extensive educational and professional experience in music education and show choir. In addition, the study found that participants utilized similar choral methods for both choir and show choir in both rehearsal and performance settings. Several participants said they trusted their choreographer's educational and professional experiences when intertwining proper vocal techniques and choreography. Also, the study found show choir to be an opportunity for students

to build valuable personal and professional life skills such as community, teamwork, personal responsibility, self-discipline, and diligence.

Chapter Five

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to learn how a select group of public secondary school choir and show choir directors from various regions of the United States incorporate choral methods in their respective competitive show choir programs. The study was also designed to educate about show choir in public secondary music education throughout the United States.

As music educators' knowledge of show choir expands, the understanding is that choral methods are an essential aspect of show choir. By sharing the experiences of prominent choir and show choir directors from various regions of the United States, music educators may better grasp how to either better their respective programs or create a show choir program at their respective schools.

Triangulation

The review of related literature discussed how to bridge the gap between traditional concert choir programs and competitive show choir programs. This study intended to learn how a select group of public secondary school choir and show choir directors from various regions of the United States incorporate choral methods in their respective competitive show choir programs.

Data was included and comprised of interviews with the secondary school choir and show choir directors (n=10). Denzin's (1970) multiple triangulation strategy was used, which encourages multiple data collection methods and multiple investigators with varying experience (Denzin, 1970).

First, this study investigated the many aspects of show choir by collecting participants' educational experiences and show choir program demographics. Second, to better understand

how choral methods interact and show choir interaction, the study analyzed participants' instructional approaches to choral methods. Third, participants shared how they communicated with their respective choreographers about staying choral-focused when adding choreography to the show. Finally, the interview explored strategies for making show choir more accessible to students in public secondary schools.

The information was coded and analyzed thematically. The educational experiences of the participants and show choir demographics identified the participants' backgrounds and elements of their respective show choir programs. Furthermore, each show choir program intertwines choral methods and show choir in rehearsal and performance settings. Also, choreographers in present-day show choirs understand the importance of choreographing for successful vocal production. Lastly, show choir is not accessible for many public secondary schools because they are too far from competitions and lack support (financial, time, etc.) The result exemplified triangulation in that each theme reflected data analysis from at least two data sources, and literature was employed to back up these conclusions.

Research Question 1

The first research question discussed the participant's educational and professional experiences as a public secondary choir and show choir director. Each participant had a unique path to becoming a music educator, with no two paths being the same. Regardless of how the participants found their niche as music educators, it was clear from their dialogue that they love what they do.

The participants taught me that both good and bad experiences create opportunities to gain experience and learn. Experiences can mold individuals into various shadows of those who have once directed or taught them. Each participant had at least one influential person placed in

their respective path to guide them to where they are today. Also, all participants valued education as both a student and a teacher. In addition, I learned that it is important personally and professionally to continuously add tools to your toolbox, whether it be a degree, mentor, etc.

Furthermore, I learned from the participants that obtaining degrees from formal education is simply equipping yourself with the essential foundational elements to be successful. The experiences in the classroom each day build on the initial foundational elements. In 2008, Malcolm Gladwell produced a concept called the "10,000 rule," which he repeatedly referred to in his book *Outliers: The Story of Success*. Gladwell stated that "the key to achieving true expertise in any skill is simply a matter of practicing, albeit in the correct way, for at least 10,000 hours" (Gladwell, 2008).

The participants taught me that being a show choir director demands the ability to balance numerous moving parts at the same time. The participants discussed with me how they balance multiple treble, bass, and mixed ensembles each day, and it can become quite cumbersome. Participants stated that they did not feel fully equipped to be choir directors at the start of their careers because the "balancing act" course was not offered in their respective undergraduate programs. However, one participant did mention that their undergraduate program required students to take a show choir methods course. The participants taught me that music educators wear many hats each day, with show choir being simply a feather in one of the hats. In addition, I learned that the best way to understand show choir is to experience it fully.

Research Question 2

The second research question discussed the foundational elements of choral methods emphasized in a choir and showed a choir rehearsal setting. I learned that participants'

instructional approaches in a rehearsal setting were heavily influenced by the amount of time they had to teach. The participants taught me that there is no universal template to utilize that will facilitate the "perfect" rehearsal. I learned that it is crucial to be flexible with external situations such as time.

The participants taught me that they need to differentiate instructional approaches more regarding choir and show choir. I learned that a choir director's instructional approach is dependent on the style of music that is being rehearsed at that time. For example, the participants, while rehearsing a pop piece, would not teach it in the same way as they would a classical piece because those two styles require two different choral sounds. Also, I learned that it is vital to warm up in the style that you intend to rehearse because it prepares the ensemble for the respective style of music incorporated in the rehearsal.

The yearly process for each participant varied based on region and preference. I learned that some participants' yearly processes overlapped with one another because their auditions for the next season take place prior to their upcoming competition season. The participants affirmed that show choir takes much time, but it is essential to pace yourself because it can be overwhelming at times throughout the season. In addition, as I examined the data, I felt that Participant Six's approach to having students learn their music made sense to me. If a student learns their music independently, then they are more likely to do so with improper technique. Having students learn music only in a rehearsal setting provides the opportunity to perfect their technique.

Research Question 3

The third research question discussed the production aspects of show choir and how they may affect a show choir's choral sound. The participants taught me that if the ensemble's

choreography and vocal production are sound, then the atmospheric effects are moot. Also, I learned that some participants have little to do with the production aspect of their show because they have the choreographer, artistic director, set designer, tech crew, etc, create their preferred visual design. Additionally, participants discussed how sets, props, lights, etc, do not make or break a show. The key to clean visual design is to have great costumes and facials.

Regarding vocal production and choreography, most participants stated that they trusted their respective choreographers enough to create movements that would support proper vocal production. I learned that several choreographers throughout the United States hold a vocal or music education degree, which helps them understand the importance of proper vocal technique when choreographing a show.

The participants discussed the importance of show design. I learned that varying musical styles that have swelled throughout keep the audience and judges more engaged in the show. In addition, participants taught me that choosing the right arranger for an ensemble is crucial. I learned that before arrangers can arrange the piece, the directors must first purchase the copyrights for the music unless it is no longer under copyright law.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question discussed how show choir may become more accessible to public secondary schools. Show choir is an asset to public secondary education because it serves as an outlet for students to learn teamwork, commitment, work ethic, discipline, and more. In the United States, there are approximately 23,900 public secondary schools, with only 1,500 having an active show choir program. The participants taught me that there are several reasons why show choir is not more accessible to public secondary students. The first reason is that there are show choir pockets in select regions throughout the United States that are supported by their

community, school, parents, and neighboring show choir programs. The show choir pockets make it difficult for show choir programs that are not within driving distance to attend competitions and support other show choir programs.

The participants stated that financial commitment can be daunting for music educators who have yet to direct show choir. The participants taught me about various successful fundraisers that they had done in the past to help with the yearly show choir expenses, such as travel, music, sets, and more. One participant mentioned that they have a cheesecake sale each year, which raises almost \$20,000 for the program. Other participants discussed having car washes, Halloween shows, selling chocolate, working football games, and more. Show choirs depend on the support of their community, school, and parents, and their financial needs will take care of themselves with support. The participants advise new show choir directors to attend competitions, network, and pick the brains of seasoned veteran show choir directors.

Implications

While there is a vast amount of research regarding choral curriculum in music education, there needs to be more research on how those methods are incorporated in show choir. The findings of this study provide supportive evidence that a select group of prominent show choir directors from various regions of the United States strive to incorporate high school choral methods in their competitive show choir programs. The participants shared experiences and insight into how they incorporate choral methods into their respective show choir programs and confirmed the show choir's role in the choral curriculum.

Final Conclusions

In conclusion, show choir is often viewed by most music educators as taboo because they think it focuses more on the "show" and less on the "choir". This study found that participants

placed the "show" aspect of show choir secondary to the "choir" by not differentiating foundational choral methods between choir and show choir rehearsals and performances. The lack of education and advocacy for show choir has been a critical factor in why over 90% of public-school systems in the United States do not have a show choir program.

Recommendations for Future Study

One recommendation for future study or replication of this study would be to edit the questions in the protocol to gather more substantive data from each participant. For example, the sub-categorical research questions associated with research question one asked the following:

- Can you briefly discuss your educational and professional experiences regarding secondary music education?
- How many ensembles do you direct?
- Are your ensembles mixed or single gender?

As respondents answered, I realized the sub-categorical questions did not fully address the overarching research question, which asked the following:

- RQ1: To what degree have your experiences with concert and show choir ensembles shaped your career in music education? In future studies, I will strive to create sub-categorical questions that facilitate discussion that will better support the proposed research question.

This study's data showed that the number of active show choirs in the United States needs to be repeatedly updated, which is a reason only pockets of show choirs seem to exist. A quantitative research study could help determine an accurate number of active and non-active competitive and noncompetitive show choir programs throughout the United States. The reason for quantifying all show choir programs in the United States will be better to understand its

presence in public secondary music education. In addition, this study would identify public secondary schools without choral programs.

This study revealed that a select group of prominent secondary choir and show choir directors from various regions of the United States put the choir aspect of show choir prior to the show. The purpose of this study would be to advocate and educate administrators and educators about the importance of music education in public K-12 education.

References

- Alder, A. L. (2012). *Successful high school show choir directors: their perceptions about their teaching and administrative practices*.
- Alder, A. L., & Mulvihill, T. M. (2016). *The show choir handbook* Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Ambady, N., & Skowronski, J. J. (Eds.). (2008). *First impressions*. Guilford Publications.
- Bell, C. L. (2004). Update on community choirs and singing in the United States. *International Journal of Research in Choral Singing*, 2(1), 39–52.
<https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/summary?doi=10.1.1.476.5694>
- Biljana, J. (2011). Choral singing as a process of teaching and communication.
<https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.2087.0163>
- Caldwell, W. M. (1980, June). *A time analysis of selected musical elements and leadership behaviors of successful high school choral conductors* (Dissertation). ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
<https://www.proquest.com/openview/280dffcbbe0782e20aae825f99f2d304/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>
- Cappadonia, A. C. (1970). The jazz choir. *The Choral Journal*, 11(1), 9–10.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23543736>
- Chen, S. (2010, November 15). The “Glee” effect: Singing is cool again. *CNN*.
<http://www.cnn.com/2010/LIVING/11/15/glee.effect.show.choir.comeback/index.html>
- Collins, D. L. (1999). *Teaching choral music* (2nd ed.). Pearson.
- Creswell, J.W. & Baez, J.C (2021). *30 Essential Skills for the Qualitative Researcher*. SAGE Publications.

- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2017). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Denzin, N. K. (1970). *The research act in sociology: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA26125785>
- Denzin, N. K., & Sage Publications, I. N. C. (2001). *Interpretive interactionism*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (Fourth ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Dwiggins, R. R. (1984). One step at a time for show choirs. *Music Educators Journal*, 70(6), 41–45. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3400792>
- Florida State University, & Millard, E. M. (2014). *The role of ensemble competitions in choral music education* (Dissertation). Florida State University Libraries.
- Flick, U. (2015). *Introducing research methodology: A beginner's guide to doing a research project* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Gaier, E. L., & Dellas, M. (1971). Concept formation and creativity in children. *Theory Into Practice*, 10(2), 117–123. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405847109542313>
- Ganschow, C. M. (2013). Secondary school choral conductors' self-reported beliefs and behaviors related to fundamental choral elements and rehearsal approaches. *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 23(2), 52–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1057083713485587>
- Garretson, R. L. (1998). *Conducting choral music* (8th ed.). Pearson.
- Gereben, M. F. J. (2011, May 23). Chorus America and America's millions of choral singers. *San Francisco Classical Voice*. <https://www.sfcv.org/articles/feature/chorus-america-and-americas-millions-choral-singers>

- Gladwell, M. (2008). *Outliers: The Story of Success*. Little, Brown, and Company.
- Gumm, A. (2003). The effects of choral music teacher experience and background on music teaching style. <https://opencommons.uconn.edu/vrme/vol3/iss1/2/>
- Haithcock, M., Doyle, B. K., Gerald, K. M., & Schwiebert, J. (2020). *The elements of expressive conducting*. Conway Publications.
- Hill, P. G. (2009). Music literacy among adults in church choirs. *The Choral Journal*, 50(5), 12-21.
- Hoffer, C. (two thousand). *Teaching music in the secondary schools* (5th ed.). Wadsworth Thomson Learning.
- Howe, S. W. (1992). Music teaching in the Boston public schools, 1864-1879. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 40(4), 316–328. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3345839>
- Johnson, D. (2007). Show choirs: Show choir competition and the impact on male recruitment. *The Choral Journal*, 47(10), 50–53.
- Killian, J. E., & Wilkins, E. A. (2009). Characteristics of highly effective cooperating teachers: A study of their backgrounds and preparation. *Action in Teacher Education*, 30(4), 67–83. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01626620.2009.10734453>
- Kindle, C. (2019). *Characteristics of the high school varsity mixed show choir* [Ph.D.]. University of Missouri.
- Klein, H. K., & Myers, M. D. (1999). A set of principles for conducting and evaluating interpretive field studies in information systems. *MIS Quarterly*, 23(1), 67. <https://doi.org/10.2307/249410>
- Lanier, B., & Thomas, K. (2007). Show choirs: keeping the choir in show choir. *The Choral Journal*, 48(2), 35–37.

- Lawrence, R., & Dollins, K. (2011, May). Show choirs: Beauty and the beast: The nature of a show choir. *The Choral Journal*, 51(10), 53-56.
- Lincoln, Y. S., Guba, E. G., & Pilotta, J. J. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 9(4), 438–439. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767\(85\)90062-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(85)90062-8)
- Mogstad, D. (2015, November). Show choir in the United States. <http://showchoir.com>
- Moore, J. A. (2008, February). Organizing and presenting an effective choral rehearsal. Paper presented at the 2008 Texas Choral Directors Association Convention, Dallas, TX.
- Moore, R. H. (1995). *Aspects of choral ensemble: Definitions and applications of selected outstanding university choral conductors* (Dissertation). Kansas City ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- “Our Deepest Fear” by Marianne Williamson. (n.d.). <https://www.appleseeds.org/Deepest-Fear.htm>
- Paine, G. (1981, May). The show-choir movement: Some food for thought. *The Choral Journal*, 29(9), 5-6.
- Pendowski, M. J. (2019). Practical and creative ideas for optimizing the show choir combo. *The Choral Journal*, 60(5), 63–70.
- Platte, S. L., Lauber, B., Willimann, J., Schuldt-Jensen, M., & Gollhofer, A. (2021). Breathing with the conductor? A prospective, quasi-experimental exploration of breathing habits in choral singers. *Journal of Voice*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvoice.2021.07.020>
- Potter, J. (2004). Discourse analysis. *Handbook of Data Analysis*. SAGE Publications, Ltd, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848608184>
- Powell, R. (2010, May). Keeping the "choir" in show choir. *The Choral Journal*, 50(10), 45-46.

Public School Review. (2023, June 28). Public School Review - Profiles of USA Public Schools.

<https://www.publicschoolreview.com/>

Rahman, M. S. (2016). The advantages and disadvantages of using qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods in language “testing and assessment” research: A literature review. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 6(1), 102.

<https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v6n1p102>

Randall, J. (2020). *The art of competitive show choir: the why, what, and how of making better musicians and humans*. GIA Publications, Inc.

Rohwer, D. (2011). Church music as an education enterprise: Lessons to learn. *Research and Issues in Music Education*, 48-58.

Roseth, N. (2016, July 16). Nonverbal communication in the large ensemble classroom. NAFME.

<https://nafme.org/nonverbal-communication-large-ensemble-classroom/>

Shaw, K., & Thomas, K. (2005, February). Show choirs: Competitive show choir festivals: What are the benefits? *The Choral Journal*, 45(7), 107-109.

Showchoir.com: The Show Choir Community. (2002). <https://showchoir.com/>

Silverman, D. (2013). *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*. SAGE Publications.

Son, A. P. J. W. (n.d.). J.W. Pepper sheet music. J.W. Pepper. <https://www.jwpepper.com/sheet-music/welcome.jsp>

Stephens, J. P. (2021). How the Show Goes On: Using the Aesthetic Experience of Collective Performance to Adapt while Coordinating. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 66(1), 1–41. <https://doi-org.spot.lib.auburn.edu/10.1177/0001839220911056>

Taebel, D. K., & Coker, J. G. (1980). Teaching effectiveness in elementary classroom music: Relationships among competency measures, pupil product measures, and certain attribute

- variables. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 28(4), 250–264.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3345035>
- The Young Americans. (2022, October 8). *The Young Americans - Performing Arts Nonprofit Organization*. <https://www.youngamericans.org/>
- Thomas, K. (2005). Show choirs: A big hit in L.A. *The Choral Journal*, 46(2), 54-55.
- Thomas, K. (2006). Show Choirs: Another Choir? How About a Show Choir? *The Choral Journal*, 46(8), 45–46.
- Thomson, S. B. (2011). Qualitative research: Validity. *JOAAG*, 6(1), 77-82.
- Thurman, V. L. (1977). *A frequency and time description of selected rehearsal behaviors used by five choral conductors*. (Dissertation). ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
<https://www.proquest.com/docview/302856613?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true>
- Tiboris, P. (1983). The show choir movement: Uses and abuses: A symposium. *College Music Symposium*, 23(2), 21-31.
- Tresóna Music*. (n.d.). <https://www.Tresónamusic.com/>
- Ulrich, J. (1993). Conductor's guide to successful rehearsals. *Music Educator's Journal*, 79(7), 34-35.
- Wagner, M. J., & Strul, E. P. (1979). Comparisons of beginning versus experienced elementary music educators in the use of teaching time. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 27(2), 113–125. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3344897>
- Wagner-Yeung, B. (2017, July 21). Engaging all types of learners in the music classroom. *NAFME*. <https://nafme.org/engaging-all-types-of-learners-in-the-music-classroom/>

Weaver, M. & Hart C. (2011). *Sweat, Tears and Jazz Hands: The Official History of Show Choir from Vaudeville to Glee*. (Illustrated Ed.). Hal Leonard.

Weary, K. J. (2012, May 30). Teaching musical literacy: Developing the independent choral singer. *Choral Director Magazine*.

<http://www.choraldirectormag.com/articles/commentary/teaching-musical-literacy-developing-the-independent-choral-singer/>

University of South Florida, & Snowden, L. G. (2003, July). *Music programs that engage our communities: Making a stronger connection* (Thesis). Digital Commons University of South Florida.

<https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=2481&context=etd>

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

RQ1: To what degree have your experiences with concert and show choir ensembles shaped your career in music education?

1.1 Briefly discuss your educational and professional experiences regarding secondary music education.

1.2 How many ensembles do you direct?

1.3 Are your ensembles mixed or single gender?

RQ2: Which foundational elements of traditional choral methods do you emphasize with your show choir?

2.1 What instructional approaches do you use during rehearsals?

2.2 Does your instructional approach differ between concert and show choir instruction?

2.3 What is your yearly process for each of your ensembles?

RQ3: Do the production aspects of show choir affect the choral sound?

3.1 How do you discuss choral technique and sound with your choreographer?

3.2 Why is show design important in show choir?

3.3 In what ways do you use visual design to convey the theme or message of your show?

3.4 What is your process for music arrangements?

RQ4: How can show choir become more accessible to public secondary schools?

4.1: Why is show choir an asset to public secondary music education?

4.2: Why do you think most public secondary schools do not have a show choir?

4.3: How have you funded and sustained your program?

4.4 What is your advice to future concert and show choir directors?

Appendix B: IRB Information

IRB Approval Email

Use [IRB Submission Page](#) for protocol-related submissions and IRBadmin@auburn.edu for questions and information. The IRB only accepts forms posted at <https://cws.auburn.edu/vpr/compliance/humansubjects/?Forms> and submitted electronically.

Dear Mr. McCormick,

Your protocol titled “Keeping Choir in Show Choir: A Qualitative Study on How Selected U.S. Secondary School Choral Directors Incorporate Choral Methods in Competitive Show Choir” has been approved by the IRB as "Exempt" under federal regulation 45 CFR 46.104(b)(2). Attached is a copy of your approved request.

Official notice:

This e-mail serves as official notice that your protocol has been approved. By accepting this approval, you also accept your responsibilities associated with this approval. Details of your responsibilities are attached. Please print and retain.

Expiration:

Continuing review of this Exempt protocol is not required; however, all modification/revisions to the approved protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB.

When you have completed all research activities, have no plans to collect additional data and have destroyed all identifiable information as approved by the IRB, please notify this office via e-mail. A final report is no longer required for Exempt protocols.

PLEASE NOTE: If any unfunded, IRB-approved study should later receive funding, you must submit a MODIFICATION REQUEST for IRB review. In the request, identify the funding source/sponsor and AU OSP number. Also, revise IRB-stamped consent documents to include the Sponsor at the top of page 1 and the “Who will see study data?” section of consent documents.” (See online template consent documents).

Best wishes for success with your research!

IRB Admin
Office of Research Compliance
Auburn University
540 Devall Drive
Auburn, AL

IRB Approved Invitation Email

Subject: Keeping Choir in Show Choir

Dear Prospective Participant,

My name is Patrick McCormick, Ph.D. Music Education candidate at Auburn University. I hope your year is going well. I am writing to ask for your help with my research study titled "Keeping Choir in Show Choir: How a select group of public secondary school choral directors from various regions of the United States incorporate choral methods in competitive show choir." Please consider participating in this brief interview.

The interview should take no more than 60 minutes.

There is no compensation for participating. Your participation is entirely voluntary.

Thank you for your consideration and time!

All the best,

Patrick McCormick, Ed.S.
pjm0032@auburn.edu
Ph.D. Candidate, Music Education
Auburn University

Appendix C: Anonymized Transcripts

Participant 1 Transcript

Researcher Ok, so thank you, uh, for volunteering your time to be part of this study. It is greatly appreciated. The purpose of this study is to learn how to select a group of public secondary school choir and show choir directors from various regions of the United States incorporate choral methods in their respective competitive show choir programs. So, to start off, will you briefly describe a little bit about your educational experiences? As far as like colleges that you went to, degrees that you hold.

Participant Yes, I tell the kids all the time that I am the poster child of.

Participant Taking my time and not realizing what I really wanted to do, and I am floundering around, went to several different universities and educational institutions and it was the last year and a half.

Participant Then I called my mom and said, you know, I want to be a teacher. Before that, I was doing church work, and I would go to school where I was closest to the church where I was working. But I told my mom I want to teach school. So, I went back, and I went to __ College in North Mississippi. ____ Christian University now and I finished my last year and a half, and then I took some graduate courses at the University of ____ _____. And you know, getting my masters in at ____ _____. And then I went on, I my doctorate is in ministry.

Participant So, it is not it is not actually music related but. That is, I mean, I've and all my church experiences and stuff really helped mold me. To walk into a classroom, pretty much, there were some areas that I was a little bit naive too, but it really helped me.

Researcher So, when did you start your post high school?

Participant I began in the fall of 1970. I went to a little Community College that is no longer there. That is how old I am. And ____ College. I went there for two years and then I stopped for a while because I was. I had moved to North Mississippi and to go to a church there full time and so. I took a lot of undergraduate hours at the University of Southern Mississippi, but I just did not graduate there.

Researcher So other than your educational experiences, do you have any professional experiences like performing or playing instruments for?

For any sort of a professional ensemble or singing in a professional choral, do you have any of those experiences?

Participant The very minimal. I have been a performer and musical theater. And so, I have been on stage quite a bit through the years with that assistant directed. You know, I have directed that has been a forte of mine, a little part past part time enjoyment that I do on the side, and I have kind of given it up. In the last three years. And its very time consuming, but I have performed that, and you know just. Activities where I have led revivals and evangelical big programs, concerts, and stuff like that, I have been involved where I have been in charge and stuff like that so.

Researcher This past year, how many ensembles did you direct?

Participant It has been three in the past, but we have two. We have the mixed group show choir and then we also have had a mixed group concert choir. This year it went to female gender, and it was just I did not have the guys to make a concert choir, so. OK

Researcher Are those all-audition groups, or are they? Just one audit. OK and.

Participant They are all, obviously.

Researcher OK. And are they competitive both and all?

Participant Yes, this year, we have gone to different festivals like we and ___ and so forth and competed and done well. I am really pleased. I really, you know, and of course, while I compete on company level every year.

Researcher So how many regarding the show choir, how many show choir competitions were you doing each year about?

Participant This year it went to six, which is very that is a high number for me. Usually, it is 5:45. Well, no, I do not think I have ever dropped to four usually.

Researcher And are these competitions local or are they out of state?

Participant Most of them, most of them, have been in the local Mississippi area.

Participant We have traveled to ___ and to ___ and places like that where we have a, you know, competed and but mostly it is most of them are and that and that is a financial decision. You know, regarding transportation and so forth, you know just a little cheaper to go local.

Researcher So, regarding rehearsals and what are your some of your instructional approaches that you utilized during rehearsals?

Participant I was thinking about that. In music education. I think that my concert choir I use like I might just pronounce this name as Kodaly. I do not know if it is the name for it. I probably use that more in concert choir because we just, you know, sightseeing and working on pitches and. We do solfege. And so, that is the really if I had to label an approach with them that would be it I. I think a different approach with so far naturally and I was looking up, I said I am probably I do not even know how to pronounce this either Dalcroze or something like that. I probably use that because that involves movement. And to me, show choir is a concert choir. That that moves, sings, and dances. So, that is probably what I use with them. You know, I, I approached my vowels probably the same way in both groups. I am not used to the last few years I have really taken more of a concert choir they owned with show choir. We used to use more of a brighter tone. We had jazzy feeling and there's times that we have, but mostly in the last few years that has really been rewarding. We have really gone in more of a concert choir sound and just had the movement with it, but I mean, I will say this too. You must really. Emphasize, I mean, you must really work. On your consonants. And the vowels is so far because I mean overdoing them to the point that because your judges are into the very back of the auditorium and they must understand the words and the enunciations and so forth. I mean in constant choir. I do not have to push that as hard because usually the judges are mid auditorium, sometimes they are up front. Sometimes they are in the back, but it is not. It is just not the same. You are not trying to override or. I mean, competing with a band or anything like it is just usual. Just a piano so. I just I have found myself working harder, pushing the work on consonants and vowels with shock far more than constant choir.

Researcher So, would you say that your approach to concert choir differs from choir or is it all the same?

Participant I am sorry that repeat that one more time.

Researcher So, would you say that your instructional approach to concert choir is the same? As show choir. Or do they have slight differences?

Participant It is. It is more unison and common than we think it is.

That show choir directors try to separate the two into two different categories of whatever two different genres. It is more. Alike a more unified than it than we than we feel of. This I mean it is. And they need to learn. Show choir needs to learn to think correctly, and they need the announcements, and they need the vowels, and they need the tone and the blend. Just like concert choir, I just think the difference to me and well, I have been told many times by. It is just a matter of putting the legs to use, and that is the difference. You know, you are dancing so.

Researcher So, take me into a rehearsal in Doctor _____ classroom. What does that rehearsal look like?

Participant Right. Which group would you like me to talk about?

Researcher So, we can talk about, let us talk about show choir and so.

Participant OK

Researcher From the beginning of your show choir rehearsal, what is it look like?

Participant Alright, I will take you through and I will tell you too. I am very.

I am very strict when the bell rings, they the tardy. They should have music in hand. I should not have told them. To get on the risers. The first part of the year where we have chairs and that is the first, just the very first part. So, they automatically should have their music and they know where the music is, and they should be in the chairs when the tardy bell rings.

I check my role have some little secretaries that work for me. Students checked the roll, answered the phone and so forth. So, I am not distracted. And then I am ready to roll. I will start with a couple of announcements. But then right after that, well, they could be chattering chattering on the in their chairs. But when I hit the first chord on the piano, that means complete silence. That is the rule. You are not to say another word. You cannot finish a sentence, you stop. And you look at me and then I will give a couple of announcements and I go right into warmups. We do, we do not do warmups probably as long. As I probably do in a concert choir because it is just a matter of time element there, I am. I am a little pushed, but I take them through warmups and then at the beginning of the year we have our show choir music. So, we do a lot of sight reading at the very beginning with our music and I do I implement. Implement as much as I can. Notations like you know this is a, B or C or what I do not do it as much as I do in concert choir, but again for. Time element but. They do learn to read music. I will have them sometimes when they are going out to auditions and stuff at college. Cannot read music, I said. Ohh yes you can. You might not know if that is an A, but you know how to watch those notes and you know how to follow them. You are reading music, and so they said, oh, OK, and it always pays off. We do, we go through the music. Like reading we, you know, we start on dough, you know, and follow the notes around and then learn on music. Usually, we are into it several. Weeks before choreography comes, arrives and. And so, we are pretty much on our feet notation wise before we gets there and then so they are familiar with the phrasings and stuff like that.

Participant We, you know, take our time, and we will do the dancing and stuff forth to go along with it. So, they get a combination every day, a combination some days, some days we spend the whole period on just vocals. I mean, we must because I mean that to me

it used to be the scoring used to be vocals were the most. I mean, we are the highest scoring of the competition.

Researcher Right.

Participant So, we just really put a lot on that. You know, I have learned in the notes and singing well acapella, I make them think acapella a lot.

Researcher So, your class, period, how long is it?

Participant Well, I have been blessed this year, Patrick. It has always been about 55 minutes and this year we went on a block. So, I was able to have them. Roughly 2 hours, I have students in different organizations like [name]. And so, I lose those students the second hour they go first period, first hour to me, second hour to the to their other locations. I usually live more than a handful, but we continue. I mean, you know we just tight gives me a chance to work. So, this is the first year we have done that.

Researcher And concert choir and choir. They are both curricular correct. And they are both allotted the same amount of time during the day.

Participant No, no constant [concert] choir has only been an hour and they did not change that this year, this past year, so I get I get an hour with them and. It has come at a good time. I mean, I have some general music classes and so concert choir had hit a fourth period for me right before lunch, so it works well for them, you know? So, I like that. I like that period.

Researcher OK. And concert choir. You said it was auditioned, right? Is that correct? OK. OK, so it is not a.

Participant Not as strict. I do not bring judges in for a constant choir where the I do bring judges in for Chuck Choir.

Researcher So, your concert choir, it is not a kind of a catch all class, right?

Participant No, no, it has.

Researcher OK

Participant They have tried to do that, and it has been a little bit off. A battle when?

Researcher Right.

Participant They need to put someone, somewhere. We will put them in constant choir. And I keep telling them this is an audition group. Now I need to hear them sing before I can, you know, or I cannot take them. We have already ordered T-shirts for them. And you know I cannot do a second order and so, but yes, it and they, they fight me on that a little bit. But we have general music classes, and they can put them in so.

Researcher Do you do you have students that do both concert choir and show choir?

Participant I used to, but not anymore.

Researcher OK, OK, all right. So, there are two separate kinds of entities right now. Yeah, OK, all right. So, take me through a year from start to finish. When you do auditions. Let us start with. Show choir and then you can also briefly discuss your concert choir season. You know what kind of concerts you do. Do you combine the two into one for concerts? So, what went through your show choir year from the time you auditioned students to the time they walk across that graduation stage at the end of the year?

Participant Perfect. Well, we do. Auditions in the. Spring and for the following year, we usually start with auditions that we have announcements we have. We have a big booster meeting to get to know everybody usually this year. The lady has taken my place.

She went ahead and had her boosting me a little earlier than I normally do. I do mine and she and she.

Went ahead and. Did hers in May. Then we get a measure. For costumes and place that order, they pay a deposit, so I do not normally. Usually, I do not do anything in the summertime with them. One year, two years ago, I had them come in each one for a voice lesson. I wanted to make sure they had. I had their placements down it. Was easier to do it. One on one, it was a little time consuming. I was fighting vacations and so forth, but it and it worked. And when school starts, we start. We do not do a camp or anything. Our camp, we do it, we do a camp, but it is with school has started. We will come in for three nights and Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday. Monday night is when I bring people in like I have brought ____ in and just different people like that to do things that I could probably do, but I just want them to. See another face.

And they will work just vocals, just vocals really. Meredith has worked like one night strictly just on tone and placements. I mean, she just, you know, they do not need. Sometimes they do not pick up a piece of music, they just work through that and the next night we get into incorporating more music. And then third night that we will just have fun a night, we will just do dancing. I will bring in different chord. To teach a jazz dance or something like that. So, they really enjoy that. So, the camp just starts us off at school, begins, and then we do a fall show. We have a Christmas show. And so, we have two shows in the first semester that so and we take. Different little themes. This year we did like the eighties. And last year, we did a country show. And so, you know, they produce little costumes. On their own. And piece together. We have a costume room and we kind of utilize that and we have different solos and different groups, and we have the groups perform like a show choir, but it is just a different phase. It is more of a fun thing.

So, and getting their feet wet to the stage and the lights in the audience sitting out there and so and we do a big production each Christmas each year we do a lot, we always end up with an activity celebration and so forth concert choir. Most of the time they participate. This year, they participated on their own. They have their own song they sang and but sometimes in the closers and stuff like that. I will put them in if it is not a lot of dancing, they will just stand there and sing, and you know? So, we work on those two things and during that, it is choreography, choreography week. So, we usually get that in set. Timber with being struck, coming in and so everything kind of stops a little bit. We do not work vocals that we can all we just work on; they will revive what they had learned the day before. And I mean because they are always stumped.

You know, we've video everything and that really helps too. But they worked out and then.

Then we start working on the file show and working on, you know and then working on our show for our songs and then go into Christmas and we just, I mean it never stops, it really does not. You know, there are times that we are stumped a little bit on an afternoon pet rally I have.

I have so far, the last two periods would last block, which I really like, but sometimes they will throw in a pet rally so that interrupts my class, period. But you know, I do not argue. I do not fly.

Go with the flow. So, we are back Christmas time. We need to memorize the show. And excuse me, so we come in, in January, we come in about at least one full day. Before Christmas, break us over and it is like I just uh, just that we call a day of pale. It is rough being a dancing all day long, and we do provide them with a meal. You know that kind of thing. But that is not before school comes back. But when they come back. It is all about tweaking. We are not trying to learn anything at that point. We are just trying to get it polished. It up and. Get it ready to perform. We do a dessert theater in January, right? Drop before competitions began. That is our preview. We for our parents and so forth. And then, you know we start. We have started the third week and we have started the fourth week fourth week some mandate. Competition we support our county, so the fourth week of January is always ___ come. So, we must go to. So, there have been times we went to like ____, play up the third week and so forth. They have moved it since, but we must be ready, you know? So, it just never stops and even. As our competition winds down, we are going right into the spring show. So, and there have been a couple of years that we did not this year that we have taken our both groups to the museum, the _____ Museum and they have a wonderful acoustics in there and just done a program for. Them for the parents and so forth outsiders. But we did not do it this year. But it just. I keep them busy all the way through.

Researcher So how many?

Participant I do not want to have no.

Researcher How many performances is the concert choir doing throughout the year?

Participant They do about five. They do not do a full show, so they I usually keep them incorporated with the show choir performances, where they will do something sometimes if it is a real call piece, they will open a show with that.

Researcher So how many pieces? Are the concert choir learning in each year?

Participant I would say probably about ten. I mean, probably now I will say I will be a little bit more cause they do learn the concert. They do not learn some of the Christmas numbers that we do.

Researcher And do you ever, you might have spoken about this a little bit, but do you ever intertwined the two like combined choir with your concert choir to do a performance or are they just, do they desire to be separate entities?

Participant Three years ago, well, 2 to 3 years ago I combined them together. We went to William Carey, and I combined them. One time we went to old. And we are, we know it was a, it was a, it was a concert choir the event. So, I just put them. I just thought it would. Be good for them for. The show choir to experience that part, you know.

Researcher So do you. Incorporate a little bit of movement in your concert choir. Or is it strictly stand and sing?

Participant Started integrating a little bit of movement because concert choirs are doing a lot of things. Now they are clapping and blah blah blah and a little arm movement maybe it goes up. You know, this kind of thing. We have done a little bit of that and this year we sang a little fun song. To incorporate the little Grapevine. And so, it was. They are not dancers.

So, it was a challenge, but I. Mean yes, a. little bit of movement mostly claps and stuff like that, and our little stone that comes with the music.

Researcher Going back to rehearsals regarding show choir, do you have extracurricular rehearsals? If you do, what are the times of those or the day? How many times a week do you rehearse after school?

Participant OK, we usually do not do anything the first few weeks after school. Except the little camp thing. Because I just want them to get acclimated to school and you know, we just football season is everything. And but usually about. The third? Third. Fourth week we will have one night a week and what I am having to do is work. Around sheer practice, band practice football practice, so I will choose for a night I will do like a Monday night. That was my night and I checked with the other groups, so it was a free night, so we had one night, 6:00 to 8:00. And we do that for several, several, several weeks and. Really helps me a lot with learning the music because again, we are learning shock for our music, but we are also learning. The fall, she. So, we are just, we just got a lot of music. So, we just so that one night a week brings them together and helps them, they begin that bonding process bonding together and then later this semester I will add an afternoon. And then I have a lot more freedom when football seasons over and by January, I mean by sorry, by December we rehearse at least twice, twice a week after school. In January. Well, this up until this year, it was almost every day.

After school, but now because of because of the block really helped me. I did not have as many night rehearsals this year.

Researcher All right, so moving. Ahead, how do you discuss choral technique and the whole idea of choral sound with your choreographer?

Participant Well, we do not. Do a lot of that. I thought about that question, and I used _____ from Iowa. He and I collaborated a lot on the theme of the show. I usually have a thought in my head. This is what I want to do, and he and I will turn around a little bit and we do pay him extra to for show design. He will work with me and. I used to have. I will come up to him and say, you know, this is what I want to do, and I have this song or maybe two songs that I just feel like I must use. So, then he builds the show from conversations with me and. And right before we, you know when he is coming in, we do have conversations. We will sit down and talk, and I say OK, look man, you know I cannot have them leaping across the floor on this phrasing here because this is so important for me. I wanted to stand still. On this section right here and just seeing and he does. He is very, very cooperative with me on those kinds of things. As far as anything else, musicality as far as the choir singing, it is not a lot from him. I will be honest with you. There has never been a year that I did not change something. After he left, I thought that was not working. I do not want. I cannot get I you know, there's. So, there's sound is so important. This is not working. So, I might change something or take something out or add something in just to help it. Help the sound a little bit better.

Researcher That makes sense. So, discuss a little bit about the importance of show design in a show car show. And you can think about maybe programming in a concert or aspect too.

Participant OK. And there are there are some judges out there who are very seasoned. I will throw out one name, _____. He used to, you know, he used to be at University of _____ Dear friend of ours. I will never forget him. Come to our do a little clinic with us. And he told the kids. I will be honest with you; I do not really care what you

wear. I will be honest with you. I do not care. I do not care what your sets look like if you even have one. Can you sing? And can you dance? And that have really struck A chord with me, and I have, you know, utilized that throughout the years that that is the most important aspect. I am a real theme. Oriented person and it is safe I think fading out a little bit but. I mean it is, it has always worked for me. And so, I feel like one year way back I did call a runaway show. Where I had two doors, two red doors. On the stage. Well, those doors were very important because the kids, I mean the, the leading parts came in and out. Of those doors. Right. So, we utilized them. I do not think I could have pulled off what I wanted to do without that. I Love Lucy where we had the set design from the show built in. I do not think I could have pulled that off without that visual for the audience. Audience likes visuals and you know. And then if we did the Pirates of the Caribbean, we would have the big ship built again. I think the visual was very important there throughout. Every year I have tried, the visuals feel important. You know, we've kind of moved into TV's, which has been a thing. It was very expensive. But they help. They have created like when we did ___ this year and we had a castle scene just a shell. But the TV's kept the TV's kept like out you could see outside the windows that he created the TV's and columns like Windows, and he was like looking out. So, when the when the attack on the castle. And you could see fire going up outside like it was on. Fire so it. Was very, very visual. The show design. Each song needs to flow into a story for me. Now I know that. In the last year or so, other groups have been doing things like OK, like we are going to do a. Show on water or Sky or something like that and too. But I just like storytelling, and so everything you know, I said the sheet with Marie Antoinette. And I felt like we, we told the story. Well, we just hit the highlights. But the audit likes that to me. They respond well to following along. The judges are like that. So, they are not saying they are confused about what you are doing. The show design is important now in the early days I have been to this is my 20th year at ____ and the first year or two it was just picking some songs. Pretty costume, and you might have something colorful up there on the in the backdrop just to add a little pizzazz.

Researcher OK

Participant And so that has evolved a lot. Over the years.

Researcher Are you a 5-song director or are you someone who loves the mashups and?

Participant Medleys, I think, it all depends on the on the show design. I am usually a mental person being is too he likes to. Hit him, hit the audience, and the judge hit him with a song, and it will not last for long. It will just mesh into something else and changes the whole. Maybe change the tempo and it changes the style or whatever and it and it works and I therefore expensive.

Researcher Yes, of course.

Participant You are only paying your you are paying your arranger, and you are also paying trecena. For every song that you put in the show, but it is what I usually have. At least one. Or two songs that are met, at least in my show.

Researcher Now you spoke a little bit about visual design and. And how do you utilize visual design to convey your theme or the message of your show? Do you find that at some points show choir goes too far with visual design and forgets? The choral aspect of show choir.

Participant I do not feel that I do. But I see it a lot. I said a lot of competitions and they will produce this elaborate set. I mean things that it takes them. It takes them 15 to 20 minutes. I mean, not quite, not that long. You feel like it takes eternity to get it. Set up and it is pointless if they are not. Performing well, you know, just a waste of time and money.

Researcher Right.

Participant I think I have seen the same costumes, and I am a big costume person. I am a big costume person. I like my costumes to be remembered. At the end of the day, you know, like _____ said, they can have all this great costume and it is a little icing on a cake that in the in the set design. But at the end of the day, you Can't Sing well, and you cannot dance. Well, it is, it is useless. I mean, you have just wasted you. Time and money.

Researcher So, if. You were to give some advice to a director who is doing a show card but does not have the money for the screens and the backdrop. What would you say to them? Would be the like non negotiables for visual design and show?

Participant Well, I think that. I am big on choreography cleanup. I really am. They must be sharp, got to be clean and I think that if you can implement that and really, I mean, you know, bringing people in and whatever to help clean them up, having great vocals to begin with, but really cleaning up that the, the dancing and so forth. That is a great visual and. I have seen it recently. Several struck choirs winning without any set at all.

Researcher Right.

Participant Because they are. Trophy the element of just cleaning and they were sharp. It did not need anything, you know. So, I do think. I mean, your audience is your audience, is there not to listen? They are there to watch. It is very visual for them.

Researcher Right.

Participant It just always adds a little that little cake icing on your wonderful got made, you know, makes it pretty.

Researcher So, in your years when was year one of short for you?

Participant So that more time now.

Researcher When was your first year of show choir?

Participant I began in 1980 at _____ High School.

Researcher OK. Was the first show choir?

Participant Uh, in the state of Mississippi?

Participant I was in high school at that time, and it was sixty-eight, something like that implemented, but it was it was just a little ensemble that. Sang and danced. And so, when I came in 1980, it was the same. There was, I think, and in my 6 years I was at law, there was one competition that was put on by the Rotary Club and. It was just the county schools and our school. Other than that, there was no competitions at all, so things were a lot easier, lighter, I mean. Just you know, but when I came to northeast. That was my first and 20 years ago. That was my first experience with competitions and that was very light and very easy back then too. Like I said, you just you might. Have a pretty. Wall with some glitter on it or something like that, you know, and a cute little dress. And you just sang some songs. So it was, but it did not take. Long two or three years of that, 45 years of that,

it evolved right into things. And your costumes and a lot of costumes had to kind of match up to what you were is your story and your storytelling and your sets also.

Researcher So how are you? You spoke a little bit about how it evolved back then. Go from year one to now. In your like how has it evolved from year one of show choir for you to now? To the shows that you have seen this year.

Participant Much more competitive, much more competitive.

Researcher And with it being more. Competitive, are you? Do you find it beneficial, or do you find it? Is it limiting the opportunity for the smaller groups to be successful in truck wear?

Participant I enjoy the competitions and I will say they are stressful. Because you know, I mean every any direct attention he do not want to win is he is lying to you, or she is lying. Everybody in, I do think that I will say this. I am sidetracking a little bit. I do think that. The rating system should be changed I envy the ban program. When you go to competitions that. If you have ten groups, then they are all excellent. You know they rate superior, they should be rated superior, you know, and they do have their 1,2,3,4, and 5. But at least you know you could walk away saying we did a great job. We had a superior rating and I think that the sad part of show choir you have was third second. You might have a fourth group in fourth place who was only a point from third or same thing. The third or you know they just.

[Internet Caused a Break]

Researcher All right, we are back online. OK.

Participant OK. Can you hear, can you hear me now? OK, just went off and obviously came back out so I would love to say a group that comes in and performs and they you know. They were like. Fourth place, but they were good. That happens in the large category when you have these groups that are so good, there is only three spots, and that fourth group walks away. Very defeated sometimes, but I mean they could have received a. Being a little cantankerous. OK, what I was saying were quick. When you lost me now, but I just think like you know in the large category you face this a lot, you got large groups. That are very strong. And in fourth place they can walk away thinking very defeated because they did not get top three, but they should have deserved a superior rating. So, I wish we could do something that would. Implement it a little bit. I do not know, something different than what we have, but going back, your question was how much has evolved or whatever. From the small from the first years of there. Yes, it is, it is a lot more competitive. You know there was this many show choirs 20 years ago and now it has, it has really jumped up a lot in the numbers. And I think that. The competition levels have, you know, have really increased a lot the, I mean it is changing a lot. You know the numbers that you can.

Researcher Can you hear me?

Participant I can hear you. Can you hear me?

Researcher I can hear you. You are just a little frozen. It is, I guess in a nutshell, just becoming more competitive over the years. So as far as your process of getting your musical arrangements, what does that look like from start to finish? Do you have an idea, does your arranger bring an idea to you? How does that look?

Participant My Arrangers really are the ones I have used. Really do not have anything to do with anything as far as uh decision making for me, they are just really. Take the songs that

we have chosen and. They arrange them. I mean, I do communicate with them. And say this is what I am looking for. I do not want to. You know, I would like this to be acapella, but the same thing I have talked about my choreographer. I will implement that. Those same thoughts to my arranger.

I have had some good arrangers and some not so good arrangers. I have one this year. I will go ahead and. Say his name _____. And _____ is great. Arranger he has. He has been about the best I have ever had in my 20 years of arranging songs. With her singable. You know, again, _____ and I have worked together over the years too that. You know, it is important that they are not. They are not turning their backs. On vocals or this kind of, I mean, he is good at it looking at the. Music and following suit on what? What needs to be done but the arrangers? As far as my theme, I have never asked the arranger theme. I have most of my choreographer. I have with him and say this is what I am looking at. And I will be honest with you, in all my years of my 20 years, I have produced my thing myself.

Researcher OK

Participant It is a thought. It is something that I have prayed about, and it just came to me, and I said OK, this is what I am looking for. I blew him away one year. When I said OK, I want to do ___ and he just there was just silence on the phone and he is like, what is it I wanted to do, _____. But the more in our conversation, you know, he just jumped on board, and it was it was a winning season for us. I mean, it was great. We had a lot of fun with that one. But we would go up to the arranger and say this is what we are looking at, you know, and this is where I feel like they should be in unison here, strong and. And he implements all that and he will change things. And he is a big help to me. He blocked me and I am. I am getting sidetracked on some stuff I am trying to tell you, but _____ will give you he will send you with what you pay him. He sends you vocal demos. You know, with he has a little group. That records the songs, so the. Kids get to hear it. You know, and then he gives you. Instrumentals too, all that kind of stuff.

Practice with and. But I like, I like, the way he arranges the band. And as well as the vocals.

Researcher Would you say you are pretty hands on when it comes to musical arrangements?

Participant Yes, I am very hands on very.

Researcher Ok. Alrighty and You mentioned that you produce a theme idea on your own after prayer. Do you ever bounce ideas off anyone or was it just always?

Participant I have there was one. Speaking of Anthony Cleopatra. We were on a. Bus in choir in New York City. And my daughter was. Sitting in the front seat with me, we. Would just chitchat and then I. Said, you know, _____, I said. I am thinking about doing ___ and she, she said ooh. And so, we started bouncing songs and thoughts across back and forth each other. But I will. Be honest with you. I am going to say I have produced everything I produced that one and. She helped me talk. Toss it around a little bit, but being has been good. I will say what I want to do. And so, then we start bouncing thoughts on each other. And I tend to. Get a little cheesy. With some of the thoughts and things I want to do, and so he is he has a fishing pole that he just reels me back into reality. No, I would not do that. So, and _____ middle school director. There have been times like that. She came to see me, and I sat her down and said OK

look, this is what I am thinking, and this is the direction I want to go in. And so, nobody is ever changed.

Tried to change my mind on my thing, but they might on some things, some areas that I am going into like I might be or something like that so.

Researcher Right. Right, right, right. So. Why do you think? Show choir is an asset to secondary music education.

Participant It is. Again, I am going to say it is very visual. Organization is the next thing for me to do in showbiz. It is which it is showbiz. You know when they see people on stage and so forth, Broadway musicals or whatever. It has that element of getting on stage under the lights and performing, singing, and dancing. And I think that. The kids are just thrilled over that. In fact, they, they, they, they, they go into mourning most of the time when they graduate because they do not, you know, most colleges do not have that. This kind of an organization, so they always miss it and, but I think. It is just the. Performance of feeling like you are in showbiz. And the excitement of all of that, the lights and so forth. And this is just different to me than concert choir. And I just think that it, I just think that.

Most groups love it. There have been some that. Have did change. I know ____ for example. They have show choir for several years and when the director left the school board said no more.

We want our back and so that is what they do. They have a phenomenal concept. And, but that is what they wanted. And Ocean Springs is the same way. Down there but. Most schools we there have been. Listen, there have been moments that we around in this area said. If we stop doing this and just have a consequence. But the school. Board loves to have the fact that it is visual, it is a very public relations group. Because not every school and I will say my daughter lives in in ____ and there is four county schools there and none of the four have a. They have concert, choir, and a little drama, but no, no show choir. So, they are missing out. It is a great opportunity for kids to perform. In a different. Then you are a different genre of style, of music than just singing concert choir. Now you are not going to get a scholarship for a concert of show choir. But you do get scholarships and choral music and concert choir, and so we do. That is why in the last few years I have really gone back to my roots of choral singing in show choir. I just feel like. It they do not. When they are they can, they can leave me. The next day and go audition at college and get scholarships because they know the style of singing and they have learned all that. It has been ingrained in them, so you know.

Researcher Why do you think that most public secondary school systems do not have a show choir?

Participant I am going to be honest with you, it is. I think some of it falls on the director. It is just a lack of not. Knowing what to do. Do they get trained in that university? They were trained in concert choir, so that has an element. I think the cost plays into it. Some schools' administrators steer away from it. You know, it does cause a show choir to rehearse, sometimes after school and so forth. I think that that can be another negative to some of them and just really. The just the lack of knowing, I mean the lack of knowledge about it. They will just brush it off. No, we do not need that without even understanding what it can do for their school, you know.

Researcher So, time is what I am hearing. Lack of knowledge is another thing. That I am hearing, but also talk to me a little bit about the financial commitment and how you and your program over the last couple of decades, how have you funded your program and sustained it?

Participant Well, cost has elevated over the years. I mean, there is just no doubt about it. I mean everything has, but I mean show choir has gone up. We I cannot really recall. The fee that we charge, we charge the kids a fee to be in show choir. It was a lot less back in those days 20 years ago. I cannot remember costumes and just a little bit of set stuff. All that was inexpensive, but over the years we, you know, it is elevated, it is grown, things are much more expensive I spend. I have a budget of course, and that we always approve this past year, but they paid \$1800 now \$1800 is it involves a trip. That I personally make mandate. Mandatory I just feel like that I am not going to take my group off to Disney World to sing if I only got half a group. So, we just incorporate that into their fee we do fundraising. We do, we do a fundraiser per month, and we try to do things that is going to make money for them. We do not do. Car washes and stuff like that, but things like that. I mean the calendar where the people are buying a day, and you know we have the prizes for the winners. That has been our best self. One that we have two big sellers, the calendar and they sell those days, and they can sell, they can sell you day three and just sell somebody else day three also you know and so they but your names going to bucket, and this kind of thing and they can make \$400.00 on that calendar. You know very quickly, and that money goes into their account and then we pay the bills from their account. We pay for the costumes, the, the trips and the arrangements, the choreography, choreography, everything comes out of them out of their account, we do. We do not do any fundraising. As a group. Like for the booster club per say, except our shows. We charge a Dorsey, you know, \$7.00 or whatever to see our shows. And so that that goes into our profit. But then we must pay the sound man, you know. But it. It generates a little money. For our account. But I will say this in all my years. As I can recall, we have never had anybody. We have never had anybody that did not pay their account. You know, I usually hold the trip over their head. That you are not getting on that bus until it is paid, you know. And then we give them a scholarship letter at the beginning. I have typed it up. Make copies of it and update it and it says this child, you know Patrick McCormick is in our show choir and blah blah blah blah. And so, I tell him what all the money is about, blah blah, blah. And they need this X amount of money to be. In the choir and that has helped. Get some sponsorships. It really has. We sell ads. We used to do a program book and in the last few years we just quit doing that. It just evolved. We just, we have we made a big slide show of all our sponsors and then 30 minutes before the show starts that we are doing locally at our school, we run the ads, we run every show, fall, show Christmas show. Dessert theater or spring show. So, we get those ads out there. And so that has been two good fundraisers for us. But we do one every month. And it is not required. Some parents say, do you know what? I do not want to do that. Check and we say that is fine. So, but it gives everybody a chance to survive if they cannot produce some kind of money, they can. They can do it, you know.

Researcher So, moving to our final question, what is your advice to novice Show Choir director? Concert choir director? He is fresh out of college. Maybe think about year one. What

would be your advice to yourself? Or is someone just getting started? In this business.

Participant Well, if you have finished university. 99.9% of your training has not been in software. And so, I think that. And I have said this before too. ____, I think that. People that graduate. It takes a mini course. In sound and lighting and so forth because you know these kids are going to graduate in the spring and they going to get hired on little high school and they going to say, ok, we want a Christmas program and you know, and if they have not been trained to eat. At least you know. Run a basic soundboard or turn a light on whatever they did not. Learn that in college. Those things need to be implemented as far as education is concerned. I think that. But I just think that. I just went back to your question. I am so sorry. I am chasing rabbits, and I went back.

Researcher Your advice to you year one.

Participant I think that the advice I give is to of course learn, learn how you can go to competitions if you want to do. A show choir. Go to competitions, pick brains. Find you a mentor. Somebody that you can really, I was fortunate when I came to ____ that I had _____ at ____ and he reached out to me and said, look, I am here for you, and he said you could ask me anything you want to come by. And I did. I just. Really, I felt like I had overstepped my welcome but, if really, I would call him. So, I am thinking about making this decision. He is saying that's great art. No, you need to think about this. He really helped me get on my feet. And I think that for every new director, if you do not think you need help, then you are going to fail. Everybody needs somebody and again, you know, I still bring in, I am good at what I do. But I still bring in the _____ and to tweak and tweak and tweak because me. Do not hear what their ears hear because it is the first time for them. They had those naked ears and naked eyes. They have seen it for the first time I heard it and. So, you need that. I will tell. I will tell _____, my daughter, who is fixing to move to the high school equipment, Mississippi. I said do not. Think you could do it on your own? Try to do it. On your own, you do everything you can. I said you bring people in that can hear and see things that you are not. And so, that is just important. But getting a mentor I would say and going into competitions do not be blindsided. You know, I am taking your first year there and prep your group. You know and start just local singing. You know and go into the Rotary Club or the Kiwanis Club and singing and whatever and just taking them to a competition, letting them see what they are up against or what they are going to be facing and you know. That is how everybody needs to not jump in the fire just, you know, at first. And learn how you can. And really, you are not as inadequate as you think you are because you have learned choral singing and if you are just. Implement those techniques that you have learned into your moving. Group they will do fine.

Researcher So, is there anything else that you would like to add to this topic that we have not discussed already regarding keeping the choir aspect in show choir?

Participant I think that. You must be flexible. As a director, I wish I could be. Draw the line in the saying on several things about the way they sing the way they do this the way that, but things change and depend on your show design too. There has been many times where we sang a pop ballad that we just, you know, I just, I had to. We had to bright, brighten it up. A little bit and. A little bit more jazz. And so, I mean, we must

be flexible. I do not think you need to be hard lined about anything. I mean, you got kids who you know you have little girls who have something. Every time the month, you know once a month that they do have cramps. I understand that when I was single at low high, I had the dance team plus the show choir, and I was just very. I was just like I would think I was me, you know, like a [Hitler] or something. They say, I say I say get over it. Take my doll. And I still am. I am still strict about things. But I am learning to. Be I have learned to be flexible in other areas. If you want to be a good director, you are spending time with your kids. And you are part of the family and them. Need to look at you as a parent. And my shoulder gets very wet sometimes from tears. And I do not brush them off. I do not always send them to a counselor. Sometimes they just want to vent their emotions. And so, I am. I am complimented that they feel comfortable that they look at me in that aspect and I do not want to lose that. And I would encourage every director to do that. To have that kind of empathy, they need encouragement. They need one on one encouragement and I have captains in my group and. I will check with them every week or two. Did you talk to anybody this week and encourage them? You know, pull them off the side and whisper in their ear. You are doing great. You know, just those little words can change that child's performance so. And again, I am sidetracking. I am chasing rabbits. But I do have. Rabbits, but with my captains, they must be great performer. They must have good. And so, I love that, and I because I trained them all year long to be good leaders. I have training sessions with them all along. I send them out something every week or two, probably most every week. I sent them out. I had a little group chat with the captains and me. Send them out. Something about leadership. And so, about that and I get a thrill out of that because I want to see them become good now that I would say this too. There is one positive about being a show. Is the chance to perform but. They overcome a lot of insecurities by being on stage. They are in a. They work together, they learn team building. They learn to perform without, you know, making them get a little nervous, but they can get out there, which is going to help them get a job one day they can do, you know, show kids. Can go into an interview very confident. Because they have learned to be confident in their in their show choir, it is a win. Win for them in life and so I recommend it. I think constant quiet too but show choir has more of that stage exposure to me, the singing, and the dancing together versus. So yes, it is a win. Every director needs to learn as much as they can, you know, and pull on each other's ears all the time. I mean, friend, to which she can talk.

Researcher So, well, thank you for your time. I am going to send you a transcript of our conversation in the next couple of weeks just to make sure that I represented your words accurately, but also gives you an opportunity to strike anything that you want to strike from our conversation and if.

Participant Well, that is hard.

Researcher If needed, I may ask for a follow up interview. Uh, just a short little zoom interview to make sure that your thoughts are accurately represented in this study.

Participant Absolutely. I am really. I am proud of you doing this.

Participant 2 Transcript

- Researcher So, thank you for volunteering your time to be a part of this study.
It is greatly appreciated it.
The purpose of this study is to learn how a select group of public secondary school choir and show choir directors from various regions of the United States incorporate choral methods and their respective.
Competitive show choir programs, so can you briefly discuss with me your professional and educational experiences regarding secondary music education?
OK, so in your in this process, Patrick, are you?
- Participant Are you, are you?
- Participant Allowed to clarify questions.
- Researcher I mean, I will give. I will give you that answer. So, you can. Start with your college where you went to college, what your major was. Did you get a masters, etcetera, etcetera.
- Participant Well, I should start by saying I was in a highly effective high school program in ____ IN and I was a member of a very comprehensive choral and instrumental program, and I was very fortunate.
During that time to be able to do both band and choir and so which is sometimes unusual in some schools scheduling wise, but I was very fortunate, and I had great instructors.
And we were exposed to all kinds of different music, and we did a musical every year and we did lots of magical singing and produced a magical dinner.
And we did show choir and we did a little bit of everything.
Vocal jazz, baroque music, you name it.
We did it so.
I really got a great start and I always credit a lot of I think who I am as a conductor in terms of my rehearsal.
Technique and so forth.
I really feel like it comes from a lot from that experience and from _____, who was my teacher in high school.
I really feel like she had a huge impact on what I do as far as experiences.
In concert and show choir ensembles I did professional work when I was in high school.
I was fortunate there as well to do studio and live performance, so I was doing some recording in the studios for industrial shows and corporate shows and things of that sort and some local commercials and then I performed.
Live for a production company there in shows around Indianapolis.
And in central, IN and so that was fun at the time they were, they were renovating the old Union Station in Indianapolis, and they had lots of entertainment they hired for that venue.
And so yes, so I got some good experience in high school.
I originally went to ____ University.
To study commercial music, which is arranging, producing, and performing kind of all wrapped up into one.
And I was there for a year, and I did not feel like I was growing, and I ended.

Up moving to _____, TN, where I became a Union pianist and vocalist in studios and then live performances there in _____, and I toured out of _____ with some shows and things.

And so that was.

Pretty exciting and really shaped a lot of my professional background.

Because so many professional musicians.

You know, you really learn in that environment when you get thrown into it, you just you learn what you need to do and what the parameters are, and it certainly was a big education for me.

So, my professional education really came about.

I feel like in _____ I moved.

To _____, MI and worked there as well as the musical director and arranger for some production companies.

There I also started doing professional choreography there, which at the time I had done some choreography for friends.

But I did professional shows as a choreographer in _____ and so.

You know that.

That was very beneficial as well, I think to what I could take into my secondary school teaching.

The other thing I think is interesting too is that I was there working for a company. Musical director and arranger and I was asked by a local university to help with a show on sale that they had in their world.

And so, I came in and staged some shows for them and did some things for them.

And they said, you know, if.

You would come.

And work with us regularly.

We will give you full tuition to take whatever classes you want to take.

So, I said OK and the first class that I took was a graduate level choral conducting class.

Which was funny because at that point I only had a year of college under my belt, really, but I had some classical choral music all through high school and toured with the _____ Honors Choral in Europe several times.

And so, I have.

A lot of and had we had amazing directors and so I had quite a bit of experience anyway seeing.

Classical choral music so.

I took this, it was only class that was offered at that time in the summer, and so I took this graduate conducting class.

And it was an interesting story, they.

Director called me into her office, and she said, you know.

I am going to be gone.

Next week and the I do not trust the graduate students I have; would you agree to run the rehearsals next week for the?

You know, advanced choral ensemble, and I was like, do you want me to do that?

And she is like, yes.

Would you please do that?

And the interesting thing is I had a lot of experience at that point of leading musicians, professional musicians.
But in terms of standing in front of a college, traditional college choir that was not something I did that often.
I said OK, she said.
That she wanted me to do it because nobody knew.
She said that they will.
They will behave because they do not know who you are and I and I trust that you can with your background, that you can.
You can manage the rehearsals next week, so would you do that?
I mean, I did.
And so, then I met the staff of the school, and I started taking more classes.
And I ended up.
And this was at ____ University in ____, MI, and I ended up taking all the classes to get my Ed certificate certification.
So, I became a licensed teacher in the state of in the state of Michigan.
So yeah, that's kind of how I felt into actually having an edge degree at the time I was doing a lot of work with friends, choral programs that I had grown up with that would invite me in to come in and do a clinic or a workshop or something, but I didn't have the piece of paper that said I could do it on my own and have that.
So, at that point I did, but I never taught ____.
I ended up leaving right away and I went to Graduate School at ____ University.
In their choral in their master's Choral conducting program while I was there, I took on a part time high school job that I was a little bit reticent to do, but.
I loved it and they said would you stay another year like a full year instead of part time?
And I said yes.
And the next thing I know, I have been there six years.
And so, and I loved it.
And I loved.
I love finding out that.
What you do as.
A high school choral teacher is not just about teaching notes and rehearsing a little bit of music, but just the interaction and watching the growth in the kids and their skills, and just they grow up as people.
They go from these little people to real grown-ups before your eyes, and it was that was really fulfilling. It was different than performing for yourself.
On stage, you know, going out on stage and just performing by.
Yourself coaching somebody else and watching them grow was exciting for me personally, so that is what I loved about that.
So that was as brief as I get.

Researcher Now what high school is?

The brief I said, and that is as brief as I get.

What high school was that that you started out as part time and then?

Went to stay for six years.

Participant I taught at ____ High School in Mundelein, IL, which is a N source of Chicago.

Researcher And they had concert choir show choir.

Participant Yes, they had a little bit of everything, and I this has been a while ago, so now I am not remembering exactly, but I know that they had.
 There was a concert choir, a group that they had called master singers, which was kind of like their elite choral ensemble.
 I had several concert choirs, A treble choir.
 I know that I did a vocal jazz group.
 Because I remember that we went to the state festival every year and like for seven years in a row got top scores there and then they had a show choir that they had just the year that I arrived.
 They had just gotten into a situation where there was credit available for show choir class.
 And they had started that, oddly enough, the person who left the job was somebody I had worked with in ____ and.
 And it was interesting.
 I followed him.
 But yes, so then so choir was a credit varying class.
 But we did have vocal jazz and some other things there.

Researcher So, after you.
 Spend 6 years at _____.
 Where do you go next?

Participant Well, at that point I knew that I felt like.
 That things were not evolving quite as much as they had in the beginning.
 It felt like things were getting to plateau and I felt like.

Researcher He is found upon why they might have been getting to a plateau.

Participant Well, I think that the middle school numbers we had, we had really tried to recruit.
 I did not think we were going to get any bigger in terms of size at that.
 Point and we were doing lots of great literature in all the choirs.
 Every choir was getting top ratings.
 Like I said, the vocal jazz group I think got perfect scores seven times at state and like the concert choir had a perfect score. Insight reading at state we had.
 Taking the show choir and started to compete out on the big circuit in the National Show choir circuit and we started winning, you know, and beating big, big groups at that point.
 And I felt like, you know, the program is.
 Kind of in a great place, but I am kind of ready to try something else.
 And so, at that point, I left.
 And headed to ____, where I had some contacts in the thoughts that I would just do performing and gigging and whatnot.
 And when I got there.
 Discovered that it was so expensive that I needed to do some teaching as well and ended up I ended up back in the classroom at ____ High School.

Researcher Now, what were you going to your vocalist or was it your piano playing that it was took you to _____?
 Was it Las Vegas or Las?
 So, Los Angeles, was it your piano or vocal?

Participant What was it that brought you there as a?

Participant Well, I had.
 I had been out during a camp at _____ High School because an acquaintance of mine was teaching at _____ High.
 So, I came out in the fall and worked with students and with parents that was there. There were professionals in the industry and the parents that I met.
 We are very well connected.
 And they said, hey, you know.
 If you are thinking about moving out here, we have connections, and we can connect you to things and so forth.
 And so, at that point, it was really the singing and the piano playing.
 I mean it is sometimes it is a package for me.
 So, I was.
 Doing a little bit of both.

Researcher So as professional experiences go like with your singing and piano play and what? What have you done?
 What performances have you did?
 Are you?
 Tried to be a professional performer at any point other than when you first came to _____.

Participant You know, the thing is, I have done a few things.
 I out here professionally not was not able to really cultivate a full-time gigging career out here because you must be available when you teach at a high school in a high school program.
 You know you are very busy.
 And you do not have availability and typically you must be in the situation where somebody can call you up and say, hey, tomorrow at 11:00 AM can you play this gig?
 And in the studio?
 And I am just not available.
 So that is really made growing that kind of career out here.
 And to be honest.
 That is the type of career that takes, you know, 24/7 pushing on your part all the time. And there's dry spells and, you know, feast or famine.
 It is interesting industry and I had worked when I worked in _____.
 I went through that, and I knew that I really did not want to put.
 In that position again and just be free and loose, I want I did want to have some type of work that was steady.
 And so, at the time I was doing that and all along, both in Chicago and out here, I did musical direction at churches.
 I was also a full-time musical director and choral conductor.
 So, I was busy between the church and the school.
 So yes, so the so the things that I have been able to do out here have always been really small things on the side when people that know me understand my schedule and they are like, hey, can you come do this?
 I know you are not always available but can you and yes.

Researcher So, you get the opportunity at ____ High School. And then what?

Participant And then what?
And then 20 years later, I was sitting here talking to some guy from Alabama. Guess that is what it is like.

Researcher So yes, so let us Fast forward to present day.
How many ensembles are you directing currently?

Participant Well, this is interesting because presently I have one mixed ensemble and two treble groups and pre COVID.
I directed seven ensembles which.
Was two mixes.
Two treble, one center bass and two acapella groups.
In addition to student LED ensembles and things that that small groups that formed that the students made COVID really shrunk our programs, though, so we are still building up.
I mean, right now we have had eighty students this past year. It looks like I may have about 105 coming this year. So, we are kind of growing.
And I foresee when we can, you know, when we can grow into more ensembles, but right now I am really focused on the student experience and quality and success, and we are not worrying about how many groups we have.
You know or.
That in terms of just size, it is more about the quality for us.

Researcher Right now, so of your ensembles, how many are concert and how many are to acquire?
Are they combined?
Is it one big?

Participant Well, you know what is interesting is that the school in ____, it was set up as a traditional choir program.
So, we had very specific groups and everything was broken out, though I had kids that were in.
All of them.
Seemed like, but the program at ____ was structured such when I got there, and it is. I prefer it is where each choir kind of does everything, so it is not a situation where we have a dedicated Medical Group.
We have a dedicated.
A classical choir, or we have a dedicated, you know, show choir that only does choir.
We try to do multiple things during the years, typically up until COVID we were doing a spring concert every year that that was all classical music, usually in a church venue in town and sometimes with guest musicians.
We would have strings.
Orchestra type things.
And we are hoping to kind of get back to doing more of that.
I am still teaching the kids classical pieces.
We do Latin, we do German, we do French.

In fact, we even crossed over in our competition show with the with the main show choir.

And did you know ____?

You know, in, in, in one of our shows.

So, the thing is.

I prefer that I get that all the kids get all kinds of different experiences and I think if they are kind of only registered in the show choir or only registered in the medical choir or only registered in this or that group, they kind of get an A1 sided thing.

Now, I do not. I do know.

That a lot of traditional programs back in the day and I do not know if this is still true or if with schedules, if it is possible.

But I do know that.

A lot of school programs are like marching in programs, they say.

Well, if you want to be in the jazz band, you got to be in the marching band.

You know, it is kind of like the little carrot to kind of like say hey, because they cause it is harder to sell to get people into the marching band, but it is kind of like that sometimes with the choral programs.

They say you must be in a concert choir during the school day to be in show choir, which I mean I think the.

All of that is noble and worthy.

And if the schedules allow that, that is great for us.

We like to do it all in the same group and all in the same year and it.

It is worked, it is worked for us to create really what I consider you know, trained singers when we were able to do a little bit of everything and we do not just.

One style or one?

Researcher So, of your ensembles, are they all auditioned or?

Is one non auditioned has that.

Participant No, all our all our groups are auditioned.

They always have been.

Mentioned, I think my first year we did an extra class that was not auditioned, and the guidance counselors used it as a dumping ground for kids that needed a fine art credit.

And the kids we come to class, and I would say, why are you here?

And they are like, because my counselor said I had to be here and then I would be like, OK, well, do you even want to sing and be like, not.

And they would not sing.

They would not open their mouth or do anything.

That to me that come y'all kind of choir was not an effective thing in our, you know, in ours.

School and then the setup that the counseling office was trying to do. But I will say that 99.8% of all students.

Do you know that audition for the program? Make the program we very rarely have anybody who does not quote UN quote make the program.

Researcher Right.

Was the conversation like with your counselor about this?

Come one, come all for choir.

And like, how did you approach it in the classroom with the kids who just absolutely.

I am not going to sing.

What was that like?

Participant Well, I mean, I went to the principal and the counselor, and I explained.

That this is what is happening.

You cannot expect singing is a very vulnerable kind of personal thing for a lot of people.

And you cannot expect somebody to come into a room of strangers and just seeing and expect that that is going to happen.

It is it does not.

You know, in general, especially with teenagers.

And so, I explained to them that it.

Could not be a dumping ground.

I mean, I said, you know, this cannot.

This this only works if it is kids who say they want to sing.

And there really were not.

You know, they did not have a tradition of having it, you know, before I got there, and they did not handle it well in the counseling office.

So, they just dumped a lot of kids in there that needed credit recovery or needed something.

So, we are not talking excited kids wanting to do music.

We are talking about kids who are low GPA students.

Who are barely hanging on, who want something else to do.

Just to fill out their schedule and it was very, very difficult because the school did not give me any kind of curriculum, any kind of nothing, they said.

This is this is going to be a non-audition choir and they build it on the student schedule as.

Mixed chorus and that was it.

And they just, you know, go to the classroom, and do something with.

Them keep them busy so that that.

Was extremely difficult and distracting.

To the rest of my day because that took that class, took more planning and.

Preparation than anything I was doing.

Researcher So instructional approaches during rehearsals talk to me a little.

Bit about your instructional approaches.

What does a rehearsal look like?

In Mr. ___ classroom.

Participant Well, I think you will see a lot of modeling you will experience a lot of imagery.

I like to do a lot of I like to do a lot of bad versus good examples for students when I am modeling as well as it is so important to have.

The students do it so.

You get the students.

To say here, do it the bad way, do it the wrong way.

And then now try the new way.

And that really opens their eyes a lot I think, but the modeling requires the students to physically try it out and copy what they are hearing and open their ears up. So, it is a great ear training kind of experience as well because they knew it is just like when you learn jazz, everybody says when you learn jazz.

You got to listen to it.

You got to listen.

You got to listen, you.

Got a lot of listening and that is so true.

And it is the same way in.

All parts of musical performance you have.

To listen to some.

You must listen to what you want to become or what.

You are trying to achieve.

We do.

Researcher Do you have like a warmup?

Do you have a template or is it like every day is going to be different in rehearsal?

Participant Every day is different. I think it should be. I think the only temper the template that you should have been one that says there has to be a lot of modeling, there must be imagery, there must be a self-assessment.

There must be assessment of the, you know, of the rest of the class.

So sometimes it is great to have the students.

Say what they are hearing.

Communicate that to you, and I think the other part, the last part of the template is like showing.

A problem or a challenge every day that you need to fix, and when that is when you get the success on that, then you are ready to do the next challenge that you keep doing it and you keep you keep giving them something to grow with.

It is a mistake.

I know in school.

They would say.

You know, have the things you are working on for the day and have a couple extra things just in case you run out like you, or you run out of things to do or something.

But for me, you must just have an endless well of.

You can just go to, go to and the next level of the music you know.

OK, now you have learned to do the crescendos now how are you going to do you know, the?

The ***** and things like what?

How can we make this better?

How can we every single second once they achieve it, then you got to say hey, that was great.

What can we do better?

And we keep moving on.

So that is the things for the day.

I do not know about a template as much as I have kind of a.

You know a set of things that we always need to keep chasing and I think.

Researcher So, when you are teaching a.

OK

The concert choir piece of music versus when you are teaching a choir piece of music.

Talk to me about the differences in your approaches.

Participant OK

So, the thing that me.

Think is a little bit different, sometimes about what we do is that I am basing the approach to vocal technique.

On what I call the core technique, a core system which is directly related to bel canto technique.

So obviously beautiful singing from Italian opera in the mid-18th century, you.

Know this was.

A very well-known at the time technique that that was super healthy.

For students and singers alike, provided longevity really maximize the best way to use the voice.

Emphasize not using the throat but using the full body to create sound.

There is a lot of things in that belt, console techniques that are so amazing to singers, period.

And it is.

What you are going to find at least a version of in most any vocal studio at a university which I find interesting because a lot of the vocal teacher's studio teachers at universities kind of looked down on the choral groups.

And it is interesting because they see what is being asked of the choirs seems to go contrary to what they are trying to do in the vocal studio many times.

It is like, OK, let us, let us pull everybody's voice down to a certain soft level so we can blend and let us just kind of like anything that sticks out.

Let us chop it off.

You know, it is just like.

Cutting the weeds out of the sound and let us get it all down to and at some point, you do that so much that you have neutered this sound to where?

There it is so bland.

And it is not really utilizing the beauty of the voices that you have in the ensemble.

You are just getting some really milk toast.

Generic voice that that really is an indicative of the of the beauty that you have in the ensemble vocally.

So, what I find interesting is if you can get everybody in your choir.

Able to use a bel canto style technique in their vocal production.

Then you do not have anybody sticking out because they are doing the same thing.

So, it is important that we teach good chord technique which like I said is based on this bel canto concept.

To get all your singers to really understand their voice, to be as healthy as they can be able to sustain long rehearsals, to make a sound that utilizes all the beauty inherently in their instrument.

And then is they are producing something that will go with everything else in the room that that really when you are producing sound the?

Same way it becomes this kind of 1 voice situation in the room and it starts to blend and balance without really talking about blend because you are doing things the same way and it also the bel canto stuff is fun because it's based on this idea of chiaroscuro, which is Italian for light and dark, right so.

What I teach is the light is the resonance that we use.

So that is we go for that and go totally towards that brightness.

So that light, the yellow and then the school really.

I mean, we are talking about like a lot of open space to find that darker side of the sound without losing one or the other.

And they must be coupled together, you know.

So that kind of sound gives you a great perception of depth and warm.

But also travels and it was invented in the day when they did not have amplification systems and you had to sing over an orchestra every night, you know, in a big theater.

So, this specific technique really was about how do you create a tone that can fly over an orchestra.

So, once you do that, then I think.

Everything else after it falls.

In into just style after that.

Then you then you go.

OK

I have this core technique.

I know how to produce good healthy sound with my voice.

And now what are the adjustments?

I am going to make for this piece of music, and that eliminates this whole idea of concert versus show choir, because I think it does not matter what choir it is.

You are using good singing period.

It does not matter what I am doing.

And then I am just adjusting for, you know, am I going to use vibrato or am I not going to use vibrato?

Or do we scoop on certain pitches?

Or how do we, how do we handle dynamics?

And sometimes they are color changes that will go to the left or right of your core sound a little bit maybe, but.

That bel canto technique is always there as a foundation and keeps you safe and keeps the ensemble sounding, you know, cohesive.

So, I think that the that.

I can tell you an interesting.

Short story about how this comes into play. People's ideas, that concert choir and show choir singing is different or should not be the same foundationally. I was choreographing for a school in the suburb of Chicago and.

Noticing that the show choir did not sing well, they had a thin.

What their idea of pop singing was it was it was very weak.

The technique was terrible.

It they did not sound good.

And yet I had directors in the area tell me, oh my gosh, the same directors concert choirs are some of the bests in the area, like their concert choirs are amazing.

And I was like, well, I will believe that when I see it and, I did see them at festival one year and their concert choir was very good.

And to me, it was so simple.

If that director had simply, you know, all the work that she had done with the concert choir.

If she had just told her to acquire students, we are going to start out singing with this.

You are using the exact same way you sing in concert choir.

We might do a few little things here there to deal with style, but really you need to make sure you are dropping your breath in.

You are keeping the focus in the same place that you are not suddenly just pretending to sound like somebody on the rag.

You know, she would have gotten a great, nice, solid sound with her show choir, but in her head, she was so divided that so choirs, pop music and pop music is kind of a free for all and just.

And will you just let it happen?

I am singing along with the radio.

Know that is what she thought, but concert singing?

She knew the difference, right?

So that was how she ran the program, and it was sad because the show choir would go to choir festival, and they were abysmal.

They were terrible.

They sounded terrible and it did not.

They did not have to.

And they were good kids.

It just was a little bit of bad directing.

And ignorance on her.

Part and it was it was sad.

So, I would love to see the world get away from having this idea, that concert choir and show choir vocal technique are in like.

Two different planets because I think that too.

That is too often a misnomer or a misconception.

Researcher Well, take me through and this can get a little lengthy.

But give me.

A synopsis of your year, a year in the life of Mr.

____ High School.

From the time you audition, kid.

To the end of the year, take me through like what you do as far as rehearsals go.

Curricular early extracurricular.

Participant I can give you an overview and then if you are wanting me to talk specifically about concerts or when things happen in the year.

I can, but typically we spend the first few weeks of school. working solely on vocal technique and very little on the repertoire I have.

I have choirs typically that a week more has gone by in school, and they have only sung a vowel.
And that we have sung vowels all day, every day. We are like on the vowel channel, you will find nothing but 24/7 vowels.
So, and it is not vowels, it is just vocal technique that we are doing and that gives, you know that also give me time.
Uh to instill a lot of the Bel Canto technique.
I go through my system with them, that kind of.
Gets them to simply understand the concepts we are going to be applying.
To our voices.
And then it also gives me time to customize the repertoire to the needs of what kind of groups we have every year, each group is very different and has its strengths and weaknesses.
And during that time.
In the first couple of weeks, I get a good sense of what I am dealing with and what needs to happen in terms of growth so.
For instance, if I am finding that the soprano and alto head voices are a little weaker this particular year, we are having difficulty finding focus in in our in our tone with the correct resonance and so forth.
I can purposefully pull out some material that pushes them to sing.
And that is one of the interesting things I think it does not have to do with the yearly process, but I am just going to say anyway what I think is interesting is that I see also directors that are like doing warmups with kids and they kind of do not push the.
The Altos to singing they just go.
Oh, well, you are Altos.
You just do not have, you know, your voice is your head.
Voice is weaker.
And those arrows?
Chest voice or whatever, and we are.
Really push the head voice stuff in the first half of.
The year a lot.
And especially with the Altos and uh, typically in other years, I have always had a few students who.
Let us say they are a very strong Alto, but they have a super.
Head voice some years depending on where they are in school, especially in the first couple of years.
I will put them in the final section.
You know, I am like, you know what you need?
Spend some, spend some time really working out that that upper voice.
And I tell it is funny, but I do tell the underclassmen students, if your goal is to make it into an upper-level ensemble, the one of the main cutoff points is going to be whether you have a workable.
Grasp of your head voice.
If you have the biggest belt voice of the year and you know you think you are just ripping roar and Alto and that is great.

And you are this loudest Alto in your section.
That may not mean anything for you getting into an advanced group, because if your head voice is.
Like this and you have not spent any time working at working that out and figuring out how to master that somehow, then you are not going.
To be in.
The mixed ensemble, and that is probably one of the things, I think.
Helps all the groups become successful is because we are kind of not just letting them sit where they are comfortably.
You know, it is easy to get comfortable especially.
You know, treble out to the voices and get comfortable in their chest voice and just never venture.
But we forced them all to do that.
So anyway, that is that vocal technique.
Stuff is the beginning of the year that is that is super important during the beginning of the year.
And then as the first couple weeks are going on, that is when I kind of.
Start really deciding what repertoire we are going to do.
I do not, you know, some people do, and some people are very, you know, planning oriented.
And I get that and that is fine.
Everybody must do their own way.
But to me, I really cannot just spend the summer picking music for choirs that I do not know if I want to really customize.
Things for them.
And that is not to say that I cannot pick anything.
But I typically do not let anything get locked in until I hear the groups and see what they what kind of help they need yearly processed.
We have, you know, we have several fall fundraising events that we perform at and.
Several involved foods, everyone likes food, and then we have we have a big camp in the fall, which is really a bonding camp.
I like to tell people it is one of the only choir camps you will ever go to where there might not be singing involved, and I am kind of proud of that.
We work so hard.
The vocal technique all the time that I almost do not have time to do the bonding stuff I would like during the year.
So, we really focus on mixing the choirs up all amongst ourselves, all different grade levels and splitting them into lots of different what I call performing arts experiences.
And the camp is really built to break down walls and just plow or fence, plow, plow fences over.
It is about getting them to come out of their shell, getting them to talk to people in different grades, getting them to feel OK, trying new things in front of others.
These are all super things important to our classroom.
Just, you know, once they get to know each other, they are less afraid to sing in front of each other.

So, we make it fun and educational.
There is lots of fun, different things that we do.
We have had voiceover for cartoons class we have had.
You know, kind of yoga classes.
We have had meditation for singers' kind of classes, where it is about focusing your mind when you are on stage.
And we have brought in experts' high-level experts for things like that.
We have motivational and community.
Building exercises and then we do a lot of fun movement things that kids love to dance.
So, we get to do a lot of different things in movement.
It gives us a chance to focus on that a little bit too.
Not so focused on voices.
Every other couple of years.
We do a vocal health seminar class.
It is about how to treat your voice nicely and take care of it, but the camp I think is super important to the cohesiveness of the community of the program, so that stuff is important.
In the fall, we typically do a holiday concert in in December and then the winter is taken over by competition for show choir.
And while we do that, we are working on the side on another fundraising combined orchestra concert that we.
To do for the school district and then our spring concert of Choral Music, which, like I said, is usually multiple languages and so forth, and then we end the year with our pop show, which is like the big blowout show of the year.
And there is your yearly process.

Researcher So how do you discuss choral technique and the choral sound with your choreographer?

Participant Well, it depends on the skills and awareness of the choreographer you are dealing with.

I am fortunate I do not have to discuss it.

Much because my team is very aware of what I expect vocally and how the choreography integrates with the singing so.

I am fortunate to have that a lot of people are not, or they are dealing with newer, younger choreographer, and I think the important thing in those situations.

Is to communicate the goals that you have and expectations with the choreographer, and make sure you are giving or make sure they are giving you know your ensemble movement that is complementary to the vocals and the singing that you are trying to do.

If you are not happy with what you are seeing, or you feel like it is not working, you must speak up and you must communicate.

And I think the hard part.

Is there is a lot of choreographers out there who are very experienced.

Who have been doing it a long time and just because they have had success with other ensembles or because they have been doing it a long time, does not mean they

are the right fit for you or does not mean they are going to do what you want them to do.

You must just kind of make sure not to be shy about speaking up and saying, hey, this does not feel right to me or hey, this is I am I really would like something more like.

This or I feel like we need to.

Back up and look at how we are supporting the vocals.

At this point, which is important.

So, like I said.

A lot of.

It depends on the skills and awareness of the person you are working with, but the main key is you know, communicating for sure.

Researcher So, let us discuss show design and the importance of it in show choir.

Participant OK, well I think that.

Programming, let us call it programming for concerts and shows are something that most choral educators are not very well-trained in.

I think that's kind.

Of a weak.

Link in in the training that we give to choral music educators, I think.

So many folks' kind of are left out there.

Not sure of what to do.

They have been in concerts, but just being in a concert really does not help you understand what?

It took to get to that point to put together the show.

I think the tenants of.

Sorry, somebody at the door.

I think the tenants of.

Good concert programming mirror the conventions of good show design, so like pacing variety, you know concurrency with the thematic choices you are making, respecting your singers' strengths and weaknesses.

These are all things that you are going to do, whether it is concert choir or show choir.

So, you look at that and you go, wow.

If you can program a good concert, you probably can program a good show.

If you really kind of.

You know, boil it down to what you are looking for.

You are looking for pacing.

You are looking for variety.

You are looking for how to support your theme, and you are looking for stuff that is going to be able to be done well by the singers you have and the forces that you have.

What is appropriate for the forces you have.

So, I think.

You must.

Just make yourself a good structure number the key points of what you are trying to do before you even sit down and try to program a show or concert.

Researcher Talk to me a little bit.
About visual design and how you utilize it to convey your theme or your message of your show.

Participant I would say, and I am going to kind of just.
Say something that connects it to what I about concert choir, I think.
Some of the most interesting concert choir concerts I have seen are ones where the directors have made a conscious choice to give us some type of visual.
To go with the singing.
So, and sometimes it may be screens with different images.
It may mean a concert of spring and we have we have made this the stage.
A spring set, you know, it is all about creating environment.
So, whether it is concert, choir, or choir, you can do that.
There is not as much of A tendency for choral directors to think that way, but I think anytime you have an audience coming in, they want to see something interesting, even if it is concert choir.
But in terms of your talking about show choir, we try to create an environment.
On the stage that.
Supports the story that we are creating or the theme that we are creating.
I like to think of it as a kind of we are creating the world and the atmosphere that we are going to be in for the show on the stage and that can be done many, many ways.
I mean, there is lots of ways to do it.
You can do it with a lot of money you can do with without a lot of money.
You can do it in between.
You can use lighting, set pieces, props, costumes.
All that kind of stuff contributes to how the stage is going to look
I you know, there is so many.
Clever ways to create the visual design.
In the kind of environment and to support your show and they do not always have to be expensive, some of the best ideas and fun things are simple.
I know that we had a fun show with the boys one year where we did a medical doctor.
I got the Blues show.
And we had these.
We took roller blinds.
This is so super cheap.
But we took roller blinds and, you know, installed them in in kind of boxes on the floor and then at one point, the boys.
Pulled the roller blind up their neck and on the roller, blind was painted in X-ray image.
You know, like a cartoon X-ray image and the doctor was pointing at it and talking about, you know, singing about the, you know, what was wrong with them.
And you know that kind of visual design stuff really helps your theme, and it is clever and fun for the audience.
And so, things like.
That are simple.
We did a show.

Many, many moons ago we called it Leonardo and at one point the main character in the show was in a jail at the top of the risers and you probably when you watch the show, if you weren't careful, you would have not known how the jail got there or how it disappeared really, but basically.

We took a long piece of wood.

And we put a bunch of tape measures.

Mounted into the bottom of the wood.

Then we put another piece of wood on the end of the tape measures, and you took the piece of wood and pulled it up and all the tape measures of course came out and they look like bars, metal bars.

And there was a jail that that happened instantly, and then he was in jail and then he was supposed to have supernatural power.

So, he walked through.

He was able to push the tape measures, you know, kind of wrinkle, push the tape measures and walked through the jail.

And it is kind of, you know, all just came flipping back and then once he got down stage and all the other things happened, the boys were holding, it just lowered it right back to the floor and the jail.

Just disappeared instantly.

And that was super simple to do.

But it was clever.

And it helped show the story much better than nothing, and was not that expensive, you know.

So visual design can really help your show, I think.

You know, we did a show this year that was based in a Speakeasy in the first show that we did of the season, we did not have, you know, the sets ready or anything to do and with like that or major.

Major lighting and the show itself did not change as much, but once we added the set pieces.

Brick walls and so forth suddenly, the story became more compelling.

Visual design helps convey that, but it does not have to be expensive.

Some people think, gosh, I do not have money to do that.

Well, let me just tell you I did not have any money.

What I did so it is just you just you.

Figure it out as you go along.

Researcher Do you feel though that visual design as show choir progresses?

It is starting to take over from the choral fundamentals, from choir of the past.

Participant Well, I think a lot of it depends on who the

director is and what they are.

What they are focused on, because I think like, you know, production aspects of the show do not generally affect.

I mean in, in its purest form do not affect the way the choir sounds.

If you are talking about fog machines really do not change how they sound.

Video screens do not change how you sound.

Lights do not change, but if.

Adding production things to your show and adding to the visual, you know design of the show.

If it takes away from the time you had to rehearse on the show, obviously or does something, you know, if they are having to move things around on the stage while they are performing, and it is really.

You know causing them to not sing.

Well, that can.

There can be an impact there.

The most dangerous part of all the visual design and production situations happen when directors allow themselves to get distracted from vocal technique and style and so forth.

And I have watched a lot of directors get focused on show.

Section it is expensive.

You cannot let yourself.

I will take you know your eyes off the ball, flash and trash is fun.

I love flash and.

Trash if it is.

If it is prioritized and I know there was a specific school recently, I was talking to an arranger and I said, man, I just wish this one school would sing better because they look amazing and all the video screens, all the magic.

The stage looks amazing and yes, the arranger said.

Yeah, I mean, I called up the director and said, hey, you know, they need to work on this part or work on that part vocally and.

And he is like, oh, yes?

Well, I have been so busy trying to get the screens.

To work and I've.

Been doing like making excuses for why he has not been.

Able to focus on the singing because he was so busy.

Trying to make the visual special effects work and that is where you get into treble.

You know if you have a crew of people or special people taking care of that and they are taking care of it and you were able to focus on the kids and the singing and not ever let any of your energy get diverted, then I do not think it is a problem.

But I think it can be dangerous.

If you do not have your priorities.

You know, set straight and I know that there was another director I was working with in a different state that I told her at one point, I said.

You must figure out why it is that when I come and work with the students, why the kids are sounding so good and then three weeks later when the show gets pulled together with the costumes and everything, why there is such a huge drop vocally?

Because it is not just me being there, it is just that we were focusing.

We are focusing on the singing so much and that's where the kids' heads were.

And the director said, well, yes, you know, we the last two weeks we were so worried about the costume change, and we had to rehearse it over and over and over.

And we were so worried about the set in the back getting moved properly during this and we were so and so finally.

The next the next year, I said before the next year, I told her, I said, you know, if there's.

Anything you can do?

To cause yourself to be more focused and the kids.

Be more focused on.

The singing before you go to compete like at the end of the process.

You are going to find so much more success.

And so, the next year, when they got to competition season, and they sang better like 50% better than I have ever heard them saying.

And I just said to her, I said, like, what did you do?

And she said, you know what I decided to.

Get rid of my responsibilities of doing this and this and this, this, and just for me to focus on what the kids were singing and to let these other people handle it.

And I had to keep bringing the kids back into focus and.

It totally worked.

I mean it was like suddenly major vocal increase because, you know, and that is so that is where it does get in the way.

So, it is it is a slippery slope and yes, there is a lot of groups out there who think that just one more fancy costume change.

Is going to help.

I recently know a director.

That is struggling with a program vocally, but kind of does not seem to acknowledge it or know it.

It is a super high-level program, and they are competing with some of the top groups in their state and his comment after this season was if we are just.

If that we just had not done so many medleys, and if I had just designed the show a little.

Bit different I think next year we can beat.

Choir X next year because I know we sing as well as they do, and I and two or three others very, very experienced choral people were like, he does not see that they are not singing as good as choir X and him simply just chasing these dreams of if I just have a better show.

If I just have better choreography, if I just have.

Better, better, better.

What if I just have?

Better singing, you know, and.

And it is sad because you know, some people must learn the hard way.

And I know this director has been told they are not singing the way they should.

It just does not believe he does not believe it, and he is young, and he does not believe it.

And I am like, but you do not know.

Researcher Yes, when you strip everything away.

What is your in your opinion, what are the pillars?

Of a good show choir design a show that is designed well and that has you know.

Good visual design and all that stuff.

What basically when you strip everything away, what is the pillars of a good show?

Participant Well, I mean it is all about that programming.
 It is all about the variety and the pacing and the good singing and relatively clean dancing movement that is complementary to the kids.
 If you are talking about everything, that is the kids and nothing else.
 I mean, it really is.
 Are you giving them material that is complementary to them?
 Is this the type of group that can handle?
 You know you are not going to want to do a show that contains a bunch of opera excerpts.
 If they cannot produce a mature sound that is going to make sense for that.
 If it is a younger group, maybe they need to sing things that that just skew themselves toward that kind of style.
 A younger, more youthful style of singing, but it needs to be about the pacing and the content and how they execute it.
 That is obviously what it all boils.
 Down to is, you know, content and execution.

Researcher Talking a little bit about pacing, we are going to discuss musical arrangement processes.
 So, when you are.
 Like when you get an idea, talk me through the process of communicating that idea to your arranger and what is the conversation like regarding pacing and show design, etcetera.

Participant Well, I mean.
 And I know some schools that are very formulaic.
 So, I have seen schools out there in the national circuit that are very formula.
 That you can see one show one year and you cannot differentiate what year it is because it is so similar and you know, and the thing is people become comfortable with something and they have some emoticon of success.
 So, then they.
 They are afraid to veer away from that and afraid to do something different.
 It almost reminds me of.
 The years back when.
 Nobody would do anything somatic.
 Nobody would do anything thematic, because the only time they ever saw somebody doing something thematic, it was hokey, corny, and dumb and was not done by and was not done by a good singing group.
 So top groups steered away from trying to do anything thematic because they watched other people, you know.
 You know, crash, and burn doing it and they were like, well, I do not want that for my kids.
 I do not want people to think that we look corny and stupid and really the bottom line was it just meant there needed to be a group that sung and performed well.

Researcher Right.

Participant It was not so much about the choice.
 So, it is interesting that the choices.
 Sometimes the choices.

Are not as important as it seems, because it really is you.
You can do some weird choices or some mundane things.
I had a friend that loved to do what I call like, you know, callbacks to different show
choir ages.
I mean, you know.
Well, he loved a good arrangement of it.
If it do not, it do not mean to think of another swing or something that nobody
would touch or steam heat.

Researcher Which is, you know, it used to be back in.

Participant The early eighties like.
Something like he loved to do things like that that nobody else would be doing right
now.
And on any other choir it would have.
Been a death.
Yet he was able to take those type of numbers.
And when national competitions with them, just because nobody else was doing
them and doing them well.
And so, it was not so much about the content.
The arrangements were very solid, but it was just about the fact that they were so
well done, so well performed.
So back to the musical arrangement process, I think.
I find it interesting when you are looking at all of this, there is always like a macro
and a micro kind of situation going on.
So, you know, you can look at the show and you can say, ok, I want pacing that is
interesting.
And you know, in my opinion and my humble opinion, variety is king.
So, like you've, you must have variety.
And you got to have a right.
Of style, you.
Need to have a variety of tempo.
You need to have a variety of texture.
You need to have.
You know, variety of time, whatever.
All kinds of things you need to just variety, variety, variety.
Is like the key.
So, then you.
Then you look at that as like, that is your overall kind of macro situation.
In the show, you are looking for the show to constantly evolve and change and take
us places.
Take us to different places, just like you would in any regular cost required setting
this you want to look for variety and maybe the variety is not as extreme in a concert
choir.
Show, but it is still there.
So, when you look at show choir and you go, oh, I have this macro show design
situation where I am creating all these different variety.

Also want to look at each arrangement individually, so you want to pull song #2 let us say out and you want to look at it and.

Ok, now that this is one cog in the overall wheel of variety and diversity here in the show.

Within this arrangement, what am I seeing?

And it is funny because I will do a workshop with the choir, and I will get an arrangement I have ever seen.

And I will literally just like, turn the pages, go look at the pages.

And I do not have to look at anything too specific to have an idea if it is going to be halfway interesting.

If the whole arrangement and I have seen it so many times and it is unbelievable currently that it happens.

But literally when the whole arrangement is four parts straight across the entire song.

You can even instantly go.

This is a disaster waiting to happen like this is not interesting.

This is if you see choruses repeated exactly arranged the same way in the same key.

Bad idea when you, you know, and you want to.

You want to look at the arrangement and you want to see texture changes.

If I do not see a section where the where the treble voices are leading and then the center-based voices are leading for a little bit.

If I do not see even in the four-part writing, if I do not see the melody occurring in other parts then soprano always like.

Just things like that.

You want to find all this variety and pacing within the arrangement itself and that's kind of the micro.

Part of the show design you are looking forward to change and the amazing part about it is that those changes inspire and direct the choreographer.

So, all this stuff is not separate and living on its own island.

These things are also interconnected, and we do not always see it, but if you are wondering why they are choreography looks kind of boring to this song that repeats the chorus three times in the same key.

And is all for.

It is not hard to see where the issue lies with the choreography.

The choreographer was not given anything to work with.

You know, if you give them a chance where the sopranos and altos just sing by themselves for a few moments and then the terms and basically you give the choreographer an opportunity to, to feature half the singers and maybe.

Just give us a different like the bass can turn around to the back and do choreography towards the back because they must sing.

Now I have a different look and texture visually.

You know if I have four things going at once.

Then I have.

Visually I can have four things visually on or if I have four things musically going on at once, I can have four things visually happening.

You know the arrangement is going to drive.

How interesting your choreography is in so many cases because the choreographer needs inspiration.

I mean, if they are expected to choreograph who you are going to pop music, they are going to get.

And I do not mean Winnie.

Researcher Right.

Participant So, I mean, right.

So, I mean, this is the important thing is when you are looking at the arrangements is, is your arranger giving?

Something interesting and it.

And are they being creative?

You know, that is the other thing.

Are they being creative?

Do they just?

Do they just stick with the original pieces?

Chord changes you know is the harmony.

The chord changes just the original, or do they?

Do they do altered chords you know are they doing?

Lots of interesting creative arranging where you are altering chords and.

Mixing it up a little bit harmonically, so that is the important thing to communicate to the arranger is that you want as many, like, interesting moments in each arrangement as you can get.

And like I said, that is going to mean it can mean key changes.

It can mean field changes and that also.

Was along with how the bands arranged.

You know if you have a horn section and whatever I mean is the arranging done well?

Obviously if I see something where the horns are doubling the voices on a lot of.

That is the no, no.

You know, and there are arrangers out there who do that and they will do that and you have to be very careful or they like to do a lot of arrangers like to do like, what I call choir horn sections, you know, like where they're playing, you know, whole notes in a chord for a measure, you know, just on the chords like chord organ or whatever.

Playing an organ, you know?

And it is like, no, this is not helpful to us singing.

Researcher Right.

Participant It covers up the singers and you know, it does not and it.

Does not add energy to.

To what is happening either.

So yes, it is important to have arrangements that.

Are helpful to your goal overall being interesting and that is changed drastically in the last 10 years because of the last 15 years.

Because I think now you can get a lot of interesting musical arrangements that are written well without breaking the bank or without having it all custom written and that's.

Researcher Now in your shows, do you utilize multiple arrangers or are you finding that one arranger building a relationship with them and using them for all you know the years that you are?
 You are a show choir director, so.
 Well, I mean, I tend to me.
 Tend to use.
 You know a few and it is if you have arrangers who you can build a relationship with, who start to get what you need and understand what you are doing.
 That is a valuable thing.
 I think you can.
 Obviously if you are, if you are shopping for the kind of stock pieces.
 You know, you just must look all over the place and find things that that are going to.
 Work well for you.
 If you are having somebody, write music for you, I think building a relationship with them and trying to get them to see your vision is always advantageous for sure.

Researcher Regarding.
 How hands on are you?
 Because some directors may, you know, give a lot of liberty to the arranger, and give them a lot of liberty into the and input into their show.
 How involved are you in like?
 Your show, I guess you could say in the arrangements.

Participant Well, it varies.
 It varies from year to year.
 I am, I am.
 I have a relationship with my arrangers to the point.
 That I do not have to do a lot of that though when I am doing clinic workshops with other schools, I find myself invariably doing a lot of little edits and little things.
 And let us do it this way and do it that way.
 I have a good friend who does a lot of arranging, and when it came to his quite his own choir, I felt a little strange.
 Like wanting to rewrite his arrangements in front of him.
 But he was such a good he was such a good sport about it, and I did not rewrite them.
 But I did make major structural changes or big moments changes that and he was like totally into it, you know.
 He was so.
 But uh, that is, that is super tough.
 One of the things that I learned a long time ago was.
 Never hurt to try out an arrangement in a couple different keys and never hurts to hit the transpose on the keyboard and just take it up a half step or take it down a half step if something is not singing right sometime and you are beat your head against the wall and you are like I just do not know why. This does not sound quite like I think it should, and it is elusive.
 Problem you cannot really put your finger on sometimes if you can just transpose the chart up or down a.

Little bit, suddenly you will find some magic, because sometimes what happens is, you know, you may not even realize that maybe you are Sopranos to have the melody.

Maybe they are stuck, like you know, in their break so much that that they it is just hard for them to get their teeth, to sink their teeth into the part.

And so maybe if you just lowered one-half step now, they are now, they could really sing in their belt.

And they can cover that part strongly.

Or if you can move it above the break enough, then they must sing in their head voice that they can really get this the part to fly off the.

I cannot tell you how many times I have just literally come to a workshop and there was something wrong with the piece and then I just transposed it up or down a half step or two and the director just thought that a miracle had happened.

And it really is not that big a miracle.

But you know, it was that they could not figure out why I could not fix it, could not fix it.

And all you must do is just.

Just move it a little bit, cause sometimes you know, and this is the this.

True of individual voices, right?

I mean, sometimes there is a specific voice in a specific singer or a specific note or pitch in a specific singer that just on a certain valve just does not seem to work right.

And you just keep going.

Ohh, that is just why is that.

That is a hard note for you.

I know I have said that to students I am coaching.

I am like, that is just in a weird place in your voice.

You know, I do not know if you have heard that.

Being said before, but yes, this is not a weird this that, that, that, that note and that vowel, that part is that syllable is not a weird place in.

Voice, and sometimes that can happen as a choral ensemble too. It can be just kind of not a great place for a lot of people, the way it all sits and maybe the way the harmony leads into it, or the way the everything's working.

So sometimes you just change the key a little bit.

You can really make a difference.

So, yes, I, I mean I have had.

I had somebody send me a couple of arrangements.

This is when was.

This must have been.

I remember I was in Florida too.

I was in Florida on vacation, and they sent me this.

This a couple of charts and it was an arranger that was a former student of my program.

They had, and it was funny, but there were there.

There was an arrangement.

Specifically, that for whatever reason, just seemed to like his.

Other arrangements were pretty good.

This one, for whatever reason, fell through the cracks and.
Just was not working on multiple levels and it was one of those things where I simply turned the pages and looked at it and like this does not look good.
This does not look; it just does not look right.
Because I do not see variety.
I do not see the.
I do not see things happening the way I think they should happen.
So, I had to literally go through and like make huge notes about move this back here.
Do that here you know give the bass the melody here you know move this around to here.
Like I did a whole bunch of editing, and it went back to him and then he redid it.
But it just all depends.
You know I and that is, and I am fortunate because I have that background and that I can do that, and I can see that, and it also comes from experience.
I mean younger directors do not.
You know, I had to learn the hard way, you know, I had to learn the hard way and the way I learned was beating my head against the wall because I was like, this does not seem right.
I do not why.
I do not know why this is not working.
What can I do?
What can I do and then just trying things and just do not give up?
You got to just keep trying.
To figure out what's.
Making it tick and yes, but the reasons are tricky.

Researcher So, this might be this might be the easiest question.
Would you ever allow an arranger to arrange a show?
Just give it to you and you do the show.

Participant No, I mean, I do not think that is not that is not possible, right, I mean.
That is not your IMO so.
But would anybody?
I mean, I mean, how many people are happy with, you know, somebody going out and picking out your outfit to wear, you know, to a special event, would you be able to let somebody just totally pick out something with which you are not comfortable?
I mean, that is hard.

Researcher All right, so why is choir?
Such an asset to public secondary music education.

Participant Well, I mean, I think any great.
Performing singing ensemble, it can be wonderful for a school, so choir is just one of those things that's kind of a little flashy and the pop style is interesting to students. I think the show choir can be a great advertisement for the choir program in the school, and so you will typically attract.
Kids and singers who would not find classical repertoire and fighting initially, but what is fun I think the show choir can be an asset because it is also a good gateway drug to many other forms of group singing.

So, I mean, once they get in there and they really like to sing together, they pretty much enjoy anything you throw at them.
I used to laugh.
Former director in an area school here.
You just say I do not know how you get those kids to sing that song.
Whatever it was, something.
And so, my kids would never sing that song.
They just would not do it.
And it was typically.
Like something that was a period piece, or it was a cowboy piece, or it was a musical theater piece.
It was a little silly or I do not know, whatever.
It was and I.
Do not know how you get your kids to do that.
And I am like, I just did not.
I mean, she basically, if her kids did not, would not seemingly approve of the choice, she would not pick it.
And I am like.
You are really limiting your student's exposure to stuff because my kids, really, honestly, they just like to sing so like and they do not have enough.
Enough discernment to for me to hand them a piece of music and then go ohh.
I do not like this before you even sung it.
And usually, we are so like in the moment of trying to learn.
The notes and saying and they are used to.
The process being one where your kind of like a puzzle that you put together where you do not see what the whole picture is until you get, you know, like they kind of are used to not knowing what it is going to be but trusting.
That it is going to be good so.
You know, getting your kids.
Attracted to show choir and it is great to build numbers in the choral program, but you must also introduce them to all the styles of music.
A good music educators should do.
I mean, I think.
Everybody has their strengths.
You know, some people love magical music.
Some people love music, some people love.
Specific kinds of music, as a choral music educator, and I think you can always really, you know.
You know, feature that in your program in some way, but if it is the type of music that does not draw in students initially, this requires a great way to attract students and get.
And do you know what?
Like, I did not know anything about magical music when I was in high school, and I did not care.
And I do not think I cared about magical music when I was in, we had.

I was in a magical group that had had a top scoring in Indiana, had the top scoring score at state solo and Ensemble Festival at nine years.
And I was fortunate I got in as a freshman.
It was a 16-member group.
They had never had freshmen before, and I got in.
I was lucky.
I did not expect to make it.
I got in, which was cool and.
I did not know anything about magical music, but I like to sing, and we sang well, like the singing was really done.
The attention to detail was amazing and we were we were very good singers and so I loved it.
I loved the singing.
It was not that maybe the style of music.
That I loved.
But I just loved singing so that.
If the program had only done magical music I, maybe I would not have been as interested, but I got into the program because there were lots of things, lots of. Different music going on and this is having one of them and.
And it was a great education.
And it got me to really open my eyes to singing lots of other things.
So, the show choir was I played the piano for.
I played the piano for the show choir.
When I was a freshman, so that was kind of how I got like I was not inquired middle school.
I played for the I was accompanist for my middle school choir.
And I was in band.
And then I was accompanist.
In high school for the choir my freshman year and then then I started doing the show choir, and then I got into all the other choirs.
So, there you go. So.

Researcher Why do you think that most public secondary schools do not have a show choir program they have?

They might have a choral program.
But they do not see show choir as an asset.
As we just spoke about.

Participant Well, I you know, I.
Do not know the statistics on that so.
Only about what you are talking.

Researcher So, I will throw it. I will throw a number. In 2015, there was a study that found that almost 94% of public secondary schools did not have a.
Show care program.

Participant So, I my first.
Question to that would be.

As I am not exactly answering your question yet, but my question my question to that would be what are would be more about what they are calling a show choir program?

Researcher No, it is OK

Participant Because if I have a, if I have a choir, if I, let us say you are at a really, small school and you basically have a like, this is what small-town schools are like. You know, they.

Have a freshman choir and then like the Jubilee.

Singers, you know, like the, the, the, the older kids, you know, and the, the question is, OK, so do the Jubilee Singers ever sing any pop music?

Researcher Right.

Right.

Probably something I am guessing I would be very shocked that they did not sing some a pop singer in the year do the Jubilee Singers ever do a little step touch dance with their then maybe Miss Jenny Lynn comes in and you know, for the spring concert they do one piece where they do, you know, some choreography.

Right.

Participant Well, I mean that is show choir.

So, I mean I think what you are probably.

Talking about maybe like competitive festival.

Show choir where.

You are creating shows, going to festivals, and competing, and you have that kind of a program, I think.

I think a lot more than that do.

What could be considered show choir in a different form maybe than what?

You are talking about.

Researcher So, are you saying that if you are doing a twostep?

To song like just swaying back and forth that it is a show choir.

Participant Well, not if you are doing a twostep, but if you are doing step touching.

And you have some armaments, whatever I.

Researcher Yes, it is that touching back and forth or?

Researcher What? What about clapping?

Participant I mean, if you have, if you have.

Like if you are clapping your hands.

OK

Participant I do not know.

I do not know that clapping hands constitutes doing show choir, but I think.

Researcher What is your definition of a show choir exactly like was your idea of a show choir?

Oh, it is acquired that is doing pop music and has some kind of movement with it, you know, and is not would fall under a traditional choir model.

OK

I think here is the thing.

I think what you are talking about is more about schools that are looking at having a separate standalone group that is competitive or whatever.

Researcher Right.

Participant And I think that the that the competition groups are expensive, and you know it is very easy for them to monopolize a comprehensive programs resource.
So, I will give you an example.
My program budget from the school at ____.
Was really good proof of what I just said that the competition group can monopolize the traditional program resources.
The school district gave us a budget of approximately \$30,000, as well as a transportation budget of about \$15,000 to pay for buses to go to festivals and things.
This was in 1990 You know eight whatever.
OK, so when you were probably five, ok, so anyway, so.
But that is and that is a lot of money, right?
So, but I can.

Researcher And today, I mean that would be a lot, yes.

Participant I can tell you that almost the entirety of that money was used by our choir.
So, I was able to charge the students \$300.00 for show choir for the year and that covered everything that we did.
And that covered sets, props, costumes, arrangements.
Any special effects buses one year we ended up buying a trailer to pull to haul our equipment in and stuff like we also did fundraisers.
We, you know, the kids paid \$3 plus we did some fundraisers. So, our budget was higher.
Than 30,000.
Dollars. But. But the fact that the school is giving me \$30,000 for choir.
It was amazing.
Yet I really did not have, and I did not feel like I was stealing it from the other choirs because the other choirs did not.
We just, I mean, I used the money to, too.
Buy the.
The octavos that we were singing.
But it was not that much money.
So, and we already had a stock of black concert dresses and tuxedos that we used, and we are just.
I have kept that a little bit, so it really was not that \$30,000 year budget just there was not, there was nothing and I even used a little bit of that to bring in some like concert choir style.
More traditional choral clinicians and stuff a couple times.
As guests, but honest to goodness, I mean it just took a lot of the money.
Now there is a lot of directors out there who just they are not willing to fundraise, and they are not willing to, to you to divert all the resources from their traditional program over into a show.
Mark, because it is super expensive, and the traditional choirs do not require that kind of money.
And doing the show choir that that step touch, clap hands to choir is super cheap, is super cheap and you can do that, and you do not, you are not, you are not.
You know, there is a lot of groups that that, their, their concert choir does a little pops concert in the spring, and they sing and dance, but they do not.

Ever go out and compete and they do not really have. Specialized costumes. They wear T-shirt and jeans, and they do not, so that. So, there is a lot of those. I mean, there is a lot of schools. That do that during their year. But they do not have a show choir in the in the competitive circuit kind of way that that is the big money thing. And that is the hard part because when you go to college, you are not taught. Fundraising, you know, and you might have, you know, Fred, Fred Smith, who knocks on your door to begin the year and says I am here with the M&M fundraiser, and you know, and I and Great American fundraisers or whatever it is. And, you know, and we offer these little prizes for people you. Know it is a little. You know Walkman thing and whatever and whatever a tape player and then you know, if they sell so many of these and they get a stuffed animal, they sell so many of those. And you know, you sell, you know. Candy bars and whatever, I mean, everybody goes through that. But I think the kind of money that we are talking about to fundraise for a traditional competing choir for that kind of competition choir in show choir is above the norm for a lot of people. And I think a lot of the, the, the directors. A lot of the directors now that are out there, they were in a competitive show choir. They came out of that environment or somehow got snookered into being an assistant director of one at some point in their life and got that way. So, I mean that is that is because they do not. Each that genre or how to because it is a lot of soap production and it is a lot of extra stuff and it takes a lot of extra time, so I think. That is the difficult thing is, I mean, how do you go to? A director, maybe a director, has been directing 10-or 15-years doing kind of a traditional program. And how do you say them? Hey, watch this fun, exciting thing and add another 15 hours a week to your job and add another fifty or \$100,000 that you need to fundraise the year. Are you interested in that and not get paid? Am I going to do that?

Researcher Yes, you and you just kind of talked a little bit about the time commitment but also fundraising. How have you funded your program and sustained it talking about ____, how have you sustained it and funded it through the years?

Participant Well, primarily the all the fundraising is through the booster parent organization and then also through student contributions. The school district. The school district. Provides now as of this past year about \$2000.00 for the choral program for the year. We used to get.

Eight hundred for music then we got six hundred and then we got four hundred for music arrangements and then we got like \$1500 for buses.
So, it is still, it is still as dismal as it always was. It is just now they are just saying it is a total of 2000.

Do whatever you want, but and I have not even spent the two.
One thousand from this year, yet I need to.

Researcher So that comes from the district or that comes from.

Participant That is from the school district.

OK

Participant In California, due to changes in school Ed Code, we are not allowed to force students to pay for anything that is considered educationally enriching.
So, anything that is connected to the school and is enriching, let us say your French club wants to go to Paris.

Well, that could fall under those that category and you could be forced to take students who do not pay to Paris with you.

So, it is very tricky.

Very, very, very tricky.

In California, everything must be donations and it is very difficult.

I used to say, and I have not figured it out recently, but.

I used to.

Say that, and it is probably true that I have had to spearhead fundraising over \$11 million over the course of the past twenty million or 20 years.

Researcher Twenty million years, yes.

Twenty million years? It feels like twenty million years, like \$11 million in the past 20 years or something, you know, to do what we do.

But The thing is I did not do all myself.

I mean that, you know, there's.

You know it is parents that are passionate about what their kids are doing that are contributing and raising the funds and that is.

You know, and that is the hard part too, because when I got here, it was already an established thing, like it was not Ed Mundelein.

I had to start.

I started the show choir.

From scratch, but here it was already like they already had the trip planned.

They were going to Orlando to Showstoppers.

That was all like.

Programmed in, I did not have a choice.

Kind of right when I got here, but they, but they already had their established fundraising methods and so forth.

So, so that was a plus, but I can say I did it. You know, I did it in in Mundelein and we start we had, we started doing fundraising dinners and we started doing things.

But it is tough.

I think the fundraising part.

Is one of the more difficult aspects of all of it, because you know it is one thing, it is one thing to raise a little bit of money.

To buy a vest.

Or a cheap dress.

But when you start factoring in everything else it takes.

I mean, you are talking about plane tickets to fly to New York City or to Chicago or _____.

And then in the in the entry fees and hotels and food for the kids and the and then the band and then the equipment truck and all, I mean it just you know a.

A trip across the country easily is \$200,000.

So, that is, you know, a challenge.

Researcher Yes, it is.

And what is your advice to a future?

Choir director, who is fresh out of college, knows absolutely nothing.

Talk a little bit about, you know, the work life balance, you know.

Just what advice would you give to someone just starting out?

Like if you could Go back to Mr. _____ in year one. What would you? Tell Mr. _____

Participant The biggest advice is finding a mentor and find several.

If you can find people that you trust that you respect what they do and try to see if you can get them to share some of their best advice.

There is a lot of resources online, I think.

I think you can.

Find information that helps online, and I have seen more of their books and things that are coming out and they are even some old ones have good advice that are super like 30.

40 years old.

That are.

If you just peruse them, there is some sage wisdom in those, of course.

And then the things that need to be updated, you know that that is another.

Thing but I think.

There is a lot of there is a lot of great things if.

You are willing to look for.

It I think that the number one thing to remember to anybody in terms of advice is remember that you are a choral director period like that is what you are.

You know you are not a magical director.

You are not a jazz funk director.

You know, if you are a so choir director, that is just.

Another facet of what you do in.

Your career as a as a choral music.

The cater I think, I think that's.

You know if you look down on a director who?

Who their magical dinner is the biggest, exciting event of the year for the kids, and you know, and use those directors, ones they can get the kids to buy into it.

And they are the kids are excited. You know, like, if that, if you look down on that kind of director in that kind of program, you are just as guilty if you are just a, quote, UN quote.

So, choir director, because you are just picking one.

One thing that you like, and you are going with it rather than giving your kids.

Kind of a buffet of experiences and I do agree.

There is, you know, there is this thing called Jack of all Trades Master of none that can happen, and you can become not good at anything.

But I think you should provide the studio.

As much as you can in terms of variety of style, periods, time periods, all that, and then you can.

Then you can pick out as long as doing that.

Then you can pick something you are good at your or you enjoy, and you can give them a little bit more of that and you can give your kids an expanded experience in in a specific area.

But the number one thing is just remembered you are.

Choral director and.

You know, as a choral director, you are required to be a producer, a director, a set designer.

Costumer fundraiser, publicist.

You know, concert programmer, vocal pedagogy, teacher of life skills, encourager, and supporter of a myriad of students.

Who learn in so many weird ways?

Obviously, and but you are also someone who hopefully can create lifelong memories and experiences for children and give them some type of musical education and bring art more closely to.

So, you need to find several programs that you think are balanced and achieving success in out and outstanding results for.

For the students and then kind of build your model on what fits you and your personality.

But my last piece of advice.

To always make sure you can balance your personal and family life in your career.

Because that is the hardest part.

Secondary choral jobs that are done well.

Where somebody's passionate and they're engaged is pretty overwhelming and I think it's great to be passionate about that, but nothing is worth sacrificing, you know, family and friends and you have to be aware of how much you're committing to and the kind of monster you're creating, because the bigger the monster gets, the more it wants to eat.

Researcher Right.

Participant And it ends up eating, eating you.

And so, I have been telling the band director we had this the new band director the last couple of years across the hall from me.

She is a fantastic person.

She has her youngest student just graduated from eighth grade and she has one that is graduating from high.

And then a couple in high school and she is so passionate, and they sound amazing like she is doing some amazing things, but they are like they added in going to Disneyland this year for the weekend and spending the night.

And they added in, you know, she is adding things.

And I keep telling her just be careful how much you add because you cannot go back.

It is very, very hard to go back.

And say, you know, once you have done six festivals, everybody is going to expect to do six festivals.

You know unless you are.

Unless you are good enough to be able to convince them otherwise without having disappointment and losing energy in your program.

Researcher Right.

Participant So that is that is the biggest thing.

You know, in terms of advice to future secondary educators is take it easy, take it slow, find out what you are good at, find out what you want to be, and then just start working towards that.

Researcher Is there anything?

Else that you would like to add to this topic that has not already been discussed.

Participant I do not know.

I do not think so.

Researcher ____

So, I will.

Participant I mean, I can sit here and pray.

I can sit here and.

Preach for hours, but that is not what that does.

Researcher Yes, yes. So, I.

Participant That is not helpful.

I will send you a transcript in a couple of weeks for you to check over.

Make sure that I have represented your words accurately.

But also gives you an opportunity to strike anything that you want to have taken out of the dialogue and of the transcript, and then, if needed, I may ask for a short follow up interview just to again make sure that your thoughts are accurately represented in the study.

So, thank you for your time.

I will stop the recording.

Participant 3 Transcript

Researcher Thank you for volunteering your time to be a part of this study.

It is greatly appreciated.

The purpose of this study is to learn how a select group of public secondary school choir and show choir directors from various regions of the United States incorporate choral methods in their respective.

Competitive Show Choir programs.

Participant OK

Researcher So, can you briefly discuss your educational and professional experiences regarding secondary music education?

Participant I have just finished me.

I want to say 18th year.

Of teaching secondary high school music.

So, 9th to 12th grade vocal music.

Also taught other classes like class piano and rock history and percussion methods and band and a bunch of other things, but mostly teach in high school choir.

Researcher Now discuss a little bit your educational background.

Colleges you attended degrees you obtained.

Participant OK so I have.

I have a Bachelor of Fine Arts in vocal music performance.

I have Bachelor of Fine Arts in music education.

And I have a Master of Arts in educational, policy and administration.

The two bachelor's degrees were from the University of South Dakota and the master's degree is from Dakota Wesleyan University.

Researcher In your teaching experience, have you always taught high school, or have you taught other grade levels?

Participant I have taught other primarily high school.

I had a brief stint of having an additional elementary assignment added to my teaching schedule for a couple of years where I did.

Elementary but, but it has been by and large, high school music.

Researcher And how long have you been at ___?

I just finished my seventh year here.

Researcher Where were you prior?

Participant I was in.

_____, SD.

And that was for about 10 years.

Researcher All right, so how many ensembles do you direct at _____?

I have four choirs.

I do the.

High School Musical I direct the jazz band.

I also have the classic show.

Choir as well.

Researcher And the is your show choir auditions.

And how many total show choirs do you have?

Participant We have two at our school.

Researcher Are those mixed or single gender?

Participant One is mixed and one single gender.

Researcher So, in a.

What are some of your instructional approaches that you utilize when teaching music?

Participant In rehearsal, you know depending.

Depending on what time of year it is and what is necessary to get done.

You know, we try to.

We try to work on vocal stuff at the beginning of show choir rehearsals usually.

In, you know first and foremost, just ensuring that kids are square with their pitches and their parts, and then making sure that we are reinforcing the.

Choral objectives that we have.

Like you know from the basics, like breathing, tone placement.

Focus of tone.

Free of tension, those kinds of things, and what my hope always is that those are the things that we are covering in choir class during the day and then our show choir is an extracurricular, so we do not have show choir practice during the day.

We have it at night, so it is a hope to build upon that, you know, to build upon what we have been working on and.

Higher and what they have been working on in their individual voice lessons as a lot of the kids do take voice lessons too.

Researcher And with show choir, where being extracurricular, how many times per week are you having a rehearsal for choir?

And what are the times? So we go, we go Monday, 6:30 to 9:30 and same thing on Thursday.

All right, so does your, especially since your concert choir is curricular and your

Researcher chords extracurricular, does your instructional approach differ between your concerts and your show choir?

Participant Like when you are directing one or the other, does it differentiate?

Researcher Or is it the same throughout?

Participant Well, I think.

I think it I think it does differentiate because.

Because me in in some senses in a lot of senses, it is the same them. The differentiation happens during the school day, whereas my choirs are made-up of variety of students that are in there for a variety of reasons. And so, the approach during the day.

With, with the choirs addresses the needs of the you know the various students and where they are.

Academically, socially, that kind of thing.

So those kinds.

Of things can be a little bit different.

I think the reason they are there is.

Not to compete like the kids are in the show choir.

And so, when you are in the show choir practice, intensity is for me is a little bit more.

Or prevalent in the show choir rehearsal versus what happens during the school day during the school day is more, you know, just making sure that all the kids are enjoying what they do, not that we do not encourage them to enjoy what they do in show choir.

But you know.

It is, you know, especially during that competitive time of year, the practices must be just they, they are just at a different level intensity wise and that is not just.

Guided by me, that is also guided by the students and their desire to, you know, have a hit list of things that they want to make sure that they go over, especially if we had just gotten off the road from competing somewhere, they take notes.

They want to come in and they are like, hey, this judge said so and so can we make sure and hit this Mr.

And, you know, I think when I watched the recording of.

Us performing our last show, I noticed that XY and Z.

Can we address that?

So, you have.

You know, honestly in the show choir rehearsal in my, in my experience the student. Participation in guiding the.

Process of rehearsal is higher, and you know there is just there is a lot more buy in there and the reason is the stakes are.

Just a lot.

Higher, you know, in, in, in the daytime choirs.

They are just there because they are there because of the joy of singing and the joy of music.

And then I think the.

The show choir thing is like to take it to the next level and see if they can.

If they can, you know if they can improve and match themselves up with the best in the country.

Researcher Now do you have student leadership in your show choirs in concert choirs or do you just have, like, section leaders in your show choir and captains as far as dance goes in your favor?

Participant Yeah, I have dance.

Captains and that is it.

I do not have section leaders in choir.

I do not have section leaders in in show choir.

A lot of people ask me about that.

I have never done that before, and I know there is lots of programs that have.

You know if I do need to send the kids off to work on something in a sectional, I will appoint somebody.

To do it but.

That that rarely, in my experience anyway, that rarely happens.

I usually what I'll end up doing is if I need to break the group down, I'll usually send the kid one part of the group out of the choir room to go work on choreography with the dance captains while I address vocal stuff with a smaller group like I'll take the tenors and basses in the choir room and send The Sopranos and out those.

Out to work on dance stuff, and then we will flip flop.

The IT just seems to work better that way as.
We do not have a lot of kids with piano skills and, they just they get here anyway.
They get anxious about having to lead a vocal rehearsal as they do not get anxious about leading the dance.
Because they really, they feel much more confident in their leadership in that aspect.
But yes, people have asked me a lot.
About that, and I, I do not know, I guess.
I know that the kids.
I know that the kids really have buy in on all aspects in this program and sometimes when you create titles for everybody.
That is a way of making some people elevated to a leadership position, but it is another way of making other people feel like they are not important.
And I do not know.
I there is a there is a happy balance that needs to be struck there and I and I think I have it with the way that things are working with the dance captains.
And so, I think that's kind of the way I would like to.
I would like to keep it and that way the mission.
Does not change like.
What happens vocally was all you know, was all okayed by me and was all the process was facilitated by me.

Researcher Now you have two captains for dance.

Participant You have two.

I have two soprano Alto, captains and two.
Tenor bass captains.

Researcher OK

And the ensemble size is how big?

Participant Usually about fifty.

OK

Researcher So, what is your yearly process for each of your ensembles?

Take me through what it looks like in the summer all the way to the end of the year for each ensemble.

Participant Yes. So just this past week, we had our auditions for 23-24 school year.

And tonight, we are going to have a meeting welcoming all the families to the group and then, you know, everybody signing up for the various contact lists, you know, for e-mail and for texting, and then doing the.

You know, capturing all the parent information that we possibly can.

So, when it comes time to need and volunteers, we have people who were excited about helping, you know, because their kid just made the group.

So, we try to capitalize on that right away.

OK

And then after our meeting tonight.

The next thing that is going to happen is next week is our middle school show choir camp summer show choir camp.

I run that with a team of like four high school volunteers and will teach.

We have somewhere near fifty-five middle school kids signed up for our middle school camp this summer and we will teach them a show vocally and choreographically and put on a little concert at the end of it.

And that is something we do every year and then we will have.

I will have a week off.

Kind of be, but we are going to be rehearsing, as classics were chosen.

Classics were chosen to perform at choir camps of America on the Tuesday night performance, so we are going to be rehearsing three times in June to make sure that we have the show ready and.

Of course, I am going to going to have to do some reblocking because it is a summer performance and you know people are gone for various activities and camps and vacations and whatnot, so got to make sure that.

Also, that the kids remember the show too, because it has been a hot minute, so we will have some rehearsals in June and then basically this year.

The 22-23 season ends on June 20th with that performance, but the 23-24 season is already started, but after that, you know I.

I have a group of about thirty kids going to show choir camps of America, which is becoming a much bigger deal for our students now, which I think is great.

I think we kind of experienced a little lag in participation there for a while, but now, now kids are.

A little bit more excited and a little bit more or a little bit less apprehensive to go off and spend a week honing their craft.

So, after show choir camps of America that will largely finish the summer type obligations for the for the group, and then right before school starts in August, we have a little bit of a welcome back BBQ.

And we just get together with everyone.

At a park or at somebody's house, if they have a big enough backyard to facilitate it and we just we get together and it is to get everybody back acclimated to the fact that this is going to be happening again and to kind of talk about.

Some things that they would some hopes that they have for the year, some things that they are excited about for the year, some things that they would want to improve upon from years past and you know how what they want to do to make this season you know, the best that it can be.

Shortly before school starts as well, I have a meeting with all the seniors.

And in a leadership role, I have those dance captains.

But I also every year kind of tell the class of seniors that are in.

The ones that are in the classics, I tell those kiddos that.

You know, I need those seniors to be, you know, my right hand my and that that people that people really do not just look to the dance captains for leadership that they look to the older kids.

So, you know I talked to them about simple things like.

And this is typical teacher speak.

But you know if you are telling.

Everybody to be quiet all the time.

You are still talking.

And so, if you want people to be quiet.

You need to be quiet.
The kids are looking at you and.
They are doing what you are doing so.
I am always trying to.
Tell them good leaders do.
They do not tell.
They do, and so I try to get the seniors started off on the right foot because
sometimes seniors like ohh it is finally my turn to be the boss.
It is my turn to call the shots and I have all these things.
I have this big laundry list of things that I want to do that I want to mark off on my
senior year and.
And I try to stop the train there, saying, hey, it is not your senior year.
This is this is our next season, and they are our freshmen, sophomore, juniors, and
seniors that are all contributing to this.
So as soon as we can get the selfish piece out, the better.
We are all going to be.
Then school starts.
We usually start rehearsing right away when school starts and our first.
Few rehearsals that we have in the months of August, September and part of October,
our learning.
Music that we will not compete with, but we learn music and choreography for a
show that we will do in April called our called our cabaret.
And so, we will bring in some other choreographer that are not.
, you know, like other people that I wanted to work with and want to, you know,
want to give a shot to and they will design choreography for a show that kind of has a
theme between me, my group and Group, which is a_.
Which is the single gender or the treble choir ensemble?
And we try to pick a theme that we can easily find music for.
For so it is not something too crazy and convoluted, and so those first few the first
couple of months, I would say August and September primarily are building a sound
you know finding out like do I really have.
Do I really have people in every section that can hack it?
Am I going to, you know, and this really gives me an opportunity to kind of identify
what this year's vocal challenges are going to be.
After we get that going, typically.
The first or second weekend in October, whatever Columbus Day lands on, that is
usually the first time that _____ stops in, and we learn our opener, usually in October
and then.
No year is really the same after that, like.
It just depends on when the arrangements come and when the ideas are flowing and
all that stuff.
But starting in October, we, you know, we really start kind of dialing in on the
competition stuff and we also have a quote on quote.
Retreat weekend in November, which really is not a retreat so much as just bringing
in.
A facilitator to do some team building.

It is all on campus, so it does not cost extra to go like off to some cabin somewhere or I just, you know, I would rather spend that kind of money on the show than spend it on those kinds of things.

So, we will bring in a facilitator to.

Come help us with the challenges of team building and just confidence and respect and all that stuff, which is very helpful and.

We usually cruise into Christmas break with at least.

Half of the show.

Kind of figured out and then we do the second half of the show very quickly in January and usually we compete sometime in January whether it is January 2nd weekend in January or third weekend in January ours.

Our program is.

The pressure of like putting stuff together at the last minute and the reason things come together at the last minute so often is because we just really want it to be right.

And so, I.

Could have a plan laid out right now.

You know, it is not like I always tell people.

It is not like we are doing the Sound of Music where, you know, the scripts already written the music is already written.

Storyline is already done.

The costumes are basically a done deal.

We are writing our own musical every year and you have not seen it before.

'S seen it before.

And so, you.

Gotta try some things and I have always found that.

If it does not work the first couple times.

That you are trying it.

You got to go with your gut and be willing to cut it or be willing to make some significant changes.

And so, we just continue to change and change and change and change.

So, it will it, it is it never is even close to the same show that it was when it started.

And the kids really enjoy that.

So, as we.

As we rotate through the competition season, we compete.

January and February.

First part of March, we have usually one competition and then we host our competition, which is always the second weekend in March and then right around that time is spring break.

So then then we come out of spring break, and we put on that cabaret show.

That we learned the choreography for back in August, which is always fun to try to blow the dust off that and.

And then after that.

There is a few.

And then there is the end of the year kind of celebration.

And then like last, this past year, we had our end of the year celebration on May 7th, and we had our 23-24 tryouts meeting in May.

You know, it is funny to just talk about what the timeline is like.
It is, you know, it is just a never ending.
It just does not end, and I love it when people are like hey, now that competition season is over, isn't it great that you have?

Time to breathe.

Like I do not.

I do not think you understand this.

Works. You know what I.

So, about this, the concert choir compete, or do they have performances throughout the year like fall and spring show that they did ok?

Researcher So, we do not have a competition really lined up for our concert choirs, but we do have.

Participant At least four performances.

For the curricular choirs, there is a fall concert.

There is a winter concert, there is a spring concert, and then there is a finale concert, the finale.

The concert is tied in with the band and orchestra programs too, so we have a big, you know, music department extravaganza at the end of the year.

And then, you know, every year there is always some extra.

You know, this past year I took my varsity choir, which is all treble singers, and I took them to my I took them to like the Illinois Women's Teaching Association luncheon, where they were like the guests of honor.

And they got to sing a few songs, and then they got a free lunch out of.

It and they.

You know, they felt cool that they were like the ensemble that was picked to do that. My chamber choir gets asked to sing the national anthem at different places for basketball games for football games.

And then a lot of times they'll do graduation as well, we'll have we'll have chamber do some pull out, like during the day concerts just out in the middle of the hallway, just to kind of, you know, especially when you kind of feel like morale needs to be boosted a little bit in the school.

Like right around standardized testing time, we will throw those kids out there and just kind of, you know, chill out people a little bit and just enjoy music for the sake of music.

So yes, that's kind of a that's kind of the gist of what the curricular choir situation is. You intertwine the show choir and concert curricular concert choir at all.

Researcher Or are they complete separate entities?

They are separate entities.

Participant They share a lot of the same people, but they really are.

They really are separate entities.

Since I have been here anyway, I have not had like a performance where.

We have the show choir and the curricular choir programs performing on the same deal, but you know there is always.

That is always something to think about in.

The future for sure.

So how do you go back to the show?

Researcher How do you discuss choral technique with your choreographer?

It kind of depends on which choreographer you are working with.

Participant You know, when I was in ____, I was working with ____ has a Masters in vocal performance.

And I really felt.

Like he, he really understood what you know, connecting the body to the singing.

And now I work with ____ and he also he just has such a breadth of experience that.

That our conversations about that.

Are mostly just about.

You know how we can improve the ensemble.

So, so ____ does weigh in on choral things, things that he is hearing things when he needs people to sing out or when we are out of balance.

And so, we discussed that quite a bit.

He is also, you know, helps me with like.

Picking soloists and whatnot.

But like when we discuss choral tech when I discussed choral techniques with him.

Some, sometimes some of the, sometimes I have just got to say, hey, what they are doing in this section, I just do not think it is going to.

It is not going to make it.

It is not going to work for what is choral happening.

And so, what I will end up doing is.

And say I am.

Going to change it.

So that it.

Will work and I will rewrite the arrangement.

And then he will come back, and he will stage it in a different way so that we can focus on the singing, singing more.

____ stuff is very.

It is really lots of feet.

Lots of physicality.

Lots of arm work, but the footwork stuff with him is quite involved and.

And it is kind of like we are a good team.

I would say as far as when we discuss, you know.

I would say that most of the time he and I discuss vocal stuff almost more than the choreography stuff, to be honest with.

You know.

And so, we talk about everything under the sun, luckily.

You know, he has been in this business so long that he also understands the nuances of vocal technique and it is.

And it is great because, you know, I have such a big respect for him as a professor.

And so do the kids.

So, when he steps in front of the group and has something to say about vocal stuff, they listen to that just as much as they do the choreography stuff.

So, it is a, it is a, it is a good partnership.

I am lucky in that regard.

I know that there is probably a lot of directors out there that are maybe working with choreographer that do not have near the amount of experience.

Not that they are not good choreographer, it is just it is a learned process that this is a choral ensemble and.

And while the movement needs to be engaging and, you know, entertaining and appropriate, it also, you know, bottom line and ____ has heard me say this a million times, like the most important aspect of show choir is singing. And I have said it right in front of him and he 100%.

110% agrees.

Discuss a little bit about show design and how important it is in show choir.

Researcher Show design is one of the things that.

Participant I worry about the most.

Down in the southern.

Area show design means something completely different than it does in the Midwest than it does on the East Coast than it does on the West Coast.

And it is great if you know if directors can, if they can really take their kids to other regions and see what other programs are doing with regards to with regards to show design, so.

The approach to show design I think for me always starts.

With making sure that.

There is an idea.

And it does not have to be a complex idea, but that there is an idea, a central focus, that is maybe even you could call it a theme from which to.

Start digging for digging for music and the music is really.

The music has really got a hit and the music has it.

You got to be able to sell it to the.

Kids, you got to sell it to your choreographer.

Then you must be able to sell it to your community.

And finally, you must be able to sell it to the panel of judges that you face every weekend.

And that is getting to be increasingly difficult.

And there are, there are things, people expect.

From certain programs like it is their brand or there, you know.

It is their calling card, you know, like, this is a.

This is kind of what we can expect from a ____.

This is what we can expect from a ____.

This is what we can expect from ____.

This is what we can expect from ____.

You know this is what we can expect from.

You know West Virginia group and.

Show design means different things for different people.

I would say that show design for me means.

Putting this together with the kids in mind first.

Made because they are the ones that got to live with it.

I guess I could walk that back just a little bit.

I am going to be the one who must hear it the.

Most so if.
I can live with.
The you know this playlist of songs.
Then there is a good chance that everyone else will be able to because I do not have a very large attention span when it comes to listening to music and honestly.
Some of the tunes that I have picked, like I just as soon never hear ever again.
But that is not because they are not good songs.
It is just that, you know, from now until, for example, June 20th, when my kids hit the stage.
For the last time, I mean, I will have heard their opening song a billion times but considering show design.
I feel like a team approach is great.
Because utilizing a team can kind of save you from yourself, you can get really caught up in what?
You might perceive as just a fantastic idea and what using the teamwork approach allows is to get those ideas bounced off people that you respect, and they can also say things like well, hey, you know.
Well, that is a great song, but.
This one group just did it as their closer last year and I just do not know if you want to do that.
And of course, I try to stay away from that as much as I can because our kids here at ____ really want something unique and something they have not seen on YouTube.
Some they did not see out in competition in the years past and you know how show choir kids are.
They are very versed almost.
Probably more than I am on.
What the other programs are doing?
So, making sure things are unique so A-Team approach and for me our best shows have always been a good combination of me, and ____ working and you know working together and throwing things.
Throwing things against the wall to see if they stick and it and sometimes things just get completely flipped on their head that you would not have ever dreamed of thinking just because you employ these other people.
I would highly recommend the team approach in in show design one to save you from yourself.
When you get the right people who have.
A breadth of experience in other areas.
They have a way of, you know, making it so it is all going to make sense.
You know, ____ will often say, you know, ____, that is a great song, but I just do not.
I just do not really think I can do anything with it visually.
I do not really see what I can do with it visually or you know, ____ will say.
I know what you want to accomplish with what is happening here, but we need to look elsewhere and I honestly.
you know, use a team approach, and take your ego out of the equation.
And a lot of people are not going to want to hear that.

But you got to take you.
 Ego out of the equation.
 I am not the greatest thing since sliced bread, and I never will be.
 So, I need to keep learning.
 I need to keep leaning on people who are experts and I have always felt when you surround yourself with great people.
 Surrounding yourself with great people is what makes you successful.
 Not doing everything yourself.
 You do everything yourself.
 You will be successful at.
 One thing and.
 And I do not know if that is going to make much of a fun life for you.
 So, you discussed a little bit about, you know how visual design you know works with _____ and all that.
 Researcher So, in what ways do you utilize visual design in your show for example like lights and?
 Fog and you know all those special fun effects to convey the theme and the message of your show.
 It is, it is.
 Participant Different things for different shows.
 I have done really prop heavy shows in the past where we've, like, done stuff with the set and had.
 Set pieces that reflect.
 What is going on musically? I.
 Early on in my career, I used fog.
 I am kind of over fog.
 It is not for me.
 I want to try to find something else that is more unique.
 I have not used lights.
 I have not used TV screens.
 I am not against those things.
 I just do not think we can afford them.
 It is expensive to get involved in that stuff and I do not.
 Not sure in terms of how we like to do things or at least how this Community here likes to see things done.
 If it, if there is a payoff, you know for all the stuff that goes into doing that.
 So set pieces.
 For the most part, we have done stuff.
 With various set pieces to suggest and to make things just a little bit more and to maybe frame things a little bit differently.
 So, you see the stage in a slightly different way.
 Yes, costuming is also a big part of telling that story and making it makes sense.
 And that is only if.
 You are really like trying to tell a story, or if you just went there for an obvious theme.
 You know and.

And I have done both things.
I have done an obvious theme.
I have done things that were just like this is a collection of great music.
Here we go, you know, and it does not have a theme.
And I have done stories.
You know, where?
You know, there's main characters and that that kind of stuff.
I know that like our community, for example, really likes to always keep as many people on the stage as possible.
So, like my parents have said, millions of times, they are like ____.
We really appreciate that you do not have.
Eight costume changes and you know a ton of solos in your show, and there is nothing wrong with the way that hat with other groups that do that, cause those are very entertaining shows.
I really, really like those kinds of things.
But you can kind.
Of see like what?
What your community has a taste for, and since the community is the people that are supporting us and paying the bills, I got to make sure and do that.
I am trying and I.
You know, for this next year's show, I am.
I am trying to figure out an any possible way of doing something incredibly unique visually that has not been seen before, and it is not necessarily in the terms of dancing or in the terms of costuming.
I am just talking about in terms of.
The stage like how to put the stage together and I do not know if that means right now like doing a rearrangement of the riser setup or more than likely what it means is adding stuff to the riser set up in a way that.
I have not quite seen before and that is going to you know, that is going to up the production level because I find that when you up the production level, the kids really buy into it because they think their show is just this massive cool deal.
That is only theirs.
And so, when you when you do that though, you got to be careful you got.
To make sure.
That the stuff that you use is crafted in a way that does not look like it was.
You know, some people that just slap some stuff together in a garage on a Saturday evening, you know what I mean?
It just and you want to.
You want to make sure it looks I guess professional and so and that all that stuff costs so much money and.
So, if there is a way in my mind, if there is a way that we can figure out how to do things like that without breaking the bank because it is expensive to do show choir here at South, it is expensive to do show choir everywhere and.
I try to be mindful.

Of the budget, and I also really 100% believe you cannot really buy your way into winning like either your kids can sing lights out and dance lights out, and your band is hot.

Or they are not.

And then the other stuff is just like cherries on the top of the Sunday.

So, you mentioned _____, right as yours is, is he your primary or your arranger or yes, OK

Researcher And how long has he been your arranger?

We have been going on six years now.

Participant And what is the process like, do you say, hey, _____, like you were talking about, do I and __, you are getting together and a team effort, do you say, hey, __, I got to.

Researcher Cool idea for this song.

Or and he makes like an organic song.

Or you know, how does that work?

So, so you and _____.

Every year it is different.

Participant You know, there has been years where ___ like, you know what we need to do?

We need to do.

We needed to do this kind of.

Show and I am like great.

Let me get to work on finding songs.

That sounds exciting and that gives me a focus.

And then there is the other time where, like I will say to the guys, we need to do this kind of show and then they both start pitching songs and I start building the playlist and we kind of work together.

But honestly, you know, for me and _____.

The songs have to the songs have.

To be first.

You know the songs must be incredible.

Like they cannot just be.

They cannot.

They cannot just fit.

So, you stuck it in there.

We cannot do that because I know that that is often not going to work.

___ always reminds me that we want to make sure to not alienate the audience.

We want to make sure to have.

Some familiarity within the program where people can latch on musically and go, oh my gosh, I love that song.

And if there is a way to make that happen numerous times throughout the show, that is better than picking out.

All these random Spotify songs that you can find that really fit the theme, but just have no familiarity whatsoever, so they do not.

They do not necessarily push the buttons that the familiarity kind of stuff will do.

There has also been times when.

_____ been like, you know, I have had this idea for a show. What do you think of this? And like he goes. I already have the opener like.

I think we could turn ___ loose on the opener and then you can kind of see where you.

Want to take it after?

That there has been times when I picked out everything from the song to the all the songs to.

To some of the songs, hardly any of the songs, and it is just if you have a good partnership like it like that and you again are willing to let the ego get out of the way. You are doing what is best for the kids and it ultimately leads to good programs being put on entertaining shows, whether you win or not.

There is a lot of dynamics to that, but you know, when our kids leave the stage, there will be no doubt that they performed a high quality.

A high-quality show from top to bottom that was well thought through and well produced, you know, and that is malleable.

In terms of where we could, we could really.

Add a new.

Section here and subtract a section there and.

Make it even better.

And so, like the parents, the parents are like the shows different every week.

We love it and that is always great.

But yes, working with ___ and ___ is never a same.

Type of process every year it is always different, but what ends up happening is we.

Toss around song ideas like crazy until we land on something that.

All of us can be.

Like, yes, this is this is it.

And it is important and that is not easy because we are all dynamic people.

We are all very opinionated and we all have what we like and what we do not like, and it is kind of fun to try to figure out if we can make those worlds meet ever.

All right, so why do you think choir is an asset to secondary public education, music education?

Researcher To me in my, you know my limited experience, I really feel is like if you compare it to like the band program, she acquires like the marching band and the pep band of the band program and band directors probably want to hang their hat.

Participant Their top wind ensemble and choir directors likely would like to hang their hat on their top curricular concert ensemble.

But for me?

My show choir is the most visible element of the entire music program here at South, like there are kids that stay in band so that they can be in.

The show band.

And they because they know about the traveling, and they know about the style of.

Music that gets to play.

Gets to be played because the show choir gets to travel a lot.

That also gets visible and so.

What the show choir does is just kind of allow.

Allow more people.

In our community to be able to see the great things that could happen if their child was involved in music in some way, shape or form at our school, and then they can

dig deeper and attend the concerts, get their kids enrolled in the curricular choirs and that kind of thing.

But I am not going to.

I mean, I know.

No, I do not know.

Very many choirs.

Directors that would prefer it this.

But it is what it is like the show choir is just a lot more exciting and you got to you got you got to ride your best horse for every race.

So, and then you, you hope that it can, you know the visibility of those.

120 some odd kids that are involved in the two show choirs, you know, speaks volumes. What is happening musically at your school and basically showing that music is in a good place.

So why do you think that most public secondary schools do not have a show choir program?

Researcher I think the choir directors.

Participant Would prefer not to be.

That committed to an extracurricular activity.

I told you about the show choir year there.

Like there is not any time off.

So, programs that do not have a show choir.

Have probably those choir directors had a I would have to say probably have a better work life balance than I do.

And work life balance is important, and it is something that, like all of us, need to continue to work on.

But I would challenge those choir directors.

They are probably seeing that COVID nip right now, and I am seeing it here big time.

Popularity did not change as far as show choir is concerned.

That popularity grew.

I cannot believe it, but it did.

But the curricular side acquire saw a huge dip.

Simply, I mean you can.

I think you can really.

You can really nail.

It on the head with the COVID nip.

So, what better way to get kids excited about?

Singing during the school day, then having them perform music in a style.

That is accessible to them and.

I know I have run into a lot of people who just despise pop music.

I do not know what pop music ever did to them, but they despise it.

They really feel like it has no place in choral ensembles, and I always come back to them saying.

I have made as a professional musician.

I have made all my money as a professional musician, playing rock and pop.

Any classical gig that I ever did was a volunteer.

They did not have any money to pay anybody because you have fifty people in a choir.
Is not going to pay people.
I know there are paid choral gigs.
And far between.
And I also point to like, you know, if you.
Look at like.
Streams on Apple Music, for example, 1% of streams. There's classical music.
The rest of it is rock, pop country, you know, musical theater and that kind of stuff.
There is a lot of directors that look at it the wrong way and they do not see the opportunities that are there in front of them to get kids in the door and to get that central mission of music.
Which is not necessarily for us to churn out amazing musicians.
It is for us to churn out people who understand how to express themselves.
It is getting kids to graduate high school with a sense of community.
It is getting kids to.
To try to figure out what it is like to be a part of something that is bigger than they are.
And these communities in music allow them to do that, and the same could be said for athletic programs.
But not every kid is cut out for athletic programs.
I will take anyone who walks in this door who wants to be in the curricular choir program.
They are like, well, I really Can't Sing.
I am like, do you want to do you want to hang out?
With these people during fourth period.
Then it does not matter.
We will figure out the thing and thing later.
It is just a matter of just wanting to be there.
So how do you get people in the door?
You start relating to them and how you can relate to them.
I think is through doing music that is a lot more modern and current in the pop idiom and.
So, if there's.
Directors out there who do not, who admittedly might not have the experience there but need to get their program.
Numbers back to some.
They could really get a jump start by doing some show choir stuff, even if they just did that in the curricular school day to just try it out.
Like maybe for the spring Pops concert, we bring in a choreographer and we throw some suits and dresses on these kids and just see what it would be like if we did couple of dance numbers in a ballad and just and we.
Did not do any extra time.
You know, we do it during the school day and just see what it is like. I guarantee you moms and dad's eyes will be wide open.
Kids will be blown away and it would be it would be infectious for sure.

So, I think why people do not choose it.
Is the time commitment.
Is the use.
Of pop and.
Rock music and to have you know.
But it is a gateway to being able to use more musical theater stuff.
So, that would be great, you know?
But yes, it is mostly a version of rock and pop music and the aversion to want to spend the time doing it.
So, I hear a lot not only time commitment, but hear.

Researcher Ohh my gosh, it is such a financial commitment as well.
So how have you over the years funded and maintained sustained your program through, you know fundraisers etcetera fees, how have you done that?
So, I have a tale of two completely different scenarios.

Participant When I was in South Dakota and _____, we could not charge the kids a dime.
\$0.00 we were not allowed to charge them anything. So, 100% of the costs associated with the show choir program were fundraised. But.
Luckily, at that school there was also a budget for the show choir yearly, and you know when?
I do not know if it is the same way now, but when I was there, they covered like the school covered, like my registration fees there.
For each competition they bought some hotel rooms.
They paid for the buses wherever we went, whenever we went.
So, what we were fundraising for was some additional things related to traveling, some things, costuming wise.
Costuming is a huge expense.
It is, and then any other things related to set design.
And then the other costs, so in in __, our best.
Our best fundraisers were performances.
Where the kids?
I had to prepare an additional show.
To get people in the community and it was awesome because it is a small town, ____, 15,000 people. There is not a lot going on in town, so if the show choir is doing a weekend of shows, which is a big thing and people will attend.
And then we hosted our own competition, and we also had a spring dinner theater.
And through those, we were able to raise enough money through that and.
A lot of generous sponsorships, again in a small town that is so much easier to do than where I live right now.
Because, you know, I graduated from that high school so I could walk down to the insurance agency and go, hey cannot.
How much can I put you down for this year, you know?
And then it is for the kids, you know?
And then they get their name in the program.
They get their name, you know, on a marquee in the auditorium, you know, and all that kind of stuff.
And those kinds of things and.

We had a lot.
Of like our sales minded parents were really involved.
In hyping that up, so we were able to get all that stuff covered and then you come here to where I am at, and wheat and we must charge the kids.
There is no show choir budget at all.
Nothing, nothing from the school.
The only thing.
The school pays for is.
The stipend for one of the show choir directors.
So, from fees we are paying for ours.
Second, show choir director.
We are also paying for our band director that does the band and then from fees, we are paying for all the costuming and all the travel, the hotels and etcetera we do.
We can offset the cost a bit by hosting our competition and.
Having our cabaret, which we have like a nice performance, we can get a lot of people in the door and a little bit more elegant kind of evening with some silent auction and people dress up and all that kind.
So, we have those.
Kinds of things that allow for the kids to have some skin in the game where like they are performing, they are literally singing for their supper.
And I found in both of those programs those that is the common.
Common denominator really is having performance-based fundraisers.
You must go further for some programs though, like you, you know, I know there is the groups that must do, like the mattress fundraisers, and they have to the cookie dough and all that kind of stuff.
And I have done every one of those fundraisers as well, but I have just found that you.
Your net gain off performance-based fundraisers is the best, and I know that a lot of groups out there have started to host their own contest.
In a hope for that to be a huge windfall of profits, there is a problem, though, and that is there is too many competitions now, and so the profitability of everyone's competition is going to go down and the quality.
Of the competitions are going to go down.
There is just I counted one weekend.
There were nearly forty contests happening in one weekend and.
That is too many.
It is too many for it is too many for those forty contests to be able to divide the very finite number of show choirs that are out there.
That can come travel, whether they are traveling a long way or.
They are just down the road so.
And, adjudicators, I mean you know the quality of adjudicators as well, so.

Researcher Yes, it is hard.

Participant Yes, it is hard on those super busy weekends.
God, it is hard to find.
It is fine too hard to find experienced.

Trusted adjudicators and so then the quality of these other contests seemed to go down that way also just in sheer number of groups attending.

If there is not a ton of groups that attend, then.

It is not as.

Competitive and if it is not as competitive, honestly.

It is just not as fun.

And so, if there are people out there that are looking.

To launch a show choir.

I would not jump right into hosting a competition.

As there is just.

So many out there, you could very easily tap into though the performance-based fundraisers which do not really cost you much to put on.

Yes, learn some music, learn some dance, and teach the band a few things.

You know, have some in his, you know, especially this is like those things are like great solo opportunity.

He is like, hey.

Let us do a Christmas themed one and everybody gets a chance to like, sing a song like a Christmas pop song as a solo and then.

I mean it.

Researcher It those kinds of things make the most money.

Participant And they have the least amount of cost that goes into them putting on a competition.

I can tell you also costs a ton of money to put on and if you can get the biggest bang for your buck.

Get out there and seek corporate sponsorships as well.

If you get.

Sales minded people, which is not something for.

The choir director to go to.

Like find. Find that. Find that guy that just will not leave people alone, and we will go sell \$18,000 worth of ads, you know, and then. And the only reason he is selling \$18,000 worth of ads.

Is because the guy last year sold 17,000.

And he wants to beat him out, you know.

So, it brings me to my last question to wrap things up and I thank you so much for your time today.

Researcher I hope I have been helpful.

Participant What is your advice to future concert and show choir director is fresh out of college.

Researcher Who knows absolutely nothing about.

You know what we are doing as far as show choir directors go and concert choir.

Get what is your advice to them?

You are going to have to play.

Participant The piano, yes.

The sooner the better.

Just bite the bullet.

And practice and practice the piano.

If you are teaching in high school, which most of them are middle school.

Dreams of being like your college professor and conducting a choir.

That is not going to happen in high school.
There is no conducting, I mean.
On the day of the concert, yes, but like.
Most of the time I am right here at the piano, plunking out parts, playing the accompaniment until the accompanist flies in the day of the concert to make sure we know what we are doing.
Unless you are doing all.
All you know, unaccompanied numbers, I guess then you would get a chance to be a conductor, but you know.
I well, I would say try to embrace the role of being a teacher and not being a conductor.
And I am not saying I am not trying to not be conducting at all, but like.
That is so.
So far down the list for me, you know.
The be willing.
Be willing to be.
A relational figure in their life, first and foremost, just be willing to listen to them.
When you finally get a chance to hear what they can do.
Start programming and start.
And I guess.
That goes to the larger thing of just.
Daily, you are if you want to do this well and you want to last, you are going to have to.
Admit that the only thing that's constant is change.
And everything changes every hour of the day.
Nothing will go as you think it is going to go.
And if you can embrace that kind.
If that excites you, which it excites me still to this day, what am I going to be facing today?
I still get excited about that.
Have I had rehearsals?
Blow up in my face?
But I am expecting those things to happen from time to time.
And I do not take it personally, so I would just say be willing to be relational.
Learn that piano.
If you do not know it, learn it.
Really, just get into this because you want to, you want to work with kids, and you want to build community and then maybe your dreams of doing.
You know, the Chichester Psalms? will come true at some point, but in the meantime, just have fun with your kids and enjoy the process that is opening ears and minds to music.
Well, thank you.
For your time and your willingness to share with me today, I will send you the transcript in the next couple of weeks for you to check over it.

Researcher

Make sure that I have represented your words accurately, but also is an opportunity for you to add anything else you would like to add or strike any comments that you would like to.

Removed from our conversation if needed, I may ask for a brief follow up zoom interview just to be sure that your thoughts are accurately represented in this.

So, I thank you so much for your time and good luck.

OK

Good luck to your group at SCA this summer.

Researcher I will be heading to Ohio and SCA, so I do not know if I will see you, but hopefully we will see some of each other sometime soon, so take care.

Take care of yourself, friend.

Participant

Participant 4 Transcript

Researcher Good afternoon, Sir.

Can you hear me?

Can you hear me, Sir?

Participant Unmute. There we go.

Researcher Awesome. Good afternoon.

Participant I have not zoomed forever, so I forget how to use it.

Researcher Right.

Well, thank you so much for volunteering your time to be a part of this study.

It is greatly appreciated.

The purpose of this study is to learn how a select group of public, secondary choir, and choir directors from various regions of the United States incorporate choral methods in their respective competitive show choir programs.

So first, can you briefly discuss your educational and professional experiences regarding music education?

Participant Like how far back from the beginning.

Researcher We can start.

With your educational experiences, like where would you go to college or what?

Was your major.

Participant Yeah, I got my undergraduate degree from the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls, IA and then right from there, I went to my first teaching job, which is teaching 6 through 12 in a small town in Iowa for 10 years.

And then following that, I have moved to _____, NE and just finished year 25.

Researcher And as far as professional experiences go, what have you had over the years?

Participant I mean, it has all been in the schools, you know, directing choirs and show choirs and musicals and all that fun stuff.

Researcher Any UM professional experiences like a primary instrument or?

Participant No, but mines, mines all been vocal.

Researcher OK

So how many ensembles do you direct currently?

Participant I oversee to think you know.

School's over and I have forgotten.

I have two concert choirs and two show choirs as part of our curriculum that I oversee.

Researcher OK

And how many of those ensembles are auditioned?

Participant The two show choirs are auditioned and then one of the concert choirs is auditioned. The other is that I direct is the freshman choir, which is open to anybody who wants to.

OK

And are they all competitive or?

Are you select?

Participant I mean that both the shores are very competitive.

They I direct the mixed prep group that competes in the Prep division, and I direct the Varsity mixed group as well, so.

Researcher Now is your concert choir competitive?

Participant The only thing that we do that is not even competitive is our is our state music contest, which is just for rating.

So, they have not traditionally competed in any sort.

Of place where any sort of competition, where a trophy or a placement is given.

Researcher OK

So, it is just a state assessment.

Participant Right, right. Yes.

Researcher All right and.

You spoke about this a little bit, but how many mix ensembles and how many single gender ensembles do you have?

Participant At ours, well, it is hard to explain in terms of the show choir world, we have two mixed groups and one treble group.

Participant So, the treble group is our second tier.

So, it is 10 through 12.

Our prep group is only freshmen, can only if they are going to be a show choir.

Would be in Warrior Express, which is our prep group. So that is like mostly ninth grade girls, 10th-11th grade boys, and then 10 through 12. Treble is in the middle there. We kind of consider it our varsity.

So, try and give it equal footing with our varsity group, and then in the in the in our regular concert choirs.

Essentially all we have, we have our freshman choir, our concert choir, which is our sophomore level, and then what is called our ____ Choir, which is our junior and senior by audition within the freshman, we break that down, so they meet separately, treble and bass are divided two days a week, so they do some stuff, treble and bass, and they do some stuff.

Six, so they are not exclusively A treble ensemble.

Researcher So, in your rehearsal settings, can you briefly discuss your instructional approaches to each of your ensembles?

Participant Well, I we, I mean I we use our vocal warmups really to teach vocal technique.

So, it is important to me that we start.

Every rehearsal with.

That so you usually spend 5 to 7 minutes and I sort of have a set.

Kind of sequence that I go through.

I vary the warmups that I use, but I am always kind of following the same concepts through then we will do just like a little bit of sight reading and then we are into our repertoire.

So, it is basically the flow.

Researcher But how many minutes are you?

Spending on the repertoire each day.

Participant Well, we have this crazy scheduling system called modular scheduling. So, our classes class periods are only 35 minutes in length.

So, and it, it works it.

I have learned how to teach under it.

I've only actually.

When I taught in Iowa, that school was under modular scheduling, and now I have been under this my whole career.

Spender modular scheduling. So, I am used to working with not a lot of time, so I would say in that 35-minute period, I probably spend probably 5 to 7 minutes on vocal warmups and sight reading maybe 2 minutes. So, I am getting a good, you know, 25 minutes of repertoire.

Reversal in there.

Researcher And do you?

Notice a difference in your instructional approaches when you are in front of the concert choir versus when you are instructing the show choirs.

Participant No, I mean.

Good singing is good singing, so I kind of take the same approach with both.

Now all our show choir students are required to be in a concert choir, so I do not usually have to go into as much detail in depth when I am teaching vocal technique.

I am it is more an application in the show choir room.

We require them to be in that concert choir because that is where they are going to get the technique.

That is where they get the information that they need then to build on for show choir.

So, I can reference different topics and remind them how to implement them, but they do not have to go into as much and.

Production maybe a little bit more with the prep group with the younger kids who you know just getting used to technique.

But by the time they reach my junior and senior choir, I say I can say something.

I need more backspace than they immediately know what I am asking for.

Researcher So, when you do your warm.

Ups, are you warming up your concert quite differently than you are warming up your show choir, or is it the same concept throughout?

Participant I warm them up the same.

The only thing that that.

I try and do different with my show choir.

Is there are certain types of tone colors that maybe we are not experiencing in the concert choir, so we will work a little bit more with placement I usually.

My kids have a pretty good choral tone that has a lot of warmth and.

Darkness to it.

So, with the show choirs I must do a little bit more to bring out that brightness. And get them.

To like that brightness because it feels different to them than what we do in our normal concert choir.

So, that is probably the one approach I also.

Thinking about my varsity group, we play a lot more with all the tone colors.

I want them to use all the colors in them in there.

Crayon Box and so we try and find what the right color is for each song.

So, I would say I spend a lot more time with that in the show choirs vocally than I.

Do with the concept of choirs.

Researcher So, walk me through a year in the life of ____ and so starting from when you do audition all the way through May and graduation. Ok. So, what does your year look like?

Participant We usually because she requires a class.

We must get our auditions done in time for them to create the schedule.

So, this year, our auditions were about April 2nd.

Somewhere around there.

I like to do the auditions right before spring break, so then I can post the results and not.

See kids for.

So that is how it is like.

So, we will get our groups auditioned at the beginning of April usually.

And then I go into planning mode.

So that is when I spend time with my arranger and show design, and then I just got back from my trip to see ____ in Hattiesburg.

So got the costumes, designed choreographer on board, so we are kind of in April or May

When I make sure all the ducks are in.

In place for the summer, I do have some students who will be probably attending show choir camp here in a couple of weeks in ____.

I serve as a clinician there, so several of my kids will go and be a part of that.

And then we hit the ground running in August.

Normally I bring the kids in about a week or so before school starts.

I usually do a team building event where we do, you know, get to know you games we.

Get to do.

Just set goal setting things like that.

I usually bring somebody out from the outside to facilitate that.

Think kids are more willing to do crazy things if somebody else is asking them, do it, and then we will usually go into about 5 days, maybe two and a two-to-three-hour sessions on our vocals before we even start.

So, we have a good basis of our vocals heading in then to what is usually a big choreography weekend, we used to go.

We used to go to.

Like a YMCA camp, but they have now stopped doing rentals.

The time we need to be there.

So, this this year will be the first time we have just done it at school.
But usually, it is a Friday night all day.
Saturday, Sunday, parents come out Big Picnic and a big kind of review of the show
and we get a couple numbers choreographed by about the third week of August.
So, we have just started.
School, we head to that retreat.
And then we will spend some time in the because it is a class. I see them four times a
week for that 35 minute.
But they do not like to sweat during the day, so we do have one to two rehearsals in
the evening that are just dedicated to choreography.
So, I spent a lot more time during my class periods integrating the vocals or just
teaching the vocals.
And we spent a lot more time outside of school with my student leaders addressing
choreography, cleaning, choreography, and then usually we choreograph another
number in mid-October.
Over add to our show, and then we usually do our final number probably the second
week of November.
So, we start in August, but it is not till November when all the information has been
given to the.
And then we do we have this event called Cabaret Night, which is just like a Pops
concert.
So, they will premiere a couple of their songs there.
Then they disappear for.
So usually by the beginning of December, all the information is out there, the show is
flowing, and I usually spend December really running the show a lot just to get them
get their endurance built up.
And I will bring in different people to watch the show just so they have a reason to
do it full out.
So that's sort of my December routine is January is coming.
Let us see where we.
We usually come back after the Christmas break in January. I do a day and one-half
of a rehearsal working costume changes.
They usually bring a clinician in, get things ready.
We do a big premiere night where we just invite anybody who could possibly come
and watch the show and put it out there for the first time and then usually at the end
of that week.
We are off to our first competition, so.
We kind of hit the ground running early in January, we will compete usually six
times between January and March.
And this process starts over again the show choir season, really.
I mean the competition season ends in March, we learned a couple of other numbers
and then we have a big event in May called evening of show choirs.
Since our show choirs are our class, you just got to keep going so it feels like our
never ends.

Researcher Right.

So, you mentioned a little bit about student leadership.

Do you have captains, and do you have section leaders?

Talk to me a little bit about that.

Participant I only have dance captains.

I have tried it; I have tried it many ways.

I have had all kinds of different leadership positions, but in the end and it is just felt like only things we have really needed our dance captains.

So, they fill that role and do a really great job at it.

And then I just handle all the vocals, I mean.

Students will give me input, or they will let me know.

Hey, we are not getting this or whatever.

It is a two-way St.

for them to always know they can do that, but I do not have a student that kind of leads that end.

Researcher And your extracurricular rehearsals, how many hours are those?

When do they happen?

Are they right after school?

Are they later in the evening?

Participant And I usually do. I had a weird time. I do 6:45 to 8:30, so it is slightly less than two hours and I get them out by nine and that will be at least.

And I like to alternate so that kids are not having to give up something the same thing every week, so it will be a Tuesday or one week or Thursday another.

In the fall, I cannot go on Mondays because of marching band, so you kind of work.

Around that, but I try and vary.

Those and then once the once the shows learned we are less frequently.

Rehearsing outside of school.

Researcher So, I hear you talk a lot about choral technique, which is awesome.

One of the things that.

Sometimes choreographer and you know and directors, you know, struggle with us.

You know, seeing eye to eye on is.

Integrating that proper choral technique and the choreography.

So how do you discuss choral technique with your choreographer?

Or is it even a discussion?

Do they already know what to do?

Participant I am lucky in that my choreographer has a master's in vocal performance and has an undergraduate degree in musical theater, lots of voice training, and he gets it.

He understands, and so he gets where the big vocal moments are and where how to choreograph.

So, things lead up to that.

So, I never really feel like.

I always I always feel like he is giving them the right amount of choreography that is allowing them to sing, but also part of is just, you know, the stamina that they build up and how they get to that process.

We have had some other choreographer that we have had to talk to because they are too foot heavy.

And so, then it becomes too aerobic.

And the kids are not able to pull off the choreography.

So, we have had some discussions and some concerns about maybe calming the feet down, especially to so that they get the breath underneath them and.
Be able to sing well.

Researcher Do you have different choreographer for your JV group and your varsity or?
Or is it the same choreographer?

Participant I have the same choreographer for my prep group, my JV prep group, and my varsity group.

We have a different choreographer that that does the treble group.

Oh, OK, OK All right.

Participant But there is so many different in the in between.

So, what does the discussion look like for that JV group who might not be as experienced as singers with the choreographer?

Participant It is just reminding them that.

They cannot choreograph them at a varsity level, that there must.

Researcher Right.

Participant Be a little.

Little less aerobics happening and more attention to it.

I always talk about are the vocal and the visual equal partners.

And when I judge something and I, and I am like, clearly the vocal is not an equal partner with your visual.

So, either those vocals need to step up or those visuals need to pull back, so I think that's sort of what we go towards if the kids are not able to match it vocally.

What is happening visually, then you have to you have, you have to problem solve.

Researcher Talk to me a little bit about the importance of show design and how you start like from scratch.

You get an idea and how do you come about your show design?

Participant Well before 20/19 I did it all myself, but starting in 2019, I partner with _____, and it was the best thing I ever did because I had a certain formula that I would like to design the show and essentially was changing the songs out every year.

I was. I was.

Rehashing the same show over and over and over, and that just was not working anymore.

So, I really have given up a lot of control of that to _____.

I trust _____ knows my kids, he knows my program, he knows me.

So, he gives us a show that he knows what I am going to do with it.

He knows how it is going to match my kids, so I have been able to step back a little bit and not be his hands on.

Prior to that time, I would choose a song and I would tell the arranger we need this for an introduction, and I want to solo here, and I want two parts here, and I need three-part women here, and I would spell it.

All out and be really hands on.

_____ and with _____, I do not, I do not do.

That would not work.

Researcher So, UM, when you were doing it by yourself, what was you? What was your system?

I always I was always looking for variety of styles.

I was always looking for I was not big.

I do not tell stories.

I did not have strong themes, but there was some connection.

Maybe the only connection made sense to us so that we could tie the show.

Together, I tended to start with the emphasis on the vocals, so I would do something Broadway or something a little more classical at the beginning to really set up the fact, hey, these kids can sing, and then I usually would do a style change.

I have an awesome band program so I would do something jazz or swing to kind of showcase.

And then I.

Have a before Steven, another choreographer did a lot of great partnering stuff, so the second number would be a style change.

I think I would have it done probably 5 or 6.

Scott Allen ballad.

So, I had a certain sound in my head and then the end.

I always felt like the end was less interesting vocally and was more about the show element, so that was sort of the flow of my shows.

Researcher So, do you tell ___?

Hey, this is my idea.

Create a show or do you just say ____, create a show for me and I trust that you ok.

Participant I mean, we have a discussion this year.

We did not even have the discussion.

I was waiting to have the discussion, but it is the same discussion every year, it is like.

I want to show that as a variety of styles that maybe it is connected by a theme but does not tell a story and I like a show that drives my costuming.

I like to spend a little bit of money on costumes rather than backdrops and all that kind of stuff, so I think the first time we worked together we had a little bit more of what?

We think and then since then he is just said calls me and says here is what you.

Show is there, there is an element of trust there.

Researcher You know, ok now.

With that, do you feel less connected at all to the show or are you still the same?

Participant I know, there is and there is an element of trust there that I know that what ____ going to give me is good stuff and I am going to be able to do good stuff with it.

So, I feel like if I get too hands on with it, it is going to muddy the waters.

So, I have just learned to trust.

____ has never let me down.

And I jump in with both feet.

So, the year, he said we were doing the Olympic.

Show I was like.

Kind of a dumb idea, but so every show I have gone into with a little bit of oh, I am not sure how this is going to work.

But there is an element of trust, and I know.

I have a.

Choreographer who can pull.

I know I have kids.

Pull it off.

So, I just take myself out of the process.

I still feel very connected to the work I know because my thing I have learned about myself is I am a I am proud.

I love the process.

I love, I love taking them from August through May.

And I know where I need to be at every step along the way.

And I know different things I can do to get them there.

So, give me give me what it is, and I am going to take you through the process.

So, it could be a show about.

Dinosaurs or something? I and I will commit to it and do it, so I do not know a lot of people, and it is because I am. I have been teaching for 35 years. I feel like I am out of ideas.

So, it is good to have, you know, other people involved.

Researcher All right, so.

Let us discuss visual design and how do you utilize visual design to communicate your theme or your message of your show.

Participant In terms of choreography or all aspects of that?

Researcher Well, primarily the lights, the fog, the backdrop, that kind of.

Participant You are talking to the wrong person about that then.

Yeah, I well, I know, but I am kind of trying to get, you know, a worldly view on it because I in the South, we are all about, you know, the bigger the backdrop, the better.

Researcher So how is it?

Participant Right.

Researcher How is it out there in Nebraska?

Participant And I have always wanted.

I have always wanted my kids to be the stars of the show.

Want the stuff to be?

The stars of the show so.

Over the years we have added extra risers on top of risers, so that was a big step for Nebraska.

I have always been about the costuming that the clothes that the kids are wearing makes sense to the music being performed, and that becomes.

Our visual element.

So, I invested a lot of money in in that this last year was the first year ever that I used some sort of backdrop, and I only used it because I felt like maybe the audience needed it to understand the show, but they were just simple banners that rotated.

And we did the kings of rock'n'roll and pop. And so, one side was our ___ Royal Ball logo and then as each new artist was introduced, _____ banner flipped around just kind of explained the story a little bit. They were very low tech, and they are now in a dumpster.

So, they can tell you.

So, and here in Nebraska, I mean we compete in a national in national venues, right.

So, we go up against the _____ and all those people who have those gigantic screens so.

You know, for us it is trying to find something.
That is our thing.
So, for us, it is costuming this year was the banners.
Next year I am adding simple lights behind the show, like simple lights.
Just sort of give a frame to the.
Stage because that would not be necessary here in Nebraska.
But when you go to these national events and when fame or when HOA has a category on their ballot about that stuff, you must do something right.
So as a prominent choir director, how do you feel seeing choir move in this visual design direction?
Where the bigger the sets the better.
A bunch of.
Movie screens behind or TV screens behind kids and you know, these LED video walls.
How do you feel about that?

Participant My problem with it, well, those are not kid things.
First, those are adult things.
Those are financial decisions.
So, it takes the focus off what the kids are doing, which is what show choir.
Is all about, you know, so we you know, if you strip all that stuff away, how is their singing?
How is their dancing?
I mean, that is one of the reasons I do not go towards it.
The other thing it is caught I am it is causing a problem is people cannot set it up and tear it down in the allotted time.
Our venues, like we cannot host a _ Mississippi.
at our school.
We just do not have the space.
You know, coming from HOA ___ this year, which ended at 1:00 AM because they got three hours behind because of all that stuff, it is bothering me because now.
I have been around for a while, so I have seen rules in show choir.
Then I have seen people rebel against those rules and now we are to the place where we need to put some rules back in because it is just being disrespectful.
If you are scheduled to perform from 1:30 to.
Two and you?
And you do not you cannot abide by that time.

Researcher Let us move away from visual design.
Talk to me about ____
Is your arranger correct?
And does he arrange everything for you?
Or is it just a couple of things, and then you seek out other arrangers?

Participant No, he does the entire show from beginning to end, vocals and instrumentals.
I like the continuity of that, and I like.
He does the best work when he writes the entire show at once.

Sometimes he can do that, sometimes not, but I have seen great benefits to sort of like I can tell, because then he has different techniques for different, you know, different.

Ohh, I already used this in the opener, so I am not going to use this strategy later, but I have before I was using ____, I used multiple arrangers and I tried to use people. Based on their special.

Like I love Anita Krakauer.

I loved her ballads.

So, Anita would write my ballad, and I used to a guy in Chicago named Jeremy Landig.

And he always took kind of a choral approach to pop music.

So, I used him for the beginning of the show.

Or I would use ____ if I wanted something that was kind of edgy or whatever.

So that was kind of fun to be able to use multiple arrangers.

Based on their strength and that way it was not forcing somebody to write or to arrange a song that they did not have.

A passion for.

Researcher Sure. So, when you are?

Selecting usable arrangements or talking with ____ discuss a little bit about the pace of the show and it is kind of ties into show design.

Like what it what does the discussion look like when you are discussing the pace of your show with ____?

Participant He always knows and I always feel like you.

You lead with what you do well, right?

So, we are going to lead vocally quite often.

We are going to lead vocally and then follow it up with a band, a band break and then maybe into a solo.

And Pete Eklund is.

One of my mentors and idols, and he always talks, you know, within that first 30 seconds you need to show good singing, good dancing, showcase the band.

Have a soloist.

So, I that's sort of my philosophy at the beginning is we just we show them we got everything so they can sit back and relax.

And there is when we talk about the pace of the show.

There is because the ballad is super important to me as a choral director.

That is where I live.

So, I always want to get us into the ballad.

There is always enough of a transition, so the kids get their breath under them.

We can be musical right from the beginning, and that is important in the flow of the show.

And then it the other most important part of your show is the closer it.

Must close.

Researcher Across, you know, the competitions that I have seen this year and past years.

Have you ever seen like a double closer?

And what would you do to fix that?

Would you do a quick hitter then to the closer or?

What would you do in that circumstance?

Participant Like so?

So, you feel like this show is closed twice?

Researcher Like you feel like it is over.

And I saw it several times this year and then they went closer.

Participant Right.

Researcher So, what would you do to combat that?

Participant I mean my first thought would be to shorten both of those so that.

Your kind of less is more kind of situation to me.

Participant Right.

It seems like maybe one of those is too long.

If you felt like it was over, then it was.

It was probably over situations I was like, really another song.

Researcher Yes, yes, yes.

Participant Doing another one.

Researcher So where do you think?

Also, show choir has gotten this idea like?

Especially the crazy mashups like putting ten songs into one, you know, or regulating a quick hitter to like a minute and a half.

Half two minutes and ballad.

Must be 3 minutes like where we have come to these?

Not limitations, but kind of regulations on show choir.

Participant I think part of his attention span.

You know and repeats, you know like, and it is comments from judges.

Well, I have already seen that, you know, if you want to repeat a chorus, make sure that you are layering choreography to do something different.

You know part of it is maybe bad versions of single songs have led to that point and you are talking to like ___ is a medley.

Dan, so although he is.

Pulling back a little bit and not putting as many.

Songs in his medleys.

You know I do not.

That is the other thing.

Like sometimes you do not know that you have changed songs.

There's so much material out there that you have moved through it.

So, the ones that are telling a story.

And they kind of never end, so it is hard it is, I mean, the lines have really been blurred and how that works.

Researcher Right.

Participant I think though the whole treasonous situation.

I am having trouble justifying.

Paying \$340.00 for 30 seconds of music.

Researcher So, it is in the realm of show design, choreography, and music arrangements in chorus general.

What do you invest the most in?

Well, what do you see as the most important investment in a show choir?

Is it the costumes?
 Is it the music arrangements?

Participant You are nothing without the show.
 I mean it is how that show package works together musically.
 So, you must start that has to be your foundation.
 You know good, good songs well arranged.
 That is where you start painting.
 And then the other stuff gets layered.
 On top of that.

Researcher So why do?
 You think choir is such an asset in secondary music education?

Participant Well, I always feel like.
 Like if I you know, ____ gets the kids in the door and then I can teach them Mozart
 and I can teach them.
 ____ and I can do other things and I can get them excited about singing.
 Good singing is good singing.
 So, it is a motivating factor.
 It helps.
 It helps draw voice to the program.
 My, my undergraduate or my master's research was on competitive show choir and
 whether it attracts boys to the program.
 So, I was able to look at that and I always felt like maybe boys were competitive.
 But what I learned is boys do it because there is a tradition of excellence.
 Boys are going to get involved if they know it is well.
 So, I think show choir.
 Because it is so.
 It gets a lot of press, and it is.
 A lot of.
 Fun and travel and competition.
 It attracts more boys to the program.
 That that is my thought anyway, I think you.
 Must be careful.
 I would not ever go into a situation where you do not have to be in a regular choir to
 be in a show choir that would just go against 100% against everything, I believe in.
 So, you must be careful.
 You must be careful.
 Become the tail that wags the dog.
 It does take all the money.
 It does take all the time, but I think that.
 The you always must send the message that the foundation of this group is taken
 from another choir.

Researcher So why do you think most public secondary schools do not have a show choir
 program?
 I you know I've. I have looked at your questions. And so, I was like, the answer is #1
 money. They are very expensive.

And you know, as I am getting to the end of my career and paying these bills, I get a little sick to my stomach.

And how did we get here and how do I?

Stop because at this.

Point I feel like I cannot.

I am like this is what it has become.

This is what we expect.

So, I think part of it is money.

And I think part of it is.

If you do not have the right person to direct it, it is not going to be a good experience.

I just do not think you know we have a lot of great choral directors out there, but it takes another set of skills to be a show choir director.

So, if it is not done well, it is better to not do it.

Researcher So, a lot of what I hear is time commitments.

So, you have been in it.

That extracurricular time commitment, can you talk about, you know, how that has been throughout your career?

And I know, you know, we do not get paid to stay until 1:00 AM at a competition.

So, talk to me a little bit about maybe, you know.

Your experience with balancing that time, commitment, and family.

Participant Yes, you know, I.

I do not know that I did it right.

As I look back, there are so many times in my career where I put my job ahead of my family and I have had to apologize to them for that.

And I applaud some of these young directors who are really finding those boundaries.

I have a friend here in Omaha who has young kids.

And I am at his invite, and he said I am leaving for 10 minutes to go watch my kids play basketball.

I would have.

Never thought about.

Leaving to do that, so I really applaud some of these younger people who are really thinking about that.

But it is the reason many of them do not stay.

They do not stay in education in general, or especially show choir.

That you know, you must be all in and it is all consuming.

We are just actually my colleague, and I are.

He has already done it, but I went on my To Do List to go through and document all the outside hours that.

I spent in the.

Course of the year because we want to show our administration.

The time investment and what we are getting paid.

In relation to what the head football coach is getting paid.

Researcher Right.

Participant So, we felt like we needed to document that.

So, we are doing that instrumentally and drama wise so that we can say here is some numbers.

Yes, we do this because we love it, but we are not being compensated for the time that we are spending.

You know, I am at the I.

I am at the end of my career.

I am going to teach two more years.

Well, I just do what I have always just done what I what I need to do to get the job done and not really thought about how he is being compensated but.

Yes, we are not being compensated, but we are also our own worst enemies.

You know, we have created, we have fanned the flames of this beast.

And if we were truly getting paid for the hours we were investing, you know they would.

Shut us down.

With the slippery slope.

Researcher So yes, not only is time commitment a big thing which is required, but also the financial commitment as you were talking as things get increasingly more expensive.

How have you funded and sustained your program over the years?

Because of you when you started.

You know, I mean, how much were things, you know?

Participant Not much, yes.

Researcher Versus what they are today, so can you talk to me a little bit about how you funded your program and how it has been sustained over the years?

Participant Yeah, I feel like the biggest expense when we first started was probably paying the choreographer because you had one costume.

You had arrangements from Hal Leonard.

I mean, you are just.

Just was not as expensive back.

Then I am in a situation.

About I do not know it has probably been.

20 years now because there was a law passed in Nebraska, a student fees law. So, if it were an if, if it were a class that was being taught that received credit that applied towards graduation, you could not charge a fee. So, I have not been able to charge my kids a show choir fee for 1820 years now.

Before that, they would pay the cost of them.

Us as suits all that kind of.

Stuff they would.

Buy that and own that.

So, this law comes into place so.

My district at that point, I showed them how much I was losing from not being able to collect fees.

And so, they gave me a line-item budget, which has not changed in 20 years, but I just have great parents who.

We specialize in large events, so we have our big cabaret which, you know, raises a bunch of money.

We have our competition.

And then we just have this thing called the Hall of Fame, which is fame, stands for fun, for attaining musical excellence.

I am the only one who knows that because I made it up, but it is just a donor program.

And so, it is the parents that are sustaining and funding the program.

And it the only thing that I do charge the students for is for travel.

So, we make travel optional.

But who does not want to go to HOA, ____, or _____?

Researcher Right.

Participant We find a way to help those kids who need help.

We, you know, we do traditional fundraising.

But in terms of.

Raising money for the program.

It is all done through our events and through our parents and through our community, donors, and things like that.

So, I do get worried every year I go to my booster parents every year like.

I mean, it has been our tradition to go to ___ every other year and it is more expensive this year than it has ever been.

And I take it to.

Them and I say.

You know, do we stop doing this?

And they are like our parents.

We as parents want this for our kids, and we will do whatever it takes to make it happen.

And we will do.

I am in a situation where I have a wide range of income and I have parents who say I am willing to help those who cannot.

So, my kids get the experience.

So, I get sick to my stomach.

I just got my costume from _____ and they are super expensive.

But I know that is what my family does, so it is my community expects me to put on the stage and we are going.

To find a way to get it done.

Researcher So, in year one, when you were fresh out of college, what did your fundraising and, you know, financial status look like?

What were you?

What were your big expense that you say choreographer?

This was what year what?

When did you start?

Participant I started teaching in 1988.

Yes, it was still swing choir for some people then.

And I was in a small.

I was in a small school, so it was, you know, I maybe two hundred kids in the high school.

I had half of them inquire, so it really was maybe more the cost of costumes because I was going to show choir camps and then I was bringing that choreography back, so I was not even hiring choreographer back.

So that is why you took your kids to show car camp?

Because they would learn some good music.

Researcher Right.

Participant Then you would bring it back.

They reteach it and there is your choir show.

So that's sort of how I started.

And then when I moved to _____, I walked into a situation where they had, you know, they were, they were using custom arrangements.

They were, they had a higher choreographer, things like that.

Then I made the mistake of fanning the flames from there.

Researcher Right.

Participant Right.

But honestly, I've not.

I have not really had to do a ton.

Of fundraising in my life.

Researcher So, since we were just talking about your early days 1988, what would your advice be to a future show choir director fresh out of high school or fresh out high school, fresh out college? Who wants to start a show choir or who walks into a program?

That already has an established Show Choir.

What would your advice be to them?

Participant I want to.

Say do not but that.

No, I think one of the things that I and all these first-year teachers around here are getting huge jobs and huge programs and have not had the opportunity to make mistakes.

Who have not, I would encourage them to.

Start somewhere small.

Somewhere where they can get their feet wet where they can build.

Build something instead of having to go in somewhere and sustain something because the journey is so much more fun when you are going up the hill than trying to stay on top of the.

So that is I am that is one of the things I would like them to consider.

But most of these kids like in this area are coming from big programs.

So that is all they know.

Large, high schools and so they do not end up in the smaller schools, but I would not trade my 10 years of time that I spent in rural Iowa where I didn't have to have all the answers and I didn't I it wasn't such a public venue, and I could make mistakes and we could grow together.

The other thing I would say you know, I just it is who I am is you cannot.

You must make the vocalist the star.

You cannot go for the flash.

We all look at the shiny things we look at, you know, all the backdrops of the costumes.

We look at, you know, all the choreography, but I.

Remain true to your foundation.

It is the singing that must be the star.

Researcher So, and this is kind of a personal question from a novice show choir director to a very seasoned prominent show choir director, what would you?
 Advice be to someone like me who is trying to who is just coming to the first. Just finished their first year of high school show choir and wants to grow the program, and right now the program is very small, and the budget is very tight. How what is your advice to someone like me?

Participant I think I when I look back at my 25 years at _____.
 The growth we saw was because I took my groups where they really did not belong. They were not ready to compete at on Alaska, which was back when I first started was the Midwest contest around here?
 They were not ready to compete there, but I took them there and they got to see all that stuff.
 I took kids to show.
 Fire Camps of America and they got to see that stuff.
 I took kids to showstoppers when showstoppers was the thing down in in Epcot. We came in last place, but they got to see all of that.
 The parents got to see all of that.
 So, they got that excitement and then I just for me personally as the as the director, I just started to study what is it I like about _____.
 What is it?
 One of my, one of my idols.
 When I was first started was _____ at _____.
 I do not know if you have encountered him at.
 Well, but there was always just something I liked about his show musically, so I tried to study that, unpack that when it came to arrangements, or I would look what other people were doing in terms of costuming.
 I just started studying the best of the best and then try to implement those things.
 Not all at once.
 You know, I remember my first costume.
 Change that I did in like two thousand. It was terrible. It was horrible. The ugly thing you have ever seen.
 Right.
 So, you make mistakes, but you, you and then we add we added band and then we made the band bigger.
 You know, it is so it has been baby steps.
 So that was that was for me.
 I think the biggest thing for my kids is I took them outside of Nebraska.
 I took them places where essentially; they did not belong.
 They were not going to be like the other groups, but they learned from the other groups and gradually.
 Then our style could have could evolve, because we are all kind of locked into whatever our style is in our region and starting to see other possibilities and that is why I continue to do HOA because.
 You, you know, you go against an Indiana group, and you go against a Mississippi group, and you go against Ohio Group, and we are all just a little bit different.
 So, it really the judges really must do their job, right?

It is not what is five versions of the same thing?
 Which ones the best it is five verses.
 So, that makes that gives us that motivation that gives us a reason to be the.
 Best that we.
 Can be so it is very gratifying to do that.

Researcher In your 35 years, what is one of your most favorite moments? Or maybe a competition that you like?

Participant That just really, you are like, yes, this is what I am going to do the rest of my life.
 For me, along the way, like I said, we used to go up to Onalaska and.
 I used to go there with my Iowa kids just to watch.
 It was drivable and I dreamed of having groups on that stage and I looked up to ____ and ____.
 ____, those were all my show choir idols.
 So, when I took a group there that finally made the finals, which was like, and I can tell you the year.
 2005 was sort of the turning point for me. It was like, ok, I have done the work.
 We are on the right track and then we kind of built from there.
 So, for me, that was one of one of the highlights of my career was fine.
 Me making it to the finals and then the other book end of that was going back to that contest in 2019 and finally winning.
 So, after that, after I kind of did a reboot of the show care program, 2019 was the first year I started using ____.
 Kind of went a different direction and kind of went back to my roots there and it was. It was fun to end up winning that.

Researcher So, is there anything else that you would like to add to this topic that has not been discussed already?

Participant No, I mean, I answered your question that you are trying to balance the whole choir part with all the other elements of it and how that gets in the process.
 Yes, you are coming from the right direction.
 I am anxious to see what you find out.

Researcher Yes, yes, yes.
 Uh, well, I have tried to.
 The goal here is to get an eclectic.
 Outlook on how every different region, as you discussed about HOA, how every different region incorporates core methods into their show choir program.
 So, I have, you know folks from California, Virginia, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi all over so.
 If interested, I will share it with you once it is all once it is all finished, but in a couple of weeks I am going to send you a transcript.
 Just to have you check over it and make sure that I have represented your words accurately but also gives you an opportunity to strike anything that you would like to strike.

Participant OK

Researcher Do not say anything bad about anybody, right?
 Or no or add anything you would like to add, and I may ask for a follow up short little zoom interview.

Just to be sure that your thoughts are accurately represented in this study, but I look up to you as a mentor, what you have done for show choir is incredible.

I will watch your shows every year.

You are my _____, so I thank you for everything that you have done.

For show choir and you are truly inspirational to me.

Participant Well, that sounds sweet of you.

Researcher So, it has been a pleasure talking with you today and I hope you have a wonderful rest of your summer.

Participant I am here if you need me.

Researcher All right, thank you so much.

Participant All right. Thank you.

Participant 5 Transcript

Participant Just get this.

Researcher Thank you for volunteering your time to be a part of this study.

It is much appreciated.

The purpose of this study is to learn how a group select group of public secondary school choir and show choir directors from various regions across the United States incorporate choral methods and their respective.

Competitive show choir pro.

So just to start off with, can you tell me a little bit about your educational background starting with undergraduate, all the way to the present day?

Participant OK

All right, well, I got my undergraduate degree in music education from Arizona State University, and I double majored in vocal performance and music education.

K through twelve.

And so, I did my degree there.

Then I began teaching right away in a middle school in an at Desert Canyon middle school in __, AZ, where I taught sixth seven and eighth grade.

I taught there it was a brand-new school that had just opened and so they did not really have much of a program yet because everything had just started.

Forgive my ridiculous hair style.

I am running a summer.

Crazy hair day, so like stupid.

Anyway, so I just looked at myself and I was like, Oh my God.

Anyway, so I taught there because there was not much of a program.

I taught a sixth-grade choir, a seventh-grade choir,

And an eighth-grade choir.

I also taught theater.

I am not educated to teach theater, but whatever.

I had done, musical theater so they were willing to hire me for that.

I also taught a music appreciation class, and I taught percussion.

That first year and then I did not want to be teaching percussion or musical theater or any of that.

So, I worked hard on recruitment that first year and by my second year I did not have to be teaching any of that. Could focus solely on choir and music appreciation classes.

I was able to do a full load of choir with one general music.

Yes, so I.

I Taught there for four years and during my third year there, I began my master's program at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff. My degree and that is in educational leadership and administration.

And truthfully, I was only getting the master's for the pay increase.

I really did not have any interest in being a principal because it would focus on Everything about teaching that I do not like, which is all the red tape and rules and bureaucracy, and not anything that I do like, which is the time with the kids.

But I got the degree and I got.

The higher paycheck.

So that was that.

And I got I finished my master's from Northern Arizona University in my fourth year there at Desert Canyon.

And after doing 4 years there, I transferred over to Horizon High School in Arizona in the Paradise Valley School District.

And I was the lead director of choirs there for 13 years.

And, you know, I ran that whole led the program and, you know, which was made up of seven choirs and a little over three hundred students and some kids. And the bad One negative thing about Arizona schools is that there is not a great deal of support for the arts.

So, my feeder schools were not very strong.

Weak and then.

I was not given any kind of support staff.

I did not have an accompanist or secretary.

The Secretary, any kind of assistant things like that.

And so, it was a lot to run that on my own.

It was a lot.

And then I ended up having two children and that it became very difficult to be running that program by myself with two kids.

And so, I had done a lot of judging and such out in the Midwest with show choir and had been involved in Show Choir camps for America.

I had a lot of.

Colleagues out there and kind of basically found out that.

Almost all the schools out here with larger programs have gotten multiple directors, and so therefore you do not have to shoulder all of it yourself.

And that was very enticing.

And so, when my husband was offered a position change to here in _ IN.

Where the schools are better, our children were about to enter kindergarten and preschool.

It was like, OK, this would be a.

We decided this would be a good change. So, we moved.

Out here in 2013 and I took on the position as the lead director of choirs here at High School and this is about to be my 10th year here at. So, this will be my me. 27th year teaching.

Researcher Now as far.

Participant Wait, is that right?

Researcher As far as like professional experiences, have you been a part of a professional choral or have you yourself performed professionally at all throughout your years of teaching and?

Participant When I first started teaching, I was I did a lot of side gigs because I was not.

I was not married with kids yet.

And so, it was a lot.

And so, my schedule was a lot more flexible and so I did a lot of side gigs.

I did some performing as a professional soloist.

I sang at a bunch of different churches and things like that.

I also did like weddings and funerals.

And various gigs like that.

I also did.

A lot of work with.

Hal Leonard, Shawnee Press, and Alfred.

In terms of like recording on their, you know, like the new octavo tracks like going in the studio and just.

Reading charts and recording there I sang professionally with a vocal jazz group in Arizona called _ Vocal Jazz.

There were six of us in the group and I sang with them for about 7 years and then I did.

I did a lot of like commercial Jingle work and movie soundtrack work in terms of like being within sometimes singing with a choir and sometimes with just solo work on little radio spots or things like that where they just needed like the Jingle to whatever was being advertised or plugged.

Because living in Phoenix, there was quite a few recording studios in Phoenix as well as in Tucson that a lot of people from California would come over and hire people from Arizona and do their recording in Arizona because it was just within a drive.

And it was a lot cheaper than in California.

So, I did a lot of work like that for a while and then and always did church work, you know, directing church choirs and then teaching private lessons.

And, you know, all the extra stuff that we do.

Researcher So, what have you?

Noticed differently, as far as like teaching Arizona coming to Indiana.

Did you have a show choir in Arizona, and if so, how is it different than the show quarter that you currently have in Indiana?

Participant Yeah, I did have a show choir there when I taught middle school, I did like little "baby show choir."

You know little.

Little bits of it.

Then when I went to _High School, there was a pretty decent.

History of having show choir there. the two directors before me had really started a lot of that, so I was not walking in and.

Having to start.

It from scratch.

was there first and she is now in the IL area, and I still stay in touch with her.

She was my first private voice teacher, so.

She was there.

She started a show choir there and.

And then ____ came in after her and she continued that show choir there.

It was called.

Step On stage. And then they had they had a women's ensemble called Show Divas and they were great.

And then when I walked in, I was able to kind of take those groups and hopefully just continue to build and make them stronger.

The difference big time in Arizona is that, is that show choir seems to be a very. Regional thing, I think here in the United States, it feels like there are these pockets of strong show choir areas.

You know, obviously there is here in the Midwest with Illinois, Indiana, Ohio.

Then there is like a little pocket of it and like in Iowa and Minnesota, which is odd, but there is.

And like a little bit Nebraska, there is this.

There is this area kind of up in New England, you know, in the Massachusetts area where there is a few, there is some stuff great groups in the South in terms of, like Mississippi, and Alabama, there is some stuff right there that is like, prominent.

And then there is the whole California show choir scene, which is its own thing, primarily Southern California, from like LA down.

Really, that is about it.

Like you do not really hear about show choirs from multiple schools in a lot of other areas.

So, there are probably schools all over the country that randomly have their own show choir, but you do not really hear about it being a very, very popular thing that all these schools have so.

And what that does is because it is regional, it ends up creating.

These pockets where there are contests and there really are not contests all over the country.

There are these pockets where there are contests, so contests are either held at schools where they have a lot of different show choir's players nearby.

So those schools can all come on the weekend and perform, or they are held in like a prominent.

Tourist spot to visit if that makes sense.

You know, like in New York or a Chicago or in LA.

Or something like.

That so being in Arizona, there were not a lot of other show choirs.

In fact, it was.

One of those areas where I think there.

Are a lot of directors.

I do not mean.

This is in a bad way, but there are a lot of directors that snub show choir and think that it is this frivolous, and not as educational as traditional choral repertoire. horrible education thing kind of.

And so, I had to fight a lot.

Of that stereotype.

Out there and I.

Did take my students to compete?

But not nearly as much as they do now.

So, because it was so expensive, I mean, just to get anywhere, you had to be driving for six hours or flying or whatever.

Flying is not the easiest in terms of show choir because of.

The amount of.

Supplies and extra stuff that you need to travel with, so it just was not really feasible to do it at the level that we do it.

Out here at _.

Show choir is like my God, it is just ingrained in the history of this school.

And so, there is a love for it in this community, not just in the _.

Community, but just in the whole Midwest, particularly Indiana, there, on any given Saturday from January through April, we could easily get to probably ten different contests within a.

Couple of hours.

Drive so you know, we could take these kids every weekend if we wanted to now.

Personally, I am a little bit cautious about how much we do that, but.

So, they do, you know, we do everything at a much more competitive higher level out here.

We also have access here at _ to a lot of local choreographers like choreographer, which who live in the Midwest that can be here more frequently.

Whereas when I was in Arizona, there were not a lot of local people choreographing show choir I mean getting a choreographer all the way out to Arizona is not the easiest thing.

And so, you know, we just have more resources available to us.

And then because the community so embraces it here, there is more of a willingness to put money towards it and to support it and things like that.

So, it is, you know, it is just a different, a different machine out here.

It is larger.

And requires a great deal more work to make it happen out here.

Researcher So, did you ever try to plant seeds in Arizona, like, go to schools and say hey?

This is why you need a show card program, and it is not to make it not so taboo for people you know to help them understand what it is and why we do it.

Participant I did a lot of that.

Now we Arizona is good about this.

They Arizona hosts an Allstate show choir contest.

Here and so because they host that you automatically get these random kids from random schools that do not have show choirs, but they come to this and then their directors are there, and you are able to talk to them. I would talk with other directors

at that event each year about how to start more show choir opportunities at their own schools.

I also was the R&S Chair of show choir for ACDA both in Arizona and the Western Division, so I had a lot of.

I do not know opportunity to talk to other directors, you know, leading reading sessions or workshops or things like that.

And then in in the actual show choir contests and things like that that they had or not contest, but like festivals that they had in the area, there was an opportunity to talk with a lot of other directors about show choir and not just talk with them trying to. Get them to do it, but sort of asking why they did it.

You know, why was not.

This included in their curriculum.

And it was.

When directors would explain why show choir was not a part of their curriculum, it was Almost always the exact same answers that I would receive from all these people.

There was a couple different answers.

One was that it is just too much work.

It is just too much work, and you spend.

I am so sorry.

There is like this announcement thing happening.

There is nobody on campus.

I do not know what anyway, so I am sorry.

Researcher It is all good.

I am just trying to.

Researcher Oh, you are fine.

Participant I am going to take this and turn.

My little speaker off so.

There we go.

OK, so ours.

So, there was a.

Lot of choir directors that said, I do not want to deal with it like I do not want.

To deal with having to have any other costume than just a tuxedo.

And concert choir dress.

I do not want to deal with blocking kids in different positions.

Can't we just walk onto the risers?

I do not know anything about dancing.

Like I am not interested in that.

That is not what I got my degree in.

I do not want to have to clean choreography and do all of that.

I do not want to have to deal with a band, I just want to have my piano accompaniment or acapella.

I do not want to deal with the sound reinforcement that is necessary, I do not want.

To deal with.

I do not have platform risers.

I do not have anywhere to put them.

I do not like all of these.
All this list, and it almost always had to do with just the sheer logistics that are involved.
With show choir.
So that was one of the big not.
Arguments, but like at least reasons why. the second was budget.
Because to do all that stuff, it requires a budget to make it happen.
And if your administration is not going to support you on.
It and you do not have the district support.
It is a fundraising nightmare. I mean, it really is. You need a heck of a lot more money to make show choir happen than you do getting some stock octavo off JW pepper and standing there acapella and singing.
And then the other part of it, I did face some people and I still do to this day is that there are still directors who just firmly believe that it is not.
Musically sound, they think that it is your dessert and not your vegetables if that.
Makes Sense, and I could not disagree more, but that is what a lot of people believe.
They believe that if you are dancing and if you are, you know, running around the risers or whatever, there is no possible way that you are singing healthy.
And I firmly, firmly disagree with that.
But there are directors that I think do not understand how to teach that.
And it is scary.
It is scary for any of us to do something with which we are unfamiliar.

Researcher Let Us Fast forward to present day this past year.

How many ensembles did you direct to _?

Participant We have ten ensembles here at _, but there is three teachers, so you know it.

It helps a lot.

Now we do a lot of team teaching, so I oversee, and I oversee the programming for four of those ten.

And then I assist with two waits.

Sorry, I assist with three others, so there is like only four that I must be.

Like the final decision-making person on and then there is three others that I like, you know, lend a hand on.

I give my input and I am available to.

Help run sectionals, help run warmups, help run things, stuff like that.

But I am not necessarily like the go to person for those groups.

And then we also have what is called an applied music class.

It is like a musical theater.

Workshop class where the students are preparing like solo literature for maybe college auditions or things like that.

So, I and I.

I Assist with that class.

So out of all my ensembles, only two of them are the ones.

I am just that I am mainly in charge of only two of the ones that I am mainly.

In charge of are competitive.

Really, I would only consider one of them to be a show choir, and even that they are only a show choir for third quarter of the year.

So, our ensembles here at _ are not exclusively show choir or exclusively concert choir or exclusively anything.

We are pretty we are well grounded in the fact that all these kids should be getting a wide variety of repertoire, and they should be exposed to a lot of different things.

Even like - and, which are our top competitive ensembles, is the mixed group and----_ - is the single gender group.

Even those two groups, they start out the year and in our fall concert, they do one singing and dancing song.

And then the rest of their music is.

Concert choir literature.

And then in our holiday show, they do one singing and dancing song and the rest of it is concert choir literature.

So really, throughout the entire fall semester, they are doing a lot.

Out of legit concert choir or multicultural or folk music.

You know, whatever.

Whatever you would normally consider and then they only sing and dance on two songs throughout that whole fall semester.

Then they prepare a competitive level, show choir show that is strictly show choir for that third quarter when show choir competition season is kind of at its peak.

Here in the Midwest.

We prepare that and we compete with it throughout February and March and then after spring break we are back to singing and dancing one song and the rest of.

It is concert choir.

So that is what like those.

And that is what _ says.

Does that new addition?

It is like our prep.

Mixed choir like _ Junior, we have a group called Allegro that is like _ junior. It is like a prep ground for the women's ensemble, or I should not say with the treble ensemble.

And then we have a wide mix of a bunch of other groups.

So, I All of our ensembles do a wide variety of literature, not just show choir. I also lead like our acapella group, which is a twenty member like Chamber acapella ensemble that.

Was a cappella performs music of all sorts from vocal jazz to Renaissance to like pop acapella and everything in between.

I lead a group that is technically a concert choir that does not really do any show choir at all.

It is like an intermediate mixed concert choir and then I am solely pretty much in charge of our freshman treble choir treble groups, the freshman.

So, I lead all of that.

Then I assist with the _ Group with _.

The two of us kind of work that group together and I assist with the.

The boys, the Freshman boys a little bit and I assist a little bit with the intermediate girls, so there is like a bunch of different groups that.

We kind of help with.

Researcher Altogether, having groups.
Groups, do you group?

Participant Ten groups all together, there will be about 440 students in the program next year.
That is about where we are. So, it was a long-winded answer.

Researcher So, in structural approach wise, one of my questions is how you know you differentiate approaches when you are teaching concert choir versus show choir.
But what it sounds like to me?
Is that you are integrating concert choir a lot with show choir.
So, talk to me about your instructional approaches in general.
Like, take me through a rehearsal in in the life of your role at _.

Participant I, as I said way back, I double majored in vocal performance and music, Ed.
And I have done a lot of solo work.
I come at every single choral rehearsal from a vocal pedagogy standpoint.
So, I basically teach all my classes like a big group voice lesson.
I do a ton of work in the very beginning of the school year on vocal anatomy, vocal pedagogy, the.
The healthy approach to like what is going on with their mechanism, I am a firm believer that if students do not understand what is happening with their actual instrument, there is there no way they know how to use it the correct way.
OK, I do not come at them and say you are learning how to sing show choir, or you are learning how to sing concert choir, or you are just They are you're learning how to use their instrument and if these students ever want to go on and be a professional working singer out in the world.
They should be as versatile as they could possibly be to just simply get work.
So, they should be able to sing an Aria as well as they can sing some country, bluegrass as well as they can sing musical theater as well as they can sing rock.
I mean they.
And they need to understand how to do it in a healthy way so that their voice will last them forever.
And so that they can be flexible with style.
So, we talk really in the beginning and.
We do a.
We do a Lot of vocal work in terms of just the pedagogy of the voice.
I do everything from the foundation of body alignment and breath.
Everything comes from the core that, including and, and really that applies to their dancing as well.
So, everything comes from the foundation of body alignment and breath and after kind of really hammering away at that, then we move into the utilization of the breath brand.
So, I break breath down into breath intake and breath management.
Because there is two different components there, so lots of people can breathe in the right way, but they cannot necessarily use their air the right way to generate the sound underneath of.
It so we talked about tapping into that and doing a lot of work at the very beginning of the year.
We do not do a lot of literature.

We maybe only do like three songs on our fall concert with each of the ensembles, because so much of the time is spent just developing the fundamentals, even more so with like the freshmen, obviously.

And then as.

They've move through to the program.

Sometimes it is a little more automatic when they get older, so a lot of foundation in that.

Then we move into vocal tone production and through warmups and whatever, all sorts of different kinds of exercises that I am sure we all do.

And a lot of that has to do with placement and resonance.

I do a lot of work with like where they are resonating the sound out of their face like where are the, where are we focusing our sound and the placement of, you know, chiaroscuro piano, scooter and the brightness and the darkness and the balance of the tone where that is going to.

To lie and then how to change that?

It is not like you really cannot stand it is confusing to kids when directors say, make a darker tone. We need to take students through the actual mechanics of what they need to do and how they can manipulate their sound with adjustments in the mouth, throat, and body.

Well, well, how?

So, then it is.

Like, OK, let us talk about opening the back of the throat, flattening out the tongue, raising the palate.

Like, let us talk about what is going on and then if it is like, oh, sing brighter.

OK, well, how many teeth are you showing?

Let us get the mirror out.

Let us really get this to have this bite in the front of like, like the anatomy of what is going on.

So, we do a lot of work with that and then once they feel like they kind of have a handle on their own instrument and the sound that is coming out of their face.

Then we can switch over to like choral technique in terms of balance with other group, other people and the other singers and matching of vowels and blend and, you know, dynamic contrast within the ensemble that needs to happen and whose part needs to be brought out in prominence and the texture of the chord and.

Who is on the third and who is on the ninth etc. or who is on the weird stuff.

And then we get into all of that.

So as far as technique, that's kind of where my approach is.

And then of course mixed in with that, we do sight reading every day.

I do sight reading with.

Sole fish and I do movable dough. Solfege & moveable "do."

So, all our kids do movable "do" hand signs, all of that and they do rhythmic sight reading on counts, melodic sight reading, and then they do harmonic sight reading.

So, we kind of emphasize all of that.

Then we also bring in ear training in terms of, like, rhythmic dictation and melodic dictation and.

With my advanced group like with my acapella group, we get into like chord court identification, analysis, and composition and stuff like that.

And then on top.

Of all that we are doing, theory we are doing music theory.

You know, like actual theory.

Work of, you know.

We also incorporate music theory such as Note names, key signatures, writing out rhythms, etc. all the all.

The normal stuff.

So that's kind of within a rehearsal.

Our rehearsals are 90 minutes long because we are on a block schedule.

So, we are here, we are here on a block schedule.

So, I see my students every other day.

And when I see them there, it is a 90-minute rehearsal.

So, in any given 90-minute rehearsal for me, there is probably about 20 minutes of technique, sight-reading, warm-up, and theory all that stuff.

Vocal work, you know, warm up sight reading, theory, announcements, whatever junk must go on.

And then we shift into repertoire depending upon where we are in the year, the beginning of the year, there might even be more of that before we get to Rep.

Researcher So, I will walk me through from start to finish the beginning of your year to the end of your year.

From when you audition the kids to when they walk across the stage in May or June, whenever y'all walk across the stage.

But what does your year look like?

Participant God, I know this could take a while.

Yes, it is a lot like.

resea like I am here on campus right now because we are in the middle of.

Our summer camp.

So, like school got out last week and immediately this week it is our summer camp and the only reason I am available right now is that I lead a session in the morning.

And then I am like working as the administrator of the camp in the afternoon.

And so, you know, so if we, if we like, really backtrack if we take it to like, I consider the start of my school year to sort of be the end of July.

Right.

So, at the end of July, we have retreat with two of our ensembles with and they don't go at the same time, but they go away like I'm a really big proponents of the fact that with your competitive level on ensembles that do a lot outside of school, they need to have an isolated focused retreat kind of experience at the beginning of the year.

That is all about team building goal setting like focus on each other.

We take away their phones for three days.

And we go away from campus, and they are like, getting that mountaintop experience where they are 100% solely focused on each other.

And the music that we are creating and the goals that we are having.

So, we do that for like 3 days with each ensemble at the end of July and that kind of kicks off our year, we come back.

In like the first week of August, and it is all like the normal prep that any teacher has before school starts, you know, all of that.

Then we start the second week of August, and we start all the ensembles in their regular rehearsal.

and rehearse outside of school once a week in the evenings for three hours, so they start those right away.

We host a huge it sounds so stupid, but we host a huge car wash and a huge bake sale in August every year.

That is like our kickoff fundraisers, so. They are great at the start of the year because they have a dual purpose as both a fundraiser but also as a social get together with the students.

leads the car wash and leads the bake sale and they like bring like I hate to use the word cigarette trays, but you know, like the little old fashioned cigarette trays.

Yes, and the girls walk up and down the line of the car wash selling baked.

Goods to everybody.

Because we are here in _, we presell all the car wash tickets.

All throughout the summer, every kid is given a packet of fifteen car wash tickets that they are responsible for selling at \$10 each, and most of the time people do not.

People buy their ticket, and sometimes they even forget to show up to have their car washed on the day of the event. But the presold ticket ensures that we still earn the profit from the sale. And they do not even show up to the car wash because they forget.

They forget that they.

Bought it so.

When we tell people that we earn about \$15,000 on our car wash.

And they like, you know, have a heart attack.

It is we do not watch.

We do not watch that many cars.

We just presell the tickets.

I got you.

And so, we happen to be in a community that will, will, people will chalk up fifteen dollars for a car wash to get and then forget to use it.

For the bake sale, we do not do prices. We simply ask for donations and people are very generous.

We just sit there.

We have our plates.

You know, our trays of cupcakes and people go.

Oh, here is a twenty and they it is just how people are here.

We are very fortunate to be in this community.

We do not get any budget from our school, we get zero money from our school or our district, and a lot of people are like, oh, well, it is _. Think we have a lot of money because it is _

You have lots of money.

We do not receive any budget from the school for anything other than a small amount for music purchase and a small amount for technology. we receive zero budget.

We do all of it through fundraising and student fees.

We just happen to be in a community where most of the people in the Community will support fundraisers and will buy tickets to the concerts and we will, you know, we will do things so, but it is all we do, all the.

But we do all the Legwork on that.

So, we do that, those are two fundraisers.

Then we start off the school year, and we are measuring for costumes.

We are getting everybody fitted.

We are getting all of them.

We are hearing all the freshmen for the first time figuring out, you know, determining their voice placements and where everybody is going to belong.

We are doing a lot of that vocal foundation work in the classroom, just getting technique built into them.

All of that, our first big event of the year is at the end of September.

We have our fall concert.

The last week of September, a typical big concert where every single choir performs a couple of songs.

It is just like a first time on stage for everybody.

Then after that, let us see the beginning of October, new addition.

After that, New Edition, which is our prep mix group,

Has an in-town retreat

They are just here on campus.

But they do like for about 2 days here on campus, working with guest choreographer and other clinicians, stuff like that and bringing in clinicians. During homecoming, the _ walk in the homecoming parade and sing the national anthem at the game.

We have fall break in October.

We come back from fall break, and we have.

Oh, sorry, I forgot Homecoming is somewhere in there.

During homecoming, _ walks in the homecoming parade and sings the national anthem at the game.

Then let us see in the beginning of November 1st.

Saturday in November.

We Host our Princess Academy.

It is a big fundraiser that we started many years ago that is like for all of this, like 4- to 8-year-olds in our community and they all come dressed up as little princesses and princes and all the older girls come as like the actual Disney princesses.

And we do this bit it sells out in twenty.

4 hours to three.

So, it is huge.

And these, it is like a Mother's Day out.

Drop the kids off when and we entertain them for the day and do hair and nails and teach them a song and dance and whatever arts and crafts and etc, stuff like that.

So, we do that as a big fundraiser the first weekend of November.

Then we are during prepping for holiday spectacular holiday spectacular.

This is There's a huge show that has been going on here for.

35 years; long since before I was here. It is an enormous holiday spectacle, really.

And all the groups perform.

We have an orchestra of about forty students that accompanies.
We bring in sets and Santa and the silent auction and all the all the junk, so we spend pretty much all of November preparing, rehearsing, advertising, etc.
Happening for that during all of this, any of the groups that compete.
In show choir are.
Are slowly learning their choir competition music.
They are learning it in class as well as outside of school rehearsals.
In addition to all the music that they are learning for their regular concerts, they are maybe doing choreography outside of.
Well, then they have.
So, we do holiday spectacular, the very beginning of December.
That is also the time we do Poinsettia sales every year in our community.
We sell those at the end of October, and they are delivered right around holiday spectacular so people can pick those up and have them for the season.
It is a big fundraiser.
We kind of cornered the market on
Poinsettias in the community. Here we make about \$50,000 on poinsettias every year.
Then after holiday spectacular is A5 night show. So, we do five performances of it as well as a matinee for like our feeder middle and elementary schools.
Then we go on, we go on break for two weeks. Over the break.
The kids are prepping show choir music like crazy.
We get back in January and we are deep.
Into show player choir competition season uh through from January through March through March.
From January through March, and are rehearsing 2 nights a week, every Monday and Wednesday night for three hours each night prepping their shows.
We this is I hate this, but It is unfortunately super early, but we must start the audition process for the next year's choirs.
The third week of January.
We must start it early because our administration and our counselors need all our placements by spring break and for us to get through hearing four hundred kids or whatever.
And we have a long audition process of them coming in and seeing us one on one to do sight reading and tonal memory.
Then on another day they come in and they do like a range check and a vocal solo that is a cappella.
And then if they want to be considered for the advanced level choirs, they must submit a video audition of themselves singing.
A major scale doing a solo of their choice, a cappella and answering some interview questions.
And then we also have a dance audition if they want to be considered for the competitive show choirs.
There is and then Finally, in addition.
To that, we have a

Call back for the acapella group where they I hear to make sure I get the voices that work together.

So, the process of all of that, plus the time that we need to like to evaluate all the stuff results and get the three of us in the same room to make decisions on placements. sit there and go, ok, who?

Belongs where it.

Takes about 2 1/2 months.

So, we start in the third week of January, and we are going constantly. And continue until we get through with anyone who wants to audition.

Some of it happens during class.

We are just like a quick pull-out during class, and some of it happens like before or after school or things like that.

Let us see. So that is that takes us to January in February, we have student scholarship auditions for our underclassmen. Our freshmen, sophomores, and juniors can choose a solo of their choice, and they come in and they sing it. We bring in judges and then we give away about \$5000 in scholarships.

To those students to continue voice lessons or go to summer camp or do something that helps them musically so that hopefully they get better, and they come back to us the next year to contribute stronger skills to their ensemble.

Hopefully better then we give out senior scholarships later at the end of the year.

So that is separate the end.

At the end of February is what we call our choral showcase.

It is a concert that features six of the ten choirs, and it is more of a concert choir concert, and it is the six choirs that are not.

Competitively competing, you know not doing competitive show choir.

So, they do their own concert and that is where we pick maybe ten of those soloists that won scholarships and they get to do their solo on that concert.

Then we are, and we are deep into the heart of the show choir competition right now.

We go competing, we start competing on the 2nd Saturday of February and we compete every weekend until almost the end of March and then at the end of March, we do a home show that is like our last performance where we, you know, do our show for all our community.

During all of this, in usually in January, I forgot about this.

We also have auditions for our School Musical sometime in January our annual musical, and then we start rehearsals for the musical, usually in late February.

Once we are already competing, so they start rehearsals for that.

Two of our more intermediate ensembles that are like more of our baby ensembles, like our intermediate concert choir and one of our beginning women's ensembles, they do like an all-day trip one day where they like perform at schools around the community and do like a thing down a clinic at Butler University.

And they do a bunch of.

Stuff like that. I forgot that we also do the Butler women's Festival in November with _.

The festival anyway.

That was back in November and then we get back from spring break.

After Spring Break, our acapella group does a whole acapella show, a big showcase concert in there with music they prepared from all year.

They also do like a mini tour of sorts, like this year we went to _____, and they did a Bunch of performances down there.

All currently, many of our groups are prepping.

Well, not all many of our groups are prepping for ISSMA, which is our state like concert choir competition of sorts.

The musical is also in full swing.

Ohh and this is also the time we've we announce all the choirs for the next year, right before spring break.

So, they all the choirs find out what they are going to be in right before spring break, and then when they get back from spring break, we start all the prep for the next year.

So, like in April, we meet with all the and for the next year, and we start laying the Groundwork of what?

For what They're going to need to know.

We usually have our shows for the next year designed and ready to go by the beginning of a.

April. So that like I have already met with like my costume designer and had her come came to the meeting with next year's _ in April to measure all the girls for costumes.

And like it was done, we do not announce the shows to the kids until retreat, but we know the whole show and that way, like I am working with my arranger all summer to get all the arrangements finished.

I am working with my costume designer to get it all done.

I am already working with my tech director to like to figure out what the set it is going to like.

Like we are already in all that process for next year.

We do ISSMA if that happens in April and in May. We have our musical.

the second weekend of May, the third week of May, we do our Spring concert featuring all the ensembles.

Then that the weekend after that, we have an awards ceremony at the end of the year that is like a celebration and we do awards for everybody, and all the classes and we give out senior scholarships.

And then we have, like, end of the year parties for various groups, you know.

And then we get to.

We sing at graduation.

And then that was last Thursday, graduation, and then we do our summer camp, which is for fifth through ninth graders.

And we have three sessions of summer camp, so a bunch of our kids are counselors. They are working this whole week, and we have a concert tomorrow on the last night with all those kids.

And then we are on break for a little while this year.

_ is singing their competition show at the Millikin Show Choir Camps of America, where, like the opening group.

And then _ is singing their competition show as the opening group of Heidelberg.

So, we are still in rehearsals, like Ivo rehearsal tonight with _ to repolish up their show to be able to do it in two weeks at Show choir Camps of America.

We are on in our town 4th of July parade.

Our local 4th of July parade.

So, we do that.

The beginning of July.

And then it all starts again.

Sorry, but I am sure I missed a.

Lot but that I yes.

Researcher Bless you is all I have.

I cannot say wow so.

Oh, do you need some water?

How do you?

Discuss switching gears a little bit.

How do you discuss choral technique with your choreographer?

Participant Well, I am fortunate because _ is one of our main choreographers, and he, I mean, he is a great musician, so he knows he gets it.

But if I know we use a lot of different choreographers with our other groups too, because he does not do everything, he kind of does.

A couple of things, but.

I do not so much discuss discussion of choral coral technique with them, but I do have a lot of say with them such as in terms of like.

“You cannot be doing this athletic of a section of choreography during this section because of what is going on in the coral choral texture here.

Like, or “that is not going to work or after we see what they create sometimes we will go back and we are like, ok, that is not going to happen right there. Remove things to make it match better between vocals and visuals.

They are going to.

Need to have.

I ensure that there is time for them to breathe properly and effectively. Something that is going to give them a breath break.

You know, I do think that if you are using a choreographer that.

Is good that, like, and who knows their stuff.

They've probably, you know.

Treble shot along the way and figured out by trial and error that this does not work.

What does and does not work well.

There are times though, there are some directors out there, some choral directors, who will be very quick to blame the choreographer or the choreography for the kids not singing well.

Well, and the fact of the matter.

Is although that might have.

A little bit to do with it,

When you can only ask someone to do so much like cardio before they are going to need a break.

Although that might have something to do with it, I honestly think that most of the time, it has to do with the choral director not giving those kids a foundation in in how

to use their breath support.

Properly because that means that they were not breathing when they were dancing either.

I mean, you know, I have seen we have all seen, like Broadway shows with these humongous like tap sequences.

Like I think of such as Sutton Foster at the end of Anything Goes where she does like this crazy like 4-minute aggressive tap routine.

And then after all of it, she does that anything good and like takes a big breath and still hits that big note.

That is an example of great technique.

Why is she able to do that?

Because she is breathing the entire time, and she has that foundation under her.

These are kids.

They are still developing.

They are still getting all of that that, you know, I get that they are not some professional singers yet, but.

If we are doing our job correctly as choral directors,

They should be developing that foundation to be able to handle aggressive choreography, and still, you know, making make it happen.

There is also the obvious things like.

No, they cannot do that move facing.

Move facing the back right now because they are singing.

OH, you know, like I do this a lot where it is like.

Sometimes I decide to put the cut off on this beat instead of this that beat to help match the cut off with the choreography., so we need to make sure that we've, like I was just doing this in my 5th and 6th grade camp this morning with my choreographer.

There is one spot in the song where instead of.

The rhythm going da.

Da it.

There is just this one spot where it changes to quarter, quarter, quarter instead.

And so, I was like, can we make sure that something is choreographed on that to really emphasize the difference in the rhythm as well as to help them remember that this is what is coming up here.

She is like, yes, no problem.

And so like, it is a very tempting.

I am in the room during every single choreography rehearsal or teaching session. I am in the room, and I am not even a dancer, but I am in the room to see what is happening to make sure that whatever is happening is going to work with what I know I am going to do vocally. I am in the room to watch what is happening, because as that choreographer gives some sort of move.

That maybe is like an aggressive punch or a full extension or a kick or whatever.

I am marking my music and making a note that I must make sure that our band or especially my drummer is going to do something to accentuate that.

I am in the room to find out.

Like whom she has?

How she or he has assigned different layers visually and then I am looking at the vocal parts to see if I can help make the vocal parts match that. So that it is easier for them to get that all figured out. So yes, I mean like, I do not know if that's vocal technique, but it is it, it is the way that we are constantly marrying the visual to the visual.

Researcher And I am not.

Particularly talking about, you know, the seasoned choreographer who knows what they are doing.

I am a lot of what we are dealing with, especially in a lower budget show choir, you know, is the novice choreographer who are fresh out.

Who have great ideas, but they just do not really understand.

You know, how to intertwine choral and choreography together and some of their movements, you know, could be.

So that is the conversation.

Participant Yeah, I think in a situation like that, there is some, there is some responsibility obviously for the director to say this is what I want.

This is what I do not want.

You know things like that and to help them along.

But they are going to probably learn best from other choreographer.

Who have done show player choreography like they are going to going to learn best from those people as opposed to from the vocal director

Because there is it is like a different, a different approach.

I mean, I have talked with the I like I have done a lot of work with student choreographer like where there who are current students in the group, and they want to try their hand at choreographing something.

And I have been doing it for long enough that I can sit down with them and say, OK, you want to make sure that you are choreographing to the music and.

Not just the lyric.

You know, like it cannot just be that you are going to going to choreograph every single syllable.

You must get to listen to the actual music and choreograph to the rhythm and the hits because we are trying to produce dancing as opposed to just placement of arms all over the place.

We talked about how there can only be so much going on with the feet depending upon the level of the group, like most freshman boys are awkward on their feet.

They just really are.

Unless you have some athletes in there, but most of the time they are awkward on their feet.

And so, if you can give them some stronger arm movements and things that is going to be great.

On the other side of that.

Your girls sometimes are often not going to be as great at like the strong arms movements kind of thing.

And so, figuring out some ways around that, paying attention to body angles and things like that and head angles, that's kind of very important to and a lot of people missed that. There are a lot of choreographers that over choreograph

Because they think that they are choreographing dancing, and they do not really understand that.
Sometimes in a show choir situation, it can be the tiny, best move that just is all done at the same time.
And it can have just as strong of an effect instead of like having to do something different on every single half count.
You know we it just does not need to be that complex.
For it to pop off the stage visually still also kind of less is more.
Sometimes I always think of it as like dynamics.
Just like there
Should be dynamics in our vocal singing.
And there should be dynamics in our choreography, there should be big moments and small moments, and there should be a variety of style, and there should be levels of highs, lows, and choreographer that are good will know how to do this.
I mean, I think about _.
I do not want to put this on.
A recorded zoom.
But the man in spring chicken, you know, I mean like, _, for example, has he has been doing this a long time.

If he wanted to, he Really could phone it in at this point and still do a fantastic job, right?

He could go on autopilot and still choreograph something that would be amazing. And yet, even after all this time, he spends all his free time on like TikTok and YouTube and everything else other platforms trying to keep learning and stay relevant.

And trying to like to see what is next, what is new, what can I put it in?

And he is constantly just doing the research to try to make sure that everything is kept current and that he is challenging himself.

There are a lot of choreographers that think that once they have their little bag of tricks that that is going to be enough, and then they stop pushing themselves to continue to grow.

And that is dangerous.

Researcher Well, let us talk about show design and how important it is to have a good show design.

Participant There is two sides to this.

Coin for me personally show design is probably one of the most fun parts of my job.

I love it.

Some people hate it.

I love it.

It is really kind of an excite.

It is like writing a novel or writing a new song, like it is fun.

Like it is just producing this new combination.

I compare show design to like.

Almost like iron chefs, where it is like you have all these ingredients.

OK, now what are you going to create?

And I just love, you know, getting to open it up every year and go, ok, these are the kids I must work with,
With this is what I have done in the past.
I must create something new.
How is this going to work?
We are still singing and dancing.
It is not like I am writing brand new music.
It is the same stuff that everybody else is doing.
It is just trying to figure out a way to make what you are doing fresh and exciting for your kids and not to win some trophy, but so that they are inspired, and it feels kind of unique to them.
So, I love the challenge of trying to produce something new and trying to design something that is going to end up being exciting for the whole year.
Now, on the other side of that.
That really is overwhelming to a lot of directors, and they think that they must produce some amazing theme and they have a costume, and they must create sets.
That is that is one of the reasons why people sometimes say.
Are like, yes, forget it.
I am not doing that.
And so, what I would caution people about is that it does not have to be complex that to still be incredible.
Like there are lots of people out there that if you have picked.
Good quality music that is giving your kids a wide variety of style, which is showcasing them singing well and giving kind of.
Like I said, those dynamics, the highs, the lows, the exciting moments, the differences in style, all of that, it will be a successful show design.
Heck, I do not care.
I mean, if they are up there in the same costume for 15 minutes straight singing their faces off in a great way, dancing strong.
I am good with that.
I have still been entertained.
So, I think designing a show that is going to showcase the talents of your kids to the best of their ability, and it is going to be exciting to watch and listen to.
So that is what is important.
I do not think it needs to have.
I have seen plenty of shows that had a theme, but it was still awful that, no offense, that they were trash like it was an awful theme.
It was just like, really either very cheesy, or had horrible music because it happened to fit the theme and it is like, I do not care that that song fit the theme. The show is a failure
It is a lousy song, and kids do not.
Kids should not be singing it.
It is either inappropriate or it is out of their range
Of their range.
Or it is just a weird groove or like.
I always think.

Let the let the music drive it.

Make sure that the music that they are doing is good.

That it is quality literature.

It is worthwhile for them to spend their time doing.

It is going to teach them something.

All of that.

And then if it happens to work together in some sort of theme that you can costume and set and everything, then great. If not, sacrifice the theme and just do good songs that are sung well.

Obviously, we hear what we see, and we see what.

So, when you are presenting a show, and you can deliver a message to an audience.

On multiple levels in terms of their senses.

They are seeing something; they are hearing something.

You know, this, all of this, obviously it is going to hit home in a stronger way.

But none of it matters if they are singing bad music badly.

But you know, so that's kind of where I.

Come from on that.

Researcher So, let us talk about the music and the discussion that you have with your arranger.

Do you get an idea?

And then you know, try to bounce it off the arranger.

Or do you just say this is what we are doing?

Arrange it for me and give me the sheet music at such and such.

Great. How does that look?

Participant Yes, that is very different depending upon directors.

So, there are some directors like even _ who I teach with like his approach to show design is drastically different than mine.

But it works for him, and it does not work for me, so that is ok.

I am extremely protective over that process.

I am also probably very.

Maybe that is a nice way of putting it.

Like I get really passionate about exactly what I want to create, and it is not that I'm not open to suggestion.

I certainly am, but once I have the concept of like this is what I want to do, and I know for a fact that the show needs to start with this, and it is going to move through this and then it is going to go to here.

And it is going to end with this like, this is the story I want to tell, and this is this.

These are like, maybe the five songs that I know must be in it.

Then I will take it to my colleagues first. I do not usually take it to anybody until I am firmly grounded in it and then I will usually take it to.

Well, usually I run it by people that.

Have nothing to do with it.

First, this is going to sound strange, but quite often I run it past my children like I have two teenage daughters that are very aware of, like modern music and what people might like and things like that.

So, I run it, I will sometimes like, throw ideas at them out of purity.

My husband has been watching my show choir stuff for 20 years and so I will run things by him even though he is not really a musician at professionally in any way. So, I run it by some people like that first, just to kind of bounce some ideas off.

Then I will talk with my colleagues here at _.

So, we I go through that first before ever even bringing in an arranger or a choreographer.

_____ does my arranging and we have worked together for three years, and we have known each other for a long time, so we have kind of a history that that existed before he was my arranger.

And so, I have a lot of respect for him as a show designer and as a choral educator.

So, he comes at it not just from the perspective of putting notes on a page.

But from like understanding that I am going to have to teach this music for a year.

For a year.

I also will never pick a show that I do not feel like I can.

Live in for that long

I will not pick a show that I that I feel like is a negative message.

Like some people pick dark and creepy things I do not often do that because I do not want to live in that space.

I feel like being a teenager is hard enough nowadays that now that does not mean it is all sunshine and rainbows, but I like, I always pick shows where there are going to be.

Teachable moments outside of the music, through the lyric or through the message that we are trying to send, or whatever it is.

So that way there can be a greater purpose than just singing.

So, I go through there.

Then I go to ____, and I say, ok, this is what I am thinking.

I usually put like a playlist together and then I go through all the music, I take all the lyrics for the entire show of whatever songs I am thinking of, and I isolate out the lyrics

Within each number that are the most important lyrics that I want to make sure are in it or the most important musical moment.

If it is like I love this an instrumental break, this needs to be in there. Then I make sure it is in there

I love the horns in this spot.

Or do you know what?

Sometimes it is just a very small section of a song that I am like, I want just a moment of. this little, tiny lick of this and that is it.

So, I bring it all to him.

And let him kind of sit with it and marinate on it for a little while.

And he is good about listening to it and then coming back to me and saying.

I do not think this is going to work the way that you think.

It is in this.

One spot or yes, I can see this or as I was listening to this, I totally hear this song with it.

Listen to this too.

And I will you know.

And so, we will bounce ideas off each other and then it will slowly evolve, and I will be like, yes, I really hear this part acapella or I want a key change right here.

And so, it is a very mutual discussion-based thing as we go and then we will get choreographer involved and they will start to give their two cents in terms of.

Like what they think?

They will give input about what Would work visually, whether we need props involved.

Whether we need a longer break for something, whether we need a bigger transition somewhere and we start to bring all of that to life and then it is kind of an ever-evolving process as the year goes on.

Yes, but that's basically kind of how it starts.

Researcher So, let us talk about visual design and how it has.

Come about, especially since Glee and all that.

Participant OK

Researcher In in you.

Current position like how you utilize visual design to tell the theme or tell the story the message, whatever you are trying to convey to the audience.

How do you do that through visual design?

Participant Well, I only use visual design if it is necessary.

I am one of those people who, if I do not have to have something else on stage to tell the story, I would love to not.

So, if I can just put humans on stage singing and dancing well, that is always going to be me.

My preference. I will use something visual if I feel like it is going to a be necessary, although I really do not even think you should be doing a show if it must have something on stage to help tell the story because.

It is like it should be told through the music, it should be told through the music and through the choreography, and through what we see with the kids.

But if a visual element will enhance your show and will really, really help tell the story.

Then sure, I am all for it, like for example.

Two years ago, I did a show coming out of COVID with, like the ____.

I will use their show, for example.

Their show literally was all about hands.

That was it.

Sounds like the Cheesiest theme in the world, and when I told the girls they were a bit apprehensive like, great, but.

It was just and we started.

It was all driven by the music and it was like about how our hands can, how it is important to touch and hold hands.

And then it went into the importance of prayer.

And then it.

Went into serve.

Serving, which it went into communication with like sign language.

It went into clapping and snapping, and then it finally ended with like, cheering for one another.

And how, like our hands have all these purposes right, that show did not need anything visual.
What was I going to do, put hands on stage?
That would be so dumb stupid.
So, like they.
It was just done.
They did use gloves
as part of their costuming.
Their costuming, but that was it like.
We are not going to do anything else on stage.
We do not need anything else.
We did not even need lighting.
It was like.
No, let us just put these girls up there singing and dancing.
Well, and that was all we did.
And we were not at all stressed about our time limits.
In competition, because it did not take us anytime at all to walk on stage and sing and leave this year's show different for that same group, this year's show took place in a cemetery.
Now that sounds like it is dark, but it was all happy, and it took place in the cemetery and the whole entire.
We needed to understand that it was a cemetery.
We needed to understand that from the very beginning. We needed the gates.
We needed the sign, and we needed the fog.
We needed the headstones.
It needed to be there for the audience to understand what was going on.
Had we not had it, they probably still would have understood it, but not as quickly.
It would have taken about, you know, a minute or two into the show
Before they got what was going on and by putting that on stage, they were able to really understand it.
Now there has been this big push for these video screens and video walls and things like that, that a lot of people have started to do.
It is very interesting because I think _ was one of the first schools to really do that back in. It was like 2016, I believe.
That ___ used it.
So, we had this video wall and he created like.
A whole sort of.
Movie slide show, whatever that was going to be behind the _ that year.
We it was very difficult because certain schools that we arrived at to compete did not have doorways big enough for us to get through with it.
They did not have places for us to store it.
Being from ____, we were already kind of facing the no well, _____ has their big video.
Well, you know what I mean.

Researcher Yeah, I guess.

Participant So, we were facing that.

And then when we performed with it, we did get a lot of feedback from some judges and some audience members that said it was just distracting.

It was just it was like they could not concentrate on the performers because it was just this busy thing going on.

We used it that year.

I think the next year we used it a little bit with a couple of things and believe it or not, over the years we've kind of gotten away from it like we have just stopped using it and that first year we took a lot of Flak for it.

A lot of people got all over our case for using that and thought that it was really. Kind of a show of wealth or something like that, which is not at all what we meant for that to be.

It was just.

To enhance the show since.

Then almost every group that I see has some sort of video wall component that they are putting on stage, and ironically, we have not done it at all in the last couple of years.

This year's _ had literal flats of wood that they just rolled onto stage to make like a house.

And a tree and a goal post.

And they went undefeated.

Because they sang their faces off and they danced really, well.

And then ____ did do a little bit of a bigger set with the cemetery, but truly.

It was just some trust truss and some Styrofoam and some dry ice, and it is really all it was.

It is like what any school would use for liking.

Whatever they create, they are set with, and it worked great, and we had no problem because it.

The quality of the show Shouldn't come down to that.

It should come down to your singing and your dancing.

So, it depends on.

Your show. Use it if you need it.

Try at all costs not to.

Researcher Well, as a prominent choir director, how do you feel?

The Direction choir is going regarding visual design?

Participant I mean it is an, you know, we are in the arts, everything about the art is always about trying to push the envelope, trying to create something new, trying to, you know, not one up each other but like try.

To design a new concept of something or find a new way how can we to make something this better?

How can we make it look more exciting?

How can we make it different?

And I do not think there is anything wrong with that.

That is just creativity evolving.

And so, I do not think there is anything wrong with that if it is not being done at the mercy of quality singing, quality dancing, really giving kids the education that they need to still create a great show and with like healthy technique.

So, I do not think there is anything wrong with that.

The problem comes in when directors start spending more time concentrating on things like that than they do on either.

The vocal

technique and foundation of their students, or simply just knowing their kids.

You know, getting to know them, forming relationships with them, building a camaraderie, building a team, creating a safe space for teenagers in a world that is scary right now and very unknown.

And kids that have just dealt with the craziest couple of years of their life.

I mean, these last couple of years were hard enough on adults, let alone teenagers with developing.

Brains that do not know how to emotionally handle it.

So, these kids are kind of more fragile than any kids we have ever seen

Lot and they need a safe environment with adults that care about them more than they have ever needed it before.

And so, I think some directors that get wrapped up in special effects on stage or wrapped up in like what trophy are we coming home with?

That is dangerous because you start to put the emphasis on the wrong thing and kids, kids get that, and they will either be put off by it or they would like to get so sucked into it that then they themselves are measuring their worth based upon that.

And it is a slippery slope.

I do not have a problem with people trying to do new things, trying to create something interesting and do some new visual elements or.

However, if those other things are healthy in the department.

Researcher So why is show choir such an asset to secondary music education?

Yeah, I think that any time you can get students, young students hooked into

Participant something because it is feeling more relevant, there is to them, there is a greater opportunity for them to be engaged in learning.

So, there is a lot of aspects that one is the relevance, you know they are doing modern music that they know that is not that all show where music is modern.

But if you are doing some modern music that they are used to hearing off the radio or something, some artist that they are really.

And then on the other side of it, throwing in, you know, suddenly, some Frank Sinatra or some Elvis tune or some like some, you know, seventies hit or whatever.

Then they are really getting the opportunity to hear a lot of different literature and but the modern stuff kind of pulls them in.

So, there is that aspect then there's.

Also, the camaraderie and team building experience of it.

Not that a concert choir does not do that.

A concert choir does, but in concert choir more often, there is not as much opportunity for interaction between students while performing, like you know, most concert choir is stand here side by side with the direction forward towards the director, whereas more show choir is all about

Interaction with each other and the audience

Consistent movement on the stage to different positions, so you are around all different people at all different times there it is more of like a team sport in a way.

And you are relying on one another.
Sometimes there even is touching right.
Sometimes you are even your partner dancing like there is that aspect to it.
So that they can really create a cohesive kind of family atmosphere that maybe you do not necessarily get in a concert choir as easily not just in concert choir in any way.
It just it is it.
It naturally lends itself to that a little bit.
More it is.
I mean, it is engaging the whole body, and we constantly are teaching students that our whole body is our instrument.
Well, our whole body is our instrument.
Let us engage that whole body and learning how to breathe right way while using the entire body is very vocally healthy.
Then there is the future.
Beyond high school.
If these kids want to make a living as a performer, more likely they are going to get hired doing something that is more closely related to show choir than concert.
There, they are going to be singing on some cruise ship.
They are going to be singing and dancing in some theme park.
They are going to be singing jingles somewhere or whatever.
They are going to be, you know, a swinging a swing in a Broadway or touring on some show.
They are going like they are more of the performance jobs that exist in this world today.
Are going to have to do with that.
It does not mean that they must necessarily do that, but that like it is really preparing them for the possibility of being able to.
And I just I think that in show choir there is
A lot of opportunity for
outside of school time, outside of school rehearsals outside of school, travel outside of school, costume sewing, set building blah blah.
It also lends itself to getting parents involved a lot more than a regular choir, because just like a regular concert choir does not require as much parental support and extra people involved.
The problem with that is you do not have as many people involved, and so you are not creating this environment for camaraderie in the community as well and so like.
On any given night, when we have rehearsal from 6:00 to 9:00 or something like that for that three hour, there is a ton of parents here
We are blinging costumes out in the hall, working on this set thing over there, helping you know, with whatever needs to be done.
And they are meeting each other, and they are supporting their kids, and you are creating more than just the team atmosphere.
Than for the students, you are creating a community of parental support and everyone.

So then when you suddenly need something, you have parents that are there on that night, seeing what you are doing for their kids, and they are a lot more likely inclined to support you.

So, it is all those things.

Researcher Why do you think that there are few schools throughout the United States who have or who want to have a show choir program like you were talking about earlier about the pockets?

Why are there just pockets?

Why aren't there, you know, why is the whole state?

Georgia, you know only having two or three show choirs, competitive show choirs, and they are four hours apart from one another.

I mean, it makes no sense.

Participant Right.

I mean, I think some of it has to do with.

Just awareness of what it is.

You know, like I think that when you see another school doing something, then of course, you are like, oh, I could maybe do that.

Like you get excited about it for it is just same reason when we go to like a CD, it is similar to when a concert choir teacher attends a conference or something and you hears somebody a choir sing a piece and you're like, oh, then they think, "I want to do that."

Part of it is.

Just awareness and when you are regional.

Like getting your choir from Georgia to see a bunch of show choirs somewhere is It is nearly impossible.

I mean, you could look at it on YouTube or whatever, but it is not the same.

It is different from seeing it in person and knowing what it is.

And then there is also the intimidation factor that when you see it usually by the time you are seeing it, it is polished and done.

And when a show player choir show is all polished and done, it is intimidating because it is like, "how in the world do I get to that final product?"

But you do not realize all the steps along the way, and so part of it is just like awareness of the process.

Knowing what it is and knowing how to like, step-by-step get to that point.

The second thing is.

The again fear I also do not think there are a lot of collegiate level music education programs that are really doing anything in terms of show choir education.

And there is a few but very few.

There is an aspect of, oh, God, I hate to use this word, but there is an aspect of snobbery with some collegiate level music educators' kind of poo pooing that and thinking that that is not worthwhile.

And that it is not healthy singing and that it is, you know, they are just a very misguided view of what it is.

Most of the time that misguided view comes from people who have not been in a classroom with high school students in a very long time, and because they just are not necessarily aware of how to make that happen, there are a lot of.

There are other components other than being able to teach singing that you need to have mastered be able to do like to be a strong show, choir director at you must have a team, you cannot do it alone.

You must have other directors helping you out.

You must have choreographer you can trust.

You must have a set person you can trust.

You must have a band you can trust.

You must have.

Like you must have someone driving the truck.

You got to have costume parents.

Like, there is a lot of delegation of the team leaders.

And if somebody comes into this and they do not know their community, they do not know where they would find those people, how to even start.

That is scary to try to go down that road, especially in a community where it does not already exist.

So, if you do not have a well.

Of resources to tap from,

you must create that from scratch have to if even if you find all.

Those people you must be a really, you need to be a good manager like.

Very little of what I do in terms of show choir is the time that I spend in front of the students teaching them.

Most of it is like logistics behind the scenes and planning and organizing and keeping all the balls spinning and you.

It is a lot.

And so, there are a lot of directors that just are like, yes, not going to not going interested in trying to handle that.

That is so I do not think it is for everyone as a as a director, but I do think it is for all students, but I do not think it is for everyone as a director.

Unless they really are up for it.

We also seem to it is interesting.

I have been teaching for quite some time, and I think there has been this evolution, particularly in the last few years

This push towards self-care as a teacher and this push towards like putting limits on how much you are willing to do, saving "me" time, protecting yourself from burnout and all of this. And it is interesting because as healthy as it is and as necessary as it is,

As it is.

It is not terribly conducive to create every a really, high level, very successful show choir.

Most very successful Show Choir directors that I know

Does not do are not great at self-care. It is terrible. I hate to say that, but it is true.

Like none of us take care of ourselves.

None of us do spend enough time with our families for all anybody that I know.

Really good at.

Most do not have hobbies. This is it. This is their hobby.

It is a hobby.

They do not go play tennis on the weekends.

This is our hobby.

Like when I have free, sometimes I am time designing new shows when I have free time, I am looking at some ideas like.

It is.

It can be All-encompassing. Unless you have a spouse that is willing to jump in with it.

Unless you have a spouse that is willing to jump in with it, sometimes you are just not married like you are it is.

It is an all-consuming thing and there are a lot of people that are not willing to sacrifice that much.

At this point.

Researcher So, our last question is if you had an opportunity to go back and talk to yourself? At your year one.

When you are fresh out and you know, you maybe know nothing, or you may know something, or you think you know about it.

Thing, what would you say?

What would your piece of advice be to that person who is just like stepping out and think you know that they are going to conquer the world and all that jazz?

Participant Yeah, I would say I would say some of what I just said, I would say it is going to require a lot more time and work than you realized.

And if you are up for it, it can be so exciting and extremely rewarding, but it is not going to be easy like it will not be easy.

And like the more prepared you can be, the better.

Like you need to consistently be

using every possible resource for finding out more, staying fresh, staying on top of things like you need to be going to show choir camps for America, and doing the Teacher workshop.

You must do it.

I learned so much from that, and not just from the actual curriculum of the Teacher workshop, but by putting myself in that place for an entire week.

With all other show choir directors from all over the country and submerging my whole self into like conversations with all these people all week.

It is the only.

It is the only place that they are doing that right now.

And it is probably the most worthwhile place to learn about this art form in existence.

In addition to that, you need to be like living on YouTube and like watching and watching and watching and seeing what has been done and not just what has been done

last year, but while it was done 20 years ago and 30 years ago and 50 years ago, and like you need to know where this all came from and

how it all has? began

You need to talk to as many different shows choir directors as possible.

Pick their brains, go observe their classes.
Bring in people to work with your students.
Bring in as many clinicians as possible.
Stop being so.

protective and isolated over your kids and your room and understand that if you can put your humility like or if you can put your ego at the door and you can just get a little humble and say, do you know what, I do not know. You will get so much better in the end, and you will earn more respect from your students in the process.

Everything I need people to come in here.

I am not a choreographer.

I could choreograph freshman boys because that is about as well as I can dance and. So, like I can kind of create that and I can help with like staging and like some visual stuff.

But I am not a choreographer, and I will never pretend to be, and I will always hire good people to come in and choreograph my students.

And I have no problem saying to my students, that is not what I am trained in.

I will bring in the best for you.

I am not trained as a band director, so I will do everything that I can to rehearse them and then I will bring in people that can help with the other parts of it.

I am not a seamstress.

I will kind of produce some things and then I bring in the right people to help with. Things so like just being, well, I was so afraid when I was younger that the students would see that I did not know everything.

None of us know everything like nobody does, and I think sometimes when students see that you are willing to say, this is not my specialty, they respect you more I am going to completely folk.

They are just as happy for you to bring in somebody great as they are.

If you are great like that, they do not care.

They just want to be good.

They want to be good, and they want to feel good about what they are doing, so ooh.

We lost ourselves.

OK, there we go.

Are you there?

Researcher I did not lose you.

OK, my, my camera did something strange going to jump back to.

There we go.

Anyway, so I that's.

I mean, I think if I were going back, I would say that I would.

I would also caution myself about creating too many events.

There is an old saying that if you build a monster, you must feed the monster and it is like I think sometimes I would get like excited about, oh, I could do this for the kids, or we could do this, or we could do that, and I would get so excited about creating. New event it and not really foresee it taking off and becoming this ginormous thing down the road.

It is harder to get rid of something later than it is to just never start it.

OK

And so, I yes, I would be.

I would have been more careful about that because I got myself in too deep a few times so.

Researcher Well, is there anything you would like to add that we have not discussed already regarding this topic or you?

No, I mean, it is, it is great.

I am doing a, I am doing a workshop at show choir camps of America this year on treble, only choirs and just the whole like other level that comes into play dealing with that as opposed to a mixed show choir.

Researcher Right.

Participant And so, it is probably a whole different conversation for another time.

So, I will not get into it, but I do think that there are some unique.

Challenges and some new ways to approach a single gender ensemble.

As opposed to a mixed ensemble.

And I think that directors that approach their ensembles and that is not just show where I mean that's just choir period.

There is a lot of figures that approach both of those.

Dynamics in the room the same way and me.

We are missing some opportunities to connect to our students in the way that they learn best.

If we approach the ball in the same way and so.

There are some unique challenges there.

people need to really know what they are doing in terms of, arranging is not the same for like a treble ensemble as it is for mixed ensemble.

Ensemble. It is terrible, but like ____, God love them. But that is all. They are awful about it because they will take an essay TV chart, and then you will go to order it or whatever in like SA. And it is in the exact same key.

It is like well, that there has no business being in the same key there.

If you are, if you have lost it, but it is because of money, it is because they only want to record the accompaniment track once, and they only want to hire the studio singers.

And like it is all because of money.

And so, you must like, unless you are a director that really knows what you are doing, you could accidentally end up programming things for your kids that are not the.

And then you are.

Like, why don't they sound good on this?

Why does it sound so horrible?

Because it is not written for them in that range.

Like they should not be singing right there.

That is not where you want it.

Your melody is right on their break.

They are never going to be able to project like.

You got it.

So, there are some things like that, whether it is travel or tenor bass.

There are some unique things that people do not necessarily think about.

Out and of course, then there is the whole gender spectrum going on right now in terms of whether people are classified as you know, you cannot say boys, girls anymore.

And then when you do that, that is a whole.

Another cool.

But it is an aspect of it that is tricky for a lot of people.

And so, because we do so much in show choir that is based on gender and so.

We've careful.

With that now and like how to make kids still comfortable but like.

Still have them singing in a healthy way, wherever their voice is and development.

And then of course, how we costume and how we make sure that they feel confident in terms of that.

So, there is a there is just a lot of different layers that go into a lot of things they do that.

I mean, all this kind of stuff is what they put in the curriculum.

Can we talk through all this kind of stuff with other directors?

Find out what is worked for them and what is not, and all of that so.

So, it is a, it is a good place to get, and we all just need to help each other too like this.

Like when you are.

Doing something like this.

And you go sure.

Yeah, I will give an hour of my summer and chat with you and not that I have the corner market, or the market cornered.

Like I would love to hear what other directors said.

I am excited to.

See your final product.

Because I will learn a lot.

From the other people that you talk with, and I will be like, oh my gosh, why didn't I?

Researcher And that and that is the end goal here, because I have directors from California, Virginia, Georgia, Mississippi all over Illinois, you know, Nebraska.

So, I wanted to get a whole lipstick view of how to incorporate choir and.

And show choir.

Properly and see what everyone is you know; experiences were in that realm.

So, I will send.

You a transcript of our conversation and.

Researcher Oh my gosh.

Me babbling for too long.

I am so sorry.

Researcher And I just want to make sure that I represent your words accurately and it will give you an opportunity to strike anything that you would.

Like to be.

Taken out or you can add you can add stuff but also if needed in the future I might ask for a short little follow up interview just to again make sure that your thoughts are accurately represented at the study.

Participant OK

Researcher So that is the main goal I want.

Your voice to be heard in this study appropriately and properly so.

Participant Well, thanks for inviting me to be part of it.

I appreciate it.

Participant 6 Transcript

Researcher Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.

It is greatly appreciated.

The purpose of this study is to learn how a select group of public secondary school choir and show choir directors from various regions of the United States and corporate choral methods.

In their respective competition show choir programs.

So, can you briefly discuss your educational and professional experiences regarding secondary music education?

Participant Yeah, I have my undergraduate from Indiana University Jacobs School of Music in Indiana.

My that is my education, my experiences.

I have been at _____ for 17 years.

Just finished year 17.

Researcher Can you talk about a little bit of your professional experiences that predates you getting into choir and coming to ____?

Participant Professional experiences prior.

I mean, I did show choir in high school, but I mean, this is really my first teaching gig, so I jumped right into a show choir program with no teaching experience before. I mean, I performed as a musician, so I had performance experience, but not directing experience.

Researcher And what was your instrument of choice as a professional musician?

I played string bass all through school and then continued playing in college and did some professional gigging whatnot and I did not pick up piano until I got to college.

Participant So yes, and voice was my primary instrument of studying in college.

Researcher Perfect.

How many ensembles do you direct currently?

Participant I am director on four now and I am assistant on two others.

So, I do an advanced mixed.

Concert choir and show choir.

Concert choir, A beginning treble concert choir.

And well, that one is two sections, so it is split over two periods.

And then I.

Assist with a couple of different ensembles.

There are two ensembles going on and I kind of float between the two of them beginning.

Treble show choir and an advanced tenor bass concert choir.

Yes, that is about.

Researcher It and how many of those ensembles are competitive?

Competitive show choirs are competitive concert choirs.

OK, so both.

Participant So, our competitive groups.

Like at the varsity level, we have four.

Two of them are competitive show choirs and two of them are competitive concert choirs.

And then we have.

An intermediate show choir and a beginning show choir as well, so four competitive show choirs and sorry, three competitive concert choirs, one treble, one mixed, one tenor bass.

Researcher So, I am very familiar with competitive show choir, but could you expound upon what competitive concert choir would look like?

Participant So, in Indiana, most competitions have both a show choir competition and a concert choir competition going on.

I mean, you take three pieces, and the judges have the music, and they score you and they rank you at the end of the night.

So, we take some of our concert choirs to do that throughout the competition season.

A lot of those kids double up.

So, they are like, I am in this show choir, and I am in this concert choir, so they are competing in two groups throughout the day.

And then at the end of the year in the spring, Indiana, Indiana State School Music Association ISMA hosts competitions.

There's organizational contest, which is like you just scored against a rubric against the criteria, and you get a rating.

And then they have an actual state final.

And so, we attempt to qualify some of our groups for state finals.

Researcher And what does the rubric for that look like?

The concert choir competitions?

Is it liking the show choir competitions or is it very like opposite?

Participant I mean, it is strictly it.

It is kind of along the lines of what the vocal caption would be on a show choir competition, but from.

Contest to contest that there's different things.

Some of them have their own, some of them use the ISMA rubric.

Yes, it changes.

But it is all just.

For the concert choir.

Researcher So, let us discuss a little bit about your instructional approaches during rehearsals.

What sort of instructional approaches do you utilize in the classroom each day?

Just vocal, primarily vocal rehearsals.

Or it could also be a choreography rehearsal where you are cleaning a show or something like that.

Participant OK

I mean, a standard vocal rehearsal like class period for me would start with a sight-reading example.

So, they site read as a group an example that is on the projected onto the screen.

We take maybe 5 or 10 minutes of doing that.

Next, where they sing into the key to whatever it is and sing the example, and then we go back and make any fixes or anything that needs to be done there.
Then we go to vocal warmups for about 5 or 10 minutes.
And do lots of technique work and our vocal warmups.
And then we go into sectional where we are learning music in split up and then the last 10 minutes or so we.
Mine and work combining vocals of whatever we were learning.

Researcher OK so as like.

Work together like a whole ensemble.
For example, like I worked the whole hour with my ensemble.
So are you.

Is there any reason you do this micro kind of lessons?

I guess you could call them in your rehearsals like 10 minutes of this 10 minutes of that, and then we come together for 10 minutes.

Participant So again, the Indiana State music competition is at the end of the year when you qualify or when you go to like an organizational contest.

Or to state.

You are scored on your ability to sight read, so all the choirs are given music to sight read and they are scored.

On their ability to do arrhythmic, A melodic and then a harmonic example, each of them is sixteen bars, so there's a.

A good focus on literacy and being able to sight read music.

So that is why we spend a chunk of.

Daily class working on that because it is.

I mean it is really skill building that you must have done through the entire year to get to the point where at the end.

Of the year you can drop.

You know, music into the kid's hands and they can do it at the level that they are supposed to be able to do it.

So that is why we do a good chunk of that.

I mean, warmups are inherent just that is a lot of that's.

Where they become good singers is in the warmup process.

That is when they are, you know, building technique.

And then just for speed of teaching, I like teaching and sectionals whenever possible.

Just so you are teaching.

If you were.

Voice parts and you can kind of focus on each voice part and give them the attention that they need.

And if you have the people to do it, it just.

Makes the teaching go four times as fast.

You know, if you are working with a mix group, you can split them up so SATB and then in.

10-minute sectional you have gotten 40 minutes of instruction done.

So that is why we do that.

Sorry, I have an alarm to remind me of this meeting and it just keeps going off.

Participant Right.

Researcher OK

So, when you are in sectionals, do you have sectional leaders that are students, or is this?

You are leading the sectionals and maybe ____ is leading.

What remind me of ____ last name?

____, sorry, so Mr.

____ leading the other, or is it just student led sectionals?

Participant No, we do not.

Do we do have section leaders that are students, but we do not do student led sectionals.

Researcher OK

Participant So, it is either it is depending on who is here and who is available during that period.

It might be that we only have two people, and we can only split in half.

So, we spend guys, one place girls, another.

If we have the people to put in.

The four parts will do that, but it would be one section with me, one section with ____ , one section with Mr.

One section with either one of our student teachers or our accompanist.

So, if we have the people there, we will use them all to break them up as much as possible.

Researcher Do your instructional approaches differ between when you are in the concert choir mode and when you are in choir, or is it the same?

Do you do you maintain the same instructional approaches between both concert and choir?

Researcher I would say that the structure is generally the same.

I mean if I am teaching concert choir.

Versus show choir.

I would say that me.

Format and structure are the same, however my approach would be different, but that is mainly in just the ask of technique.

So, I mean, I would say it changes for every single song.

What are you doing based on what style?

You are working with it because the style and the technique would change with any different genre of music.

So yes, there would be some slight differences with when I am working with on show choir things, pop music.

You know if I am not working on.

Something that has a big, rich, open, dark classical vibrato sound.

I would not warm them up that way, and then I would not.

You know, I would not be expecting that technique of them.

Through the rehearsal process, if they are doing some.

Contemporary pop acapella, straight tone situation.

You know I would be approaching the technique very differently, but the structure would stay the same of how I run rehearsals.

For the most part.

Researcher As far as like you mentioned, the different genres in selecting repertoire for your concert and show choir.
 How is it the same?
 How is it different?
 Selecting repertoire so like do you do you separate the two or do you try to do chukar music?
 That kind of parallels your concert choir or fundamentals.

Participant Well, I would say that my philosophy on both is that there is no one correct way of singing that you can apply to all music.
 There is you know, each.
 Every song and every genre of music and sub-genre of music has its own.
 Differences in the vocal technique.
 The sound that you will be aiming for so.
 My philosophy on show choir is I like to have a variety of styles and genres and sounds, and I have that same philosophy when it comes to concert choir music that you know.
 I mean, concert choir is the broad generic term for all kinds of music that is appropriate to stand there and sing, you know, and that that basically includes everything except for.
 Contemporary pop music so, but I would say, you know, there is a lot of interplay between those two where like for example, in a lot of show choir stuff, you are doing a lot more pop music.
 Your use of the chest voices is more.
 Whereas in you know more Bel canto singing it is its less use of the chest, or at least in different registers, but I find that.
 My girls, since they can use both parts of their voice and transition easily between them, I just have, I am allowed to have a broader.
 Palette of colors to work with so you can implement that in concert pieces where it is applicable and appropriate some more like world music situations and then also that more like Classical Bel Canto singing.
 There is lots of situations where you can use that in a show.
 Try setting where you are doing a piece that is more.
 Classical be it like legit musical theater or something, just a little more.
 I am thinking like when we did bells of Notre Dame from Hunchback of Notre Dame, like that called for.
 Like classical bel canto technique, but it was totally in a show choir setting and because of their training as a concert choir, which comes easily to them.
 That is kind of their default is that and all the other stuff is kind of like.
 Outside of the comfort zone, no one say comfort zone.
 It is just like.
 Not their defaults.

Researcher So, you discussed briefly like your different warm up approaches depending upon what you were singing like genre wise.
 So, could you give me like if you are going to work on a pop piece versus a classical piece?
 You know, how would your warmups differ to get this?

The sound that you want from the choir with those differing genres on which you are working.

Participant So, I mean it just depends on the specific sound you are aiming for.

So, like, let us say I am doing something, and I need to have the girls in their chest voice, and I need to have it relatively high.

So, they need to be belting and mixing I.

We will take them on like, start at F major and they will do, hey, hey, you are over there.

You are over there, and they will.

Hey, hey, shouting and getting that projection going and then take that in, too.

Hey, you are over there.

Hey, you are over there.

Hey, you are over there.

So, on which they are focusing.

Sending the sound and focusing the tone and then within that I am going to keep refining it and being like it needs to go brighter.

It needs to go darker.

It needs to go more forward, more back.

You are missing the space.

Where is the vibrato?

I am refining that within there to get the kind of sound.

That we are aiming for within that, whereas if I, so if I were not doing something that required that chest belt situation, I would not do that warm up at all.

And if I am doing something where I am like working a very.

Like an Eric Whitacre Straight tone concert piece, I mean, I would be working on a different.

Tonal approach and I would be doing a lot of likes.

Like uh, warmups to get their sound clean and focused.

And I would like to do Hootie owl.

Sounds like, oh, and then we do.

So, we are focusing the sound is a much lighter, more lifted approach.

Way headier, totally disengaged, chess voice, but totally focused.

And still forward but.

That, you know, ethereal light lifted.

So, I mean, ideally my kids can do.

Both of those and anything else, but I would say like those are two contrasting sounds.

And then I would.

Like them, I like within a show to showcase.

All those abilities like paint with every color is.

One of the things I.

Like to do so you.

Researcher Do not do like the same warm up every single day.

You diversify it by whatever you are going to be working on.

Is that correct?

Participant I mean I have.

I have a lot of warmups that I do the same most days just like this is.

Researcher Right.

Participant What warms your voice up?

This is what stretches your rain.

This is what it gets your you know the instrument working.

But then if I am going into like, specific technical things that I am asking for, I have a handful of those that I will switch out for whatever.

Is appropriate, so yes and no.

I mean, there is some core ones.

I am like, we just need your voice getting warm, right?

Not so much the exact style.

And I would say that I air on more.

Classical bel canto technique is kind of the fundamental and then from there we would branch out into more stylistically appropriate things that we would be.

Doing in that.

Researcher So, walk me through a yearly process with each of your ensembles.

Is it the same?

Is it different?

How do you start the year with them and then progress from there?

Participant Well, I would say that the literature that they do determines.

You know, a lot of the work that has done we are, you know, it depends on chair to chair, just cause they have kind of different concert series that they do but.

The simplest way I could put it is basically they are doing a concert every nine weeks, so they are prepping.

The more beginning level choirs are prepping 3 or 4 pieces per nine weeks and then the more advanced choirs have a lot more going on, so they are kind of pulling.

A lot of the time where they are like kind of functioning as a concert choir during the day and then as a show choir in the evening.

So, while they are working on a show choir competition set, they are also working on a concert choir set during the day.

They are there's kind of a lot of overlap there.

So, I would say on the more beginning level, it is like a concert every nine weeks basically.

So, every nine weeks you are learning a.

New three or?

Four songs set on the.

Like Advanced Varsity show choir.

End of things.

They are prepping a.

Summer camp show that they do just one week in the summer and that's.

A standalone situation, they learn.

It is thought of it as show choir camps of America.

They go for that week.

They learn those pieces; they perform those pieces and we put them to bed, and they are done.

And then we do a fall concert.

Which is basically nine weeks of prep for a fall concert before the end.

Of the first quarter?

And then the second quarter, they start doing.

Preparations for their our big Christmas show that we do, so that is a huge, that is all ton of music.

The Fall concert is all strictly concert choir.

So, we did show choir set over the summer.

We do a concert choir set for fall concert and then the Christmas set is a mixture of some more.

Concert pieces and more, more showy pieces.

But it is a lot of music, so they are everyone's learning tons of music to put on that show, while at the same time in the evening they have started learning their competition set so.

They are doing after school rehearsals for show choir competition set while during the day still prepping that.

Then once we come back for the second semester, they get one month where they are strictly a show choir in class.

So, for the month of January, we will finalize our show choir competition set and we use all class period to do that as well then.

Basically, they are out and competing, show choir.

So, they are doing choir by night.

Back to concert choir by day, and then we are prepping for our spring concert competitions and a spring.

Show that we do here, which is another.

It is like pull back all your choir stuff, pull back some of the concert choir stuff, throw in a new piece here or there.

So, I am sorry, that was very confusing.

Researcher No, that was, that is fantastic.

You are very what I am hearing is you are very heavy in the concert choir.

And you, you have some show choir, you know, undertones.

But mostly your focus on the technique of the concert choir.

Am I hearing you correctly on that?

Every one of our show choirs is a concert choir predominantly like the story of I, I mean, I would say they are, you know, in the choir world, we are known for being a show choir in the concert choir world.

Right.

Participant We are probably known for being a concert choir, but I mean, if you were a kid in one of ours.

Choirs you are doing.

Way more concert choir than you are show.

Way more but depending on if I mean if you are a competitive level show.

Choir you are going.

To do more.

But the standard choir that we have does like 75% is concert choir.

Twenty-five percent is showing choir be a little a little more, probably a little closer to 50/50 splits with our advanced groups.

Researcher So, the summer show that you do is that a recruitment for the for the middle school or is that just something that the high school do?

Participant Well, both we do.

We do a camp that is a recruitment camp and that is its own separate thing.

And that is like a whole year.

Camp thing, but this this camp that I was talking about is just for our advanced groups.

So, our top.

Show choir and our top mix show choir do camp. It is very SCA format. They do.

The girls do four number show that makes it do a five number show, but it includes a guy's number and a girl's number so everyone's learning.

Basically, everyone is learning four numbers, and it is a little it is a, it is a show where.

Set a little.

Compact little show choir set performed at the end of the week.

Researcher So, when do you give them their?

Competitive show card music is it in?

Is it in January that you are finalizing the?

Music that you are.

Going to do or do you know what music you are going to do when you give it to them in the full sometime?

Participant They Start learning in in October.

So, I mean, it is sometimes it is trickling in, and we are not getting some things until January, but for the most part, they have most things we are starting in October.

And they start choreography on them and start learning the music.

At around the same time.

Researcher How much time is there between learning the music and the for the show choir, the better show and doing choreography for it?

Participant Sometimes they learn the choreography before they do.

The learn the vocals just because of, you know, logistics, calendar issues and I cannot get the chart in until.

Right.

When my choreographer needs it to be teaching choreography.

So, they are learning the music after.

Sometimes it is like they have had.

Sometimes it is like they have the chart locked in.

Before they learn the choreography, but I would say that is a rarity.

It is just a scheduling thing.

I mean, ideally, I would love to have them like they know all the music and they have it.

Perfect it and all they need to do is learn the chorion, then layer it on top.

But that is just.

Not how it goes.

Researcher So, when you are teaching the music.

Are you sending out like tracks of the respective parts, or are you hammering out notes in rehearsals or they expected to learn the notes and they come in and you are just putting it together in rehearsal setting?

Participant I do not really do like they learn things outside of rehearsal.

I do not expect them to take music home and learn it, and I do not.

I also do not really do the part dominant tracks.

We did during COVID, but that was just.

Out of necessity.

Tracks vocal tracks to learn from.

You are learning.

You learn by rote, and you learn the style the way the saying it, and oftentimes that is not what I want them doing.

So, I mean, everyone makes their artistic choice.

But and when we do have people record our tracks, which we like, learn choreography too, I am usually like, wow, that is great.

They made some artistic choices, but sometimes I am like, oh, wow, they made some interesting choices there that that I do not want my kids picking up per say.

So, I like to have control of that so that all I mean, all the singing is done.

Me not on their own, not to say that.

Like there are not solos that they are going to work on outside, but I would say generally no one really takes.

Homework. Home to learn.

Researcher So, you do not do like a practice log where they must.

So, your evening rehearsals.

How many extracurricular rehearsals do you have in a week?

And how long are they two?

Participant Two, usually Tuesday and Thursday, three hours each.

Researcher OK

And do you do you go in the evenings or is it right after school, OK

Participant It is kind of right after school. It depends on we are either school, gets out at 2:15 for us, so we either go 3:00 to 6:00 or 4:00 to 7:00.

So, the I mean, either way they get a break after school. Sometimes it is an hour or 45 minutes break, sometimes it is only a 45-minute break. Sometimes we will do it. I mean that is the standard.

Are those times.

Researcher How do you discuss choral technique with your choreographer?

Participant Usually not very much, I think.

My choreographer, ____ is she is so great, and she is so musically inclined that. Normally what she is doing just inherently.

Matches vocally what I want them doing like there is so many times when we reference.

When we are talking about like the dynamics that are going on, we are like, listen you all, it is already, it is already in your choreography there.

Like you are doing this crescendo and there is this movement that is like growing and rising so.

I am blessed in that she is just a very smart musician herself, and her choreography is therefore very musical and considerate of the vocalist, so there is very few times when I must be.

Like, hey, you were not thinking about the vocals there and you have them.

Turning around backwards while they are supposed to be singing or oftentimes.

There is, you know, oftentimes there is like choreography on the cut off.

When they stop singing that note.

So, like that is helps me that gives me it gives the kids something to connect to know where the that is.

And then we also like there is just a good relationship there where I can go back in and tweak things to be like I need.

They do not have a cut off and I need them to know where their cutoff is, and it must be in the choreography so that I have something to connect.

It to vocally.

So, we are adding this here.

So, you know it is always a work in progress and sometimes you have those moments where you.

Does not work so well with the vocals, and we just need to change something or simplify or add.

Researcher It was _____, the choreographer.

When you stepped in the position at _____.

Participant So, we have gone through several choreographer.

When I started, _____ was ours.

Both shoppers the.

Women's and the mix. And then I started _____ also did half of the girls show. And so, when I came in, I inherited that _____ did half. And _____ did half with the women's group that I directed. And then when I.

Became the director of _____, the mixed group I brought _____ with.

So, Jared did.

Half of _____ show, and so did _____.

And then after a while we stopped using _____ and then _____ came on with _____ and we used them for several years.

And then _____ and _____ have stopped working together so much.

So now we are using _____.

And then we have brought in some other people.

_____ worked with us the last couple of years.

Researcher The wind selects and choreographer and we were kind of talking about how _____ understands.

And choral technique and how to utilize it in her choreography.

What do you use to determine?

Yes, that choreographer is a good fit for me because you know they do something like that.

They respect the choral technique.

And so how do you choose?

Who? Who choreographs for you?

Participant Well, I mean, I think a lot of it is like relationship building and do I have a good working relationship with this person, and do I want to work with this person? And that is what I have with ____.

I love her work and I love her process and I love her product.

So, what I am thinking about is.

All those things are, are we going to, are we going to be able to have a shared? Vision of what we want is the teaching process going to be great for the kids.

Are they going to get a lot out of it?

Is it going to be positive?

Is it going to be enjoyable for them, and will they?

Will they want to do it and want to come back to it and want to bring other people to it?

And then in the end is the product?

But it needs to be.

Does it benefit the show the way that it needs to?

Is it going to help us be successful and competitive?

So, I am looking at all those things, but.

And I would say that ____ fits all of those, as do many other choreographers that I would be happy to work with, but so much of it is just a relationship thing.

Like you trust this person, you work with them, you are committed to them.

You make it work.

Researcher So alongside choral technique, another important aspect of show choir where the show design is of course.

And are you solely responsible for producing the show design?

Do you work hand in hand with ____ to produce the show design?

And discuss why show design is so important to the success of a show.

Participant So, our show design is a team effort.

It is myself and my husband, ____, who helps with so many things in.

His you know.

Very instrumental in the show design process as well as ____, as well as our arranger, ____.

They are all very invested in what are we doing next year, and I have ideas.

And you know, once we get a show concept going, everyone is throwing out. Ideas and putting them in there and.

You know, saying yes and no, and I like this, and I do not like that.

And what about this?

So, there is, there is always a lot of.

A lot of ideas to work with and then it is kind of just refining those and.

And as a team coming together and being like, ok, here we think that this is. Going to be the.

Best way moving forward to.

Make a show work.

Researcher So how do you produce ideas?

Does it just like, are you listening to a song you build the show around, or a song that you heard?

Or how is that come about?

Are you all just like sitting in a room together, throwing out ideas?
 And then something makes sense.
 And it all comes together.

Participant I mean, sometimes it is that sometimes it is there is, you know, we have a mountain of music that we like and.
 Sometimes the show evolves out of the music, and then sometimes there is a concept. With a couple of musical ideas where then you are building in the rest of the music to fit the concepts and so it depends on the year.
 Sometimes there is just a strong song that sparks something where you are like, oh, I love this song.
 I want to do this song in the show so much, but.
 Like what is the?
 Show that it is built around, you know.
 So, I mean it, it varies from year to year that me.
 Would not say there is one.
 Like specific formula that we ever use, but lots of brainstorming, lots of post it notes. On the wall.
 That is our technique.
 Is like post it notes go everywhere and build up ideas and you know we like to once we kind of have a show.
 A plan for a show.
 We bounce it off a lot of other people too, so I have a lot of other choreographer friends or director friends that I like talking with and saying like.
 Come over and.
 Would love to pick your brain about this show and you know, sometimes you can have somebody be like your area of expertise is this.
 And like I know that inside your head is all this music that I do not have in my head, and I am really looking for this one.
 One puzzle piece that is missing in this show.
 And I bet you can.
 Bring that to the table as sometimes they do.
 So, we, you know we.
 We really love being open to all our friends input and I think that even though like some of our friends are choreographer of groups that compete against us, but we are all friends, and everyone is, you know, invested in creating great shows.
 So sometimes I am helping them create one of.
 Their shows and they are helping me create my show and we might go out and compete against.
 Each other and it all.
 Is just one big happy family.

Researcher So, when do you have a show solidified for the next year?
 Is it early in the school year, is it?
 In the summer.

Participant It is usually over the summer, so I usually normally like I am a little ahead of the game this year just because some good ideas popped up early.
 So, I feel like I kind of have a show.

Outline and a good collection of songs to build from, and a show concept generally there it is.

Not fully realized yet, but normally this time of year I am like Ok, I need to start listening to music and start from square one and start picking things.

But this year I am a little bit ahead and always by our camp.

In July, we present the show to the kids and so we are normally.

Have a full.

A more fully realized picture by then, some of it has not gone into arrangement plans yet, so that some it is happening between July and October when the charts are getting finalized.

Researcher UM, so in what ways do you utilize visual design to communicate the theme or the message of your show to your audience?

Participant I mean costuming, and now we have started using LED screens just this last year as a new thing for us we had.

Some grant money.

Or grant money from something else.

Put us in a financial situation to have money to buy these screens.

So, we invested in them and.

Particularly, the shows that we were doing that year kind of called for.

A lot of visual representation on.

In some kind of way, so one show was Woodstock and Coachella.

And so it was, you know, our girls show.

Telling you right off the bat you are at Woodstock with the costuming and the background and all of that was very beneficial as well as then when you got to Coachella, it was like, well, you know, at a concert like this, you'd have screens with all kinds of images on them.

So that was very fitting.

And then my mix group show was.

The elements you know, Earth, air, water, fire and love and it visually representing all those things.

With just costumes on stage would be difficult because they are, you know.

You know your costume representing air is that you know, that's kind of difficult to figure out so.

We were we were just like this is a show that calls for screens.

So, we are going to, we are going to figure it out.

We are going to screens.

And then it was helpful because.

I mean, it helped just clarify the message like yes, you are seeing all these elements and I hope that that we found a way of using them effectively without.

Detracting, which I think is a pitfall you can really fall into with those where you rely on them.

So much, or there is just too many ideas on these screens.

And I tried to be as minimal as possible while still being effective.

So yes, that is now and prior to that, we were kind of.

One of those choirs that was known for, like they do not do any sets or backdrops or anything like that, they just, it is just the kids on stage and.

That is changed now, and I think it would be hard to go.

Back, but I think that.

I do not think that we are relying on those in some kind of vital way to help other than just communicate a setting for the show that you are putting on.

Researcher Do you feel?

There is a certain aspect of the.

The lights, the backdrops, all that that distract from.

Chorally what is happening on stage?

Participant I would say that you know inherently those things are not.

You see some.

Groups where they put the cart ahead of.

The horse where?

Like clearly you put a lot of energy into all these technical things, but you are missing some of the fundamentals of.

Good singing and.

Dancing and it seems like you had.

You know, like, well, we must use this and then we got to use this, and we must use this, and we got to use that.

And that all of that is a huge time commitment.

It is just, you know where.

Where are you allocating your resources?

I would say is the important thing and you know.

If you have.

All those resources there and you are going to use them, and it is not.

Detract from what your kids are doing?

Go for it like I love bells and whistles and all those fun things, and we normally do things somewhat along those lines at our shows that we do at ours.

At our school, so when we do our big, you know, Christmas show and spring show like there's lights and there's fog and there is, you know, all kinds of fun things.

But when we travel.

It is just such a headache to travel with all that stuff.

In such an expense that.

You just must dedicate a lot to.

It to make it work.

And you must take care that it does not detract from what you are doing.

Researcher So, what is your process as far as music arrangements?

I know you utilize ____.

Talk me through like you hear a song you want it done.

Do you just go straight to ____, or do you utilize other arrangers?

To do your works or your shows to speak about your arrangers that you utilize.

Participant We have used for.

I will speak for myself.

I have used ____ almost exclusively for the last got almost 10 years or so.

And again, this is just one of those things where it is like you build a relationship with the person and you, you like their process.

Trust their products.

_____ is great about it being a process, not a business transaction, so it is not.
Here is the music I want here.
Here is the instructions.
And please send me the charts by this date.
And here is your money.
It is very much like we are working on them together.
There is a lot of revision that goes on so.
Like he, you know, there is a lot of brainstorming that goes on.
So even while he is in the middle of.
And he is like, hey, I am calling you at midnight because I have this thought about
this song long, and I am thinking about doing blah blah, blah.
And I wanted.
To run it by you.
So, it is involved, it is not transactionally, it is interactive.
And I appreciate that with him because I am that is how I like to work creatively.
I do not. I am not I.
Usually do not have enough of my own ideas figured out to like.
Put it in a cute little package to give to some arranger months before I need it done.
I am, you know, I am still turning it over, and I and I need someone who can.
Go through that process with me of like working their way through it and _____ just
works well for us with that.
But we, you know, we have used many other arrangers for other things.
We have one of our companies does some arranging for us for various things.
_____ is now using _____ to do quite a bit of his arranging.
We have used _____.
We have used lots of other people.
We do a lot of secondhand purchases for.
Amps and our like JV groups.
So, we are buying stuff from ___ and ___ and ___ backs up library and all those things.
So yes, we use lots of people, but for my group, for the competition that I have used,
_____.
Exclusively for a long time.

Researcher All right, so we are.

Researcher Going to switch gears and discuss a little bit about how.

How can show choir become more accessible in secondary public secondary schools,
so why, in your opinion, do you feel like requires an asset to public secondary music
education?

Participant Well, I mean, I feel like show choir is an asset to your program because it is
oftentimes like the flagship thing that people see like it is the thing that draws people
in more so than other things.

I mean the reason that.

Kids come and audition is because they want to be in one of those show choirs.

Often.

I mean, there is also.

We also have a lot of other choirs that have their own character and identity that
people are like.

I want to be in that choir.
I want to be in that concert choir.
I want to be in this concert choir like.
They are drawn to.
Those, but I think that you could say broadly.
Show choirs draw in kids, so that is beneficial.
That show choir also helps you.
Your choir, not just be a class during the class day.
It is something bigger than that.
It is a community.
It is something you are working toward.
You know you are putting blood, sweat and tears into this product.
And so, there is this huge buy in where it is not just, it is not just a class that I go to
and do.
It is like I am.
I am it is part of me, and I think.
That retains kids.
It draws in other kids as well.
You get people that are passionate, and they will be passionate about other things, so
some.
Some of our kids are doing show choir because they want to be in an advanced
concert choir and they are like, I will do all this dancing stuff, but my real passion is
just the singing and then vice versa.
Some kids are like I just want to dance, and I want to perform, and my cost of
admission is I.
You must sing.
So, you know, you get, you get all those kids in a program.
Where you get have.
A wide variety of things that they are doing.
So, I think it has been official for our program in that way and then therefore it is
inherently beneficial for a school.
I mean, I think a thriving performing arts department is great at any school.
I mean, I think you should be giving kids as many experiences as possible and as
many enriching experiences as possible and as broad of an experience as possible.
So, you know, we encourage our kids.
To do all the extracurriculars that they want to do, please do your sports that you
want to do.
Please do theater.
Please be in these musicals and please do show choir and we want you to experience
everything, and we will work with you on.
That because I think.
That is what high schoolers should be doing.
Should not be.
Pigeonholed into.
Activity so ours.
Or my philosophy at least is like we want you to be able to do everything.

There are some things that are impossible, like if there is a sport that where you are going to be going every single Saturday in February and March and cannot do a show competition, maybe that is more and show choir are not the answer.

Let us find somewhere else for you to do a choir.

The competitive show choir situation, or vice versa?

Like maybe, you know, maybe that is not the sport for you to do if you are trying to do show choir, but for the most part.

You we want them doing everything and we want them.

You know, being experienced, having experiences with as many.

Things as possible.

Researcher So why do you think?

Most public secondary schools do not have a show choir program.

Participant I do not know.

I mean, it is kind of a specialized thing.

It is a, it is a niche ensemble.

So even though you know you.

School will have a choral program.

It is not showing choir, is younger than a lot of other things, so it is kind of.

You know, choir evolved.

After marching band and things like that had evolved.

And so, I mean, it is safe to say that any school.

Has a band program been going to have a marching band and a pet band because those things are just kind of inherent in a program but a.

Choral program will not necessarily have a show player and me.

Think it is partially because.

It is younger and it is specialized, and some people are.

Just want to be choral.

Directors and do not want to do it and it takes a lot of investment, a lot of time a.

Lot of energy you usually.

Do not get paid very well to do it.

Researcher Right.

So, you, you spoke a little bit about investment and one of the things that I hear a lot of times is the reason schools.

Choose to not have a show card program is the financial commitment that it requires. So how have you funded and sustained your program over the years so that you can make that financial commitment to things?

Participant Well, I was lucky that we had our booster organization was already here when I started teaching so.

The previous director and his boosters created.

This is ___ was at ___ performing at he is at ___ now he and his.

Board of directors created a 501(c)(3) to help support the choir program and over the years, that organization has just grown and grown and grown in its.

Ability to do more things and its ability to raise more funds and its ability to serve more students.

So, it used to be that the organization was like it just benefited _____ only because that was the only show card we had.
And then, you know, we added our treble.
So, then it was benefitting _____ and then you know, we started adding more and more choirs and we kind of enveloped them all into the umbrella of this organization.
And then there is just more and more.
Parents and volunteers and things like that to help.
Help support our program so I am.
I am the lucky beneficiary of a well-run program that just gets bigger and bigger and better and better.
But I did not create it.

Researcher What advice would you give to future concert and show choir directors?

Someone fresh out of college who wants to get into concert.

Participant Let us say make sure you are doing what you are passionate about, and if you are not passionate about it, do not.

Do it or.

Yeah, I would say.

Build a team of people around you that you.

Want to work with?

That just makes the process so much better.

If you are part of a team and you are.

Not by yourself doing it, delegate.

Find people that will help you and do things that so that you.

Do not have to do them all.

Do not be afraid of change.

Sometimes changing things is great.

It puts you in the right direction.

So, if you feel bad about.

The way that something is going or the way that something has been, do not be afraid of changing it.

You should be evolving.

Your program should be evolving.

Find balance in your life with you.

Personal life and your program.

That is very hard, I say.

While I am here by myself, no one else is here.

I am in my office doing work today.

My children are.

So, I mean that is a big thing is that it is easy when you are young to be like, I am going to pour my whole existence into this, but you cannot really sustain that when you have a family.

So, find ways to maintain balance.

Researcher Well, thank you for your time and willingness to share with me today.

Is there anything else that you would like to add regarding the topic of keeping choir and choir?

Participant No, I think I have said shared all my opinions.

Keep me posted.

I want to see the product.

Researcher So, I will send you the transcript in the next couple of.

Researcher Weeks for you to check over to be sure that I represented your words accurately, but also as an opportunity for you to add.

Anything else that you would like to add or strike out?

Any comments you would like to remove?

If needed, I may ask for another short zoom interview just to be sure that your thoughts are accurately represented in this study.

So, thank you again and I hope you have a great day.

Participant Good luck to you.

Researcher Thank you so much.

Participant 7 Transcript

Researcher All right, first, thank you for volunteering your time to be a part of this study.

It is greatly appreciated.

The purpose of this study is to learn how a select group of public, secondary school, choir, and choir directors from various regions of the United States incorporate choral methods in their respective competitive choir program.

So, can you briefly discuss your educational background starting from your undergraduate school, and then discuss a little bit about your teaching opportunities coming out of undergraduate and how you have paralleled you?

Education as far as like Graduate School and your teaching.

Participant Ok, sure thing.

Researcher Have you balanced it?

Participant So, this is it is a hefty question.

So, it is going to be a little.

Bit of a hefty answer.

My mother is a music educator, and I grew up singing in the Episcopal Church under her leadership as my section leader.

And so, I grew up singing the classics.

With Thomas Tallis and I also grew.

Up she was an elementary music specialist, so every day I had access to not only great singing, and she would teach fundamentals of dance.

I had a room full of instruments with which I could play.

So as a child I was always very at home in the music classroom.

And I knew I always wanted to be a teacher and I was able to go through an incredibly great middle school and high school choral program as well.

And they had show choir.

I went to ___ High School in ____, VA, which is the oldest show choir program in the state of Virginia.

And they were very successful.

And I had a really.

So, when I went to ___ University for my undergraduate.

And not all the people that I was in school with had been exposed to show choir, but we were required to take a.

Show choir methods.

So, my foundation is both this love of classical music, the fundamentals of music education, as well as the show choir element.

I feel like as a.

As a learner, I was exposed to a wide variety of the best of the world of music, especially in education, and that helped to focus my dream.

So, at ____, I was able to be in larger ensemble, smaller ensembles.

They took a show choir methods class, and I was always told I wanted a job in ____.

And so, I was always told to come home for my student teaching and.

As I did, I was six weeks into my student teaching and got hired as an elementary music specialist to complete my student teaching and start my first year of.

Teaching and they were opening a brand-new high school in my county.

And because I was already employed by ____ County, I got to be in the first round of hires and that was ____.

My school, where I have spent 17 years.

My whole career.

So, coming out of college, I got to immediately I created like a project everybody else going out for this job came in with.

Photo albums and videos and choral program examples and everything I came in with a three-ring binder that had a five-year plan and everything.

I dreamed that the program would be.

I named my choirs.

I produced perspective concert.

Repertoire programs I talked about, my choreographer, that I wanted to hire.

I gave examples of costumes.

I talked about that the class descriptions for each class that I wanted, the foundation of the choral program to be, are the same ones that I use now in me in, in my choral handbook every year.

So, I think that vision of what I had had going into what my dream could be and now I live that dream every, every day, every year, that office has always been mine.

Those students have always been mine.

The chairs in my classroom have carried every single student in my program and through the pandemic through every challenge.

Being a mother, every personal thing that I have gone through.

It has grown with me, and I have dedicated my whole passion into taking what I had and building what I want.

So, I am in a special situation and the education that I have received and the partnerships that I have formed throughout that.

Of granted me what I have today, so for example, ____, who I met and was in education classes with as a student at ____ is my choreographer has been since the beginning.

We are the same age.

So, we took that to acquire methods to class together and went.

This is fun, and so we founded ____ together and we have only grown with it and dreamed for it.

Uhm, so yes, I am in a special situation, and I appreciate that a lot.

And that is my big answer.

Researcher So, discuss a little bit, because most undergraduate music programs do not have a show acquire methods.

So, what did that class look like and how did it prepare you for being a show choir director?

Participant Well, I am going to give credit to my professor, ____.

He is at JMU, and the fundamentals of that class were basically like how to select music.

He had US design that shows choreographed shows like he had us do pieces and parts of everything so that we could.

Understand, because again JU pulls from all over and does not necessarily get.

My students, my colleagues in school would come in thinking, show there was like a joke, and they would never want to do it, especially in this is like the early 2000s.

I graduated high school in 2001. I graduated College in 2005, so it was this idea of like, oh, this is not serious.

And exposure to that class, thinking about things like budget and travel and all that now Scott brings his.

Show acquire methods class and makes them observe and judge at choir competitions locally in Virginia so, and he is gracious enough to open his classroom to me as a as like a guest lecturer and things so and my classroom door is always open to them.

But that is as show player has changed so has the methods class.

And yes, he leans on his former students to, you know, give him material as well occasionally.

But he is great.

He is genuinely great.

He judges as well.

Researcher So that you said you graduated in 2004, right? Yes, from college 2005. So that was right. Pre Glee.

Participant 2003 yes.

Researcher Right, so the methods you know following the, I would like to you know study that would be interesting to see.

How has met how the class evolved from that?

You know pre ugly.

To post Glee, you know.

Participant Yes, well, one of my best friends is, and he is going to be here in a couple of weeks.

Is ____, who is the director at ____, who Glee, the pilot of Glee.

Was shot in his glasses.

Yes. So, like it is.

And that as when I reflect on that like I watched ____ on ____ like it and I was dork.

About it too.

And now he is one of my best friends in the entire world.

And like it just it, it is kind.

Of its kind of funny how the impact of.
The popularization of the idea of show choir it is so not show choir.
I mean it, it is, and it is not.
You know the structure of competitions and this national championship things like
but, but I did I was very excited about.
What it could do for all our program, but unfortunately what I feel went wrong with
Glee is.
The negative direction that it took
Toward you know what it could be like, what it really is, is so beautiful.
But what makes good TV is not beautiful.
Yes, it is interesting.
And we all have interesting scenarios, but mostly it is, you know, raising kids.
I find that interesting, but the public is not like the _____ are not always going.
To find that so.

Researcher So aside from.

Your educational experiences and teaching and running a _____

Participant Yes, on and.

Off but I.

I had my girl _____, 13 years ago and.

When you become a mom in this world and.

It really does impact the choices that you make about what you are going to invest
your time in.

And I will say that early on in her life, I tried and especially after I got married, I
tried to make choices about what.

What I was going to be involved in to try to preserve my family and the cool thing is,
and we can talk about this later as well.

All the love and time that I have invested in my daughter.

I will be very candid with you.

I am in the middle of a separation and divorce and.

All the time that I have had her in the classroom and raised her with my students, all
that love has come back to her over her entire growth and development.

And this year, I mean my ex-husband and I are good teammates like we are good.

We just did not want to be married anymore.

Still a family, but that.

Family aspect like he is still traveled with us.

They all like all my kids, embraced her and.

Cared for her?

She is now thirteen, and like all of them.

Are so cool.

Researcher Right.

Participant And she is going to be in my program in two years.

And so professionally speaking, I have made choices to focus on my family and my
program first.

So professionally speaking, I have turned away opportunities because I've just.

Cared more about being the mother and the coach.

Researcher So, is your primary instrument your voice or do you play do you play?

Any other instruments?

Participant OK
 Alright, I do the.
 Best that I can, but I am just, you know, I yes.

Researcher So, we will move along.
 How many ensembles did you direct this past year and that incorporates both your concert choir and your show choir audition and non-audition.

Participant Ok, so I direct five ensembles and my former student is my assistant director and she directs two.
 Assembles the choir program is structured like this. We have foundational choirs that are non-auditioned. They are my treble concert choir, which is predominantly freshman treble singers and then my men's choir, which is 9th through 12th and there were 35 boys.
 In that ensemble.
 This year and those are my foundational ensembles and then moving up from there. Once you make it through your first year, then you can audition for other ensembles. Our stand still ensembles are.
 An intermediate level larger women's ensemble that tends to be accompanied and that is a standstill. That is directed by my assistant Director, and then also a select treble chamber ensemble.
 Which is also directed by my Co director.
 Now you can also then as a treble singer, auditioned for ____, which is my Girl Show choir.
 And that is 10 through 12.
 If you are a tenor or bass.
 You can then audition for ____, which is my mixed show choir or and or my chamber ensemble, which is the top of my entire floor program, so.

Researcher OK

Participant I hear you are.
 I am so sorry, I.

Participant That is OK as long.
 As you can hear me Ok, I am fine.
 Do you want to mute?
 So, you can, I do not know.
 Yeah, I will mute.

Researcher So, I mean, I do not know if it is going to pick it up or whatever.

Participant OK

Participant OK
 So, everything is like a pyramid style and my mixed chamber ensemble is the top.
 Of that pyramid. So.
 My show choir is not my top ensemble.
 My show choirs are equal.
 They are twins.
 There is not.
 I do not consider
 _____.

And to me, that is essential in the foundation of success for your entire program.
Like you do not.
I do not think you should favor one show choir over another if you can manage to do that.
One of the things that I have noticed happens in my choral program is that.
That men's choir.
They come in their freshman year, and they never want to leave, and that is where my leadership grows from in men's player because I know where your questions are going.
I read your thing, and I wrote down some responses.
So, men's player.
___ choir foundational.
You must audition.
Well, you do not have to audition, but if you choose to audition for my upper-level classes, anything past those classes.
You must cite read you have to sing like you.
A lot of my kids.
I sent sixty kids to district chorus.
This year I sent thirteen to Allstate, like eight out of twenty-four. Like I believe in fundamentals and technique.
But my number one thing in the entire program is respect.
So, when you walk in, I create the most fun environment.
Silly like kind.
Focused environment that I can with that level of expectation of respect like I am going to be as silly, crazy, and fun as I can be.
And you be exactly who you are meant to be because in.
In my world, I believe that celebrating everyone's different gifts and everyone's different personalities.
Creates this perfect combination of people.
That is what your choir is going to be, and we are not all the same.
We do not all have the same tone, but taking what I have and what you have and blending them together and bringing out the best of what we can put together, that is the magic of what we do.
After watching this entire program grow from nothing, I see the best of my first students still reflected in my students today because they have been such excellent leaders they have.
Created this loving environment where you can make loud mistakes and learn from.
And grow that men's fire.
You know those first couple weeks where the more experienced boys let their voices crack, they make jokes they like.
But then suddenly, they, like, whip back into musicianship.
That sets that bar of excellence annually and what they can give each other is something I could never give them.
As a teacher.
I am always going to be getting older and I am always going to get more removed from them and.

But when you create leadership in those classes, especially in that fundamental men's class where it is cool to dance, it is a puzzle to sight read.

You can do it like everything is a game.

With those boys.

Everything is a game. Who can read?

It the fastest.

Who can get it first?

My environment where like the tenors and bass try to get their part before the other one does.

It is all a game.

Like if you can have kids that are going to help you create that environment.

Where it is fun.

To be good.

You are set for life.

And that happens in those fundamental classes.

So that is what I.

Teach and then.

All of that reflects in my show player.

And because those fundamental groups are the foundation of musicianship, and then my top choir is not my show choir, it is my chamber group.

Everything like that is taught the same way.

I do not teach my show choir differently than I teach my chamber ensemble.

That is the secret.

Yes, you teach great musicianship all the time.

Yes, because great singing.

Is excellent breaths have worked great, set foundation and then the rest is play.

It is manipulation of sound.

It is bringing out the best in your lyrical content and show players it is all storytelling or all reflecting on a theme.

So, these lyrics come to life, and you manipulate your sound along the way.

It is all a game.

It is all play and if you get kids hooked into the seriousness of that game.

It is a fun.

To be a teacher.

Researcher So, are you scaffolding in some sort of way to build your kids up to your varsity show choir?

Or is it just, you know, you have some kids who just want to be in that treble ensemble or some kids who just want to be in the men?

Participant It is all based on their confidence level and their comfort level.

I mean, I do not believe that every.

Needs to be a show choir kid to.

Be valid in my program?

Like, that is what is so important.

Like everyone has different strengths and everybody has different needs.

And I just had a conversation with a kid who was thinking about going.

She is an incredible student, but really enjoyed being online during the pandemic.

And is involved in other things, like ___ Youth Symphony Orchestra and other things where she felt like she was still going to be involved in a community of some sort.

And she was like, yes, I just do not know if I want to be a full time.

And anymore I really liked online and so I just do not know if I can do _____.

And I was like.

I fully respect that, but I am here to tell you we are going to keep going.

But you have such an opportunity ahead of you, and now that she is, like, gone to the meetings and.

She is like in it.

She is her mind, is blown.

Just like this is my entire, you know.

But the kid must make that choice.

The other kids will certainly encourage each other and pressure each other somewhat, like when we see good kids coming through, they will recruit each other.

I have a couple of student athletes that are essential for create it, like creating that.

Bridge between athletics and show player I have a couple of band kids that are great with creating and doing that bridge because again, that stuff that students can give you that I cannot give.

Them as an adult.

You know, I am just the coach.

They know who I am, and they are almost a little scared.

So, like, I cannot.

I can be friendly all day.

Researcher It is funny you say that you are a coach because my principal always calls me a show car coach as well.

Participant Still the coach.

So, I mean, I can, like, you know, and some folks are.

Participant Well, I mean like it is so much it.

It is so much cooler like.

We get to be.

With them for four years.

We get to watch them grow like I always say that I feel like I am one of those really harrowing people that raises puppies for like seeing our dogs and you get these sweet, precious baby puppies.

And you know that you must give them up.

But between now and then you love them with your whole heart and train them to do amazing things for the world.

And you will hope that once they go off into the world, they are the best dogs ever, but.

And you do not always.

Get to see it.

And you hope that they remember all the great things that they were successful with, with you.

And it is upsetting.

When you watch them grow and graduate.

Researcher Right.

Participant It is but it is.
 Always good, great, or good.
 And if you take that time that you have with them seriously and you, they are not trophy hounds, right?
 Like they are not there to win you awards.
 That is stupid.
 They are there to be the best that they can be in their limited time with you.
 And to prove to themselves that they can do it, whatever that means to them.
 At whatever level they are, they can do it.
 And that is a life lesson.

Researcher So how many of your ensembles are you spoke a little bit about mix and single gender.
 How many are auditioned and non-auditioned?

Participant All of them are auditioned, but two.

Researcher OK

Participant So, we have five are auditioned and then two are non-auditioned.

Researcher And the two non-auditioned are those strictly concert choir or them.
 Show choir as.
 Yes, well, they are strictly concert choir.
 All of me.
 Boys do like boys, numbers like they will do a spring concert number.

Researcher OK

Participant But again, that is because both of those classes and the treble concert player will learn about fun day like the Fundamental show choir and adding.
 Yes, but it is not pressure.
 It is like a get to not a have to.

Researcher I got you.
 And that will hopefully create a spark.
 Many kids come in wanting.
 To do show choir in.
 Some capacity, but not all.
 And yes, making those kids who do not want to do it feel as relevant as the kids that do want to do it is important to providing a balanced music education for everyone.

Researcher Yes. Yes. OK
 So, would you say a lot of kids come in wanting to be in _____?

Participant ____ and_____.

Researcher Like they aspire.

Researcher That is their goal.
 When you ask them.
 It should be a part.
 OK All right.

Participant Yes, but.
 I feel like _____ tends to be just as prevalent by the time my senior boy's graduate.
 They all want to be in _____.
 Right.
 It is funny they are not allowed, but that's.

Researcher Yes. OK All right.

Participant They all want to travel.

Researcher So, let us discuss your instructional approaches in your rehearsals.

Take me inside one of you.

Rehearsals on, you know, a daily basis.

Are you your curricular?

Are you extracurricular as well?

Participant All my classes are curricular, and then all my activities are curricular and then I have extracurricular rehearsals as we approach concerts and competition.

Take me through a curricular rehearsal daily with ____.

What does that look like?

Participant OK

I have four captains each year sorry six captains in that group.

So, four dance captains, two male, two female.

And then I have two captains who I call show captains.

They oversee kind of overall directional bridging between me and the students getting information out to students, organizing extracurricular rehearsals and.

Needs for the group.

They can also assist in taking attendance.

Things like that other people have, like President, vice president, things like that, that this is, it is called show Captain Dance.

Captain, they also manage like props and equipment when we travel, costumes etcetera.

So, my class, will I be very leadership driven.

I also have section leaders.

Just so you know.

Everything is written on the board as to what we are.

Approaching for the day and I believe in setting goals all the time, everything is about goal setting.

So, we review what we are going to accomplish announcements made by either myself or my captain's role is taken physical stretching.

Deep breath. High sigh.

And then I have a set of.

Of vocalese that I do standard every day, and once they start to feel tired, I will find ways to refresh them.

But I believe in structure like when you go to yoga, you do the same poses every time to get your body warmed up.

Then you challenge.

It is that same concept.

So deep breath, high side lip trills, things like that.

And this is for everyone across the board, and I totally took this from my former Co-director ____.

Everyone starts in head, boys.

Everyone starts in the key to G.

Like just going.

Up, up, up.

Up, up, up, and then.
Coming down, I am just.
I am going to fake it right now.
We typically come back down and then we will do forward place exercises.
Kind of mid-range and then we will go down.
That is from men's choir.
All the way through, everybody starts in head voice because, I mean, there is like humming and general exercises to start.
But when we start structured warmups.
I always start with a head voice because it is ripping off the band-aid, so the boys have to kind of get it up above and like, stretch that muscle first, get that going and then we go back down and then we are in our own octaves and approach things. I almost always incorporate. So, solfege in some kind of pattern, I tie the pattern.
In typically to what any challenge that we are going to face in our music, and I try to end with some kind of cordial.
It might be something that they do frequently to kind of make sure that we are tuning wisely, or it ends with something new that will be reflected in whatever we are learning.
For that day.
Depending on what the task is at hand.
In I typically pull a lot of students down around the piano.
I like my kids nice and close, and environment feels especially post pandemic like they like being around each other.
They can really hear each other well; I do what I call power circles.
Where depending on how many.
Parts we are singing in that day, they will circle.
Up and then.
I will have leaders in every single circle.
But the cool thing is, I almost never have to appoint leaders.
They step up where they work together, and they figure it out.
And so, let us say that I am working with me.
Soprano ones and twos, my Alto ones and twos will be in power circles in other parts of my room, learning their music, reading their music as I am cleaning the music.
And then they will switch out because I try to give them the foundations of music at the beginning, I almost always have.
Really great readers in there that will help make great readers.
And sometimes I have buddies, but the buddies almost like the secondary buddy almost never knows that they are their buddy.
Like I will be like, OK
Christian, your friend is going to be_____
And I just want you to like pair up with baton.
And so, by the time it gets to be like 2 months in, comes in looking for Christian and Christians.
The one who is like.
All right.
Look at this.

So, the small one or big one?
 What do you see?
 Do you see like?
 Where are we going?
 Like they can.
 Help create that and they love it because Christians leader.
 Was ___ leader? Was _____ leader? Was will like. They are all in this pattern. So those circles.
 They have their own structure to them, and it has now been grandfathered in.
 I believe in trying to do read throughs first and I try not to hand feed anything.
 I am not a great pianist and I think that has almost helped my students to be better.
 Leaders because it fosters independence.
 They are not like leaning too much on the piano.
 A lot of them come from a middle school choral program.
 My daughter is currently in where the teachers are phenomenal pianist.
 She is also a great singer, but like a phenomenal pianist.
 So, they come in leaning a little bit on it and then.
 Very quickly get pulled away because I am not good so.
 We when we set goals, we try to like either meet or exceed our goals.
 I love a reflection.
 I try to put choreography and music together sooner rather than later.
 I try to.
 Incorporate dynamics and like.
 Phrasing things that I want immediately in as like a loose shape, but I do not overly structure things as I teach it because I want a lot of it to happen organically over the development of the piece.
 So, in show choir they learn Choreography first.
 Almost always, for three songs, they learn Choreography first, because we have a camp where they learn choreography predominantly.
 Then we add vocals to the choreography, but we have one song at least where they learn vocals first and then the choreography, so they do get it from both sides.
 We are always so sorry.
 My dog is like buzz saw snoring next to me.
 We have short-term short-range goals; long range goals and we always try to breed success.
 So, when I create goals, I always want to make sure that.
 It is we have something attainable in there where they can leave my classroom with.
 A yes, sorry.
 Researcher So no, you are fine.
 So do you.
 Differentiate your instructional approaches in your lower ensembles.
 Or do you?
 Do you just do the same thing across the board because you want them all to you know.
 Say you have that same level of expectation for all your ensembles.
 So, which is it?

Do you do you dumb it down for the, you know, the more inexperienced, Ok, so.
Participant No, I will.

Researcher You keep.

Participant I will expand on topics.

I will, like you know, explain the why a.

Little bit here.

My because I have the unique perspective of starting this from scratch.

And I know you are going to ask me about advice.

The thing that I have learned, and I learned it early.

Is that you never set a limit to your students' excellence.

You continue to just.

Dream big with them and set bars as high.

As you can.

Reach and so I believe that to dumb down those foundational ensembles puts limits on their excellence, so.

I you know.

I talk about my kids like their cars, my chamber ensembles, my Lamborghini.

Right.

Like they are responsive to everything I want.

They can go as fast or as slow as I need them to go.

They can expand on.

Things I mean.

It is just a fun ride every time.

My most of my ensembles start as my Honda.

It is going to get you from place to place.

Sometimes you got to give a little extra, you know, muscle to get it.

Where it needs to go but.

The goal is always the Lamborghini, but they are always building better cars.

So, what is my next car like?

You are always trying to create that next fuller model, and if you limit your kids, especially from the beginning, then you are only limiting your own excellence and you want to expose them.

You want to get them?

And seeing and hearing incredible choirs.

You want them to go out into competitions where they are totally going to get their butts handed to them and you want a good chase.

You want them to go and sit in an audience and like I would say, like stand out if they hand you your, you stand up and clap and scream and thank them for it because now you know how to be better next week.

So, I believe in a continual growth and that all starts in the foundation.

Researcher So, do you do you approach your concert choir differently than you approach your show choir as well?

Participant No, it is all its.

Researcher Like as far as like sound goes, going back to like the rehearsal.

Are you trying to evoke a different sound from your show choir versus your concert choir?

No, every piece calls for its own sound, and if it is good, healthful singing.
That is what you are going.
And every stylistic piece needs to like it calls for a different level of diversity, and
you want to create the most diverse palette of musicians that you can.

Researcher Right.

Participant If you are singing something in Tulsa, like.

You need to have a different style of singing than the American spiritual versus.
30 Seconds to Mars like you.

You want to make sure that you are really differentiating your palette and creating a
diverse panel of singers.

Researcher Do you curtail your warmups to what you are going to be working on that?

Like, say you are going to be working on 30 seconds some more, so do you curtail
your warmup, so you get that sound that you want from that, OK

Participant Always, always, always, always.

And usually, I try to give them a diverse palette of sound in their warmups.

It is not just straight choral all the time.

If we are trying to fatten our sound because we are doing an American spiritual, if we
are trying to get like a more nasal sound cause we are studying French like, I will
absolutely give them a taste of everything.

But usually, I am thinking long range.

So, if you know that French piece is.

Coming, I will start on it early try to.

Get the sound.

Researcher Ok, awesome. So, this is.

Participant Like where it should be.

Researcher A bit of a lengthy response, so I am going to mute myself after I asked this question
to give you an opportunity to.

Spill everything so.

Participant I feel like I have been giving you the lengthiest response.

I am super passionate.

Tell I love what do I am a dork.

Researcher I love it.

I love it.

So, what is a year in the life?

For you from the time you audition your kids to the time you have graduation, so
take me through the process of auditions to do summer camps.

To your choreography camps to your vocal clinics, etc. etc.

And I will you myself and let you respond.

Participant OK

We must do auditions ridiculously early.

I must have my names in by March 1.

I know it is horrifying, and we usually must tell them almost mid-season what they
have made for the next year.

Can you imagine?

We are recruiting for next year's football team, and we are going to tell you whether
you made it in September.

Which is the nicest word I can.

Produce so.

And what it does to the mentality of the seniors, I think is deeply unfair because you want that excitement for next year to build in a natural way without sweeping the seniors under the rug.

So that is the audition process.

We are during recruitment and auditioning when we are in the busiest season of the.

And that is.

The worst time of year for me, so unfortunately my year at the start in your mind is not.

To start, it is like still mid-season of.

The last year.

Researcher What do your auditions look like?

Participant So, ok, so my auditions are the vocal audition is I listen to their range, and I mark the quality of their voice like tone.

Is it light?

Do they have any hints of vibrato?

What is there?

Strongest, highest note where we should, you know, curb their voice on the lower end knowing that that is probably going to change because they are developing singers, especially with my voice.

Next thing I do is like an auditory check, so I will play something on the piano, have them sing back to me a series of pitches.

I will also have them.

I will play chords and they must find the middle note of the chords so the me or they may like whatever they have to sing that.

And then I have them sight read eight measures in at the level of All State for Virginia.

So that is only sold leaps, quarters, eights, dotted quarters, half note.

Almost never a whole note, though.

Maybe it starts on "do" ends on "do."

It is usually in the oh, in the key of either C or E flat they choose, but I have the same examples.

You go, then they sing any song of their choice, preferably like 45 seconds like verse, Bridge, Chorus, bridge, whatever. Because everything good happens on the bridge, right? So.

Of any song that they want to sing in the style of their choice.

So, whatever they feel most confident.

Singing and that you usually get a wide variety of styles, and it is their choice.

And when I judge them, I grade their tone quality, their ability to maintain a key.

It must be acapella, so their ability to I also look at their showmanship in that, do they understand what they are saying?

Are they trying?

And then I have like an overall points kind of give me category where like overall impression you know it is.

Usually, like a little boost.

And that that score is a certain amount of points then I if they are auditioning for show where they learn a portion of the choreography from the current show that is chosen by, preferably my choreographer, dance captains and me.

And the dance captains teach it.

So, once they learn it, I checked for they audition in small groups of three.

I look for knowledge.

Cleanliness, effort, and energy.

So, like how energetic there are moves like?

Are they fully present in that and then facial expression.

So that is a total of forty points there and.

Then their overall scores.

I look at the top scores of everyone.

And basically, if you were at the top of the top, you qualify for whatever ensemble you are aching for, and it is like a prep sheet.

They give me a prep sheet where they circle the chairs, they want to be in them, and they rank them 1,2,3, and 4 and then they tell me how many class spots they have for the next year.

So, my director and I sit down, we go through all of that.

My choreographer _____ helps me to audition, mostly the trebles that are going from _____ into _____.

So, they are a little bit more handpicked than the boys.

I do the boys myself just because he is not available.

He is more available to find the girls, so that is how me took our auditions.

Work or auditions for the entire program, honestly.

Researcher All right, so they have auditioned.

And we are moving on.

Participant We have our end of the year show prayer meeting where everybody and at least one parent comes, and I give them.

Tips for camp I talk about what we our goals are for the next year.

We meet everybody.

Everyone like all the kids, sit together in the pit and like this big puppy pile and we take pictures and like they get really excited for the next year and all the parents I have, the students speak like I will ask questions like what your favorite was?

Memory from this year and a lot of the kids will know that they are going to speak, so they attest to that.

So, the new parents can see the investment up front, and they have faces and names.

And it is not just me.

Saying we need your money like it is.

It is, do you know what?

And so, my parents speak, I speak camp is in the first two weeks of August, 4 days.

Per ensemble, we start with _____ 12:00 to 8:00 daily.

So, my football players, marching band kids, all the cheerleaders can do their morning routines, and then they come to me after that.

And then uh, so.

We have 12 to 8. We fed them dinner. They learned three songs at that Camp, three songs of Choreography is the goal, and _____ there every day.

_____ my choreographer _____ piece. And so that is when I revealed their show at the very beginning of the camp. They do not know what they are walking into, and I sit them down and I read them, the camp rules.

And I really should probably go through that with you because my camp rules are like my Bible.

So, camp rules.

Then we do the show reveal.

Then we get to.

The hard work then?

The first few days of school, we hit it with like good vocal workshops and refreshing that choreography.

I will send them into sectionals or put together on choreography with the prospective captains for the new year clean.

And I have windows to my room from the outside.

So, the _____ that I am in, I sit with the piano, facing my windows to my classroom. I can watch my leaders lead and every single student comes out and gets voiced by me.

So, I touch base with every kid.

What are your goals for your year?

What are you thinking of this so far?

Were you happy as an Alto two last year?

And it gives me the chance.

To connect on a personal level with every single student and play with them so that they must sing for me, and I sing with them.

And I think for those kids that feared me going.

In it is so.

Essential for them to see me as a human and to know that I am there, to love them and invest in the best that they can be.

And I am not one to be feared.

I am one to be trusted and I am there for their journey.

I am their guide so.

And at the end of every rehearsal, the students that I have picked to lead that day, and usually it is a split rehearsal, I will have a meeting with everybody went well.

What did not go well?

Sometimes if, like, I will have some hang back and be like you should probably talk to _____ and like, talk to him about this, this, and this.

Make sure thing because we are all raising leaders, right?

So, _____ needs to learn.

You know how to be more effective in one field or how whatever he is going to do for the rest of his life, he is going to be.

In positions where he must work with people.

Anyway, it is all good positive like compliment, sandwiching, you know, trying to raise kids to be the right fit for each other and for the team.

Then and all that time, we are probably learning the foundations of our show music.

As soon as I get those.

Oh, ok, so I am.

I am dorky about this.
 Every kid I take notes on my computer in a
 Spreadsheet I take.
 Notes on my computer initially.

Researcher I am the one doing a dissertation on choir so.
 We can be doors together.

Participant Then I am going to.
 OK All right, sweet.
 So, I take specific notes on each kid in a spreadsheet while I am listening to them
 sing.
 Then I take those notes and I put it on like half of an index card, and then I lay out
 my index card and like I will star my leaders, I will circle the ones who need buddies
 and I will lay them out so I can very visually see what I want my classroom to look
 like.
 And that is my chair seat structure.
 Right.
 So, like I know that I have ringers, soprano one, soprano two, Alto 1, Alto 2, tenor 1
 tenor 2, and bass 1.
 Bass two like I have my foundation of leaders and then I build off that.
 And then I look at like my best first, my worst first and then I fill in the.
 What they sang last year, what they what they probably should be singing this year
 and like, it's all this fluctuating puzzle and the most important thing is that the kids
 understand that the puzzle is going to shift year to year and that even though you
 really liked being an Alto one last year, we really need you as an Alto two this year
 because we were missing Alto twos.
 And you can really sing.
 So, I lay that out.
 Puzzle is revealed and I understand that it might be flexible my arranger.
 Is so good at his.
 And he writes the most beautiful and challenging music.
 And I am singing in a lot of deep splits and spreads in my treble show choir.
 I have what is called middy splits sees.
 So, like I have soprano one soprano two, Alto one, Alto 2 OK
 And then there is a lot of times a middle part that will come from both of those to
 create a three-part split. So, Missy splits sees. So soprano one, soprano 2 MIDI
 splitter goes in.
 Yeah, I know.
 I see you trying not to laugh at me and my cute Mitzie splitty thing, but like, yes, it is
 it works with them.
 They like, oh, I am a Mitzie, Splitty.
 And then we will have soprano, one top split, bottom split, soprano two, top, split,
 bottom split.
 Sometimes we will have soprano 123 like.
 It and they must highlight and like circle which notes are theirs.
 And the approach to the note.
 So, like if they come with.

A pencil in one ear or in one side of their ponytail, and a highlighter somewhere where they are like physically highlighting and making notes.

Because I will tell them like.

You are in.

Charge of one single part.

I oversee this many parts and this many splits you as a section leader you need to know what I said that one time in rehearsal and that I have the.

Right to change my mind.

Researcher So, after this wonderful camp that you have done and your mitzi splitzies, what happens next?

In the year, OK

Participant Full night of music.

They are learning more like.

I try to find good choral repertoire to introduce them to that will help enhance the sound that I am going for in their shows for the year.

It is going to maximize their strengths and give them a structure that is going to complement their show.

That happens in October, that night of music is not a choral concert.

It is a booster event, and it is free, and everyone is invited.

Every single choir performs at least one number.

My Chamber ensemble performing three numbers and it between every single choir.

One different part of my booster stands up and talks about costuming for the year.

For every group, stand still and should wear another one.

We will talk about fundraising.

What do we have going on?

So, it is like.

Booster meeting concert and it is free.

So, nobody is getting duped into paying to come to a booster meeting.

So, then we are all teaching music and cleaning choreography.

We will learn our final show player song some Saturday in the fall.

And vocals for show with whatever other concert music we are working on.

Winter Concert fall concert.

We are shifting our schedule forward because I have a fair amount of wrestlers next year and because wrestling season happens in January, February and I do a lot of Saturday rehearsals, we are trying to shift forward a little.

Bit to do.

More December cleanings and then leave January.

February for more like clinician and adding like show elements, putting the band with like the first sets pro like all that stuff.

So, choreography and show and a lot of the basis of everything is cleaned in December, early January and then we have like other weekends of workshops throughout.

January, Monday nights are my nights.

We have 3 hours of a Monday night rehearsal, and everybody is there for three hours.

And we split the kids in like groups and structures because there is me.

There is my assistant director, _____, who is my former student.

And then I have other former students in the area who might come help.
I might have a clinician come in.
_____, who is also a parent who is really gifted all of this.
She will come in and, like, work with them.
But that is to like clean, clean music.
Look at staging.
If we must do costume fittings for an hour and a half of that, like it is just that bonus time where they are totally mine for that.
And then competition.
So, because my choral program is not just showing choir, I encourage my students to become part of this thing called District Chorus that they must do a blind audition for.
I had sixty students from my program participate in that like they got accepted into that last year and that is ninth 12th grade.
Like the first full weekend in February, so that typically Presidents Day weekend like after whatever that weekend is after Valentine's Day, which is our first competition weekend.
I like to travel for that weekend.
I do not have to travel for that weekend, but I like to get out.
Ok, so ours.
Our premiere of our shows, we try not to whisper about what our shows are going to be or anything until we open the curtains for premiere.
Our premiere happens at our pyramid concert.
Typically, the first or second weekend of February.
So that leads into the district Chorus weekend, so if.
Our premiere would be Tuesday, February 6th.
Like so, the kids get to throw their show out there and then they must see everybody at District Chorus who came to see their premiere.
So, no pressure, but a little pressure.
And so, we premiere our shows.
We do district chorus the following week.
We do a competition.
Kickoff show where we open the curtains.
And it is like it is free, so everybody can come, and we open the curtains and we let our stage crew run on the timer.
So, we are basically.
Set it up perform.
See set break it down booster speak.
Timer set it up, ____, break it down and.
Everybody sits their leg.
Ohh like this is what we must do so we prep for that following weekend and that is when we go compete, we host our own competition at ____ that we started this year called the Titan Tournament of Choirs.
That is one of our competition weekends.
Then we travel and compete four times.
We usually do at least one out of state.

If not two and then two locals.

Then after that season has concluded, we typically have All State Chorus Spring concert during that February season.

That is when I am doing auditions.

So, it is auditions.

All district and all state auditions, as well as starting like and we compete with standstill as well.

All my players from this year were undefeated in the state of Virginia Men's Choir chamber ensemble, like all the like and my show chairs in the state of Virginia because we all take them to go compete.

Oh, I forgot.

Oh, my gosh.

We do what is called district choral assessment, where I must take my kids to be graded.

We perform graded music.

And we must sight sing for a grade based off a graded scale that happens in December and that is my men's choir and my chamber ensemble.

So, we are going for superior ratings in that.

And so that.

Also qualifies us to be a blue-ribbon school in the state of Virginia.

Researcher So does your concert choir competition?

Does it look like a show choir competition, or is it just superior?

Participant No, it is a.

Researcher You are going against other schools, OK?

OK All right.

Participant And it is divisional.

So, like you can compete as a unisex chamber and a mix chamber.

And you can have a concert choir, and you can have a like, a contemporary collegiate style acapella group.

You can compete in different styles and then you have your overall grand champion of the day, which is the best score of the day.

And so, like this year, we competed at the Thomas Dale Commonwealth Choral Invitational with men's choir and my Chamber Ensemble.

Men's player won the unisex Chamber division.

And then and then Chamber one, their division, they and then chamber one the day and then we took chamber again to compete at the _____ Festival acquires, and they won for the day.

So, like it?

It is structured as in like your own category and then.

Overall, this score.

Researcher How many competitions are you doing each year?

Participant District choral assessment is for a rating.

Researcher So, let us take show choir competitive shower.

How many competitive shows choir comps are you doing?

Participant We host one we attend four.

Researcher OK

And then your concert choir.
Competitions like it is just the one.

Participant Yeah, I typically call it standstill because it I do have.
A ring. Sorry. No, no.

Researcher Stand still, so yes.

Participant No, just because it is very different.
Ok, we go to at least two.

Researcher So, let us change gears a little bit.
It sounds like you have a very established choreographer and what is your choreographer's name again?
OK
And where is he based out of?

Participant Virginia

Researcher So how do you discuss choral technique with him?

Participant I do not have to because he is a music educator.
So, like, yes, so one of the best things is that he and I were in the show choir methods class together.
He and I got the same choral education I was in some different ensembles than he was in inquire.
Like I or I in college, I was in.
____ Singers, which was like the ____ chamber ensemble, but he also did way more like musicals, operas, and things than I did and was like a dancer.
And a singer.
So, we got differentiated experiences, but the same overall expectation of excellence in choral singing.
So as and he is also worked as a performer.
So, he typically does a lot of very.
Seeing or bass dancing because we have been years.

Researcher OK
So, you do not.
You sit in on choreography camps and say, you know, I do not think that, you know, is going to work vocally for that section of the.

Participant I never have.

Researcher Like that move.
OK

Participant I never have to.
I sit there the entire time I block it.
I am the blocker with him.
Like we rank our kids and then based off what I know that they can do like.
I do final blocking and so.
But yes, I have.
Only rarely, like if we find that something is not working, we will change it later.
But I almost always give it a chance because it is.
It is rare that he will produce a moment that we.
That is not designed to be vocally friendly, OK?

Researcher So, when you say you rank your kids.

Is that based on their skill level like front row is highly.

Participant Oh, I give them a rating, so if a kid it is a twelve or a three and it is based on their independence, their showmanship, how you know and their growth potential and. Ones and 1 + 1 minus like.

It is just kind of based off that and then I will block the show accordingly based off that and like I am not going to put a three on the front because they cannot.

Researcher OK

I got it.

Participant They will not be able to perform without somebody in front of them.

They need a guy.

Researcher Or sure. OK

Participant So, but it is not always like.

Front row, middle back because you never want to put a three like on the back in the center.

Researcher So, you are not like putting the best on the front row, the second best on the second row, OK

All right, this one.

Participant No, no, no. And.

Blocking is.

Kind of it, it morphs as the kids morph.

So many things that go into blocking like vocal considerations, considerations, you know, where it is going ultimately.

So, but we will rank them based off what they show us.

And then I obviously have more of a content knowledge for.

It is rare that it comes into my program that I do not already know pretty darn well.

Researcher Sure, sure, sure.

So, let us talk about show design and how important it is in a show choir show.

So, discuss about how you produce your show design.

Participant We are very blessed in the perspective that we get to design our own.

So, when I look for show design, I look for ideas, themes, stories that inspire me and that I believe will be assets to my students in their educational profile.

I believe in a good time.

Like I want my shows to be a good time.

I do not want them to be too heavy.

I did a show post pandemic about surviving a storm.

Which was, you know, the storm happened, but like, it was all the ideas and the reflection of surviving the storm so.

And it kind of mirrored the pandemic but like I did not want to spend the entire time focusing on the pandemic, it was all about survival.

So, I try not to make things too heavy, but I want to be super inspired, so I am going to speak about this.

Your shows just briefly our treble concert.

The treble show choir ____ did a show all about Amelia Earhart.

And the ninety nines?

The entire time, knowing I am going to kill ____ in Song Three and how do you kill your captain?

Your lead of your show without making it heavy, and the idea is that in this whole parallel show player.

_____ is a hero.

She is a pioneer.

She is a visionary, and she was someone who.

Empowered other women, and we learned all about the ninety's, which is the league of female pilots, and _____ was their first elected president.

And the ninety nines was founded because they were doing these flight competitions, and they were being sabotaged by the men.

And so, the women looked around and said we cannot let this happen.

Need to bond together.

We are all going to meet; we are going to start our first chapter and we are going to do this.

So, this year?

We looked at _____ and saw Wow, but she ultimately failed.

But is she a failure?

No, she is a dreamer.

She is a dreamer.

She was an innovator.

She was a pioneer.

She was scrappy as hell; she was a fashion designer.

She was a nurse in Canada for a brief amount of time post war for soldiers that were returning vets.

With like severe issues.

And so, we, we learned a lot about Amelia Earhart, and we had guest lecturers, one in particular, _____, who talked to us about the nineties.

We had ninety nines come to our shows. They presented about rapacity show and showed _____ show at the ninth chapter meeting this year.

It is so much.

There is so much more potential in design than just what is going to win like so when and that show was assisted and designed by one of my former students, _____, who she came in with this idea and was like.

This is so Rhapsody and let me tell.

And so, we sat down and went in a meeting like I just.

Had last night.

Where we talked about what is going to be fascinating from a show perspective.

What is going to give it enough depth?

How are we going to kill our lead?

But like, what is the ultimate point and how can we make it freaking entertaining as heck?

And make this message.

So, our theme this year for _____ was paving the runway because there is this great Amelia Earhart quote basically about how if you do not have to if you do not have a runway.

OK

Pave it like put in the work and pave it yourself so you can take off and others can fly behind you like and there is this great song by ___ called paving the runway, which us was our ballad and it and the whole thing tied into.

People try to poop on treble, show choir that it is not as good or relevant as mixed show choir.

Well, that's kind of what the nineties were facing.

How can we pave the runway and show people that this can be just as superior?

As all our brothers out there.

So, my design typically links into a greater purpose.

My mix show choir said this year was about the greatest generation.

My stage crew lead. I have a lot of military parents and my stage crew lead is a 29-year veteran of the army who was a Colonel, Colonel ___ and he was.

Well, I will not give you.

His personal details, but he is.

He was noticeably big deal, a big part of the reason that we are safe post 911 so.

He came in and lectured about the Department of Defense and how it changed after World.

War Two, we have an incredible a retired semi-retired teacher who is on the AP board who came and talked about like he wanted our students to kind of taste feel here.

What that greatest generation survived and what made them considered.

So great, so like and then when we were competing, that is when my juniors were learning about that generation in the US.

So, like, as they were competing and representing these people, they were learning about that.

And so, the structure of their education was elevated.

And I have a lot of military kids and a lot of military families that felt represented, and they were tied in, like, a lot of our stage crew dads and moms are.

So, it provided this sense of like perspective for military and service and sacrifice as well as cause I am.

Forty and I have noticed, as I have aged, my reverence was for this greatest generation, like that was my grandparent's generation, and I have noticed over the years that my kids have become less and less connected to that generation, and I wanted them to have that perspective.

So how do you do a show?

Are said about war and not make it.

Instead, we made.

It about service.

We made it fun.

It was about brotherhood.

We did this entire like military training number with us.

Like our boy's number we set one of my favorites I love.

I have always wanted to see Choreography.

Choreograph big ***.

A big, big old swing number.

A big old swing number.

And so, we did this great number that started with the girl's section called babies of the Blitz, and then it went into party rock anthem.

But it was swing was.

So iconic and so fun, because what they were doing overseas is they were pumping a lot of Americana to keep that spirit of America in at, you know, in the hearts of their soldiers as they were facing all this conflict.

There were.

Ties in educationally, but it did not have to not.

Be fun. That's.

That is my approach to.

Science education first.

What is the overall lesson?

Cause you cannot guarantee that you are going to be undefeated in the state.

Of Virginia like.

Rank on that.

Crap, you know.

You know what is going to, you know, judges I am.

A judge? We are.

Stupid like we do not.

We do not always know what to do.

And so, I believe that if you give the kids something to hold on to and a bigger educational purpose and like something to bond them together.

Then you are really serving that creative.

Outlet for the show.

Researcher So, do you like to do 5 songs? You know, a roulette type of person? Or are you a threat person? Or it sounds like you are a lot of a theme type.

Participant More theme story like it is I am way I will do a theme or a story or something structured.

Researcher OK

Participant I we used to be five song roulette like for sure it is always like, OK well we need a. We need a.

70's Rock 4 like but that's how show chairs evolved in 17 years.

Researcher And you talked about your guy's number.

So, is it open or mid-tempo ballad?

Girls' guys like costume change in there and then closer I mean OK

Participant It is whatever I want it to be.

Researcher So, let us move along.

Talk to me a little bit about.

How you utilize visual design to convey the message or the theme of your show?

Well, we just invested in a video wall two years ago like a 25-foot monster to look around and scare our parents.

So, we are still.

Working on incorporating like and we.

Got a great.

Student who is a student lighting designer, and she grew up in the theater, and that is what she wants to do for her.

Wife and her name is.

_____ and she is just completely changed.

You know how we look at lighting and.

That is a.

Visually, a way in which we are really growing.

I believe that costuming smart costuming is essential, and as somebody who was grew up in the nineties and was not Kate.

Most shaped, I believe in the power of effective costuming for every body type that is flattering and makes every kid feel confident and beautiful on stage.

And that costume is always rooted in the design of your show, but it needs to look good on every single human up there.

And I believe in the effective use of color, both in costuming design and in light can tell a beautiful story, but all of this is to say, kids cannot sing and dance, it does not matter.

If the lights are on or.

Off. So, our very first.

Competition with the video wall we wrapped, he had it and it was fine.

We did not really incorporate the video wall too much in their show, but it was real pretty.

So, we paid a.

Lot of money for it, so we put it out there and then _____ went to.

Go compete with.

The video wall and they started to crank.

It up and it went.

Like and the cable inside of it snapped and luckily it just stayed where it was, but they could not lift it, so they had to, like pull it back behind the band, put the band in front of it and we had no video wall at all.

And the show was all about a storm, and we have like.

A part where it shows the tornado coming from, like the background into the foreground and then we shut the lights off and like everything was.

But we did not design the show to be based off the visuals so that you could still see it and hear it and no matter.

What and why?

Like because it does not, as cool as it can be.

And like, oh, it is.

A tornado coming like.

Yes, cool, but.

It should never.

I believe that your show should never solely rely on.

Lighting or an element that you cannot provide with your students.

Because we are all timed, a lot of the times we are timed and.

You want it to be as cool as you can be, but you cannot always rely on it and.

Like I referenced _____ earlier, I work with their program a lot.

We are good friends.

I go out and clinic them, they clinic us.

They have the cool advantage of traveling with a student tech crew where these students you know about this.

Have you talked?

To _____ at all.

Researcher I talked to him several years ago, OK?

Researcher So, they have.

I am friends with another school right down the road, so.

Participant Oh, ____, no, like ____.

OK

No, I think ____ is absolute magic.

His ballad this year was brilliant.

So, they can travel with the student tech crew.

Where and a tech director.

Because these kids are learning the fundamentals of how to do this professionally.

It is the dream, right?

I do not live that dream.

I have a lot of really dedicated parents, but ultimately, we are all under the clock and we do not always have the expertise to make it happen.

Your design should always just speak for itself.

Basically, and choreography.

Researcher At what point does?

Become a hindrance to the show choir onstage.

The extra stuff like the fog, the spot, the lights, everything, the video walls.

Or do you feel like?

If it is just too much, like if it is too much and you cannot focus on the music, there was a group I was judging a few years ago that had a strobe and.

I could not look

At the choir, like if you have too much going on where you cannot.

You know, there are effective moments that you could not manipulate of anything, but like, if you are just doing too much, you cannot focus on what is happening.

And some people use it to their advantage as a distraction.

So yes, so.

On a player that.

Cannot advance is a big asset.

Researcher As someone who has been in it for a little while and was in its pre-Glee, and then now possibly are you worried?

In the direction visual design is going in show choir because of these smaller on the smaller competitive show choirs.

Who cannot afford this type of visual?

Assets, you would call them are visual.

You know things that are incorporated in these shows these days, toys, you would call.

Participant Yes. Like, ok, I.

Oh, I will get on my soapbox.

Researcher I will, I will mute myself.

Participant Every choir deserves to be considered equally, and I do not care if they are student choreographed.
I do not care what it is.
They deserve the right to have the exact same respect as the big names, the big names.
Exist for a reason and the big money exists for.
A reason, and that is cool, but like.
As somebody who directs in Virginia, which is not a huge show choir state, we are not like in.
It is where their kids are, like, lauded on the walls of their wings.
We do not get that here.
We are trying to make it here, but.
We are not the money machine that some people are.
So, I believe that.
Yes, there are some toys that me.
Have but those toys do not make or break my show.
Ever and.
I believe that all of ours.
Our score sheets and our competitions should be structured in a way in a creative way in that.
Schools should not be penalized for not having as much as other schools, so at my competition this year we had some incredible choirs coming out, but the group that came in for best vocals was a smaller school because the judges agreed that.
Their vocals were the cleanest, most effective.
They had fewer boys, so you know, they could not do all the crazy parts, but what they did was very effective, consistently lovely, and clean.
So, that is always going to be.
Based on whatever, whoever you have that day, and whatever your judges believe.
But I truly believe that we should structure our competitions where an underdog can totally come in and take the day.
They do not have to have the big money because flashing lights is.
More show than choir and it has nothing to do with your student's ability level.
It only has the effect on what you can afford, and that's BS.
It makes a cool show.
Singing and dancing is where it is at, and if you have.
That does not matter and.
Another thing that really bothers me is.
I am not extremely comfortable like participating in the network like the show choir, show choir, Camps of America, like I have never been in that crowd.
I do not know the old boy's network down, you know, in in parts of the country, like, I do not.
I am not a part of that.
I am not like, I do not mind walking into a room of people and saying hi, I am not around.
Right. Like that's.
Not a problem, but I do.

Participate in that social very like competitive.
That makes me so uncomfortable.
And one of the things that kills me about competition is that I do not need you to know my name.
I do not want my kids to do better or worse because of who I am.
I want my kids to do as well as they should do because of how we have worked and how well I have taught them.
Not my name, not my school's name.
In the world of subjective judging.
I think that can be just as relevant.
As what are you rocking?
You know on your lights and sound and glitz?

Researcher So, your pillars of a show choir?
What would you say they are like if everything like you said your video wall fails, your pillars are what?
Singing and dancing right.

Participant Oh yes, like it is.
All spinning and dancing.
Yes, for sure.
And performance like if a kid believes in what they are singing and what, like what they are embodying does not matter if they are singing about a damn telephone, like if they love that, telephone it.
It has taken it is expecting them to be performers, actors, musicians.
Because all musicians, their storytellers, it does not matter if you are sitting damn still or not.
The lyrical content brings the story out, and when a kid emotes, whatever that character or content is, that is what we are teaching that's.

Researcher Well, let us talk. Let Us.
Talk about how you produce that lyrical.
Content and what?
And what does the process look like for you when you are discussing your ideas with your arranger?
Or do you discuss your ideas with your arranger?
Or do you have your arranger just give you the sheet music and say, here is the show we are doing?

Participant I have a very good arranger, and I do trust him implicitly, but when I have a specific design, like the arranger that I used to work with was one of my really, good friends and he did anything I wanted.
So, I would like.
Physically give him every single you know, and then he manipulate it from there.
I still do that with some numbers where I have.
A very specific other thing.
I am just like you go play like you do.

Researcher You do it, yes.

Participant And this is what I want the piece to do.
And this is what I wanted to say.

And I need a dance break.
Here, but otherwise go.
Because my shows tend to be content driven in some form, it is important for me to structure things a certain way, and I do that with my team and then we give it to our Ranger who is that other part.
Of our team that.
Makes it come to life.

Researcher Now who is you?
Participant His name is _____.
Researcher OK
Researcher And he is based out of.
New York, OK
Participant He is a former borough student, but he is.
Researcher OK, I got you so.
Participant Based in London.
Researcher What, like percentage would you say he produces the show and gives it to you or you?
OK
Are you just bouncing ideas off them or?
Participant So, I produce everything that I want and then if there are holes like gaps of things then he will, he will assist and he.
A lot of times when he will produce the map of the show that he wants like or like the song that he wants, if it is not something that I have handed him, he will send it to me and he will flush through it together.
He will like vocal like examples of what he wants.
Or hey, this is what I was.
Thinking of this build here.
So, it is very, very collaborative, but.
It they are always my shows like it, I might get my design idea from _____.
I might like I at the end of the day, I am responsible for these shows and the ideas can come from anywhere.

Researcher For sure for sure.
Participant But they must be my shows.
If I do not have ownership over them, I do not feel.
Comfortable doing them.
I have a.

Researcher You are not getting.
You are not getting a huge team together and being like, OK, what do we think today or this year's next year show is going to be about?
And I think this and that and like you are not getting.

Participant Yes. No, that.
Is a.
That is an aspect of it.

Researcher OK
OK
Participant Yes, for sure.

It is like me, my choreographer, my assistant director.
 And like _____, sometimes we rope in other alumni, but like it and we had a conversation with _____ this year.
 Because she is a parent, so like that.
 And of course, there gets to be that time where, like, well, what are we going to do next year?
 So those conversations tend to.
 Be open, but then.
 It is it must be my call as to what is.

Researcher I just wanted to like to clarify you are not sitting in an office and like this is my decision like, I do not know.
 Like a dictator.

Participant What we are going to do, and if you do not like it, what you know?
 Oh, honey, I am not cool enough for that.
 Like the older I get and the farther removed like my 13-year-old has like modern taste.
 But like, it is this bridge of people that that can help with different stylistic sensibilities and like, what speaks to today's teenager, and how do we diversify it?
 And my cheat code is.
 I have my students produce a show design project at the end of every year where they must design shows.
 They are always designing a show about like a girl who goes to New York to try to make it like it is always like the same kind of shows that we see, which I totally believe that those shows can like be turned on.
 Their ear and like there are some great shows out.
 There like that.
 Yes. Or, you know, we are going to do a Scooby-doo show. Cool. That is awesome. But what they do give me is their favorite.
 Artists and their favorite songs.
 So, I get this whole new playlist of things that they think would be cool, and I have absolutely dipped into that, and they love it, especially when I say.
 Without so and so show design, we would have not had this part of our closer.
 We did that.
 Yes, a couple of years ago, _____ brought in part of our closer and it was like go _____.
 Like it.
 Especially in this time of year where we are like looking to fill in the gaps.
 We know what we want, but we might need a little bit of like a of a dance break or, you know, so.
 I believe in being open, but I also must let the accountability rest on me.
 All right, so.
 I am the one at every rehearsal.

Researcher Yes, and yes, absolutely.
 I get it.
 So why is show choir such an asset to secondary music education?

Participant As it sets goals and it, it teaches them about the foundation of community, teamwork, and respect.

A lot of choirs can do that, but when you when you add that physical element like to the structure of your sound and you travel together and you compete together and it, you have a season, and it bridges like it is that cool combination of sports and music. And it is so.

Physically, you know connected.

There are there are aspects to the challenge of it.

But it is.

It is physical, living, musical theater, art, and it speaks to so many different sensibilities, and it helps to build a community of performers that all have different strengths to create this.

Perfect world and that is exactly what children need in the.

Time of their lives because it teaches you lifelong lessons like you are not always going to be best friends with everybody in the room, but you need to work with everybody in the room.

You need to show respect to everybody who thinks differently than you looks differently than you, because ultimately, we are all in this to create that goal.

We must learn to get to, to work together because.

Our country needs a budget, so let us look at this debt ceiling together.

You know, like that is a real-life experience.

Because not all my kids look, think, and act the same way, but that that community building.

And again, it is all about how good you can be every day.

My I say, my idea of perfection is your best work every day.

And so, if you are having a real crappy day and you come in at 80%, what can we do to get?

We never want you to go back.

What can we do to get you up?

And if you did it and you checked it off, you will not regret having a.

Or the best rehearsal you can have.

It teaches them patience.

It teaches them perseverance.

It teaches them how to deal with disappointment, teaches them how to deal with, not making your goals.

It teaches them that.

No matter who you are or where you are on the stage, you matter at the end of the day.

There, there are so many endless life lessons that they get.

From participating in.

And if they have the right.

Who will love them for being exactly who they are and encouraging them to be the best person they can be.

And teach them to be the best musician.

They can be.

As a facilitator of all of that.

That is the goal.
 That is the dream.
 Researcher So why do you think that most schools do not have show choir programs, competitive or noncompetitive?
 Participant Exposure, I think.
 What is your take on that?
 A lot of my colleagues that.
 I have thought it is.
 Too much or cheesy, or they do not understand it because they have never been a student in it.
 That changes a lot of minds, kids that were students in there, they know what it feels like, and they chase that feeling with their own kids.
 They want to give that.
 Like, that is what I.
 I am creating the classroom that I would want to be in as a kid.
 Every day and now me.
 Kid is going to be in that classroom.
 In two years like it is, it is we.
 All create the classroom that we want to have.
 And I think the people that did not have that.
 Do not know how and it is.
 So big and.
 Scary that I understand.
 It does not feel as attainable.
 And it just it.
 It is a lot more for not any more pay.
 I make the same stipend as my colleagues that do not have show choir.
 So why am I busting my to do all this extra stuff?
 There is just like a lot of teaching, it relies on your love of what you do.
 If you do not know to love it, you do not.
 Know to do it.
 Researcher So how do?
 We educate and advocate for show choir.
 I am not just talking about your colleagues, I am talking about superintendents, principals, you know, the board who has absolutely no idea, you know?
 No idea what we are doing.
 Participant Well, all of it is an advocacy for relevance.
 So, like as I was explaining earlier about like how to tie it in to the educational fundamentals of what they are learning, you know, not only from a musician standpoint with like the naff me standards of music education but also.
 Where a lot of our school districts are looking at social emotional learning, what we do is project-based learning social, emotional learning when we can tie it in to like historical context with like the music that we are choosing to teach.
 In our classrooms.
 It all helps to enhance their growth as people, performers and educated students in our building.

I think the students speaking for themselves are our best advocates.
The students saying This is why this is important.
This is what this did for me.
Those are those are the kids that are or those are the people on the front lines to advocate for our relevance with other colleagues and with our board.
The more they love you and believe in you, then it is not you are fighting for your own relevance in the pay scale.
You are not the employee.
Your parents and your kids are always going to have more power than you are ever.
All you could do is just show them.
The meat and potatoes of what you are teaching them, because at the end of the day, they are not going to be able to hear all the nuance.
They are not going to understand why they heard those lyrics so clearly and what it took to get those kids to sing the ____ correctly.
They are not going to know what that feels like, but they are going to see.
The students representing the greatest generation, and they are going to hear what they learned and who you brought in and like.
You have to kind of be Superman or Superwoman.

Researcher Yes, for sure.

Participant And for our colleagues, like, why would you want to be?

You could just teach choral music.

Researcher Right, right. So.

A lot of my colleagues that I talked to around the state of Alabama.

There is two things that come up time, which we have discussed a little bit about and you can.

Expand upon that, you know, balancing time and family, you know.

And then also.

The financial commitment that choir requires, so talk to me a little bit about time and how you have balanced it over the years between, you know, your personal life and professional because you know that area can get great quickly and then also discuss.

Your funding of your program, how you have sustained it through the years?

Participant I some of my most successful colleagues pour a lot of their time and lives into what this is and what I have realized in their success is that they create the community of the people that they love the most, that they work with, and so their work life and there is their home.

And it is this beautiful thing they like.

Their best friends are the ones that they create art with.

Their family is who they you know who their team consists of.

And there is something beautiful about that.

My daughter ____ is.

He has always been relevant in like she my ex-husband brought her in to her first choreography camp in the car seat and she sat in the front.

She has always been a part of my family and raised by the best teenagers on the.

In it, and they she has been passed around at so many rehearsals and people know her. They like people used to approach my husband or my ex-husband in in like.

Panera Bread, talking to ____, who is like 2 years old in his arms, and he is like uh, because they know her because she is me.
So, but not everybody can.
Have and I was only able to have one baby, so like that's.
That is my blessing.
Like she is my whole blessing and.
Luckily, I had a very supportive partner who made sure that she could be there as much as possible, but there were times where.
I would be so upset and resentful for missing.
Things or you know we did.
We did ours.
Best, but just like any parent and any mother who works.
There is a there is a feeling of.
Twice, and so what?
I have tried to see is the gains rather than the losses, and my students that invite ____ to go out for brunch, they like.
I remember, you know, so many trips she would ask to go sit in the back of the bus and she would come back with like chocolate all over her mouth and like her hair and pigtail braids and, like holding somebody else's stuffed animal and like just, you know, and she is.
Her life has been more enriched by this experience, and I think, show choir kids are all if they are, if they are raised right, they are all family based because you create this family and last year, I was going to go judge at music showcase at Burroughs and.
I mean, _____.
____ has been around like _____, and that team like, because they are just.
Practically, our family, they are just live far away.
And we extended our vacation for the spring break.
So that first weekend we went to watch a competition, them compete at another.
School and it was out of it, was based out of San Diego.
So, we went, and we stayed like in an Airbnb with _____ down there and we showed up to the.
And those kids took one look at my daughter and immediately were, like, come on, sit with us, and watch the boys.
And like she was in one of their jackets and, like, holding their hands at awards.
And they did not.
They knew me.
They did not know her.
So, when you think about.
Choir and family could be as a parent or as you.
How you value?
Your time as a parent in social emotional life.
Look at who are you working with?
Are you trying to make them your friend?
Colleagues, like your life is going to be made better if you have a good working relationship with your people and.

How can you make your family?

Are you in a position where you can make your family part of your family at work?

I have the heart of a mom and everything I do as a coach, as a teacher, I see those kids as somebody else's babies and so putting my baby in with those babies.

OK

Does not feel like an effort, it just is.

So, it is all in what you have going on here and it will work out.

So, the second question had to do with funding my program.

Researcher Money. Yes. Do you come?

Up with the money.

Participant We do not love this.

So, we do charge for concerts.

Pay, pay your fees.

Pay your dues.

And we do charge for concerts, and I would never shy away from, like, doing, doing my concert. We just raised the cost of our tickets from \$7.00 to \$10.

Because post pandemic, we could only allow five hundred people in the seats of our auditorium, so we did twice the shows and I was like, I am not doing twice the shows for not more money so.

And they were charging \$10.

For football tickets. So why?

Researcher Yes, for sure.

Participant Can't I just?

So that is a big source of our funding.

Students must pay a flat.

Show choir charge that helps to cover arrangements, copyrights and like band arrangements, things like that. That is \$250. And if you are.

Researcher And how much is that?

They that is their show choir fee.

Participant Yes, our county does not let us call.

Researcher The two 250.

Participant Us call it a fee.

It is a charge.

Researcher OK That's and that's.

Why was I getting at?

Because some districts are like you cannot charge at all.

So yes, I was wondering.

Well, here is the thing.

But you know.

Participant They do not have to pay it if they cannot pay it.

We will find a way because I live and work in an affluent community.

But not everybody is.

Pulling the same amount in and we have plenty of families in need and not a one of them should ever not be in show cause they cannot afford it.

It is one of my patents and nobody ever knows who it is.

I will say we have three students that need to be covered.

We do it and I make sure that those kids attend every fundraising opportunity when they are not physically working for their families.

So yes, so there is that.

Researcher Do you charge \$10.00 for concerts now and?

Participant Yes. And so, then we.

Have and then we have a student fee and then if there are doubles.

Researcher OK

So, if they are in both _____, they only pay an extra \$100, just so that it is more

Participant economically based. They must buy all their costumes, and then we do fundraise for everything else. So, we will, and we are we will do.

Researcher OK

Participant Anything from like?

A raffle to local like we have a discount card that we used to sell that like we work with local restaurants where you would get those discounts every time at the restaurant like throughout the year.

You know there are lots of general fundraising opportunities that we have participated in over the years.

We have motivated boosters and all of that is done through our boosters.

One of the things I have never really been able to do is individualized account for students.

So, it would.

OK, well, here is your account.

And you must participate in fundraising to raise your money to.

Go to the trip.

Hosting a show for our competition brought in a fair amount of money, so that was really, but that is also another weekend where you are working nonstop or no profit for you, but your kids might be able to travel and compete for free.

Researcher It is kind of a twofold question.

What made you want to start one and two where it in proximity to you?

Where is the nearest?

Show choir competition.

Participant OK

I will start with that one first.

They are everywhere, like our schools down the street in our same district.

We have _____. They are all within 35 minutes of ours. So, Virginia, it is, it is we say Virginia. It is central Virginia.

Researcher OK, so the yes.

Participant We used to be able to go compete in.

The mountains at.

Amherst, we used to compete down in Titan at the beach, but those programs have since stopped hosting competitions.

So, a lot of our things are deeply local.

Even so like I do not have my kids take a bus, they meet us there.

So, because why would we meet at _____ for a bus and then drive 10 minutes to _____?

It does not make sense.

And it is just spending money to spend money we do not need to do that.
I like being a little thrifty when it comes.
To things like that, let us see.

Researcher So, there is so.

Many competitions around you.
Why did you want to start a competition?

Participant Because I wanted.

I wanted to be done having babies before I started it, and I am done having babies
and so like that work life balance had to work out.

Because they wanted, they.

Since we founded the program, people have wanted to have a.

Competition at Cosmos.

I looked around post pandemic and I saw all these students and parents who were
incredibly motivated to provide as much of A positive experience as possible.

People that would be welcoming and wonderfully supportive to others that would
enter our building and I saw the opportunity to do things.

In my program for my program that would help them to grow.

In serving others like supporting schools, knowing kids at other schools, facilitating a
place where they are not competing.

They are providing the opportunity, and they are supporting those choirs like I think
that has given my kids such perspective.

And it is a fundraiser to support all my students being able to be successful without
the huge financial commitment, because it is all sweat equity.

Some of my kids could just straight up write a check and participate, and it is
important to learn.

How to work?

And this is a great opportunity for them to learn how to work.

I wanted to try to bring out what I value.

You in our world, in the form of a competition where we are giving an award to the
outstanding music, music educator of the day like it is named.

It is an award named after my mother, who just retired.

So, my kids and my parents who watch these teachers, no matter how their kids rank
at the end of the day.

Working their butts off, running positive rehearsals, communicating, taking care.

Of their kids that.

That teacher is acknowledged.

We are doing finals in Virginia, which is not very common in state of Virginia and.

As a director, having finals is a pain.

The ___but as a student.

Finals is the opportunity to take your show to the next level.

It is as a parent; it is an opportunity to see your kid compete one more time than you
thought you would be able to you grow.

And it is.

It is such.

A growth and learning opportunity and I feel like it is an untapped asset in the world
Show Choir.

And we needed, we wanted to make sure that that was an opportunity in Virginia, especially for our treble groups.

Researcher So other funding opportunities throughout the year, do you just do the normal fundraisers, or do you have anything?
Special that you do.

Participant No, I mean we do our typical fundraisers, and we do not really.
Yes, and they fluctuate based off what our parents have an idea to do.
You know, so it just it kind of depends on what they feel motivated to do and we have some that are tried and true.

Researcher So, the last question and then I will give you opportunity to fill in the blanks or whatever we missed.

Participant Into the restroom real.
Thank you so much.
I will be right back.

Researcher Thought I thought you would run away.
No, it is OK
So, if you could go back.
To yourself, you are one.
What would you say to that person?
What would your advice be?

Participant You are not going to be twenty-three forever.
Being twenty-three and starting a brand-new program from scratch, you are working with parents that are your parents age and you are creating something that you know with booster presidents from other schools that literally have more experience in a high school.
Setting than you do.
But you have the education, and you have the dream, and you have the passion.
And some of those parents.
We are just so.
Essential in helping me as a teacher, but a lot of them saw me as just a baby, which at 40.
I get it but.
If you just give yourself time, you can build whatever legacy you dream of.
But you are going to have to grow up.
And that is OK, that's part of the fun.
And you will never get those first kids back.
By those first children.
That I taught.
I still remember every single.
Part of building this with them.
They were such a.
Big part of my heart.
And you never get those years back.
And as hard as they can be to feel like you are constantly having to prove yourself and your validity and all of that.
God, they are just so beautiful.

And it is all part of the ride, man, it is.
Just that chick, chick, chick.
Up to the top of the hill of the roller coaster and it is.
You know, it is exciting, and it is fun.
And you know that it is going to be a great ride, but there's so much anticipation at the front part of it.
And I am a warrior.
I am a people pleaser, and the pressure that I put on myself and that was put on me by my administration at first.
_____ has always had winning teams.
We are in a very successful area.
We have a lot of state champions in sports and a lot of things like that which was great, but it I had to deliver, I had to deliver.
Big I remember.
___ came to compete at _____.
And I was so excited to see them, and Rhapsody was good that year.
They were great and.
I guess my parents had it in their heads like, you know they we are going to win this, we win, we would win everything and like y'all.
This it cannot always be about winning plus.
This is like the dead tones you all like it is it, they are incredible.
And they are a big name for a reason.
Let us just enjoy this.
Let us see how we do, but.
If you are always.
All about winning.
You are never about learning.
You are missing the point.
You cannot always win.
And no matter what, no matter.
How good you are life.
There is always an end so.
And I remember me.
My principal brought me into a meeting.
After that competition and they are like, I heard your parents were very upset that you came in second last weekend.
And I was like.
I am sure they were disappointed that we did not win again, but like we were exposed to an incredible group that challenged us to grow further.
And if we are about the growth of our students.
It presented that and like but it I was made to feel like.
Lost this horrible thing.
And I it was.
Gosh, I was probably in my mid-twenties.
Those kinds of things leave scars.

The kind of things leap bars that you have to, you know that and because I am already so community, how can I serve my community?
What can I do for my community?
How can I make my community proud?
What can I do to make my students more relevant?
In my community.
There are certain things that will happen like that.
That will challenge you mentally.
And it will make you focus on.
Wow, I really let everybody down.
And you cannot let yourself think like that.
But that stuff I am still trying to work on at 40 because I do not personally, I hate the competition part of what we do.
I want to sit.
And enjoy the art that we are all able to create for the competition is what feeds our program and.
Sets our goals.
But my God.
I hate that we all ultimately must compare these gorgeous apples and oranges that we create.
It is, it is beautiful, but it sucks.
And it there is so much.
Worse than that?
Is tied to how well we do and money and support and relevance within your own school building that is tied to how well you do.
It is a big challenge.
I could I.
Wish I could.
Tell myself at 23 you did it because when we started.
We won everything in our division, and we did not even have seniors yet.
And so, we really proved ourselves up front because we started off in this like smaller division, this B division and.
And I knew that it was going to take time to do well in a division and like win and do all of that.
But there was so much.
From the top of my school, from my community that you know, we are successful.
I wish I could give my myself perspective to look at what I have now.
And it is not.
You know, just to.
Tune it out a little bit better I would have.
Had less stomach issues for sure.
Over the time.

Researcher So, would you do it again?

Participant 100%.

I would not live my career any other way.
Every mistake.

Every, every kid.
I would take another crack at it.
Especially with me with my brain as it is now.
Because I am.
I am stronger and stronger every year, both in the head and.
In the heart.
So, it is all a muscle that I have learned how to flex for a long time and now.
I am kind of a beefcake.

Researcher So, is there anything else that you would like to add that we have not already discussed about this topic?

Participant Was really attracted to this interview because of.
Somebody singing my song, so to speak about.
The relevance of good choral education in the show choir realm.
Because I am somebody who is always advocated for the fact that should acquire or should not be instructed differently than your top.
Choral ensemble it should just have a lot of differentiated sound and there is a lot of. Misinformation out there, especially in the world of our colleagues.
Where to be a successful choral or show choir coach, you must have the keys to the Kingdom in pop music.
Or you must dim down your teaching, or you must do less somehow while doing more.
And that it is the cheesy, cheap version of what we do, and it is absolutely the opposite.
It is training, it is the gauntlet like it is.
It is such a gorgeous.
And it is beautiful that you are highlighting the fact that we should be excellent choral musicians and choral music educators no matter what we are teaching.
And I will stand on the soapbox all day of advocating for the relevance of every single type of choir as it speaks to your kids.
Because whatever puts those butts in those seats to get them to be a part of that community and learn those lessons while they are with you.
That is why we are here.
The music is the facilitator.
For that community.

Researcher Well, yes, my hope through this study is to educate and advocate as someone who. Just discovered, you know, show choir.
Six years ago, you know, as far as I had been church music.
And heavy choral music all the way up, you know, till I graduate undergraduate school and even into some of my Graduate School.
But my hope is that through your experiences, and that is why I said a regulation on you must be like.
Been in this for ten plus years and someone who is prominent.
Chore not just, you know, mediocre.
And you know, winning, is not it, but a prominent someone also has passion for this.
But I want to take your experiences and you know, we have a lot of fantastic choral programs here in the state of Alabama and they do not have.

Choirs and I want to publish this dissertation and be like.
Implement the choral methods and have a show choir if they are not, you know,
ABA.
ABA is so divisive between show choir and concert choir and it I want I want them
to come together and be one.
So badly, and when I see like the ABA, the All-State Show Choir.
I am like, yes.
That is, you know, that is not show choir, you are missing the point of what your
choir is.
And so, if I can do that through your experiences, then you know, I feel like this
dissertation is a win.
If I cannot do that, you know, if I cannot convince people.

Participant Get your PhD, Boo.

Researcher You are going to be fine.

Yeah, but I am.

I am very passionate about what?

Every aspect of what you do, and we are, we see very much eye to eye on the
investment.

You know that Joe quarries for kids. It is a beautiful thing. We are not just a teacher.

I am. I am a. Not only am I a dad to a 4 1/2-year-old and you know, one on the way
in September. But I my dad too. You know all these.

You know, these kids come in my office all the time and they, you know, I am a
shoulder to cry on.

I am much more than just.

A teacher and a show choir director, and I do not think people really get it like, and if
they did, maybe we would not just have these pockets of show choirs around the
United States.

Maybe we could have, you know.

Crap ton of show choir programs throughout the United States, whether there, you
know, competitive or noncompetitive, I do not care.

I just feel like show choir.

It is like what you say.

It is a community.

And it gives kids.

I do not know about you, but I have kids in my program who do not have the best life
outside of these walls.

Show Choir is their life.

And it gives them an opportunity to have a family inside these walls so.

Participant Yeah, I have.

I you were talking about that, and I my daughter just came down.

Researcher Like talking to you for two hours.

Participant She knows she knows.

Participant She is used to this, but the.

A friend of mine who is also a choral director.

He was talking about his senior class.

And he said that one of them came up to him the other day and she said, you know.

One of the things that I really am going to miss about you is that you tell me that.
You are proud of me.
And I love my dad, but my dad never tells me that he is proud of me.
And when you tell.
Me of which you are proud.
It means so much and it makes me.
Want to work hard to make you proud?
And he was like, yes.
You know, and that.
I have, oh, this one is going to get me.
One of my you know; you travel with your parents a.
Lot and like them.
They are your set people, and ours is called strike force.
And one of the members of our strike force was ____ and her boys.
Baden and Talon were in show choir.
And, well, this year was talents.
First year, Payton was in the year before and.
____ was firefighter water rescue and dog rescue, and just this woman she was 41
years old and died very suddenly in a training accident this last summer. Just.
Boom, like she was she was in, she was teaching water rescue, and she swam out into
the middle of this river, and then suddenly just stopped and stayed face down and she
floated.
A half a mile down there and this all happened last summer.
We got back.
I traveled with some friends overseas and got back and this this all happened and
immediately we all rallied around Baden and Talon and there were aisles.
This it was the biggest funeral I have ever seen.
Firefighters like everybody and they.
They escorted her back from Carolina like they covered the bridges and like, they
made sure.
I mean, her funeral was epic, and we I sat in these my daughter and I sat in these
aisles of my kids and families, and they are forbidden and talent and stayed with him
after the funeral like.
And that we all had game nights that we would go to after this, the parents facilitated
to get beaten and talent out of the house and involved.
And this year at _____, into that being my not only my dance captain, but my leader.
We were at camp, and it was like the third night of camp and.
One of the captains from the former year that we you know, he, he graduated, and he
was Baden's leader came in and you know like they all kind of age up.
Over the summer.
And he saw him and.
Like he just bade and sucked, he just could not focus.
He could not stay.
And I got water, and I was walking out, and he was walking to get water.
And I looked.
Him in the face.

I was like, baby, are you OK?
Like I took from day one.
I was like you, and I texted him every day.
You got this.
I believe in you.
And I looked at him and the.
Boy is 6/4.
And I am five.
And I looked him, and I said, are you OK?
And like a giraffe, he just.
Like crumpled on to me.
And I pulled him and like we talked for an hour and a half about all the things that it was starting to hit him, that his mom is going to miss everything.
And so, my goal was to get that boy to graduation, and he sang at graduation and all the firefighters were there.
And like, my purpose.
Brendan was here when, when all this happened and like getting the phone calls, motivating all the people and.
He was like, gosh, I am so sorry, and he is like.
But what a what a?
Beautiful thing he has in all of this.
You know, as horrible as this going as this is he, he has this entire community and I felt that more than ever this year, I see my purpose for the kids that do not have.
Strong or loving or patient?
Parents who see them for who they are, not who they want them to be, you know, that is so important.
You know you be exactly who you are.
I do not need you to be anything but your best.
Those kids will grow farther and faster for you than any other kid.
And they will put more pressure on themselves than you can ever put.
On them. But that baby.
Getting him through to graduation and through this year and that that baby is going to be a part of my heart for the rest of my life.
And if I had not had this job, I would have never known that love.
Those are the stories that mean the most.
To me, I love what I do.
There is one thing that I do want to make sure that I say because you kind of hinted on this before.
Something that I say to my kids is they are about to graduate.
They need to be a dork.
They would be such an.
Absolute, passionate geek about whatever they do.
They need to love what they do for a living as much as I love them.
As a student, I was always super extra in the music classroom like my it was my home.
I had told you at the beginning.

Of this, my mom was so I was never afraid to be.
I and I was.
I am a dork.
I am a huge dork.
I love the nerdy music moments, and I was always seen as being like.
Too much, too extra weird, loud.
All of that.
Part of me has made me a super passionate teacher.
And all that stuff that I would get teased for or excluded for whatever, you know,
mean high school kids cause, you know I would.
I would get things.
That that made it was.
All part of what my ultimate purpose.
Was going to be.
That looking at myself back then and seeing who I am now, I am exactly who I
meant.
And that is true of every kid that walks into your classroom.
There is just this unpolished gem that that you get to help uncover and whatever it is
that lights their fire, it does not have to be music.
But whatever it is that lights their fire, you can teach them to be a huge dork.
And you can teach them to be themselves.
And to find.
Whatever they are supposed to be, and that is huge.
And sometimes it takes that role model who is unafraid to be authentically who they
are, and a huge to work and basically faces and jokes and give hugs and have an open
office.
Set standards uphold standards for them and their classmates about not being a jerk.
The only time I get scary is when respect is in in question.
It is the only time I ever get.
Scary in my classroom, though.
Yes, we just need to raise a whole nation dork about should be.

Researcher Yes, sure. Perfect.

Participant All right, we will take over.

Researcher Well, thank you for your time and your willingness to share with me today.

I am going to send you a transcript in the next couple of.

Weeks for you to check over to make sure that I have represented your words
accurately today.

OK

But it also gives you the opportunity to strike anything that you would like to strike
from our conversation or add anything that you would like to add to our conversation
and if needed, I may ask for a follow up interview.

It would just be a short zoom interview again to make sure that your thoughts are
accurately represented in this study.

So, I will stop.

Participant That sounds fair.

Participant 8 Transcript

Participant How are you?

Researcher I am very well and yourself.

Participant I am going to put in air pods.

Researcher You hear me?

Can you hear me?

Can you hear me?

Researcher Yes, we are fantastic.

Perfect.

So, thank you so much for volunteering your time to be a part of this study.

It is the purpose of this study is to learn how select group of public secondary school choir, and to show choir directors from various regions of the United States.

Incorporate choral methods in their respective competitive shopper programs.

So, we are going to start by just can you briefly discuss your educational and professional experiences regarding separate secondary music education?

Participant I have been.

Involved in secondary choral music, since obviously being a student and then being a university student, and I have been teaching in secondary classrooms since 2003.

All, all choral experiences, and I have done.

Obviously, concert choir experiences as well as show choir, acapella ensembles, madrigals, all pretty much every genre of choral music and.

And so that has gone for again 20 years now, I've.

Been involved with that.

Researcher Talk a little bit about your educational background.

Which go to college. What?

Participant I went to the _____ and have an undergraduate in music education with a.

The minor or they did not allow us to mine it because we think it is.

Two majors, but it.

Technically, is enough credits as a minor for a musical theater minor.

I helped start big ____, which is the university show choir there at the _____ and my senior year was being that girl.

Year of that.

And we started that with a faculty advisor, ____.

Once I graduated, like I said, I taught in schools as small as two hundred kids in the high school as well as all the way up to the size I am currently at, which has about 3000 kids in the in the building. So, I do not have a master's degree. I stopped after bachelors.

Researcher So how many ensembles do we currently direct?

Participant I currently direct five.

Three of them are concert ensembles.

One of them is single gender.

And then I also teach pop acapella contemporary acapella and A2. No 6 ensembles. I have two show choirs.

Choirs right now? Yep.

Researcher OK

And how many of those ensembles are auditioned?
 Four of them are auditioned.
 OK And how many compete?
 Participant Two-thirds of them compete.
 In Texas, we do compete at ____, which is like not placement based, it is rankings or ratings based.
 So, if you count that all of them compete.
 Researcher OK, so your so your concert choir competes as well as your show choir.
 OK
 Participant That is common, yes.
 Researcher Hey, talk me through.
 Choir competition looks like in the state of Texas.
 Participant So, we have the University Interscholastic League is our state.
 Essentially, it is like the High School Association for the state, and they provide competitive opportunities for athletics as well as academics.
 And so, we compete in concert and sight-reading contest every spring, which has two components to it.
 There is a stage component where you do three pieces that you have been preparing. For however long in the year you have been preparing them for three judges, and those are for ratings, and then you leave stage, and you walk immediately into a separate room, and you are adjudicated on your site.
 Skills and music no one is ever seen the kids read most of the campuses in the state. Read on selfish, but you can read on nonsense syllables or numbers.
 Researcher OK
 Participant There are words in the sheet music.
 Those songs are always written specifically for this.
 People do not generally read the words, but we found that kids had a harder time sight reading.
 If there were not words because it looked weird.
 Researcher Right.
 Participant But yes, so and those are structured based on the varsity level of that you are competing at.
 So, like the non-varsity ensembles read fewer.
 Measures with more limited key signatures and time signatures and skips and leaps of no more than one-third and then as you work your way up through varsity.
 It gets more and more difficult.
 Researcher OK
 Researcher So are you ranked against other schools or are you just get like a super, OK, superior, excellent.
 OK, so it might be considered something like a festival.
 I am in Alabama, OK
 Yes, look at just like.
 Participant The contest, or something like that, but I cannot stress to you how seriously it is taken.
 Researcher Yes, it is really.

Participant The thing that determines whether you are good at your job, or whether you are required and is succeeding and is the marker which everything is hung.

Researcher OK
You briefly discussed your ensembles, so which are mixed gender, and do you have single gender ensembles?

Participant So, I have in the concert choir side of things a non-varsity mix, which is an essay B. Just saying, and that's mostly freshmen and some children who need a little bit more time learning how fireworks.
And then I have a treble only ensemble.
That is a varsity ensemble, but those are treble singers that are not quite ready for the top ensemble yet.
And then the top ensemble is a varsity mix that is an SATB voicing, and then from a show.
Per standpoint, the middle school and high school are both SAB voicing and then the contemporary acapella is mixed as well.

Researcher So, what instructional approaches do you utilize during your rehearsals, show choir, and concert choir?
Uh, we do a lot of listening work and sight reading, work less in our show choirs

Participant because they are getting it in their curricular ensembles as well, because those are all Co-curricular.
You must be involved in a daytime choir to be involved in the extracurricular choir, but site reading components we work on that every day in class.
We work on oral skills, so there is a lot of.
Singing back and forth, there are worksheets and activities we do related to that.
Especially that is really.
And then we make sure that we always start the day with physical movement as well, because, I mean, they are bodies are involved in the singing process and sometimes we are that.
So those are really the tenants of other than just obviously working on the repertoire itself that that we spend time doing.

Researcher Now, do you diversify your instructional approaches like say, you, you have a certain structural approach for your concert choir versus your show choir?
Or is it?
Is it the same approach across the board between the two?

Participant That is a great question.
We probably spend a little bit more time on the theory side of things with our concert choir ensembles and a little bit more on the performance side of things.
Of course, on the show side of the ensembles.
But the way that I structure the classes is largely similar.
There's obviously just elements more related to movement when you get to show.
There as well I must leave more time for that.
But yes, they are similar other.

Researcher Now as far as like warmups go, do you differentiate?
You will do maybe one warm up for the show choir versus the different warm up for the concert choir or do.
You do the same warm up for everyone.

Participant Differentiate based on the type of music that we are doing or whatever songs we are playing work on that day because it just kind of depends of course on the piece. You know, there is tends to be more of a. More of a focus on I hate to even say about confuse. That is not really accurate, more of a placement of warmth when we are doing warmups with the concert choir things, and we do a little bit more placement of front placement warmups when we are doing pop or contemporary but that would probably be the only difference and again it just depends on the pieces, we are doing that day.

Researcher Walk me through like a typical day.
A rehearsal for you in your concert choir, and then also walk me through a show choir rehearsal.
And is your concert.
Choir and choir.
Are they both curricular, and is one extracurricular one?

Participant Concert choirs curricular Show choir is extracurricular.
It is also just that is Co-curricular, meaning you must be in the daytime choir to be in the elective.

Researcher OK All righties.

Participant Outfit School Day, so concert choir.
We are on block schedules every other day for ninety. Minutes. So, concert choir.
Start with physical warm UPS, vocal warmups that takes usually about 1520 minutes. I do announcements after that.
And then.
We will jump in with some theory work, whether it is usually sight reading is every day.
In those classes we use.
Sight Reading Factory a lot of the first half of the year and they will read eight measure segments starting in unison and then we build throughout the year to whatever they are going to need to do for URL content.
Second semester we have actual old sight-reading pieces that we use to prepare us for our contest that we have in April.
But that process takes about 20 minutes as well.
Usually site reading.
Once or twice a week, I will throw in another theory exercise.
Some or oral skills.
Or ear training work and those usually taking where between 5:00 and 8:00 minutes. Just quick hitter.
Things that can kind of get their brain working in that direction and then we work through the pieces we spend time working on selfish first and foremost, always they write it all in before.
We even start.
But then we sing on selfish for a while until they have the structure and.
Really, the intervals down and things like that, if it's a more contemporary piece or if it has really challenged rhythm structures, will move to a nonsense syllable sooner

than later, and then we'll put words on kind of in the last third of the of the rehearsal structure before the concert and work to put all that together.

We have a memorization requirement for ____.

Well, we do not have it for obviously other concerts.

And so, it just kind of depends upon the concert.

Whether we are working.

Towards memorization or not?

But that is really what.

A day looks like in concert choir show choir.

They come in, we.

Have student leaders who are stretching them out with stretch captains that start the day.

They do that for about 10 minutes.

Physical movement kind of get all their chatting out and all that stuff and move their bodies a little.

We will do very quick vocal worms.

We do not do a time just because at that point in the day it is very late in the evening usually.

And they have been talking or singing already that day, and then we will go through and depending upon the time of year, we are working on just vocals, just dancing.

Putting those two things together, and again, it really depends on the.

Time of year.

But that is a lot of adult focus.

Work moving them forward and then when there's moments where there's cleanliness issues with choreography, we will put dance captains in front of them to work with that individually until we are a place where we are putting it all together as a group.

Researcher OK, so you mentioned.

Your captains, those are student led, right?

Those are student.

Do you assign captains, or they vote?

Participant Nope, I choose them.

They applied for it like an internship.

Basically, there is an interview process, and they write a little bit about it and them.

Researcher Right.

Participant Interview with me? Yep.

Researcher Do you have section leaders in your concert?

Participant I have a treble section and a tear bass section leader.

Researcher Quarters with words.

Participant I do not do each voice part but and they are just there to kind of like blink notes.

If somebody has a question during a break or things like that, they do not leave large sections of rehearsal.

They are just kind of there for accountability standpoint.

Researcher OK

And do you like, do you give them the music ahead of time, so that?

They can learn or no.

Participant Get it with.

Researcher Everybody else? Nope.

Researcher So, walk me through your year with each ensemble, like from July to the next May.
How does everything start and where does it go, you know, so walk me through a year in the life of Miss.

Participant OK, so concert choir starts when school starts.

And the Allstate process is the beginning of the year here in Texas.

And so, we start learning site reading purposes for individual site reading, cause that is a component of the Allstate process.

So, we spend a lot of time during the first semester working on individual site reading as well, but we start with pieces for the fall.

Concert as well as, like I said, students who are involved in All-State, though that is an individual endeavor.

We do like sectionals outside the school day for that and give them extra opportunities to rehearse outside of their voice lessons in their own time.

But that is a huge chunk of the fall. And then we get to, and we do a winter concert with our middle school feeders. That is a that is a 7th-12th grade school.

Concert in December.

And then when we come around the corner into January, that is when we start working on things for contest, which is early April or late March and then we end the year with Pop show.

So, pop show is basically a giant show choir.

Show and all.

Of the students are required to be in all the student's dance, which is very.

Fun I have.

A great time with them and the kids love that thing, so.

That is the cycle for concert choir for show choir.

Last year was the first year they have had one on this campus, so we started it late.

We started it in the fall.

Which is closer to the model that I did when I was in ___ and that they have done for, you know, decades there, which is that you do not start it until basically October one, you do auditions in September and then.

October when you start.

And then we learned choreography in November and December, and even into early January this year.

And then we compete in the month of.

February in Texas.

All the contests are in February and then they were finished by March 1.

And then we pick it back up for pop.

Show and they.

Do their competition set one more?

Researcher Time at pop show so.

Talk to me about not starting until.

Fall because that is something.

Participant I have done it in July, obviously for years and years, because that's kind of the standard starting in.

The summer with the camp.

The beauty of the way that _____ had done it for so long is that that worked for them and having to do it that way showed me that it could work in.

Other instances as.

Well, part of what has been a challenge of starting competitive show car in Texas over the last 15 to 20 years is.

That the structure of the year is so state in stone with the things and the state All State components that we all do are required to do that.

Finding a place to.

Fit it in.

Has been a challenge and so there have been lots of directors that really pushed back against the notion of starting it in the summer, you know, with marching bands also starting in the summer.

And things like that.

So doing it not starting till the fall helps us because we are a ninth 12th grade group.

So, I make sure the first-year students are on campus before we audition.

That means I can see them.

I can talk to them.

That means we get better.

Recruitment out of our freshmen and then #2.

Unless you are doing multiple shows a year, which we just are not at this point, we are not doing a winter show for show choir.

We are not you.

Know doing a.

Spring show for show choir.

There is no reason you must be rehearsing your comps set.

Starting in July, there just.

Really is not, and sometimes you.

End up peaking too early when you do.

Stuff like that.

So, it is worked well for us not to start until, you know, _____.

And then last year with my own kids, not to start it until the fall, not to start it until I have seen them.

I have met the kids.

They are kids that I can convince that, hey, this is probably for you more than I would be able to, you know.

Not knowing them yet, coming up from the middle school.

Or them being.

So far away from the actual time of that happening, we rehearse what I would consider the absolute minimum amount of time you can rehearse in a week, which is just 4 hours a week, and then once we get into January, we add a little bit more, but it allows me to say.

Say January and February, like we joke like I “own” you. Like, that is like we just focus hard in January and February as opposed to focusing 60% on choir for eight months.

We focus 100% on choir for two months.

And it really.

Outcome wise, it is not a whole lot.
Different, so it works for us.

Researcher So, your extracurricular rehearsals, how many hours, how many times per week are those?

Participant We do two per week.
In most of the year for show choir, and those are two hours at a time it goes up to three.
Hours at a time when we get into January.
So, there is a month of three hours at a time leading up to the first comp.
But beyond that?
It is maintenance at that point throughout most of February.
So, there is not.
There is never more than a strive to keep it.
You know less than five hours a week total for all the extracurriculars we are involved in, both our contemporary acapella meets, one a day a week outside the school day for two hours, and that one is a little more student led.
It is like adult guided, but it is a little.
But yes, we like I said, that is what I consider to be the bare minimum of what you could really get.
Away with, but for my campus, it is a highly involved student campus.
It is one of those situations where the kids are really, really involved in everything.
And so, you must carve out the time where it works, and you do not.
Want them to become burnt out on anything so.

Researcher Yes, yes, absolutely.

Participant We just super built this.
While we are there, that is the thing.
We walk in the door.
We do not think about.
Thing else and then we leave and we.
Do not think about it.

Researcher So, are these rehearsals right after school or are?
They in the evenings.
During the evenings, this is another thing I stole from _____ when he started _____.

Participant You know, over 25 years ago used to start at 6:53 PM. It is such a random time, but honestly, it is great because they cannot forget.

Researcher Right.

Participant Like was it 6 or 7 tonight was.
It you know like.
653 like it is so specific it.
Gets stuck in.
Your head.
8:00 PM or sorry till 8:30 PM most days and then sometimes till nine. It just kind of depends on what is going on there.
But most we.
Strive to go until 9:00, so it is like 2 hours basically, but also it gives them 7 minutes to be dumb like I am late. I am talking. I am trying to get my life.

So, I am still getting two full hours of rehearsal.

Even though they got there, I mean.

It is just when.

You want them to get there?

What we all want.

It is like you know.

It is early so.

We just make you start paying.

That is why.

Researcher I love it.

I absolutely love it.

OK, so how do you discuss choral technique and the choral sound with your choreographer?

Participant OK, I have a specific like personal philosophy on that.

As far as like.

We can do all types of vocal tone and production.

It is just whatever is the right tool for the moment.

So, I really work to craft that myself.

My choreographer do not really have a say.

In that I trust them to do the technique things that I need them to do physically.

But for me it is more about me training them inside the movement with what needs to happen as far as shape and placement goes, and a lot of that happens outside of choreography rehearsals, and then we just place that on when.

We are going and tweak.

As we need to go, but I have always been blessed to work with choreographer that are also.

Vocalist so they understand.

Researcher So, when you.

Are searching for a choreographer.

Do you look for that aspect of, like, do you watch shows and say ohh well they you know really utilize the voice well in that movement you know?

Participant I do not personally employ someone that does not have a show card background as a performer.

As a choreographer.

I mean that's kind of a luxury.

You must know people and you must be willing to spend the money.

Usually, to do that.

But for me the benefits far outweigh.

The negatives of any cost value differential because I can hire, you know, someone who is a dancer and someone who owns a studio and someone who you know, even if it is somebody who is like, oh, I have a huge musical theater background.

That is not really the same.

So, for me it is worth looking for someone who has an actual show.

Their background so that they can employ that knowledge as well.

Or it must?

Be somebody who is willing to learn.

Well, you know, they are.
Willing to go to SCA and learn all about it.
They are willing to like.
Put themselves in a in a place where they are having to be a student again.
If that is the case, then that is different.
I am willing to work with a choreographer in that scenario, but yes, in general, it has
got to be somebody with show background because it's so specific.
So weird.

Researcher So, let us talk a little.

Bit about show design like how important that is.
That in your shows and in show core in general.
Like you know, discuss a little bit about what show choir design is for those who
may not, you know.

Participant So, I like to put it in three camps.

We call out five song roulette, which it does not have to be five songs, but it just
means five random songs that do not have anything to necessarily do with each other.
That is a very starter way of doing it.
I feel like that is what a lot of people begin with.

It is just I am just.

Going to pick.

Some songs that like, which is fine and there is nothing wrong with that.

The middle ground would be I like to call it the through line, which means there is
something there is a thread of some sort.

Connecting what is happening with your pieces?

Through lines are almost just more helpful when you are designing.

It is not even something the audience or the kids may recognize, but it gives you
something to focus on when planning, because otherwise five sound roulettes can be
very overwhelming to plan.

And then lastly there is there is like story shows which of course has usually a
storyline or characters running through it.

I do not recommend that for people unless they have been doing it a while and unless
their kids are good at theater, because story shows can go really bad really quickly
and you have to have the ability to story tell in in such a short format that making
something work in a way that would be viable.

It is just not.

Something a lot of people are good at, unless they have again experience with it, and
I get that you cannot get experience without trying it.

But like you need to be your kids need.

To be really.

Doing show car.

Well, for a while before you jump into like.

Now we are telling the story of the Bible.

So, it is important that.

Directors know themselves and their limitations.

First for like what they are going to be able to get out of their kids.

If you yourself are not an actor or actress and you are not really into theatrical storytelling, then absolutely do not do a story show that makes literally no sense. If you are very adept at that and you love that you have kids who are extremely interested in that, hey, then that is a cool way to go. But those are kind of the three things I look at when. When designing is like what makes the most sense for this group? For me, what I am planning, I am also looking at what? Do I need to teach the kids this year what culture, climate, things are we working on? What emotional, social, emotional learning elements do I need to pull into our year together? And I like to tie those into shows if I can. So that's kind of a fun part of it for me too, when I am looking and seeing how I can, I can make lessons out of what we are going to be. Doing anyway, retreat things, stuff like that. Most of the time my shows have a through line. Often, they will have a story that depends upon the group of kids like this year with. My brand-new kids, we did not do a story. Because that is a lot to. Put on the kids to start. If they are just learning how to sing and dance. At the same. Time, they do not also need to. Be telling a story, but we did a through line. Something with the concept of. Of the Disney movie inside out. So, emotions as like physical beings' kind of. Thing so each. Song had kind of an emotional tie to it. You know, there was a song about joy there. Was a song about, you know, like that kind of stuff, so. Again, real gentle, not a storyline, but just a kind of a line you could. Draw if you. Needed to and. It allowed us to talk about emotions and vulnerability and like how that plays into being a performer and like those are things I. Needed them to learn in their first year of existence. And so, it was a nice way to kind of add to that, but without the pressure of like I said, also having to learn how to act on top of learning how to sing and dance. Same time, so show design is very important. There are lots of people that really do not recognize how important it is to have a successful year with your kids. And that does not just mean trophies. That just means like. Getting what they can, getting the most out of that year from a learning standpoint. So, it's something that needs to be thought about and there are more and more people who do design work professionally like I do that for some schools I have a

few that I work with and then I a lot of arranger friends of mine have started dipping their toe in that as well, which I think is great having extra people around to bounce ideas off of from.

Show design is important.

It is hard to design in a vacuum.

I think when people try.

To do that, that is when.

You get some jump things so.

Have a little group of people you can bounce.

Ideas off?

That is the most.

Important piece of advice from show design.

So, can you?

Researcher Expound upon designing a show in a vacuum.

Participant Yeah, I mean, like, I can sit.

Here at my desk and me.

Can do it.

I love this song.

I am going to make this song work in this show, and I will cram that song.

Into a show and I will force.

Songs to fit around it.

And like, it does not feel right to me.

I know it feels awkward and I cannot tell you.

Why? But because?

I am only doing it by myself.

I am not bouncing that off anybody and you end up having awkward, stunted material because you chose to just keep yourself isolated in the design.

Process it is OK to ask people questions.

It is OK to say, hey, will you listen to what I am planning right now?

Because sometimes they may just say something.

Oh, that reminds me of that one song from the eighties.

And you will go.

Oh, my gosh.

And you may.

Not even use that.

Song, but it will lead you down the path to something else that fits even better.

So, if you are just forcing design like here alone in your office and you are going to do it in this one day like I know people who are like, oh, this is my day that.

I am planning to show I am like your day.

Like I cannot imagine.

Playing your show on the day.

Like you, sometimes that happens.

Sometimes your creativity flows, the doors just open and yes, you get a great show today, but it is usually a longer process than that.

So do not design that you are not designed without other people.

Researcher Right.

Right.

So, who, who do you surround yourself with like?

Is it your bouncing off ideas with your choreographer or you bounce off ideas with?

Do you have a specific arranger that you like you like?

Do you utilize one arranger, or do you utilize mini arrangers?

Participant That is a great question.

Researcher Who is your team?

Participant I have done both ways.

Previously in the history of my show for life, I have had one choreographer, one arranger, right.

And those are the people I have used for everything.

And I still love and used those people, but like I have now that I am here in a in an in a building scenario again where there is no tradition and there is no set.

The way I have always done things last year, we did a different Ranger for each piece, which I ended up love.

It is again, it is more of what works for you.

If you and your kids are loving working with this one arranger, and that's part of your team, and you are loving that, and it is working for you.

Great. If you are like, I really would love other people's opinions or you.

Know what I love?

How this arranger does ballads.

I love how this arranger does openers, like I do not think there is anything wrong with that.

California tends to use that model more than the Midwest.

And the South.

But it creates a more organic show in the sense that things sound more like they are meant to sound.

If it is something because, I mean, we all have our, our things that we are strong at and things at which we are not as strong.

There are genres that I would prefer to teach and that I feel like I do better at than others.

Arrangers are the same way, so like giving them the freedom and the ability to do their own things, which is there is nothing wrong with that.

Now summer Rangers only want to do full shows and.

That is OK too.

You just kind of have.

To know that and you just ask.

But for me, my team at this point is choreographer for sure.

Using them and saying, hey, this is, do you know what, I am.

Planning to do.

They get. I joke with them. They get like a 70% say like you know, 70% of their voice will be heard.

But at the end of the day, the other thirty belongs to an arranger or someone else, and then I get the final say. Of course, like their input is worth 70% to me.

But I can still look at them and go.

I just strongly feel this.

Is the right way to go.
And I have faith and trust in your ability.
To do this, and so I need you to.
Jump on board and then.
Flexibility is important too.
In show design.
A lot of people assume that.
It is a well, I picked it, and it has done.
I have chosen it.
So, we are moving forward no matter what.
This would be 2019. I did a show where we got two comps end of the season and it was just so clear.
That the middle, the opener and the third number were just not working, like not working at all, just a.
Big old mess, and that is rare.
But we had to go.
OK?
We need to redo something here.
So, we had about two.
Weeks to redo an entire opener and then adjusted by half of the ballad.
And it was great.
It made a huge difference, and the rest of the season was so much smooth, smoother because we did that.
But you must be not afraid to be flexible in those moments and again have conversations with people you respect and go, hey, what do you think the people I talked to the most when I am show designing?
Or working during the year through a problem are not my arrangements and choreographer.
They are friends of mine who are other directors or people that I like.
We consider mentors and look up to people who have done this a long time, who really have had a lot of wealth of experiences to pull from to give advice.
So, I just use as many humans as will listen to.
Me as possible.

Researcher That is awesome. So visual design.

How do you utilize visual design in your shows to convey your theme or the message of your show?

Participant So, the first visual element that matters is the choreography, and you must hire someone who is going to do the choreography well, because all the light screens and bells and whistles and light towers and fog in the world is not going to matter if the choreography is bad.

Like it does happen.

So, hiring a prayer for that understands blocking in an effective way and movement those two things.

Are where I start.

And then once you get to a place where.

The kids have that.

Then we will add in extra things unless it is a set piece where the kids are going to have to stand on it for choreography.

Know that on the outset.

But otherwise, I personally do not add in things until I know that they are going to be able to pull off the actual part that matters.

The part that is on the scorecard, you know, visual storytelling is great, but beyond the movement itself, it is generally one category on a score sheet.

Not that that is not fun.

Not that it is not important, and I am not like anti TV screens or anything like that.

Like that is fun.

But too often people rely on that as the visual elements when that is not even present on a scorecard.

In most cases, it is one to two categories, max.

So, you are kind of hurting yourself by spending all this time and energy on that instead of spending more time and energy, or in some cases money, spend more.

Money on a better choreographer.

And less money on technology.

Mostly, but it has its place.

And again, it depends upon the show that you are doing.

If you are doing a story show that really requires a lot of help with the setting, then yes, that can be important and great.

But like I said, I plan the show itself first we start movement first and then unless it is a set.

Piece we will Add all of that sometime in mid-fall.

Participant Though you are building a program and talk to me about finding a choreographer, because you, you know, a ton of choreographer who are amazing people, but they are just not the right that your kids are not at that level.

Yet, right, so talk to me about how you find a choreographer that meets your kids, where they are currently.

Participant That is such.

A good question.

And I am going to give you may be the answer that you are not expecting here.

And then I think a lot.

Of people do not expect which.

Is that you should hire the choreographer.

You want your kids to be working with in two years.

Not hiring a brand-new baby choreographer or someone who is maybe not as good because your kids are not as.

They will not excel the way you are expecting them to or want them to or grow if they do not have someone over here challenging them and so often when we are starting a new group.

This is the fifth group I have started.

Over the course of my career.

So, I have done the version where we hire someone that is new or younger or has very little experience.

And by year two or three, I must get someone new.

Not that there is anything wrong with that.
If you want to do that as well, but I know for a fact my kids would have grown more quickly with a more stable base of knowledge if I had started with that person and had the conversation with that person of.
Hey, this is where my kids are.
Are you interested and willing to do that?
Because some are not.
Some do not want to do that and that is again totally their prerogative.
But when you get.
Choreographer that are teachers first, which those are the people that I feel like everybody should get the beautiful opportunity to work with.
That is such an incredible experience when you have that, they understand that they need to adjust what they are doing.
Teaching wise to fit the ability level of the kids, but they will also keep pushing them subtly and again it will be a firm foundation for these kids to stand on versus this person is cheaper.
This person's local this person is newer. That is all fine, but you need to be prepared for the fact that it is going to be two years max before you are.
Going to have to be.
Like and we need a new person.
So, if you must start.
Because finance is wise, sometimes the problem is that choreographer who are like what we are discussing are not.
Necessarily local to you.
So, if you need to start with someone who is local, you want to look for an again someone with any kind of show prior background is important.
If they performed it in high school, it is going to go farther than.
Somebody who is a dancer with no background.
And but you.
Do secondarily and importantly, want to look for someone who has a.
Dance background, if possible, because now that.
You are younger than I am.
I do not know when you graduated from high school, but I am assuming I am a little bit on the older side here.
But like, there is like the time of the 1970s and 80s when show choir was really starting to be competitive.
Right.
And the people who were professionals during that time were professionals by accident, like they were creating this genre as it was happening, and they became professionals.
Because they were making it up right then you have my age group of people where we grew up with it and we saw it and we were kind of striving to be in.
Just a little, we are like, oh, I can always do that.
I could always, you know, fall back on that.
That was kind of the fallback generation.

Right now, we have kids who have grown up with it for two to three generations and just think it is normal that everybody has a show choir.

The ones who have been in it and they are like I can be a.

Show car professional.

I want to be a show car choreographer.

How do I do that?

OK

Well, it is not as easy as just as, oh, I am going to, you know, I like to dance.

So, I am going to be.

A choreographer there.

There does need to be some background training.

Involved in that so taking dance classes.

Even if you did not when you were younger and doing all that stuff is important.

If they are wanting to be a choreographer.

So nowadays we are flooded with kids who are like under, I say kids because they are like under twenty-five really under thirty.

Like they are like.

Yeah, I am going to be.

I am a show crime choreographer.

OK, well, you have worked with who?

How long have you?

How long have you been practicing your craft?

What do you do to?

Practice your craft.

How are you growing in your profession like these are important questions we must ask, so getting someone young when you are when they are first starting is fine, but also know that younger choreographer tend to be over choreography.

Your first and when I say younger, I mean newer, not necessarily just age.

So, you must be aware of that.

And as a director, you must be.

Willing to say.

I like what you are doing here, but I need it.

To be pared down.

A little bit.

Or when they are gone, you need to be able to be like I must take this ripple out.

I am going to change this.

Things like you must be willing to do that as well so you do not have as much of that issue.

When you hire in someone who is seasoned, so that is why I always they spend the good money on, spend the money on people.

We spend a lot of money on stuff in shower world, but if you spend the money on people being choreographer and array.

You are going to have a way better situation than if you spent money.

On like look

At these amazing costumes, do not get me wrong, I love a costume.

But like if you are like I changed costumes three times and then we.

Have these television screens.
We have this girl who graduated last.
Year from our high school is choreographing the whole show.
Like it might see.
Maybe you found the next April, James.
You may have just made a mess for another year and.

Researcher Right.

Participant Then it is another.

Year before you get that build going that.

Researcher Right, right, right.

Participant You had done.

Sorry, that was the whole tangent of mine I.
Just went off on.

Researcher But I totally get it.

Participant One of my hot button issues.

Researcher I totally get it.

I have been there, you know, and tried young, fresh out of high school.
Based on where they went to high school.
And yes, so talk to me about the music arrangement process.
Like you produce an idea and what is next as far as putting it into music.

Participant So, I really love to.

I should not say the word arrange.

I need a different word for it, but like I like to edit my pieces before it goes to the arranger because I personally am someone who really knows what I want.

Like I can hear it, I know where I want the mash to go with song splits.

I know I want it to speed up here.

I know this key needs to change here.

I want this to be just tenor bass, so working with me from an arranging standpoint I know is.

Less fun, they get less like creative freedom sometimes.

That is not true.

Sometimes I do say, hey, I know, I want these two songs.

I trust you.

Go for it.

But because I have been doing it for so long, I generally know what I want.

To be like so I will take the pieces and I will edit them in my own music software to start and so I can give myself kind of an overview of like the original song but mix the way I would want it to be and then I will send that to my arranger and say this is kind of what I'm thinking.

And then my arrangers usually go beyond that, like they will take it and they will run with it in the best way, which is awesome.

So, for me, that is how I like to do it.

When I am working with clients and I am show designing, usually I will cut things for them as well, but.

Oftentimes, we will leave. It depends on who the arranger is, but we will sometimes leave more of it in the arranger's hands when it is not me directing personally.

And then again when it is a newer group like with my own group this year, we did two of ours.

Four songs were stock and there is nothing wrong with that.

In fact, a lot of a lot of arrangers, most of them nowadays.

Have been doing it long enough.

They have their own stock pieces, things that they arranged custom for someone else at one point, and now that is in a catalog, and you can purchase it for them.

So, it is less expensive than a custom.

It is not as cheap as a stock, but it is a nice hybrid, so pulling from those catalogs is great.

So, if you want to.

Like as far as money goes, not be spending, you know the full however much you were going to spend on having everything.

Customer arranged not there is anything wrong with me like I need this one song and _____ has a version of it.

So, I am going to use that one from pepper and then I found this other one that is this arranger has in their catalog going to.

Pull that one and then I am having these two-customer ranged that is great.

Some a publishing standpoint, if it is truly stock and it is published like it is available for purchase at a music store like Pepper, you are allowed to cut things in it.

You are not allowed to add things to it from a copyright standpoint, but you are allowed to make cuts, and that is the one key encouragement that I always make sure I say to people, which is you must cut those.

They are not meant for show choir.

They are usually three to half to 4 minutes long or longer.

That is too long, my friends.

If it cannot be.

Said in under 3 minutes, it does not need to be said, and frankly, 2:30 is kind of the sweet spot so.

Cut if you are doing.

Stop and even if.

Do not be afraid to say.

To your Ranger.

This does not feel tight enough, like the kids are struggling with the section, we are going to cut this out.

Just being communicative with your arranger is so great.

They love communicated with.

Researcher Yes, yes, yes.

So, at what point did we say?

A show choir song must be 2 1/2 minutes. It cannot go over 2 1/2 minutes, or it gets boring.

And or maybe we need?

To add like ten songs.

Into a, you know, two and.

1/2 minute. I do not know you.

Participant I think no, you are right that that.

Researcher Know at what point?

That has all changed.

A lot in the last 10 years, I would say for sure, even eight, but ten for sure.

Mashes became kind of the thing to.

Do in the last 10 years.

But that was really with the advent.

Of customer arranging, I mean shook

Our universe was not doing as much cut like pay for custom arranging.

There were schools that had it.

Plenty that did, but it would be like my director is also an arranger, and therefore that is why you had customer ranging.

It was not in the last decade that we were paying people to do custom arrangements, and once that became a thing, then it just opened all the worlds where you could be like, oh, I got fifty songs in this one.

They are also coming out of the whole story show or sets and things like that when we have this tight time frame of like a 25-minute time slot at competition let us say.

You need if you are going to.

Have all this stuff.

5 minutes on the beginning side and 5 minutes on the back side to set up.

And tear down.

Your first show cannot be longer than 15 minutes, and so yes, you could have five songs that are three minutes each, and you are like right in that window.

But really it just comes down to, like you said, you know, attention spans like.

You would rather leave them wanting more as judges, as an audio.

There is nothing worse than getting to a closer and.

Being like, why is this song?

Still going on or.

And this one is happening all the time right now where there is like a second closer.

Like you have come off song essentially five, because everything is a match like this, like four and a half five and it feels like a close and you are clapping because you are like.

And then start a whole other.

Song and you are like.

No, like we are done, you know, so it really starts to affect like scoring.

If you have a judge who is not a great judge, you know, so something get washed with the paint of something.

And if they get washed with the paint of this is too long, it is.

G color all.

Your schooling so shorter, it is better.

You know, you work to be quality, not quantity.

Those sorts of also are things that I always say to people.

Let us do less well while I am on that tangent.

My personal philosophy is varsities can do five.

Or more JVs should do. Four middles should not do more than.

Three, but I.

Know you are from the South and that.

Is S 5th but.
 In general, in general, unless they are just competitive at a high level.

Researcher Well, going back to that show design, you know, with that second mid-tempo.
 Would you make that like just a little like?
 Spurt of assault like a minute.

Participant The hitter, yes.

Researcher Little transition, quick hitter and.

Participant Yeah, I would rather have two.
 Quick headers than four things.

Researcher And the closer.

Participant I mean, openers can be wonderfully long in a fun way.
 Like those can be 3 minutes, little over three.
 Minutes and nobody notices ballads.
 Fits good can be over 3 minutes and no one notices.
 Losers must be under three or people.
 Notice and then those mid tempos.

Researcher OK

Participant Quick hitters style change novelty like there's.
 You must.
 Have something happening there or it is like why are we still doing this song?
 It just ends up being the same thing.
 Repeatedly.

Researcher Why do you think that show choir is such an important asset to public secondary music education?

Participant Yes, absolutely. The we spent a lot of times, you know, American choral music in the schools starting of course in the 1950s and on from there with you.
 Robert Shaw, Ness of it all.
 We that that was a grand time in, you know, concert choir music.
 But we almost did it at the detriment of all other forms of corporate singing.
 It became the only way to express yourself in a group choral setting was a certain style of concert.
 And a lot of school districts have, you know, abandoned other musical vocal musical experiences for their students.
 And so, bringing show choir back in is important from that standpoint.
 But it is also incredibly important.
 Culturally, I feel like.
 You know, I am very aware of the fact that we are both sitting here as people who are not people of color having this conversation.
 But there are.
 A lot. A lot.
 Of cultural backgrounds that celebrate music in a corporate fashion that looks nothing like American concert choir music circa 1950 and again secondary public.
 Education really put down all those other forms over the last fifty.
 Years and I feel like places like show choir and contemporary acapella are where we are allowing things back.

We are bringing back in other sounds, other rhythmic structures, other key signatures I teach in a school district right now.

We have a huge population of students who are from India and a lot of them.

Sing traditional Indian music and take voice lessons.

From traditional Indian voice teachers because it is a specific style of singing, it is a different foundation.

It is a completely different way of placement, and it is first, just fascinating to me, but secondly.

Like there is nothing like that available in the schools.

Nothing if they did not have a community surrounding them where that was an option, it would not be something they would ever see or hear.

So yes, is everyone in the world saying Jai Ho it is at some point in the last 10 years?

That is not necessarily talking about.

But you know doing show card gives you at least the opportunity to do things like that.

Other people that that like district music contest and state.

State standards do not allow for this.

Gives you the window to put those things in there and open that up.

You know we.

___ said this, I do not know.

Gosh, it was a while ago now.

Five or six years.

Ago he was talking about.

A former student of his from Milan.

Could not get accepted as a music Ed student somewhere having to do with his music background. You know, he did not take standard voice lessons where he learned things from the 24 Italian books or, you know, a shimmer book and so like, what he had to audition with.

Was it considered?

Suitable for audition purposes and like that kills me like that makes me so.

Infuriate like the amount of gatekeeping we are doing and secondary music for all backgrounds of, of people who grew up with music but just not the way that society has decided choir supposed to work.

So, it is a hugely important that it be in schools because again, it just opens the doors to all sorts of other opportunities musically for kids.

Researcher I never cheer in Dallas.

Fort Worth area.

Right.

OK, so talk to me a little bit about how this demographic.

Came about in that area.

Participant It is a highly it is a, it is an interesting, it is a very interesting place.

It is incredibly affluent.

The suburb that we are in that I am teaching in it is.

Been very publicly reported on in the last couple of years trying to think of the appropriate way to say this.

But UM, we?

Had some things go viral from students using inappropriate language about minorities, and when students and teachers in the district trying to step in to create a more.

Cohesive and inviting environment.

There was a secondary portion of the community that stepped up and said, no, you cannot tutor our kids about racism, and you cannot teach our kids about, you know, those sorts.

So, we were a little ahead of.

The curve like the.

Rest of them, but then until 2.

Years ago, but.

But yes, it is.

It has been a thing here in the last few years.

And I say that.

It is more parents that.

Leading that charge, and it is a ridiculously small number of them, but it has created a very interesting community because, you know, we have, I would have to look at the population numbers.

I do not want.

To lie to you.

But the IT is, it is a very.

Slim majority of white students at this point.

If there is a majority, we may have slipped into not the majority.

In the last couple of years.

But it is very well balanced as far as that goes. We have, you know about 1/3 a little more than one-third of the population is white students.

And then you have this large population of South Asian and Indian population, which really comes from the fact that we have.

A lot of.

Medical families, doctors, and specialty medicine in the area.

That is where a lot of them are from, and that is where they are in this area.

And then we used to have a much larger.

Black population, which has changed a lot in the last few years because of all.

Of the things that have happened.

So, it is a very, very diverse student population.

We have also you know; we teach Mandarin as one of that is like a four years' worth of Mandarin as an option, we have you know like those sorts of things.

So, you can see it is a very.

Diverse student population.

Which is also a challenge when they are singing together, because, again, the way everyone grew up singing in their own, you know, homes or religious experiences, because a lot of them are coming from that, you know, you have kids who singing corporate worship in a Christian Church or a Mormon situation.

Right.

And then you have kids who sang in in Indian backgrounds with that music, which again different.

In different places than all in style, and all of that, we have kids who are from Middle Eastern countries as well that have a strong background and the way that they have sung their music growing up and all.

That and then we have a wonderfully large Black Baptist Church population in one part of our town, and so we have kids who grow up singing that way as well.

And so, you.

Really must teach them all to speak the same language first, which is let us unify.

What does this mean, right?

OK

Feel how it sounds when you are singing, and it is coming through here.

Know how it sounds, where your singing is coming from here.

You know you must go through that process and teach everyone this one new.

And then we just say this is what we are using for this song.

Here is what makes sense for this because of the background of the piece, you always must look at the source.

And if you are looking at the source material and doing justice to it, you will be fine.

You are doing the right thing by those kids, and you are giving them diverse and varied musical experiences.

But yes, this is really the first time in my career where I have had this diverse of a student population musically and it has been a fun challenge.

I have really enjoyed it, so.

Researcher So why do you think?

That most public secondary schools do not have a short program.

Participant It is absolutely fear, number one.

I mean, if your director has not experienced it themselves, they are not going to do it.

I mean, that is just.

What we have seen over and over.

Again, there is a level of.

Terror attached to me would have to oversee children dance.

Thing I cannot dance.

The people are like I cannot dance.

So that is like the first thing directors will say to me.

I am like no one is asking you.

To dance, hire someone to.

Do that or again, because in secondary choral world in the last 50 years, 70 years, we have pushed so hard this notion of bel canto and this Eastern European art song way of doing things that most of us were.

Only trained in that and so we do not have a background of training for anything pop or contemporary, and that seems scary too.

So, I think as we are seeing more and more graduates who did contemporary acapella or show choir in high school and college.

You are going to start seeing more and more of it pop up around the country, so I think #1 is fair, but #2 is money. People get really concerned that it is going to be.

The world's most expensive endeavor, and it can be you can make.

It expensive.

But you can.

Also do it less expensive.
 So again, focus on spending money on the people that part.
 Is important.
 But you could have an incredible show if you have a great choreographer.
 But all your music is stock.
 That could still.
 Be a good show and that is not going to be crazy expensive.
 Kids do not have to change clothes.
 That is not a rule, you know.
 I mean, people make it.
 A rule, but they do not have to be the largest expense on the outset.
 If your school does not already have it is the riser component that can be cost prohibitive.
 I know so that takes some time to fundraise or.
 Convince the school that that is a worthwhile purchase from capital outlay.
 I know so I have sympathies for that part of it for sure.
 That can be a challenge, but beyond that, once you have risers in your hands, you can pretty much make it as cost effective as you need it to be, if you are just not.
 Afraid to jump in and try some stuff.
 And if it does not work this year, you do something different next year.

Researcher But do not allow the students at SCA.
 Learn their choreography on the ground like they, you know, they are not on risers, right?

Researcher I mean if you are starting.
 Out. You know just.
 Be on the ground for a minute, you know.

Participant Totally and we have seen.
 A lot of schools, and I have done this myself before, where it is like, OK
 We do not own our own risers, right?
 But every comp we go to is going.
 To have risers.
 Or and so you do not really need them the first year or you are performing, and you would love to have riser options.
 OK
 Well, maybe you and the school across town that like you do a joint performance and then you are performing because they have razors, and you are on their risers, or I have borrowed risers.
 Schools before performance and taking them back.
 So, there are ways around it for sure, and you are right.

Researcher What do you think about the time commitment?
 Cause I that is what I hear a lot.
 Well, if I only had the time or I do not really want to devote the time that it takes to do that extra work.

Participant I mean, there is absolutely a time component part of why I am keeping it to the minimum.

I am keeping it at my own school right now is because I am showing people that you can do it with the minimum.

Again, the quality of what you put in that time.

I know friends who do it year-round and there.

Groups are fine like they are.

Not any better person anybody else's.

But they put all these hours into it because the work they are doing in those hours is kind of scattered.

If you are there and you are focused for two hours at a time, like total for twice in a week, so four.

Hour total. That's.

Even honestly 3 hours, you could do quite a bit in two hour and a half segment if you are like.

We are focused while we are here, and we are doing this work while we are here.

You are going to get a ton of stuff done.

You do not need it to.

Go on for nine months.

10 months of the year.

It is more about your efficiency as a director at that point, you know.

If you are telling me, you do not have time.

And my question for you is well.

What are you spending time on?

Is it efficient?

Are you doing the?

Right thing by.

That because also refusing to add in extracurricular things.

That can enhance your students understanding of.

The diversity of music genres is doing them a disservice.

Like that's part of our state standards for us is that we must do, you know, a diverse amount of music genre things.

So, you do not have to do it that way.

You can do it during class for sure, but.

This is a great way to do that.

Plus, it is an incredible recruitment tool like rarely, rarely, rarely is it something where it is like, oh, I have less kids.

Well, I started to show choir.

It is rare so.

Like I think again that.

Just speaks from my fair place.

So, my advice is always like just try it.

Try it one year.

If it was terrible and it did not work.

For you and you really gave it a shot.

Because really, I do not want people doing show care that do not want to do it.

Researcher So, you, you.

You spoke a little bit about how you utilize show choir as a recruitment tool.

So, what do you do?

What did you do in this budding program of yours to recruit for next year, you know?

Participant Yes, we did.

Obviously, I showed them videos of other groups and things that are attainable, but also cool to see, to start, and then we did auditions.

I took everybody this year.

I mean, there is no rule that says you must edit people out if you do not want to.

I took all of them, so we had almost thirty this first.

And then we did a show our kids camp in the winter where we brought up like the elementary kids for three hours on one Saturday and like, learned a number.

And then they perform with us at Premiere night.

We have a summer camp for middle school as well, and then for my own high school kids, they get a PE credit if they are in a daytime.

Which is our content.

That is a whole other conversation.

But like, yes, you could entice kids with if you wanted to do that.

If it is if.

It is in the daytime if it is outside of the school day.

For us, the main like draw with it was the competitive part, the competitive and the travel part was exciting for those kids and just the opportunity to sing music that they do not really get to sing in the classroom all the time.

Researcher So, talk to me a little bit.

About the other aspect of show choir, which is, and we spoke about it a little bit.

The money side of things because that is a fear of a lot of people.

How have you funded and sustained your program throughout the years?

Participant So, I have had.

Both versions of the scenario where you can do pay for play in your school, which means that the kids can pay a fee and that does help when they can do that.

But I've also.

Been part of programs where they cannot do that, so if you are in a scenario where you cannot charge your kids a fee.

It is all coming from fundraising, then yes, you are going to spend some time fundraising.

There is no way getting around that.

Obviously, the absolute most lucrative fundraiser of all time is hosting an event.

If you host a contest, you are going to make money.

But if you do not host a contest, well, you may make money for only one or two years before people stop coming, so that is an important thing to keep in mind.

Before you just jump into hosting it, you must have the parent.

Support to host a good event.

But beyond that, I always find that anything you can do that has a performance edge to it and you are charging a ticket fee is a great fundraiser.

We have done talent shows.

We have done pageants, which is very fun.

Texas is very popular doing this, like man of the year pageant, things.

I do not know why we do that here.

It is the South is weird.
But like pageant stuff.
Talent shows. We'll do premiere night every time we have a show, we charge minimum of \$5. Usually, it is no more than \$5.
But if you have one night of performance and you have a decent audience, you are usually pulling in about two grand in that scenario for just a performance that you. We are going to.
Do so, like if you do enough of that kind of stuff over the year and then maybe one major like fundraiser where you are doing a thing where they are either selling something or it is an event or something like that, you are going to make enough. To make it.
Happen it will be a.
You will find a way to do it now.
You might have competed six * a year.
Nobody needs to do that anyway.
But like you know, you may have to pare it down a little bit, but it does not mean you cannot have it.
The either-or mentality is dangerous in general in all of life, I feel.
Like you do not have to say we.
Cannot have a show.
Where all because I cannot charge my kids a fee.
No, you can.
It just may not look like I do not know.
Pick something giant that is around you when you when you think it has.
To be that way.

Researcher Right.

Participant If you can do pay for play, you know charging kids if fee is an important bass there that kind of helps.
Funds things moving forward, obviously year to year.
I try to look at what band fees are for marching band or if you have like Texas has competitive cheer and competitive dance which is very similar.
So, I look at what they are doing.
And I usually take that in half.
Because what they are charging is usually astronomical, so like my child, my eldest child is in _____.
He is there right now.
He, their fee.
Is going to end up being.
All in somewhere around 1200 for this year. And so, I am like and take that in half and then see if we can even knock a little bit off.
I always charge the least amount I can get away with as a fee, even though again for me I am in a very affluent community right now where people would happily pay probably whatever asked.
But I want parents to see that we are being good stewards of their money.
And not just like just give me six hundred because we will find a way to.
Spend it, OK?

Researcher Right.

Participant Being smart about like.

I am as I am doing fees for kids; I am assuming that fee is paying for arrangers and choreographer.

Like that is my assumption we are getting that paid for out the gate.

Everything else usually comes from a fundraiser for me as how I personally structure it in my mind, it is not a hard and fast rule, but it gives you a.

Little bit of guidance of like.

What you should be charging?

Researcher What advice would you give to a future?

Concert or show choir director, someone who is coming fresh out of college knows absolutely nothing about, you know, life and all that jazz.

Participant You are going to be bad at this for a couple of years.

And that is OK

Like genuinely I would.

That is the number one thing I say to kids all the time when they are coming out of college is that they remember these large choral experiences they had in high school. And they were probably incredible and that is why they went into this, right, these huge memories and these big ideas and.

These giant experiences they have had, that is probably not going to happen for you in the first two years.

It is probably going to be a mess.

You are going to screw some things up badly.

I had a growth plan my second year of teaching like.

Because I did not put in because I did not put in a bus request a full week in advance for something and.

Then my principal maybe lesson plans through the end of the year that I turned into him like it was embarrassing and it was.

Horrible and I.

Hated it, but also it kind of taught me a.

Couple good lessons about organizations.

Researcher Right.

Participant Needed to learn.

Researcher Right.

Participant And you must remember that you are going back to scratch when you are starting like you are kind of a student again.

Yes, you are in charge.

But just walking into the room, assuming you are going to have the experience you had with your director, who had been there for 20 years and had been doing it like it is.

Researcher Right.

Participant Not going to happen that way, so.

Pick a job where you can feel comfortable exploring ideas and trying stuff.

Know that there is a decent chance you are going to need to leave that job after two or three years, and that sounds silly like you know they are going to get rid of you or something.

I do not mean like they are going to fire you, but like they are going to make enough mistakes in the first two years that you are going to be out of there.

And that is OK, too.

That is kind of normal.

I do not know what your path is like, but I have so many friends that taught somewhere for two to three years at the start of their career and then went somewhere else and were amazing.

But those first two to three years.

You know, hit or miss kind of thing so.

That is OK and normal.

Researcher And that is right on par with.

My experience, yes, absolutely.

Participant And if you can be an assistant in a big program, great.

But if you are going to be like the head banana at your own program.

Just not overextend yourself like it is OK to try things.

It is OK to do a bunch of stuff, but like.

In the doing of a bunch of stuff, be clear about what must be done inside that.

It is OK to have a concert choir, an acapella group, and a choir.

But you do not need your concert choir to be performing in New York.

Your show choir, to keep feeding six times and have LED lights set and your acapella group to be trying to do edge like, that is too much.

So, like just carefully pruning what needs to happen inside of those things to give those kids that experience without it being overwhelming and crazy so.

Researcher Well, thank you for your time and your willing to be here with me today.

Is there anything else that you would like to add to this topic of trying to keep choir and show choir?

Participant I read something the other day or earlier today.

It is funny, but it is also true, which is that stem like, you know, teaching in in mechanics and science, like stem teaching without the humanities.

Creates DC villains and humanities without STEM, creates Batman villains, and I laughed at that so hard.

But also, there is such a kernel of truth to that, and we are so dangerously creating a world right now of DC villains.

Because we are taking the humanities out of everything you are giving.

The kids, all of this.

Structure and understanding in math and science and technology, and that is wonderful.

I do not have a problem with it, but when you remove the humanity from those things, you remove what makes those things worth existing for and you get a really stunted way of living life in our community here in America.

And so, it is important to keep the humanities involved and what we are doing there, so that.

We still have a why?

For why we are doing all of this, we are taking away kids.

When we get rid of these opportunities, so give kids back the why by giving kids back, you know?

The arts and show choir and choir.
An enormous part of that for so many kids.
So yep, that would be my last soapbox about that.

Researcher Well, I am going to.
Send you a transcript in the.
Next couple of weeks.
For you to look over and make sure that I have represented your words accurately
today, but also to give you an opportunity to add or strike any.
Anything that you do not agree with or.
You would not like.
To be incorporated in this dissertation and if needed, I may ask for a follow up short
interview just to fine tune things.
Make sure again that your thoughts are accurately represented in the study.

Participant OK, well, that is fine.
Just let me know.

Researcher Thanks so much for you.
Time today, it has been a pleasure.

Participant Have a good rest of your day.

Researcher You too. Bye.

Participant 9 Transcript

Researcher Can you hear me?
I do not think I can hear you.

Participant Said my mic was muted.

Researcher There you go, I can.
Hear you now.

Participant Says my video stopped OK how are we?

Researcher We are doing fantastic.
You look great.
All right, do I.

Participant Plus, little white.
But I have lost a little weight.

Researcher Hey, you are looking great.
Well, thank you for volunteering your time to be a part of this study.
It is greatly appreciated.
The purpose of this study is to learn how a select group of public secondary school
choir and show choir directors from various regions of the United States incorporate
their choral methods and their respective competitive show.
Our programs, so can you briefly discuss the educational, your educational and
professional experiences regarding secondary music education?

Participant Well, educationally I have a BS in music education and a master's in music
education from ___ University.

Participant And thirty-eight plus years of teaching experience.

Researcher And how many ensembles do you direct?

Participant I currently direct. I oversee the entire program 6th-12th.

But I direct three.

Researcher And are these ensembles mixed or gender or single gender?

Participant Have a large.
Mixed and two single genders have an all-girls and an all guys.

Researcher And are they both competitive?
Are they both competitive and auditioned or?

Participant They are all three competitive and auditioned.

Researcher OK and about?
How many students are involved in these ensembles?

Participant Our large mixed we.
Currently have forty-four.
And our lady's group, we have forty.
And the men's group is right at about eighteen.

Researcher OK
And when you are in a rehearsal setting, what instructional approaches are you using for these ensembles?

Participant Well, from a music standpoint, I am.
I am pretty much fully in control of all that aspect.
I do trust my section leaders to.
Handle section work and individual work.
We have a.
We have a pass off system that I.
Have used for many, many years.
Even back when I was.
Where I passed off the section leaders.
They must pass off their music to me.
Passing off is a term we use it faithfully.
It means that they demonstrate mastery of a certain.
Piece of music.
I will, I will.
They must hand me their music and I read their music and market.
Accordingly, Mark any problems they have, and they must go back and fix problems, come back and try again.
And that process repeats two or three times however many times it takes until they have basically perfected the using, and then they turn around.
But second turn around and repeat the same process with each person when they are sectional.
And so that is our demonstration of mastery, of, of.
The music itself, the.
Choreography I am not a dancer.
I do not intend to ever be a dancer.
We hire choreographer and me.
Captains for each group are basically.
In charge of making sure that that and we also have dance pass off.
But that is strictly dance captain with.

Researcher OK, so you.

Have do you have?

You have student LED student section leaders and student captains.

Participant Yes, we are very.

I have I have for many, many years my first ten years.

So, teaching I sort of.

Did everything hands on and over overtime and just realized the value of giving students leadership and, you know, putting a lot of responsibility.

We have a lot of student leadership.

Researcher And how does a student become in in that to that role?

Like, do they apply for?

Do they like how do they show interest in it?

Participant To be a vocal section leader, they it is like a job application.

They write a resume and submit it to us, and I say us, I have an assistant director.

I have been saying these the whole time because we share our responsibilities.

But whether I say he or we say.

We take, we take the job resumes and we ask them to tell us, you know, what is going to make them more effective as a section leader than someone else in.

Their section they can.

You know piano skills.

How many years?

In course they have had any other activities they do that might lead to it and other activities that might keep, you know from being an effective section leader.

It is hard to be an effective section leader and be the captain of the baseball team or you know, something else.

So, once we have read the resumes, we.

Sometimes we will decide stricter from resume.

But often, it is followed up with a with an interview.

Process dance captain is.

Different dance, captain, since that is so student driven and student oriented.

It is a voted-on position.

And I was wary of.

Doing that my first.

Years or so that we did it because you know how.

Favoritism comes into it.

But all I know over the years I have found the kids in so far take their roles and there. Responsibilities seriously.

They want to let their best friend, if they know their best friends, are not going to be the best mascot.

I've, I've, and.

Probably thirty plus years of electing dance captains.

I've never.

Never had that happen.

I have had dance.

I have had some great ones.

I have had some were not as effective as others, but I do not think that was ever a result of favoritism.

Researcher OK, so are all your choirs show choir or do you have a concert choir as well?

Participant All our show, all our choirs are show choir and concert choir.

Researcher OK, so how do you?

Differentiate or do you differentiate your instructional approach between your concert and your show choir?

Participant No, I mean there are there are a few key elements of concert choir that.

Do not pertain to show choir and vice versa.

I find myself.

Stressing the difference between the two with isms like bring concert season, I say this.

We are not going to do the show choir ism of this sports.

We are going to do the concert version of the sport, Sorta.

We are not going to do that in your face.

Kind of go from nothing to triple.

F and then end it.

With a great at the end, we are going to.

You know there there's subtle differences between the two, but vocally it is the same thing.

So, I do not find myself teaching.

The literature for so far, any differently than I would teach it for concert choir.

Students are not one or the other if they are in the show choir when they are every they are in every concert that that we perform black and what we call black and white.

So, we do, we do a fall concert.

We do a.

And our spring and Christmas shows, our spring, our Christmas show is called the Christmas Spectacular. It is about a two hour, 2 1/2 hour or long event. The first half is.

Always black tie.

Sacred concert music.

And second half is choreographing show choir and that is different.

It is the same groups, but sometimes we combine them.

Sometimes it is featuring groups, it does not.

Must be.

The same as the competition groups, but usually it follows the competition group format.

And spring show is the same thing we will do about an hour of this year.

We did rudders.

Requiem last year.

We did the armed man by ____, both with orchestra.

We do that for the first half.

Researcher Yes. Yes, it just.

Participant So, they are not OK

Researcher Cut out for a second.

Participant So that is a that is three main concerts and then we also do a show part only.

Several so far only events during the year, but the three that contain the concert music are the Fall Concert Christmas concert and the spring.

Researcher Well, take me through a year in the license.

Participant And so, I will, I will also say that that even though the classes. Summer mixed and some.

Researcher OK

Participant Are unisex where they learn the same literature regardless.

Researcher OK

Participant Combined as a, you know, give, or take 100 voice choir.

Researcher So, take me through a year of ____ from, you know, the beginning of the year all the way through show car season and the end of the year show was that look like how what is the process?

All three choirs have a camp with a choreographer.

At the beginning of the year, the large mix is the earliest we start the week after the 4th of July.

We will have a week of music camp to learn the literature, and then we will have a week with our choreographer.

That is all before school starts.

After we get into school ladies' choice.

That is my girls' group.

They get their show music right up front.

First week of school too.

We learn their music, as do the men's group, so they will learn music in class for the first couple of weeks, and then we bring their choreographer in later in August, and they will have a week of camping, each with their choreographer.

So now we are at the end of August.

Everybody has their show, their competition, show their music and.

Choreography by the end of August.

Then we will Start learning concert literature for events and Christmas.

And we are working.

We will work musically in class most every day on fall concert, music, and Christmas.

All concert comes up in late September.

Christmas concert is couple weeks before we get out for Christmas break.

We are also Fridays all the way through the fall.

Fridays are reserved for competition.

Show just to.

Keep it going.

So, we call it full out Friday.

They must bring their dance attire and whatever.

And we will we.

Will do full out music and or vocal music and or choreography on Fridays.

We hit the ground running after Christmas.

We will sometimes have a full day rehearsal before we get back into school to get everybody up to speed on the.

On the competition shows we have access to our auditorium at that.

So, we will have.
We will hold all of ours.
All of ours.
January, February rehearsals are in the auditorium.
And they are all 100% choir competition show.
Until about mid-season.
OK
And then about mid when we have been to two or three competitions and.
We are ready for a change.
We will give out the.
Concert portion of the Spring concert music to them and start.
Working on that.
Just to give them something else to be doing because everybody is sick of the show
by then.
So, we end our season with our contest is late.
So, it is usually it is always the last contest that we go to and then we do a thing
called the show for showcase the next week which is our last public showing at home
of the competition show.
And from there out, it is all about spring show.
We bring in.
No, I am sorry, we do not bring anybody.
That is one of my dance captain's responsibilities is they must produce, they pick the
music, and they teach their own choreography to the spring show.
So, I am directly involved with the concert portion of the Spring show.
We will work that two or three days a week and I will turn it over to the dance
captains and give them.
Two or three days a week to work there for everything.

Researcher OK

Participant Spring showing is about a week before school's out, and then it all starts over again.

Researcher You have the show choirs and all your groups.

Curricular and extracurricular.

Is that correct?

Participant We meet every day in class and each group has.

Hour and a half to two-hour time slots.

After school one day.

Researcher OK, so you just have one extracurricular per ensemble each week.

So just one extracurricular per week per ensemble.

Is that correct?

Participant Yes, until we get into January where we are really getting ready for the season, we
will, we will throw in two or three extra rehearsals after school for all the ensembles.

Our first couple of competitions.

After school rehearsals.

Are mostly band related.

We can do everything we need to.

Do in class.

From a choreography and vocal standpoint, so we spend 90% of our time with those after school rehearsals, working band volumes and balance and so forth in the auditorium with our ensemble.

Researcher OK, alrighty. So yes.

Participant And stage crew we when we.

We have been known to do some elaborate theatrical.

Sorry we got.

Researcher No, it is OK

Participant It is also protected.

They grew, they.

We worked them hard on those money in two square school too.

Researcher OK, so how do you discuss?

Participant We do not meet.

In class with the bands or the tech groups, that's.

Researcher OK

All right, how do?

You discuss choral technique with your choreographer.

Participant I have the best choral choreographer in the business with _____, and that has never been an issue.

Researcher Right.

Participant He would be more likely to discuss it with me than I would him.

I mean, Man's got master's in jazz and classical literature is up.

Researcher Right.

Participant It is, you know, in his background.

And so that has never been an issue.

It is a little more of an issue with my choreographer from California with my girls' group.

But she again, I have never really had to **** heads with her on anything.

She knows when.

To keep them.

Posture in singing position and you know when she can let loose so.

I cannot answer that.

Because I do not.

Think I have ever addressed it.

Researcher OK, so how does show design come into play and how is it so important to your show choir?

Participant Show design is everything in my book

I got bored with typical show choir shows about.

25 years ago.

Not bored with.

Watching other people's typical show car shows but bored with doing typical show car shows where you are just.

Screaming, smile, smile, smile and face the audience and heads up and that kind of stuff.

And wondering which sequin dress to change out of and which one to change into and.

It just became tedious and boring to me, so I early on developed a need within myself.

Take a more theatrical approach to it, where the kids can take on the personalities of their characters on stage rather.

Than just being a.

You know, a singer in a in a.

In a jazz move or something.

So, I forgot what the question was, but.

Researcher So how important is show design and show choir?

Participant Show design like I said is very I must have a show that I can get that I a storyline that I can get behind and sell to the kids.

And a storyline that I believe that they will buy into.

We go as far as.

Depending on what the show is.

I make them right as part of their weekly grade.

I make them write biographies of their character.

What is going on in their life?

What brought them where they are and where they want to be.

Give themselves a name, and sometimes we even go as far as to.

Refer to them.

As that name during the show.

So, finding ways to make the kids buy into it, I think is directly related to show design.

Researcher Now, are you solely producing show design, or do you have a team that you throw ideas?

At the wall and.

See what sticks.

How does that work?

Participant Sometimes I make a hole.

In the wall, I have thrown so many.

Things against it produce anything.

He has been a.

God send in that area because he is very theatrically trained and that is his.

That is his wheelhouse as well.

I always produce the general thesis of the show.

Sometimes I produce the entire show.

I have produced the entire show before and never shared it with anyone until the first.

Day of camp.

But often.

I have, you know, I have a few adults that I can bounce things off, like mine to my assistant director.

I have let.

Is stuck and my girl group is good about that.

Some of the best girl's groups shows that I have produced have not really been what I have produced.

My girls have produced sometimes around, you know, time in mid, mid contest season when you are trying to figure what you are going to do.

Next year and.

The kids are tired of.

Hurting the same show, I will.

Give them a day.

And we will brainstorm.

My favorite girl show that I have ever done we called nineteen and it was related to the 19th Amendment in women's rights and women's suffrage, and they threw that.

Early and by the end of that class period we had, we had put that whole.

Show together you.

Know the Bruce and.

I so it happened.

In different ways.

Researcher Well, aside from show design, can you discuss like how you utilize visual design in your show to convey the message or the theme of your show?

Participant Well, well, like I said, we have been known to use elaborate sets and sometimes the. Set feels part of the story.

Researcher Right.

Participant Sometimes that it is just a backdrop.

I like using the set as a backdrop sometimes because I.

Have regroups if I just have one group.

I could like it when it was an album and had one major.

Group that competed my JV group competed on a lesser level and did not really matter what their backdrop was.

So, I put all my energy into that one.

Set for center stage.

Here, having three competitive groups, we just we do not have the truck manpower wherewithal, money, or anything to produce three elaborate.

Sets, so that has been a challenge.

Researcher Right.

Participant In love itself, to try to figure out how to morph one set into another into another and use the same basic setup for three groups and make it look like three different things.

So that can be that can be a challenge and a hindrance too.

It has hindered me from going all out with some would like to have gone out with here, but you know.

You just cannot put that much effort into one group if you are.

Right.

So, the set tells an important part of the request costuming, and I have also been fortunate to have the lady for years.

Been willing and.

Able to make.

Period type costumes for us when we needed them.

I very rarely.

Require vendors for costuming, I ordered.

I was ordering stuff from China before Amazon came around.

And now even.
When you order from Amazon, you are still ordering from
China, but I.
I have been known to.
China, China, and Asia in general, and.
It's got cool guy.
Get it here.
But it is hard.
To get it through customs sometimes but.
Anyway, I do different.
Costumes trying to save but here and there I am.
I mean, we wear pants from Walmart.
We do not, you know, I unless I need a fancy constant for a for a character for a
period piece.
We are cheap on constant.
But you know, you got to tell the story if you are if you are going.
To go all in with the with.
The with the concept show it is.
Through the customs and set.
Do you ever feel like sometimes that visual design takes over and kind of is a
distraction from the choral aspect of things in choke wear?

Researcher

Participant

I feel like I feel like when.
When the group started going to television screens.
Large DVD backdrops and such.
That was a distraction for me in in, in watching this now I have used them myself.
But I have never tried to fill up.
The back wall.
With TV, where you are so distracted watching what is going on back there that you,
you miss out.
What is going on?
In the stage.
I have always tried to use the TV's as just a static background. Maybe it moves
slowly, but it is not that in your face.
Looks like you are.
Walking down 5th Ave.
Right.
So yes, I think the video stuff has been a distraction for the last 10 years or so.
I do not feel like this the set.
Has ever taken over?
In my case, this like I said, some shows require more than others.
I find it I do not put something up there.
That is not necessary for the show.
My Wonka show my favorite show that I have ever designed.
I had to kill all four kids and the backdrop demanded that there be four sections of
that backdrop that could kill the kid.
So that was that was a lot of fun designing how that was going to happen.

Putting Mic TV into a.
Into a television screen and sending down the down the chute and all that kind of
stuff.

So, we had a very interactive that is my most interactive set that.

I have ever done.

And probably the one I am most proud of.

But no, it.

Did not take over the show.

It was a very necessary part of the show.

The set is an actor.

And just like any actor, can steal the show, I guess the set can also.

So, you just must be careful how you use it.

Researcher So, what is your process?

Moving away from show design and visual design, what is your process for getting
musical arrangements for your show?

Participant Four or five really good quality arrangers that I have just relied on through the years.

The process is usually.

Is me taking existing music and mashing it up, cutting it up the.

Way that I want it.

Getting it into the hands of my arranger and saying, you know.

What this is how?

I want it to happen.

I need a little.

I need you to fill in eight measures here.

I need two measures of drums here.

I need a dance break.

I do not know what to do here.

If you can produce sixteen measures, you know we will talk through it like that and.

Is the one that I've.

Used in most years, he is very good.

At taking mine.

Ideas and putting it into something that works.

The best arranger out there, I think by far, is _____.

So much so that my show this year, this coming year, my mixed group show, I went
with _____ catalog and just picked songs.

That he had already done.

That made sense to go together, and then I put the story together like and I put the
story together after I picked the songs.

I have never done that before, so that's.

That is a new way.

But I wanted.

To use his music because it is.

Such good quality music.

And I got a good crop of singers coming along this year that I think is going to be
able to really.

Do that but and that's also part of the process too is.
Knowing who your singers are, you are going to have the next year.
And I tell the kids this when they audition.
I will tell them.
All right, I have this show.
Four solo parts.
And when I do a show, it is not just somebody coming front and just singing a solo, it is.
Somebody acting out the part of.
Abraham Lincoln, or you know, whatever, and they are going to have solos related.
To that part.
And I have never done any blinking, but I am an example.
If I were going to do an.

Participant And we are back.

Researcher If I am if I am.

Participant Going to do a show that requires a blinking.

Then I really need a six-foot six kid, skinny 6-foot six kid who can sing and so.

Just you must know your kids, are you still?

There I cannot see you, but.

Researcher Yes, I am here.

Participant Yeah, I see you.

You got to know what kids you got to.

Choose from when you when.

You design the show and I tell the kids.

Researcher We are good.

Participant And we are back again.

I will tell the kids that that I designed this show and.

I will go so.

Far as far as to tell them, you know, I have.

I have so and so in mind for the part.

But auditions are open to anyone.

But I must know that I have somebody who can cover that part.

So, I do not get stuck having spent all summer developing a show, building a set, and getting costumes together and then find out that I got nobody that.

Can play a game so.

That is part of show development as well.

Knowing your kids, knowing what they can.

Do and then that goes back to the arranger, you know.

The arranger and I will have the conversation will can your cell always hit a high G so that that determines a lot of time, determines the key and.

Then then you are.

Then you are in to ban, you know, the band part.

Well, my soloist needs this in the key of.

G flat but my trumpet players are second year high school trumpet players.

They are not going to play.

In that case, so.

You know so many.
 Perimeters talking with you with your arranger about how to put.
 A piece of music together.

Researcher So why do you feel like?
 Choir is such an asset to public secondary school music education.

Participant Well, the schools that have not discovered so far, I.
 Do not know what they are missing.
 It is a recruiting.
 I see I see all directors on the forums all the time complaining about.
 You know they are cutting.
 My class size, they are cutting me down.
 I cannot get boys.
 I cannot get.
 Kids to commit.
 To and they are doing concert quite.
 You will get kids to commit the show choir, and then you can give them concert.

Researcher Right.
 So why do you think?

Participant OK
 And this guy seems off the last question.

Researcher Why do you think that there's so few show choirs and public secondary schools?

Participant I am sorry you broke up halfway through that.
 Say that again.

Researcher Why do you think there are so many like few schools that have a show choir program
 in public secondary schools?

Participant Because most choir directors do not get it and they do not want to get it.

Researcher OK

Participant They have been brought up with classical.
 They went to college and were.
 Classical literature they might have had the opportunity to sing in a jazz group, and
 they might have even done a little soft shoe routine along the way, but that is as far as
 they have gotten in so far, and they fear.
 It is.
 It is fear of the unknown.

Researcher Is it time and funding or?

Participant Well, it, it goes back to the director I.
 You can do it without the funding to start with and the funding will come when the
 once this once the school system, school board principals, everybody gets on board.
 If you get if you if.
 You get a system with a.
 Successful show part going to the.
 The administration is going.
 To get on board big time.
 And then funding is less of an issue and structuring the classes is less of an issue and.
 And getting whatever help you need is best an issue, but the director must take that
 step.

The program that has never had a show far before that director and that director has never done so far before, which I would say is most of the schools out there. That director has no idea what steps to take. The kids have no idea what he or she is asking for, and everybody is afraid of committing to anything because they are afraid it is going to be a.

Researcher So how have you?

How have you funded and sustained your programs throughout the years?

Participant I took on a philosophy early on of I hate fundraising.

I hate everything about fundraising.

But it is a necessary evil.

So, to appease myself.

I produced one fundraiser with expensive items on it.

And I pitched it to the parents and the kids, and I said, I promise I am not going to send you out with suckers, candy bars, T-shirts, lanterns, candles, you name it.

We are not going.

You are not going.

To be asked to do anything else.

But you are going to sell these cheesecakes like?

And when I go to the fundraising company, I have them make the brochure for me.

They will do that.

Most people do not know the fundraising company will tailor A brochure for you.

And in my brochure, I.

Do not allow them.

To have anything on it less.

Than \$20.

Because I know you with your typical brochure, you got \$20 items, but you have also got \$5 items and seven-dollar items and \$2.00 items and somebody is going to buy from that kid next door.

But they do not want what kids.

So, they are going to get the \$2.00 thing, and that way they can pat themselves on the back and say we help the kid out and we gave them two dollars.

You know that's.

It so my kids go out their minimum threshold is sometimes eighteen but eighteen or \$20.

So, if they make a sale, it is.

Going to be eighteen or \$20 and.

That is our only.

In this past.

Year we made we made 20.

Right at about \$20,000 profit.

On that one sale.

And I, you know, you look around, I would. I would bet you that most choir programs that are doing the candy bars and the suckers and all that stuff, they may be bringing in \$20,000, they are doing a dozen sales to do it.

The other thing we came.

Up with is.

We cleared \$24,000 in sweets and songs this year.
And that is a win, win for everybody in the system that that brings in our elementary schools.
Describe it before you want me to.
Since you know what it is I want.
I want if you do not want me to, but you are bringing in kids from kindergarten.
Eighth grade we were not in choir.

Researcher Right.

And they are putting on the show, and their moms and dads do their show.

Participant Competition shows profit share with the elementary schools. So, every time we make \$1000, they.

Make \$1000.

Researcher And for everyone.

Participant So, if it goes.

Back into their youth programs.

And the administrations love it.

The parents love it.

Kids love it, and it also provides we do it.

The week before our first competition, we do four of them.

We do a Friday night or Saturday, matinee, a Saturday night, and Sunday met my kids get four times and do full out dress before it sits in front of the audience before we put them in front of the judges on that following Saturday.

It is a win, win, win, win.

That is the greatest thing it has ever been.

Is that sweetheart?

Researcher And do you feel like it is?

Participant Do you feel like it is also recruitment?

Your question was about funding we try.

To keep our farm fees as low as possible.

But that is the trifecta of our funding. I mean, we bring in money from, yes, from our Christmas shows and our spring shows, we do charge a door admission there and we will bring in a few \$1000.

But 90% of our funding comes from those three sources, sweets and songs, cheesecake sales, and choir piece.

Researcher So, do you utilize like suites and so on as a recruitment tool as well?

Participant I am telling you; it is from every direction you look at switching songs.

He is you are a second grader.

You come to sweets and songs, and you are going to.

Watch the high school show choirs.

After you do your show, you are going to want to do their show.

Mom and Dad are going to.

See them do their show.

So that when this kid gets to the same, say, mom, I am going to try and show for our moms already been to five or six show for our competition since you were in second grade.

Researcher So, what is the process in starting a fundraiser like suits and songs like is it a bunch of delegation?

How does that work?

Participant Well, we started it from scratch.

It was apparent suggestion when I was at _____.

I had we were.

We just had we were trying.

To figure out how to get our funding.

More up to speed where we needed it and.

One of me at a round table meeting suggested a spaghetti.

Supper Dinner theater, where we would do.

Our sort of where?

We premiere our competition show from the show.

And so sweet songs.

Came about from that it was.

Supposed to be a spaghetti.

Supper and someone along the.

Way and we decided that spaghetti.

Was too much treble and everybody could just.

Bring books and cookies and cakes and.

So we went that direction.

We did not have an auditorium or any space to perform in at that time.

The elementary school had a stage that was not big.

Enough for us.

But we turned the stage.

We turned our set around and did it backwards in their big lunch.

And set up round tables and sold.

At that time, you.

Couldn't just pay to get in?

You had to buy a table.

The way we first structured it.

We called them corporate tables and they were like an advertisement for like 180 dollars.

You know, some company would.

Sponsor a table and give out eight.

Seats to their employees.

Researcher OK

Participant We in the.

First evening with, you know, solos and kid could play guitar.

They would do that.

We, you know, it was kind of a song and dance thing and then that culminated with the premiere of our competition show for our show.

It is progressed and simplified now to.

The point that.

All four of.

Our competitive so far is we have we have a middle school competitive so far.

So, there's forum, they all perform.
At all four shows and then we have a lot of elementary schools in our system.
So, we will do two or three elementary schools at each show.
So, each elementary school performs once or and the middle school also performs
that are not there so far.
There will be.
There, they are all two hours plus long because of the.
Kind of kids that we got performing, but.
You know you start where you can.
I think I; you know, I do not remember the exact number.
But first year we did it, we may have, we may have made three, \$4000 but the.
Difference in you?
Know those days are.
Now clearing 24,000 is.
Is night and day.

Researcher So, who coordinates sweet songs?
Is it you or is?

Participant It parents and you just oversee it.
I am not only big in delegating.
Student responsibilities. I am big.
In delegating parent responsibilities, we force.
Our parents to.
Serve on yearlong committees.
We have \$150.00 parent fee.
That we charge in addition.
To the so far fee.
We do not charge those parents 150.
Dollars as long as they.
Serve on their committee for the year.
We will have a dozen share at the end.
Of the year.
That will not lift the finger to do anything, and they get charged 150 dollars and that
is fine. That is money in our coffers for the next year.
But you know we 80%.
Of our parents.
Serve on some kind of committee and one.
Of the committees.
And sweets and thongs, one of.
Travel, you know, they oversee booking hotels and making sure the chaperones.
Are on the buses and.
Kind of thing we have.
We have a.
Competition committee, our Peach state so far petition.
You have a sweet science committee.
We basically coordinate the cheesecake sale.
Concerts committee they coordinate parents to take.

Up admissions at the door and to have chevrons backstage for the kids and bouncers at the back door to make sure people do not sneak in and that kind of stuff.

Have a costume committee.

I have a set committee, so every major aspect of the program has a has an adult committee that corresponds.

So, I do not know anything with sweet.

And soft they I perform when.

They tell me before, but I am totally trying.

Researcher Is every single parent if they do not participate in committee charge.

\$150.00.

Ohh wow OK

And do you make any money from that, or do you do you have parent involvement where that is not an issue, and you are not having people pay \$150.00?

Participant Most of our parents do not have to pay.

I think we had about ten that had to pay this year.

Do not budget that money because I never know until the end of the year how many parents.

Going to end up paying the money.

Researcher Right.

Participant But it is nice.

It is a nice little chunk at the end of the year to have to start the next year with.

OK

Researcher Well, what is your advice to future?

Participant And it does not have to be apparent.

We are as fair as we can be about that.

It can be.

It can be an older sister or brother.

It can be a next-door neighbor, it can be an aunt, uncle, grandparent.

We call it a sponsor.

We call it an adult sponsor.

Researcher So, what is your advice to future concert and show choir directors?

Someone fresh out of college who has never been in a classroom before, never done show choir.

What is your advice to them?

Well, if they have a job and they are interested in starting a show choir, the very first

Participant and most important thing I would say do is get your principal to allow you to bring an excellent show choir to your school and do a show for the entire school.

While the iron is.

Hot sign them up.

Because I will.

Only group I ever.

Started when I came to ____.

It was an established show choir community already.

But I would have never started the _____ show choir.

Because I was that person out, fresh out of college, I was.

I was one step removed from that.

I was not even a choral major.
I was a trombone major, supposed to be a band director.
Fell into a.
Fire able had never had a choir before and had never seen a show choir my life so.
My Superintendent, my first year that I was there.
Well, I tell you how my choir started.
I started in December because I graduated in December.
So, I started midway through the year, started in January.
They made a general announcement to the school.
First day of school and said if you have study Hall fourth period.
And want to be inquired.
To the office and sign.
Up I got eleven kids.
I had eleven kids in me.
Car this first year.
At the end of that year.
My Superintendent went to a superintendent's conference in ____.
And a show choir performed, and he thought he had seen Jesus, and he came back,
and he got that same show choir that performed there.
He got them to come and perform at album before we went to the Coliseum, brought
every kid in the school to the Coliseum.
And he wanted to show them that choir.
He did, and I was standing with him.
We were both watching the show for keep him on this first time I had ever heard of
show choir never seen or heard of.
OK
A show choir before and so he leans over to me, and he says you are going to have
one of these next years.
And I said, I have been teaching a total of three months at that time.
I said OK, well, you just tell me how and.
After that choir performed.
They had; they had a general.
Sign up for.
The school for.
Kids and said, hey, if you like what you saw today, we are going to have.
One of these.
Next year come sign up I had.
Eighteen kids that came and signed up, nine boys and nine girls believe.
It or not?
I know there was a lot of luck in that because it was eighteen of probably the most
talented kids, I have ever had in 38 years.
We did this show choir that next year.
And performed for every.
Church and school, and you name it.
Still have never seen anybody else's show choir.
Except for that one.

So, we just kind of made it up as we went.
I had a local dance studio teacher who volunteered her time to come and.
Teach us some choreography.
It was at the end of that year that I found out.
That that show choirs competed.
I said, hey, let us try that.
So, we signed up for the ____ Show Choir competition. We went, they scheduled us
at 7:30 in the morning.
We were the first group, of course, cause nobody ever heard of.
Us nobody knew.
Who or went on stage?
Still, having never seen another show car because us.
Were the first show choir and me.
Had I had no idea what the other show?
Cars were going to look like sound like whether they were going to.
I had no clue.
I mean, we were just going to go and.
Do our thing and do it.
And that was the catalyst that started the whole thing.
We came back with trophies.
I had enough kids the next.
Year for two show choirs.

Researcher Do you remember what the show choir was that you saw?
The first show choir show that that principle brought.

Participant Yes, it was.
Yes, it sure it was, it was.
It was directed by ____.
What was his last name?
Cannot remember his last name.
He is deceased now, but.
He had it was.
It was a statewide group it.
Was called the Alabama Choral explosion.
And the entire the entire reason for that group to be they met in, they met down
around Montgomery.
And he would have practices with him like once a week, couple times a month,
whatever.
Their purpose was to go out to schools and be _ for choir.
And I do not know how much effect if he had any effect anywhere else in the state
but him.
Is he being the entire reason that Albertville is what they are and that I have had the
career that I have had.
Because of the Alabama Choral explosion.

Researcher And do they still exist today or have you?

Participant No, they do not.
They have been.

Gone probably 20 years.
Researcher Well, thank you for your timing.
Participant One of my students early on went and.
It has been a pleasure.
Researcher No, just finish your statement.
You cut off.
Participant So, I thought you.
Researcher It has been a little touch and go but.
Participant Well, I was.
I was just going to say that one of early on, one of my students went an audition for the.
Alabama Choral explosion and.
Performed in it, but when it.
Was still active, so sort of went full circle.
Researcher Well, thank you for your time and willingness to share with me today.
Is there anything else that I did not cover that regarding to the topic of keeping choir and choke where that you would?
Like to add.
Participant I think you have exhausted me pretty much.
Everything I know.
Researcher Well, I will send you a transcript in the next.
Couple of weeks.
For you to check over, make sure that I have represented your words accurately, but also as an opportunity for you to add or strike anything.
That you would like to strike from the comments that you made if needed, I may ask for a brief short zoom follow up interview just to be sure that your thoughts are accurately represented in this study and thanks again for everything you've been a great mentor for me along this journey, so I appreciate it and look forward to more conversations regarding show choir with you.
Well, good luck to you and.
Your season this year?
Researcher Thank you so much.

Participant 10 Transcript

Researcher Thank you for volunteering your time to be a part of this study.
It is greatly appreciated the purpose of this study is to learn how a select group, A public secondary school choir, and show choir directors from various regions across the United States incorporate core methods in their respective competitive show choir programs.
So first, can you briefly describe a little bit of your educational experience regarding music?
Participant How far back?
Researcher Just start with undergraduate and then the present day.
Participant OK
Well, I went.

I started out at ____ State Junior College just because I did not know what I wanted to do.

And I am put music theory for fun.

Just because that's.

What people do when they have not a lot of music background.

They do not know what they are doing, but anyway I ended up loving it.

I went to ____.

Study with Dr. ____ at ____ and it was the greatest thing had an amazing voice teacher there at the time.

He was an artist in residence, and he was a. Retired professional opera singer. And just completely changed everything for me. And got done with that I.

I took a little break before I started teaching, before I finished my degree and that is, so I went and worked at the church for a while. But then I finished, and I started teaching that you.

Follow high school. So, you want me to keep going about like you know.

Researcher Yes, Sir. Keep going.

Participant You are going to have to keep me in here.

Researcher You are fine.

Participant What do you follow? And I had you follow. We are on straight block scheduling.

And I had three classes, and one was a concert choir.

One was a like a Parel type choir.

The top group.

And realistically, the teacher that I replaced let too many people in it to let it be. I mean, it was there thirty-six people there. And I am thinking that does not feel ensemble is. But OK, we will

Make it work.

And then I had a.

Oh, I had four classes.

Yeah, I had a musical theater class.

I made me teach, and then I had a class.

How should I say?

Come one, come all.

But realistically, it was just we are going to put these kids in your class and.

I went into my first day of that _____ group and I said, what would y'all think about being a show choir?

And they just looked at me and they said, what is that?

And I said, well, you singing you dance.

A little bit.

And they were like, OK, we will try it.

So that is where that began. That was in ninety-eight.

Researcher Now what prior experience did you have in show choir to give them that?

Participant Well, when I went to enterprise, I was on a concert choir scholarship.

And then I watched the show choir there at ____ state.

And I thought.

They are having too much fun.

I need to be a part of that.

So, I did it next year and.

We also did some joint concerts with ___ High School at the time and ___ being the director and I just was like.

I kind of love this.

And so, when I was auditioning for scholarships.

At Auburn, Alabama, and Montevallo, I got scholarships to all three schools for voice, but something about AU singers just made me think.

Do you know what?

I like this show choir stuff.

I like what it does.

I like how it has made me feel and I want to make other people have that same kind of feeling.

So, I was in au singers for four years.

And at the junior college, I also did some musicals, which is, you know, I would say a musical is just off the exit of show choir.

Researcher OK

So Fast forward.

You present this idea to them.

And what happens next?

Participant Well, they just they take it in and do it and like.

I said, well, let us go to ___ Jazz Festival, which was.

You know, it was just like the contests of today, except you had to sight read.

And it was more about getting superiors just like it would be at District Festival.

And so, I took the kids there and we, our costumes were these polos. No, no, no. It was not polos. We wore T-shirts and blue jeans.

And we went early in the day, obviously, because we were a new school.

I mean, a new show choir.

And it was just funny.

They had the best time.

A great job.

Got all superiors?

We were, you know, sight reading we made like a ninety-nine but.

You know, so it was good it.

Was a good day for us.

But we are watching.

We are watching the big group start.

And ___ goes and ___ goes and ___ and ___.

What is the funny part was the parents were like I from the groups we have seen up until this point.

I think we might win.

I said just wait.

We will talk a little.

But you know, I am.

I have never been one to be like, I think we might can win, folks.

Right.

I am a like a I know what is out there.

Know what our ability is.

But the kids I had the like, kind of the leaders of, like, the younger the leaders, like the sophomores and juniors sitting by me whenever the big group started going.

And two of them looked over at me and said, what do we have to do to become that?

And so, I.

Said, well, we must work hard, and we got to commit.

OK, we are going to do that.

And so, you know, we walked away from that pumped.

And then the next year, we went a little bit farther.

And did you have costumes that some of the moms made the costumes?

And then we went to Chicago to a like a not a festive all, but one of those kinds of things that the standard contest.

We went with the band.

The kids were good that year and they won ___ Jazz Festival in the third year.

It was just funny because we are at this thing and all these people getting called out for their awards and they had only one gold award for all the bands and choirs, and it was us.

So, you know, the kid that is all the kids need needed they were, they were like.

So, then the next year and that year that year?

So, I stepped it up a little. Every year we went from jeans and T-shirts to having some costumes for the next year. We had we hired a professional choreographer.

Still did stock charts because you know the customer arrangements were a bit newer at that point.

But _____ was always the one that Scott, you must do your own charts.

You cannot show up and have the same things that people are doing.

I said all right.

So, then the next year, which is where we went, and we got some rivers dresses.

And I mean, we were.

We thought we were something else.

We had fancy.

Dresses and a custom show and.

And they did well.

They won Jazz Festival again.

They came in third place at _____.

But it was funny because it was behind enterprise at that point was just so good and pedal beat us by like .25 and pedal was like in their hay day during that point. And it just was a, you know, it just gave them a lot of a lot of confidence.

And we did musicals every year I was there too.

So those kids were the same kids that I had the musical.

So, I felt like every time.

I was teaching them.

We were getting just better and better and one of the reasons we could.

Build so quickly is the kids in there.

They were because we are on a straight block.

They had to commit a fourth of them.

High school to me.

You know, they had to take an hour and a half of me every day all year.
So just having that kind of time with the best kids in the school, it was just golden.
At that point.
___ principal, who I went to college with.
His son I.
Mean not, not the principal Superintendent they were looking.
For a new choir director.
And his best friend was the assistant Superintendent at ____, and he said we are
getting ____
And he said no, he is going to.
Stay here and.
He came after me and he like.
They had such a great.
Facility and they had a great program.
So, I left you fall and went to ____.
And they had had kind of an off year or two.
Just circumstances over, there were a little wonky when I got there, and I walked in
and.
They it was a tough group of kids.
I mean, they were great kids.
But you know, the new guys always going to be scrutinized.
They we had success we won homewards competition.
We did thriller and that is just the thing.
If you ever see the DVD cases on for Pro Cat, it is still that year.
Thriller is still on the front of that thing.
It is in.
It is crazy but.
Yes, that was a good year, a learning year I had there, I taught.
We had a.
An ensemble and we had a concert choir, and we had a girl's concert choir girl show
choir and.
The mix show choir and I that at _____ we had an alternate day block, so I would
see them every other day.
We had red days and black days.
Learned a lot about myself that year, just from a.
The grass is not always greener.
I mean, I was.
I loved you, Paula.
You fall was too small for me.
Open like it was.
It was just a different environment.
And it is my first, I guess part of the wonkiness of ____ was I was at a weird age
because I was in my early thirties.
So, you have a bunch of college kids around you, you know, always around, and you
are too young to be hanging out with all the parents.
The old people, you know, it was just a weird field, you know?

You lived in Albertville.
So, at that point, _____ was coming open, and _____, who is now at _____, she was pregnant and her husband's a meteorologist, is a radiologist or a meteorologist.
He is a weather doctor now.
He is a radiologist and.
She just she was like, I am going to go.
Be a mom.
And so, say, are you interested in in applying for this?
I said absolutely.
So, I did that and.
Moved up here to _____.
And _____ high school has always pretty much been a show choir.
School starts in the middle school.
I mean, there is some, there are some concerts.
Choir type things.
Concert choir was such a huge part of my life.
At that point that I was thinking ohh am I going?
To be happy.
And I was on a 7-period day.
But when I got here, I cannot remember what I taught.
I taught.
The mid show choir.
The girls Show Choir I had a.
Ninth grade because ninth graders, it was, ___ was weird.
We had a seven-period day, but the ninth graders were kind of on a model.
They went from middle school, where they were on a block schedule.
To this strange little modified block, so they were only with the normal that they were.
They were not with the normal kids except for like two periods a day.
I had a girl's ensemble of ninth graders and of boy's ensemble of ninth graders and.
Who knows what else I taught?
There is no telling.
I cannot remember.
That was 20 years ago.
As that developed, you know the first two years.
Tough they were tough because I had people who did not want to believe.
I knew what I was doing.
You know the seniors anywhere you walk in as a new guy there, they question you.
Regardless of how much success or not successful, how not successful they were prior to you getting there, they suddenly were much more successful than you remember them being.
So, get through those two years, I get to move into my whole thing was I wanted to start a concert choir too.
But every time I tried, they the administration would kind of push back on me a little bit from a.
I had to.

Have a come.
Come all concert choir.
It was very similar to the one I described it you follow.
It was kids that, I mean they did not want to be there.
They got put there.
And so, I knew I could not call it a concert choir or the whole.
Concept of concert required just gets solidified in everybody's mind, so I had to play around with that ultimately.
That went away just because.
As I, as we have progressed and got more competitive and got to be more.
Involved, you know, I was by myself all those years until six years ago.
I was by myself.
And then in the meantime, we had enough people wanting to be in show choir that we had.
You know, our whole.
Third show choir pop up.
So, it just took up all me.
Time and then.
You know, they would.
They would use me in places like they needed because I am a big guy.
They would need me to go and help supervise in school suspension and then I got my master's in counseling, and they said, well, you are you have a master's in counseling.
We want you to supervise this study skills program, and I am like, yay.
And you know, it is just progressed and we still we still in the first five years, we would still sing some concert music in our spring show, our fall show.
And we will, I know.
I saw your question, so I know we will talk about this more in a bit.
My thing is I teach show choir just as if it were concert choir teach the same technique.

Researcher So, let us discuss a little bit about your professional experiences.

Like have you performed professionally in chorales or while you have been teaching or is that something you have not done a lot.

Participant Of well, I have done some performing.

First, I sang in a professional gospel.
Quartet before I ever started teaching, and then after I started teaching, I did.
Its part time.
I have sung, I have sung in some of the community corrals around here.
I have done some theater.
I did theater with a.
Red Mountain, which is an equity theater.
I also while I have been teaching you, I sing at Dollywood.
I sang in a country show which was, you know, singing and dancing and then I would sing back up for they would bring in like an old.
Opry member of the Grand Ole Opry.
And they come in and sing.

And in the in the between our sets of our show.
I would get out there and be the bass for them, you know,
That was a good time, but.
Yes, it is until I got to _____, they had they had a I have sung in like I sang in the
community chorus.
And you follow and here I have sung some, but it just it takes so much of your time
to do show choir that you at some point you have to start coveting time off.
And that is one of the things I am looking forward to in retirement is wait, I get to
sing for my own enjoyment again.

Researcher All right, so this last year, how many ensembles?

Did you direct?

Participant I directed this past year.

I directed two I have been directing three for years, but with having my assistant
_____ as knowing he was going to take my place at the end of the year, I wanted him
to have a.

Supervised experience of an ensemble from the very start to the very end.

And so, I stayed out of his way.

I was there when he needed me, but so I just had two ensembles this year.

Researcher And both were competitive.

And where they single gender or mixed?

Or both things.

Participant Once the gender one mixed.

Researcher So, let us get to the instructional approaches during rehearsals.

What does the rehearsal look like in your room?

First to acquire, particularly let us start there and then we could switch to concert
choir.

Participant OK, well, you know, I agree.

I greet them at the door.

That is the first thing that is the one of the most important things as a rehearsal for
rehearsal, is for them to know that you acknowledge them.

They get their folders and when the tardy bell rings, warm up starts and they
immediately have them.

They are few to be in their place, ready to go.

You do not have to yell at them.

Tell them it is time to start.

It is just it is gone.

You know, it is hard to.

I must think through like, OK, what?

We are working on music today or we are working on choreography.

So, we will still do the if we are working on nothing but choreography, we are still
going to do that vocal warm up as us as our ice breaker slash, you know, whatever
get you in the door, get you focused.

You know, we go right into it.

I am big about taking advantage of the time you have at school.

Because if you squander that away, that is more times you must ask those kids to be
away from other responsibilities.

So, I mean, my kids read music well.
 I am not going to say I do not have to pound out notes because I do.
 And I am stuck behind the piano a lot doing that, which is not a not what I want to be doing.
 It is for me a rehearsal.
 I because I am so ADD.
 I am very nitpicky on things, however.
 I do not allow myself to get stuck on like four measures of music.
 For 25 minutes.
 And one of the things I feel like has been a strength for me is I, I even when I am working on stuff.
 I am watching the kids, and I am seeing body language.
 And I see, oh, it is time for us to move on.
 Back to that tomorrow.
 Flexibility is key.
 Even if that may be what my whole goal was to get those four measures perfect, if I see it is not going to happen, I am not going to end a rehearsal.
 In a bad spot.
 We are going to end on something positive.
 It is a mixture of I mean that is that is pretty much that for that and concert where it is the same process.
 I will say that I.
 I am going to I say I want to be.
 I have always wanted to be efficient.
 But I have I am going to take time out to talk text with students because.
 You know, people forget that there is a whole set of words that is going along with what you are singing.
 And I want the kids to understand what they are singing.
 I want them to know like phrasing.
 If I am sitting here talking phrasing, I can have the line that says.
 I do not know.
 I am going to drink this drink.
 And what I will do is I will just talk to the kids, is how would?
 I say that.
 And so instead of worrying about the music line, think I am going to drink this drink?
 You know I am going to; I say always think of I drink, drink, drink.
 Verbs think nouns.
 Find out what is important, and that is how you can get the text across to people, and that is what we are supposed to do.
 I mean, I know we do it in a competitive setting, but at the same time.
 If people do not get anything out of it, is it worth doing?

Researcher So, do you have a specific uh like template for each rehearsal?
 Or does each rehearsal just vary?
 On whatever you are working.

Participant I will write on the board what we are going to be working on.
 Some days that is just exactly what we work on.

Some days I start one and I am just not feeling it, so I move somewhere else, and you know some kids I know that frustrates them because they are like, all right, we are going to work on this today and.

Then I just skipped over it.

Researcher Right.

But yes, I do not like.

I do not sit down and write out lesson plans of I am going to work on this, and I am going to.

I know what I want to do.

I know what I need to accomplish.

And I just must think Timeline, where do I need to be?

At what point of the year?

Researcher OK

So, talking a little bit about concert choir.

Does your instructional approach differ or is it just intertwined?

Do you do the same approach to consequence as you do to show choir?

Participant I do the same approach.

My philosophy sometimes is different when it comes to I am.

If I may I will just throw this out there.

If I am doing show choir the music is nothing more than a road map.

How can I get from A to B?

But I might want to stop over here and look at the trees for a minute and so I am going to.

I am going to take liberties with show choir music.

Not as much.

You know every now and then you might stretch a rhythm or do something, but and.

I loathe, hate, and despise when I am watching a show choir or judging a show choir and people like.

Give you all these internal consents.

Because show choir to me is.

Feeling it is all about feeling, and if I am going to say I feel better today.

Why would I say I feel better today?

That does not sound real.

That does not sound relatable.

It does not get across to people.

The in-concert choir.

I would probably sing.

I feel better today because it just it just feels right, you know, we are all classically trained first.

I was like I said, when I was talking about my music.

Degree, I went to ____ as a performance major and I my voice teacher wanted me to go to Europe and to get with some of his coaches and sing professionally and I am like.

No, that is not what I want to do, but I mean still that is where the training was, so.

It is still the same vocal technique; it is just the consonants and stuff like that.

Or just a little more.

Defined and not.

As easy to.

Researcher How much time do you spend on?

Vocal pedagogy in in the rehearsal.

Because you talked about the text and that aspect of rehearsal, but how much time do you spend on the vocal ped?

So, I think so.

Participant I would say that I would say that probably.

That is a hard thing to ask because I.

Feel like I really think that almost everything I am doing.

I am working on that.

I do not feel I do not feel like the kids know that when I am doing this and getting them to raise.

Their soft or I am bringing it to the mask and using this to take pressure off their vocal cords.

I am not giving them the.

I do not sit there and go.

OK, so I did that because I want you to understand, I want them to know that this means.

Oh, I got to raise this.

We work on, we work on support all the.

Time you cannot do show choir and not have a supported sound and be successful.

It is period it you would be.

You do not have that.

Researcher So, when you are warming up your concert choir is a different warm up than if you would be warming up your show choir.

Or is it?

The same warm up.

OK, so like, you are not curtailing your warmup to the sound that you want from a specific ensemble.

Participant I know, I know.

There are times that I will do things that I want not for ensemble, but if I know a song that is going to require something, I'm going to do something like if I know that I'm working on something that's just got a ton of text, I'm going to bring out a lot of things that are going to, you know, we're going to do a lot of warm ups that are going to kind of.

Researcher Right.

Participant Get their actuators or articulators going, you know.

Researcher OK

So, this next question is a bit of a lengthy one.

Take me through a year in the life of Mr.

From auditions in the beginning of the year to when there's graduation in May, what does that year look like?

What is the process if you can?

Kind of just give me the overview of your school year.

Participant OK

Well, I am going to give you that and then I am going to tell you a good story for which you can have.

The rest of you.

Life, first, it starts well before auditions.

Researcher OK

Participant As I am putting together next year's show as soon as I put that.

Show on the stage.

This year's been weird not having that.

As part of.

But you know.

I am the guy that stresses out and thinks that no one is going to audition every year.

No one is going to show up.

And they always show up.

You know, we have we have this year we had.

170 auditions.

With that, you know the process of auditions here is we they learn like 35 seconds of a dance.

And then they learn a song.

Four parts of a song like they learn.

They are part of a four-part song.

And they come in in quartets and they do their they do their dance a couple times and then they sing.

It is what it is, putting up the scores is.

Pretty terrible. I have 20% of their score.

So that helps me keep kids that do not need to be in from getting in.

But I always say it is I am not going to put a kid in.

Based off.

I like that kid.

You know, you got to you got to prove it.

I am not going to allow a kid that did the work all year in that group to not make the group.

I made them audition again just to keep them working, but I am not going to kick the kid out.

If they had a bad audition.

That was already in the group.

You know after that happens, you have the pouting that happens for a few days, and I will not allow them to quit.

I said emotions are going to happen.

Take time with it.

Talk to me in 2 weeks.

I am not going to give them feedback on why they did not make it.

I mean, I just, it is just I am not.

Because first, I am not going to remember it.

And if I tell one person, why did not make it?

Then I tell every kid why they did not make it and I just do not remember.

But I will tell you the main reason people do not make it is because they do not come in confident enough.

When you have that many kids, you must come off as just pure confidence.

You know, it all dies down them just all summer long.

I am trying to finalize this show.

We do it very.

We do it sort of strange, and I know it is not the ideal situation, but.

We get to school, and we work on any music we might have already.

I do not do any summer workshops with them.

I just do not they have plenty of show choir without do that, and our kids band wags the dog at home with high school.

So, they are, you know, they are in band camp 3 weeks before school starts.

So, I am just not going to do that too.

What ultimately happens is 1st of September, _____ comes and _____ works with the girls group.

_____ works with network, the mixed group, and then suddenly.

I mean, he has done with his stuff.

He starts helping _____ just to kind of because we must learn.

A 20-minute show in four days.

They do not come back ever after that; it is just Wham.

Bam, see you.

But _____ writes my arrangements unless I find something like I've last few years, I have gotten something at least one song from _____ that is on his list that I have not heard of one thousand schools do and.

And _____ typically writes my ballad.

But Dave writes all the other stuff.

_____ he, we learned a few years ago that he will not arrange it until _____ leaves.

So, we know the cuts are and she had not changed cuts in several years, but we, you know, one year he had arranged something and.

She got there and she was like, it just is not speaking to me.

I feel like it is not the right song and I just listen to it and cannot, like, lived with it for a day while she was there and.

Yes, she was right.

And so, we changed song.

And so, _____ had arranged that song, and it was just kind of stuck there.

So that is when we start kind of busting through the music.

As soon as he starts writing the stuff for us.

And it is harder from a standpoint of the kids are.

It is hard for them to sit still, they.

Want to dance?

But what I have found is they have listened to the original recording so long.

Right.

That they know the feel of the song.

And you know _____, don't you?

From what bonds of?

Course you do.

Which kind of one of my heroes in that I went to a session of his at SCA and he said.

Do not be afraid to let the kids sing the music.

Do not be afraid to let them sing to their original track.

I mean, it is just let them sing.

Stop trying to over produce everything and let them sing.

And that just changed my whole approach.

That is when we started winning.

And it is just because, you know, while they are dancing and they are hearing it, they feel the style together and you can pull off a lot.

Of stuff there.

You tread through, you know, September, October, November we do a fall show which we've we stopped some of the contest stuff so we can work on other stuff for that and.

And then we do that lovely show.

And then the next thing you know, it is Christmas, and we get back and we are busting it.

Researcher So, what is what?

Are you doing on your fall show?

Is it concert, choir music, or is it?

Participant No, it is shofar music and ballads.

You know, we have remembered who, what?

OK

The piece we did last year.

It was we did a concert choir piece last year, but it just depends on what there is.

Researcher So, you get to December and then kids go away for a couple of weeks and.

Participant And we come back the day before.

The day before we come back for the break from the break, we have a 12-hour rehearsal.

And I just get former students to come in and clean choreography for all three groups all day.

It ends up being really 10 hours because you do 3 hours and then you must have your lunch break and dinner break.

But that is a tough day for them.

But it is the day I tell them it is where we start to make it.

Start looking like stuff.

You know we go.

We only do one night rehearsal a week through the year in January. We pretty we pretty much do 2 a week just to you know I know some of these groups do like three and Saturdays and Sundays. What I have said to you earlier.

The harder your working class, the more you get it done.

We are, once you know, once we hit that first contest, we do that, we do we do a parent show two and two days before then we got that first contest.

And that is when you kind of know.

Because I always say it is it in my mind, I think.

We might be good, we might be.

Pretty good this year or oh.

Yikes. That is going to be.

OK

A tough year.

You know that first contest, and it is all subjective, but you kind of get the feedback more from the audience and the other schools and stuff kind of feel like, OK, it is pretty good.

And that determines how we still work.

Like we still work one night a week with each group at that point.

But it kind of determines where we are, how hard we are going to work.

Researcher How many hours are those extracurricular rehearsals?

OK

It is like in the evening in the evening, OK

Participant It is nap, yes.

Researcher All right, so you get into show car season and.

Start to wrap things up in choir season and then what is next?

Participant The second or third contest?

Yes, they are done.

Done with that.

So, we just move on and start just doing stuff for spring show and once again Spring show can be anything and everything.

It if we.

_____, I know last year _____ had a piece that he wanted to do.

A concert choir piece last year and.

He did it.

And it so that happens in our Spring show is in always like the third Sun, third Monday or fourth, third Monday of April, they try to get done before AP testing hits. Because once AP testing hits, you are done.

Plus, you know, when you have a lot of athletes.

In there and most of my athletes are soccer players and baseball players and softball players, and I just try to get done as quickly as possible so that does not get into the playoffs for them.

Researcher And then after pop show, are you all done or are you performing graduation?

Participant We sing at graduation Network does just the top group and.

This year, I mean, they are trying to cut it.

They cut it back this year.

We used to do two songs, but this year they only wanted one.

And I am like, just shut me out.

My last year.

But it really did make it go faster.

But yes, and we usually just do whatever ballad that I have done because most of the time my ballad are trying to.

I mean, they are pretty much all graduation songs anyway.

Researcher All right, so how do you discuss choral technique with _____?

Participant It helps that _____ studied under _____.

You know, she went to _____ and ran as a degree in choral music, Ed.

So, they understand vocal technique I this is my thing.
I do not want to ever micromanage.
A choreographer when they come into me.
They I have a face.
I know I have a face that says.
I am not happy, and they will ask me.
About it, if they ever see that, but the other side of that is.
When they leave.
I am smart enough to know we cannot do that.
Let us change it.
Sometimes I must, sometimes I must just in the beginning stages when we did not know each other that well, I would have to go.
That is just, I mean less is more sometimes.
But the key is when you have choreographer that understand vocal technique, it helps a lot and they do both saying and it's just.
It makes it to where you do not have to have that awkward conversation because I know some choreographers are just simply dancers and they will put them out there and have them.

Researcher Right.

Participant You know, doing pirouettes while they are holding a high eighty or something in them.

Yes. So, you.

Researcher Do not you do not sit in on the choreography camps and like, say,

Participant I sit in but.

I do not face anything.

Researcher OK

Participant I sit back and watch.

Researcher OK

So, you are very trust trusting of their expertise.

And I want you to.

Participant Yes, like I said, when they leave, if I do not like it.

Researcher You changed. I got you.

Participant It is just it the second someone.

They are going to shut down and they are going.

To dump it down.

They are it is it is about making sure that they know you trust them, and they trust you, and that pairing will then ultimately turn out some great stuff.

You know, there is always something we must change because, oh, we cannot physically do that in.

A dress or.

You know, these girls do have heels on.

We forget the.

Researcher Talk about show design and how important it is to create a show that has good show design.

Participant OK

Well, I think it, I think, yes, it is I feel like it is a sliding scale.

People with like story shows or this kind of show.
It is great. I love it.
But there is nothing on a score sheet that says this is what it is.
I just try to do my themes are always so loosely themed I have they are very specific
in my brain what they mean.
But I know my brain works differently than others.
So, I think that.
The show design for me show design wise for me what is important is.
It makes sense why you did that.
I think the old Midwest way of doing things was here are five songs opener, a
novelty number of boys, girls, ballad plus or six songs.
And it was fun.
You did not have to think.
And that is the that is the greatest kind of show choir for a popcorn eating audience
member.
I will watch some of these shows and I am.
Enthralled by like.
_____ so much and it is his shows are phenomenal.
And I watch them, and I go.
I wonder if that was supposed to be that, and I love that.
That is what it does.
But there are other people in the audience that just want to.
Eat popcorn and enjoy.
I do a project with my kids at the end of the year and have.
Them design shows.
Just because I want them to understand the thought process behind it.
And one thing I would tell him is like.
You know, you must like.
Think about your audience.
Member is going to sit and watch 17 minutes of music.
How are you going to keep them entertained so.
If I want.
If I have this, this kind of tempo opener.
I do not want my second number to be this right here unless it has a completely
different genre change or something it is like.
Last year, when I wanted the lyrics of eye of the tiger as my second song, so I started
looking up at different arrangements and found the _____ and it is all like big band.
And I said that's.
What you do?
Make it different.
You can still have the same the same song but find a cool arrangement that makes it
interesting for the audience, and it also makes it you got to think the judges that are
judging you.
If you are at the end of the day.
Have seen twenty show choirs that day.
They are grumpy.

And they do not want to.
Have BS thrown at them.
And then they are going to probably must do finals afterwards.
So, let us go watch those same things again.
The other thing that is important is and as far as show design is the length of each song.
It is OK to cut.
A verse in a chorus from a song.
It is OK Don't do 3 1/2 minutes of a song if your song's over 2 minutes and 15 seconds, it better be worth the two minutes and 30 seconds you are going to do it.
Then cut. You know it is just a.
So, from that standpoint, you get pace that is on the score sheet.
There are very few score sheets that have like entertainment value, or I like the story of your show or beautiful costumes.
You know it is.
I when I finished my show in the summer.
I listen to it over and over and over, and if I want to listen to it repeatedly, then it is a good show.
But I find myself looking to change it if I get to a song and skip it, or I just.
I am like, oh, I do not want.
To listen to it today.
I do not know if that answers your questions.

Researcher Well, yes, it is perfect.

So, talk to me about how you utilize visual design to convey your theme or your message of your show.

Participant As you know from seeing my shows over the years, I do not typically buy into backdrops as something you need to have.

I do backdrops when backdrops help.

I think that visually, the choreography and vocally having the music going at you should be able to convey everything.

You should never have to have something to convey your message.

I have seen some of the best shows have zero behind them.

_____.

They are shows in the day.

And they did not need something behind them.

Like I said, if it can, if it can accentuate what you are doing without distracting from what is important, and that is the kids.

When it when it take when I am watching TV.

He is instead of watching kids, then you might have done what you wanted to, but you have taken away from the very thing we came here for.

So, I think costuming can be an amazing asset and because costuming still is about the kids.

And that is what I am going to always go back to like.

Sure, I had a big clock this year, but it is because _____.

said, hey, we want to do a backdrop for you for your last year, I said I want a big clock because I was doing.

You know, in my mind, I was doing a whole wicked kind of feel thing, you know, I just wanted to.
 Feel that way.

Researcher So how do you feel about the direction show choir is going with visual design and the lights and the fog and?
 All the bigger the sets the better.
 How do you feel about that?

Participant I fear where it is going.
 Because what happens is people are so worried about visual design and having all the lights that.
 It is taking every contest that they go to.
 They are taking them by hostage.
 Because you watch.
 You know, you know what I am talking about when I say you perform. We had a critique. The kids went to change and got back, and it was still 25 minutes before the group after it started.
 It is getting to the point that you cannot keep a contest on time.
 No one in the _____ is the exception.
 No one else in the in the South has the facility to handle all this stuff.
 And it is just, it becomes offensive to an audience member.
 It becomes offensive.
 You know, as a judge.
 And it is I am sitting there, I am like, well, I got time to get a snack.
 It that should not be, and it just makes me nervous.
 It ultimately also sends the message the choir with the most money wins.
 And I do not like that.
 So, I do not like the little headset mics when people wear those for soloist, I am like.
 You I had the same amount of soloists.
 Get your kid to grab a microphone.
 It might be nice to teach them how to use the microphone.
 And then you are left wondering if they keep those microphones on.
 You know, while the ensemble singing just to fill it out and so.
 I feel like that visual is it, it is just scares me.
 I just do not know if it.
 I do not know where we are headed, but.
 I am glad that's part of.
 I will tell you, that's part of why I got it.
 I mean, I was ready to get out because I just thought I cannot do that.
 I am not going to get little lights that do all this and then inevitably, something goes wrong. Someone's TV's.

Researcher Right.

Participant Not going to work.

Researcher Right.

Participant There is going to be one TV that is not working or there is going to be one colored light that is different from all the other colored lights.
 And it just what?

Those things are not meant to be set up in 5 minutes and then a show be done.
That is not what that kind of lighting is.
Is set up for.

Researcher So, I know over the years show choir as it is grown in popularity there has been new rules and regulations that have come about.
Do you feel that implementing new rules may help?
In the future.

Participant I do if people would enforce the rules.

Researcher I think that, yes.

Participant Because those rules were in place at that very contest.
I was Speaking of; they were not enforced.
And some people are very good about that.
I cannot like at my contest.
I cannot very well.
Penalize somebody for time because I know that I have a challenging situation getting into that auditorium, however.
They knew what they were getting into when they got there.
I just I.
That people have.
It has just got to be enforced if you are going to make it a thing.

Researcher Because are we not awarding those who like you said, who have the money to spend?
I know of a group out in California that consistently went over time, but they called it.
Art. This is our art. I know our show is going to be 25 minutes.
And that does not incorporate setup.

Participant Right.

Researcher But it is art.
So, what would you say to a group that's kind of going against the grain?
And like, I know that you are going to implement these rules, but I am not going to follow them.
So, what would you say to a group like that?

Participant Do not come to my contest.
This is what I would say is I know another director that has that same mentality and he said to some people.
But that is not fair to hurt my kids.
That is hurting my children.
Well, what about the children that came in second place even though you broke the rules?
What is that saying to my kids?

Researcher It is OK to break the rules, yes.

Participant And it is saying it is saying.
That my kids are not important.

Researcher Right.
And the audience is telling the audience that.
They are not important.
So, art or not?

Their life has rules.
 Them follow them.

Researcher So, let us move on.
 Before we get into more hot water.

Participant I am not, I hope none of those people that I am talking about are going.
 Talk to me.

Researcher No, it is OK
 We can strike anything that you wish to strike from this conversation.
 So that will be OK
 What is your process?
 To get an idea for a show and you contact your arranger.
 So, what does that process look like in getting the music?

Participant Well, I basically I.
 Do not tell anybody.
 I mean, I only, I do not contact my arranger until I am ready to just, I just send him
 my music and say here you go.
 And Dave writes it to the point that he knows I am going to change.

Researcher OK

Participant A lot like, I think.
 But no, I think that.
 When I am doing it, it always starts with a ballad for me and that is where it all
 hinges from, so that I talked through with Lee just because I want her to understand.
 Because she writes from a place of like the soul that not most people do.
 And so, I want her to understand what is in my soul so she can, and she pulls it out
 every time.
 But with the other stuff, I mean I do not send my music to Dave until August and just
 say, you know, this is what we are looking at.
 Tell you what, _____ says afterwards.
 I am of course you know.
 I am a good boy and I go.
 To trace someone and pay them the many thousands of dollars I must pay them
 because that is what good people do.

Researcher Right.

Participant But yes, I mean it is just it is a pretty easy process, especially when you have an
arranger you have been working with 21 years.
 They know they know what you like.
 He knows what I like.
 He knows where.
 I do not want my kids.
 To me, that is where.
 Because he knows me, he knows I do not want Sopranos singing up around E's and
 F's.
 When they are going to be in a dance break in two seconds, because that's.
 Do not write me a closure that has my sopranos screeching.
 So, he writes it in such a good place for us because he knows how I want it done.
 And maybe a lot of younger directors are afraid to have that conversation without.

You do not want to insult an arranger.
But you, your Ranger needs to know what the ability of your group is.
I mean if you have mega sopranos, then ok, tell them.
So, I always tell _____ what my weakest what, who my weakest section is and.
He rides around that.

Researcher So, are you producing the idea yourself, or are you bouncing ideas off other people?

Participant No, I do it by myself.

I do not like to.

I do not want people to muddy my ideas now, done.

Researcher Right.

Participant When it is done, I will play it for some, like, I will play it for some of my friends and

I will play it for _____.

Over the last couple of years, _____ just goes, that's.

Good, because he knows.

I am going to change my mind about something.

But if I see somebody have a strange reaction to something and I am not willing to fight for it.

Then I go.

Oh, I better look at this some more.

Researcher So why do?

You think show choir is such an asset to secondary music education?

Participant I think show choir does something.

I think show choir.

Creates a place that these kids.

Gain more confidence than they do in the concert choir setting the confidence of them singing and dancing something they thought they could never do.

Boy wise, they are like I just watched them.

It is just I love watching something turn on inside of them and I do not.

I do not necessarily see that when you know, you are because this is a lot of this music stuff they know.

And you know if I am doing.

You know _____ piece.

Or what other?

I mean, if think about you got to think about where your kids are coming from.

You know, we have kids from all walks of life, and I want if it is something that's pop or something that, like, drives it, just they get into it and they invest so much time in it.

And kids want to be in show choir because kids want to be something that's quality.

Researcher All right, so.

Researcher Why do you think that most public secondary schools do not have show choir programs?

Participant OK, this is twofold.

It is probably manifold.

Directors are afraid of it.

Some directors are lazy.

They do not want to put the work in, and I had a director tell me that said, yes, we started a show for our thank goodness.
It did not take off.
And I just thought.
Yes, you just did not put the work in.
School systems see it as being an expense.
And you know.
You got to pay for it somehow.
I but I really, I and I and I also think that.
It is harder to start a.
Show choir in a more rural area.
Because I think there's so much pressure on high school boys to not be gay, and that is a that is a harder sell when you are too when you are in a place that has a little more.
Affluent Ness to the to the to the place.
I feel like it is a little more accepted to do things like singing and dancing.
The Fine Arts in general, I mean, I just remember, I mean, I grew up in southeast Alabama, I get it.
I was afraid of what people would think about me when I did show acquired enterprise.
That is why I did not do it the first year.
She will choir director begged me to do it after I auditioned for the concert choir.
I was like.
No, I am good.
Like so, that is a big part of it, but I would really say.
The directors being a little.
On the well, they are afraid of what they do not know.
And so, I could do it because I could talk those kids into it because I had done it at Auburn.
But you know if you do not know.
Nobody wants to get a four-year degree and then at the end go oh, you mean now?
I must go learn how to do this.
I know how to teach choir but.
So, that is a big part of it.
So how do you think we can advocate and educate force to acquire in those schools that are very strong in the concert choir world?
I do not know if I do not know an answer to that.
I do not know if it is a thing, I think.
Well, I will tell you this.
Oh, how many?
People from a Virginia are going.
To be reading this.
We can strike anything from the conversation.
I know, but I just I.
I have sat there with my All-State kids over the years.

And watched All State show choir and thought every director in here thinks that is what I do.

It is a camp show.

And I sat there as we are sitting at _____.

I am like, you have one of the top show choirs in the state in the South.

Five hundred feet from here.

Let my kids come over here and perform for All State.

And if they saw that like what?

A real show choir can do in person.

Maybe they get excited about it.

Maybe their kids would get excited about it and want and talk them into it.

But you know, for right now all the people that do concert choir C is camp show that they learned in four days.

And you know you can get quality people in.

And it makes the product some better, but it is still a camp show.

You cannot give them complex stuff.

Researcher So, over the years switch gears a little bit.

Another thing not only is time.

A big part of the reason maybe a director does not want to do show work, but also you mentioned cost.

It is very expensive to do show choir and.

Do it well.

How have you funded your program and sustain that funding throughout the year?

Participant Well, the kids must pay, first.

I probably charge less than most of the people that I can, that I am very competitive with.

Like, up until two years ago, if you were in my top group to pay.

The \$1000.

And that covered all the travel and the trip.

How I subsidize that is through.

The contest I run.

My contest makes anywhere between thirty and \$45,000 a year, so that is enough to kind of offset a big bunch of that cost this year. It was very difficult. As you know, buses.

Went crazy on us.

Gas prices and all that, but I do not.

Until I did not do my contest for because we had construction a few years ago.

I had never gotten a dime from our school board.

For show choir.

And I loved it because I knew that I was controlling my program.

Having the money to be.

And ultimately, I will never keep a kid out of show choir because they cannot afford it.

I find ways for that to happen.

I have people around here that will pay for it and me just.

I make sure that they are covered.

But its money is the is tough because you know, once Tresóna started their stuff that I mean I spend \$7000 a year just in rights and royalties.

I am thinking that is ridiculous.

And the people and you think, how much do you think the?

Publishers are getting out of that.

None, very little.

I do not know how you make it more accessible.

I do not know how you make it.

I mean, you do not have to do it at the you do not have to do it at the level that everybody else does it, but if you want to do it, you want to.

If you going to put the time in, you will not be successful.

But ultimately sing, I tell people, sing, and dance.

Singing dance better than everybody else they will have.

A hard time.

Not putting you up there.

Researcher Do you do fundraisers?

No, you do not do any fundraisers, just the fee.

Participant And the contest?

Researcher OK

In the years as contests have become plentiful, how has that affected you?

Participant It has not.

Researcher OK

Participant I turn people away every year.

You know that.

Researcher Yes, yes, yes.

Participant But no, I have.

The thing is.

There are not as.

We have been very fortunate because _____ is so centrally located.

Researcher Right.

It is either go to _____ or go to _____.

Participant And now two below, they are on the same date, but you are going to either end of Mississippi or.

But we are getting people from all around just to come because it is easier and it is _____ like you take them to the mall and you can, you know they are hotels and there are places for them to stay and that kind of stuff.

And we will get people from the Midwest, and they will always.

I love it because I always seem to work in the Civil Rights Institute.

Researcher Talking about, we talked a little bit about the cost of travel.

Do you think accessibility?

Regarding competitions, like if you do not live in the immediate _____ area, you know your if you must drive to enterprise.

For your closest competition or something like that, like you know those type of situations, do you think that is a reason?

Schools are reluctant to have a show choir program, maybe because of proximity, and that they know there's only certain pockets throughout the southeast that have programs that are close to each other.

Participant To be honest, I do not think I think the people that do not have the show choir. Programs are intuitive enough to think that far. They do not know. Unless you, unless you know you do not know. I mean, they are not. They are not looking at it and going ohm. Will it be this far? They are thinking there is no contest near me.

Researcher Right.

Participant I mean, they are not thinking. About the cost of it. You know that's. You go to. The Midwest and they have, though you will have a contest. Twenty miles from each other. Which ones do we choose this year?

Researcher Because I spoke to a director not long ago who UM was teaching in Arizona and the closest competition was six hours. So that kind of limited that director on accessibility to compete they produce.

Participant Right. Now when you are outside of. When you are getting outside in places like that, yes, I can get that. It is like Florida. _____, who was at _____, I mean. He had to go. He had to drive 6 hours to get anywhere.

Researcher Right, right. Yes.

Participant Ours was like 8 hours and them. Take a school bus. And I am thinking no, not me. All right, so.

Researcher Ohh year one. What would your advice be to yourself in year one? Looking back, what would you tell that young man coming out you know of undergraduate entering the world of music education?

Participant I tell him to stop and enjoy it. I mean it is over before you know it. And there are a lot of things that I feel like I wished over would wish they would be done. And then next thing you know it is. Like that movie click. And they say, you know, it is over, and you are like, oh, no, what do I do now? One thing I did that I would suggest for any young director.

People think I am crazy that I did this.
But I saved every score sheet I ever got.
In 25 years.
And I did not do I am the guy that can tell you what judge put me in which place?
20 years ago.
I can do that.
But it is not because I look at those score sheets, but every now and then I would sit
down, and I would just go through them and look and think.
Oh, look how much I improved in this area.
Look what I did in this area.
Or wow, I guess I have always been good at doing this.
What, like I did that.
I threw them all away couple weeks ago before retirement.
Except for my first two years.
And I looked at it and that was all concert choir stuff.
That I was looking at and every one of them talked about how well blended and
balanced the sound was.
Well, that's sort of what I am known for is to have that blend and I thought.
I am that is awesome because that means I really was cognizant of that from the
beginning.
And I will tell you the trick behind that is I think I have probably ever told you this,
have them sing in circles all the time.
You know you talking about the rehearsal process.
Once we found out notes we are singing in circles of sections.
Because that is going to bring every like, you are always going to have a strong kid
who is going to learn it quickly and have some to struggle.
That is going to help them.
But they are also going to sound like the best singer in each.
Thing and then you put them in a big circle, and they are going to just.
Listen, learn to listen.
So, but that is just, that is one of the things.
But I think yes, just.
I feel like I have too competitive at times.
And I did not enjoy.
The actual process as much.
I made some.
There were years that I made.
I made it more about.
I thought the final product was.
And like this year and last year being my last years, I tried to really soak up every
day of.
What I was doing, and you know some frustration in that, but it was it was worth it,
and I was.
Right.
And that is when I mean.
I was fully.

I was fully convinced that the music was the.
 Secondary part of.
 It was the kids I loved being with kids.

Researcher Looking back on your decades of service, is there one moment that you can pinpoint that you are like this?
 This is what I want to do the rest of my life.

Participant I have already told you about it.
 It was the moment that those kids turn to me and say, what do I need to do to be that?
 I was.
 That just blew me away and it just made me like go.
 This is it. This is it. And what made me want to do it was seeing _____ group when I was, when I did not know what show choir was.
 I saw them and I said I want to do that and so to have those kids tell basically say the same thing.
 It made me realize I must do this, and I am going to do it right.

Researcher What is your favorite memory?
 Over the last couple of decades in your career.

Participant Ask me my favorite child.
 While you are at it.
 I am trying to think because it is.
 They are weird little moments that.
 That kind of hit me and I have been so reflective over the last two months that my it is all over the place.
 From a from a.
 I will do it.
 I am going to give you two because and you can decide.
 What you want?
 Because I am going to give you, like, a personal, exciting moment that I thought, wow.
 And then I am going to.
 No, I am not.
 I am looking that figured out.
 OK
 When my mom.
 Was sick.
 And we went to _____ in 2013.
 And she died that fall.
 But we sang.
 We for finals, we always sing our ballet in the dark.
 You have been there for that.
 And four finals.
 My mother came in and I just got to hug her while my kid sang to her.
 And in that moment, they were doing that for, for me, for her.
 If that makes sense.
 They were doing it for her because they knew it because they were.
 They felt like they were part of the family.

And that was probably the first.
Maybe the year before this I used to always be like this is the business.
It is not a family because I did not want.
I did not have all that touchy feely kind of stuff in my that is just not who I was.
But I was like, you know, they are my support.
They were my family in that moment.
And then that is one of those times that people complain about when one group gets
all three, get all three groups and finals.

Researcher Well do you remember the ballad?

Participant It was a.

I dare you to try.

And The thing is the year before.

Was the show about her? Her fight through cancer, which was my favorite show of
all time until 2018. And then.

The year after we did one called home, which was.

And then at her funeral that in thirteen and we have been working on home that
whole year.

So, these kids, you know, they are my, they are my family.

But then I am at the funeral and the and the preacher's talking, he said.

If I could describe _____ in one word, it would be home.

Nobody knew that nobody knew what song I was doing.

And so, yes, OK, let us describe her as my ballads title.

Researcher Ohh my gosh.

All right, so is there anything else that you would like to add to this topic we have not
discussed already?

Participant And I feel like we have discussed everything in the entire world.

OK well I will send you a transcript in the next couple of weeks for you to check

Researcher over to make sure that I represent your words accurately, but it also gives you the
opportunity to strike anything that you want to strike.

As far as comments.

Or you can add anything that you would like to add if needed.

I may ask for a follow up interview, just it will be a short little interview just to make
sure that your thoughts are accurately represented in the study.

And thank you for everything that you have done for show choir over the years.

Participant I appreciate it.

Participant Hey, I am proud of you too.

Appendix D: Anonymized Codes

Participant 1 Coding

Abandonment	Dedication	Inflation	Performing arts
Academic journey	Delegation	Inquisitiveness	Personal growth
Accuracy	Difficulty	Interest in music	Physical movement
Achievement	Disappointment	Interest in storytelling	Planning
Adaptation	Distraction	Interpersonal relationships	Positive evaluation
Advertising	Education	Involvement	Positive experience
Aesthetics	Educational institutions	Knowledge	Preference
Allocation of resources	Empathy	Leadership	Presentation skills
Ambiguity	Encouragement	Learning	Professional experience
Ambition	Enjoyment	Loss	Progression
Appreciation	Entertainment	Lying	Resourcefulness
Artificial intelligence	Expectations	Miscommunication	Responsibility
Attention to detail	Expense	Monetary gain	Rituals
Availability	Expenses	Money	Sales
Budget	Exploration	Motivation	Satisfaction
Budget constraints	Extracurricular activities	Music	Scheduling
Career exploration	Fear of loss	Music and event organization:	Reflection
Categorization	Financial decision	Clarity of purpose	Regret
Certainty	Financial management	Educational exploration	Relationship-building
Challenges	Financial responsibility	Importance of show design	Religious faith
Change	Financial stress	Incomplete education	Reminiscing
Children	Financial transactions	Instructional approaches	Self-confidence
Collaboration	Flexibility	Music performance	Self-reflection
Commitment	Fluctuation	Musical performance	Skill development
Communication	Focus	Organizational logistics	Speech recognition
Community	Focus on details	Organizational tasks	Success

Comparison	Frustration	Organizing events	Supportive mentor
Competition	Gender	Practice and rehearsal	Sustainability
Confusion	Goal setting	Rehearsals	Teaching
Consensus	Gratitude	Revenue stream	Technology
Continuous learning	Group dynamics	Revisiting past interests	Transition
Convenience	Growth	Need for approval	Travel
Creative expression	Guidance	Nostalgia	Uncertainty
Creativity	Hard work	Objects	Unclear
Curiosity	Historical interest	Perceived injustice	Unity
Dance	Importance	Perfectionism	Variability
Deception	Inclusion	Performance	
Decision-making process	Indecision		

Participant 2 Coding

Academic environment	Concert
Active participation	Concerts
Adaptability	Confidence
Adjustment	Confirmation
Advice	Conformity
Affordability	Consent
Agreement	Constraint
Ambivalence	Contradiction
Amusement	Control
Analytical thinking	Coordination
Anticipation	Creative process
Anxiety	Cultural differences
Appreciation of aesthetics	Customization
Appreciation of variety	Dance aesthetics: Appreciation of clean dancing
Art	Dance aesthetics: Appreciation of complementary movement
Artistry	Dance aesthetics: Preference for youthful style
Assertiveness	Decision-making
Assessment	Desire for change
Audience	Desire for improvement
Autonomy	Desire for stability
Balance	Development
Blending in	Differentiation
Budgeting	Difficulty concentrating
Busy schedule	Disapproval
Career advancement	Disbelief
Career change	Discomfort
Career diversification: Diversification of skills	Dislike
Career diversification: Poor handling	Diversity
Career diversification: Unexpected career path	Ease of access
Career diversification: Unplanned career	Education policy
Career limitations	Education system
Career progression	Efficiency
Child development	Engagement
Choice	Enrichment
Coherence	Enthusiasm
Comfort	Envy

Complexity	Event participation
Event planning	Impatience
Exaggeration	Imposter syndrome
Excellence	Improvement
Exchange	Improving communication skills
Excitement	Improvisation
Experience	Incentives
Experienced	Inclusivity
Expertise	Incomprehension
Family	Inconsistency
Fear of judgment	Indifference
Financial	Inefficiency
Financial burden	Inequality
Financial concerns	Influence
Financial considerations	Innovation
Financial constraints	Insecurity
Fit	Inspiration
Focus on execution	Interest
Follow-up	Interest: Appreciation for old books
Fortunate	Interest: Demand-driven activities
Freedom	Interest: Interest in online resources
Friendship	Interest: Interest in pedagogy
Fulfillment	Interest: Interest in self-help books
Funding	Interior design
Fundraising	International experience
Future planning	Interpersonal dynamics
Generational differences	Interpersonal skills
Genre	Judgment
Goal-oriented	Lack of clarity
Growth mindset	Lack of competition
Health and well-being	Lack of control
High school	Lack of experience
History	Lack of exploration
Home improvement	Lack of focus
Identity	Lack of motivation
Imagination	Lack of opportunities
Impact	Lack of preparation
Impact of COVID-19	Lack of resources
Lack of support	Pacing
Lack of training	Parent involvement
Lack of trust	Parental influence
Learning from experience	Parental involvement
Legislation	Parenting

Limited options
 Mechanical
 Mentorship
 Mindfulness
 Monopoly
 Multitasking
 Music appreciation
 Music culture: Arranging
 Music culture: Choir
 Music culture: Ensemble
 Music culture: Ensemble dynamics
 Music culture: Orchestra
 Music culture: Small town culture
 Music industry
 Music: Aesthetic experience
 Music: Classical music
 Music: Musical experience
 Music: Musical stimulation
 Music: Musicality
 Music: School spirit
 Negative evaluation
 Negative experience
 Networking
 Observation
 Open-mindedness
 Open-mindedness: Appreciation for varied experiences
 Open-mindedness: Appreciation of pacing
 Open-mindedness: Downplaying individuality
 Opinion
 Opportunity
 Organization
 Overwhelm
 Religion
 Repetitive
 Research
 Research purpose
 Resilience
 Resistance to change
 Resource allocation
 Passion
 Peer interaction
 Perception
 Perception of time
 Performance anxiety
 Performance: Desire for optimal performance
 Performance: Live performance
 Performance: Rehearsal
 Performance: Show design
 Perseverance
 Perseveration
 Perspective
 Pessimism
 Pop culture
 Positive feedback
 Praise
 Preference for diversity
 Pride
 Prioritization
 Problem-solving
 Professional role
 Program evaluation
 Programming: Concert programming
 Promotion
 Proud
 Pursuit of passion
 Qualifications
 Questioning
 Recognition
 Recording
 Recruitment
 Relationship building
 Stress
 Structure
 Struggle
 Student contributions
 Student rights
 Student success
 Studio

Reticence	Support
Risk aversion	Supportive
Seasonal activities	Surprise
Seeking advice	Talented
Seeking guidance	Teacher
Self-consciousness	Teaching methodology
Self-criticism	Teaching methods
Self-doubt	Technical
Self-exploration	Technique
Self-identity	Technique: Attention to pacing and content
Self-improvement	Technique: Focus on technique
Shared responsibility	Technique: Importance of technique
Similarity	Time constraints
Simplicity	Time management
Singing: Appreciation of good singing	Time reference
Singing: Choral education	Tone
Singing: Choral methods	Traditional
Singing: Enjoyment of singing	Trust
Singing: Lack of enthusiasm for singing	Unconventional
Singing: Lack of tradition	Unexpected outcome
Singing: Vocal technique	Uniqueness
Singing: Voice care	Ups and downs
Skepticism	Validation
Social anxiety	Variety
Social comparison	Vision
Social connection	Visual
Social discomfort	Visual design
Social skills development	Visual stimulation
Status quo	Visual stimuli
	Work-life balance

Participant 3 Coding

Altruism	Inattentiveness	Socializing
Assertiveness	Inconsistent participation	Sports
Athletics	Informal setting	Status
Authority: Small-town culture	Instructional approach	Transformation
Boredom	Intense	Variability:
Casual conversation	Lack of familiarity	Performance-
Community engagement	Materialism	based
Competitive	Music education: Importance of singing	
Cost-effective	Power dynamics	

Curriculum
Discussion
Entertainment: Limited
entertainment options
Evolution
Extracurricular
Goal setting

Profitability
Progress
Quality control: Accuracy check
Quality control: control
Repetitiveness
Request for feedback

Participant 4 Coding

Academic research
Admiration
Affection
Arrangement
Artistic expression: Artistic
direction
Artistic expression: Artistic
evolution
Artistic expression: Choreography
Artistic expression: Interest in
aesthetics
Audience perception
Budget-conscious
Burnout
Career development
Choral methods
Clarity: Pace
Clarity: Style change
Clarity: Unclear explanation
Community involvement: Choir
education
Community involvement: Family
events
Competitiveness
Cost
Cost analysis
Cross-cultural analysis
Cultural diversity
Cultural perspective
Design
Desire for experimentation

Financial commitment
Financial investment
Financial sustainability
Frequency
Gender diversity
Gender studies
Generosity
Group participation: Group
classification
High workload
Inexperience
Instructional methods
Intertextuality
Law
Learning from mistakes
Location
Logistics
Musical ability
Musical performance
No applicable codes
Non-competitive
Optimism
Organizational skills
Experience
Performance development: Approach
to performance
Performance development: Ensemble
teaching
Performance development: Technique
development

Division	Performance: Costume changes
Evaluation	Performance: Importance of dance captains
Event	Personal exploration
Exclusion	Personal values
Expensive	Physical activity
Exploration: Interest in exploring new sounds	Physical fitness
Exploration: Personal hobbies/interests	Positive self-perception
Exploration: Strong beliefs	Positive sentiment
Feeling isolated	Preference for variety
Fees	Variation
Pressure	Visual analysis
Pressure to perform	Visual communication
Rating	Work-life balance
Rebellion	Youthfulness
Regional differences	
Regional variation: Regional variation	
Rehearsal	
Rehearsals	
Research objective	
Resource constraint	
Risk-taking	
Seeking validation	Strategy
Show choir: Competitive show choir	Study
Show choir: Enjoyment of process	Task-oriented
Show choir: Focus on performance	Team management
Show choir: Preference for showmanship	Theme
Show choir: Preference for thematic connections	Time commitment
Show design	Time delay
Skill assessment: Comparison of skill sets	Timeline
Skill assessment: Recognition of specific skill set	Tradition
Social events	Training
Social influence	Unfairness
Social norms	United States
Speculation	

Participant 5 Coding

Speech and performance: Activities:
Contests
Exploration: Location: Midwest
Events: Location: Indiana
Multisensory experience
Minimalism
Intimidation
Education levels: Princesses
Community event
Speech and performance: Costumes
Disney
Events: Fundraiser
Visualization
Emphasis
Overwhelming
Sound
Music education: Musical instruments
Misunderstood
Underappreciated
Consumer behavior
Forgetfulness
Academic calendar
Music Interest: Performance arts
Self-expression
Speech and performance: Voice training
Well-being: Physical exercises
Growth potential
Performance orientation
Extrinsic motivation
Lack of knowledge
Music Interest: Musical appreciation
Differences
Challenging expectations
High standards
Music Interest: Appreciation of ensemble performances
Community building
Imitation
Music education: Hierarchy in music ensembles

Music Interest: Participation in choir
Long-distance communication
Well-being: Staying in touch
Well-being: Rhythms
Music education: Music theory
Exploration: Note names
Exploration: Key signatures
Scholarships
Awards
Celebration
Diversity: Blend
Prominence
Speech and performance: Vowels
Speech and performance: Dynamic contrast
Texture
Music education: Choral technique
Speech and performance: Geographical challenges
Music Interest: Audition
Social change
Music Interest: Audition process
Music Interest: Sight reading
Music Interest: Tonal memory
Breathing techniques
New beginnings
Incompleteness
Music Interest: Choir performance
Music Interest: Musical event
Awkwardness
Stereotype
Well-being: Performance-based activities
Limited interaction
Music education: Musical development
Constraints: Sense of missed potential
Academic pursuits
Process
Speech and performance: Visual preference
Music Interest: Interest in performing arts

Exploration: Seeking external input
Safety
Disinterest
Humility
Religious activities
Exploration: Specific reference
Critique: Negative critique
Isolation
Stereotypes
Community support
Music production
Constraints: Belief in understanding mechanism
Events: Future interview
Longevity
Ineffective communication
Comparisons
Career prospects
Reward
Inquiry
Professional
Physicality
Speech and performance: Speech production
Well-being: Physical coordination
Trend
Events: Academic events
Meaning
Interpretation
Blame shifting
Fear
Input
Events: Important event
Exploration: Scottsdale
Education levels: eighth grade
Education levels: sixth grade
Education levels: seventh grade
Arizona
Retail
Bureaucracy
Skill
Sacrifice
Music education: Band dynamics
Music Interest: Appreciation of quality

Middle school
Lack of awareness
Feasibility
Misconception
Talent
Administration
Education levels: Freshmen
Exploration: Focus on basics
Stress management
Music Interest: Healthy communication
Music education: Musical analysis
Text analysis
Exploration: Multifaceted
Arts and crafts
Show Choir
Music Interest: Vocal health
Constraints: Negligible amount of teaching
Constraints: Limitation of teaching time
Instruction
Regional focus
Speech and performance: Southern California
Constraints: Lack of growth mindset
Complacency
Speech
Events: Show preparation
Time pressure
Open-minded
Passionate
Audience engagement
Self-neglect
Lack of self-care
Adventure
Constraints: Openness to creativity
Music Interest: Appreciation of innovation
Exposure
Possibility
Well-being: Seasonal products
Caring
Physical limitations
Retreat
Speech and performance: Ensembles
Events: Beginning of the year

Time constraint
Comprehension
Synchronization
Connectedness
Social cohesion
Sense of community
Ambience
Event announcement
Decision making
Music performance
Dancing
Lack of confidence
Long-term relationship
Music Interest: Interest in sound
Music education: Musical education
Quantitative data
Approximation
Self-acceptance
Teaching experience
Negative impact
Diligence
Music education: Music composition
Music education: Interest in music theory
Omission
Constraints: Difficulty of fundraising
Lack of community
Lack of engagement
Seeking support
Recognition of expertise
Need for support

Ambassadors
Events: Isolated focused retreat
Exploration: Competitive level
Speech and performance: Accents
Effort
Student involvement
Gender stereotypes
Specialization
Different perspectives
Financial pressure
Local resources
Critique: Snobbery
Awareness
Avoidance
Informal learning

Participant 6 Coding

Academic	Incomplete understanding	Seeking
Acceptance	Integration	Seeking information
Accessibility	Investment	Self-discovery
Approach	Iteration	Singing
Attention	Lack of importance	Skill-building
Attraction	Limitations	Structured approach
Broad experience	Limited scope	Style
Choir	Logistics: Differences in workload	Symbolism
Choral activities: Concert choir	Logistics: Event preparation	Technical expertise
Choral activities: Organizational contest	Logistics: Program funding	Timelines
Choral activities: Show choir	Logistics: Time-dependency	Vagueness
Christmas	Message	Visual: Visual Communication
Clarification	Multifunctionality	Vocal technique
Classical music	Multi-tasking	Voice transition: Voice transition
Compatibility	Music theory	
Concern for children	Music: Music selection	
Connection	Music: Musical expertise	
Contemporary	Music: Musical technique	
Desire	Music: Pop music	
Disagreement	Music: Sound engineering	
Diversity: Artistic choices	Music: World music	
Diversity: Exclusive	Musicality	
Diversity: Preference for different learning methods	Need for guidance	
Duality	Organizational growth	
Educational research	Past experiences	
Excitement: High pitch	Performance evaluation	
Expansion	Productivity	
Feedback	Reasoning	
Gender identity	Refinement	
Genre: Broad genre	Relationship dynamics	
Genre: Interest in music genres	Representation	
Hobbies	Schedule	
Incompatibility	School events	
	Scoring	
	Secondary Schools	

Participant 7 Coding

Academic achievement	Content clarity: Importance of main content
Academic experience	Content clarity: Simplifying complex concepts
Academic pressure	Coping
Accompaniment	Creative thinking
Acknowledgment	Danger
Adaptation: Developmental changes	Desire for challenge
Adaptation: Feeling of competition	Desire for unity
Adaptation: Feeling of discomfort	Desire to communicate
Advocacy	Dialogue
Ageing	Differentiated instruction
American culture	Discipline
Appearance	Discontinuation
Appreciation of art	Discounts
Artistic expression	Discovery
Authenticity	Disregard
Beauty	Doubt
Belief	Dreaming
Belief in fairness	Educational disparities
Belonging	Effectiveness
Body positivity	Emergency
Bullying	Emotion
Business	Emotions
Canada	Empowerment
Career aspiration	Energetic
Childhood memories	Enjoyment of music
Choral program: Camp program	Enriching
Choral program: Event Planning	Ensemble
Choral program: Interest in choral programs	Ensembles: Treble chamber ensemble
Choral program: Intermediate level	Ensembles: Women's ensemble
Choreography	Equal opportunities
Cleanliness	Equal opportunity
Community gathering	Equality
Comparing oneself to others	Expectation
Comparison with others	Expression
Compassion	External pressure
Concern	External validation
Consistency	Extravagance
Fairness	Life lessons
Family bonding	Limited resources
Family influence	Local community

Family planning	Love
Family-oriented	Loyalty
Fashion	Measurement
Financial assistance	Metaphor
Financial gain	Methodology
Foundation	Motivation: Dislike of competition
Friendliness	Motivation: Goal setting
Fun	Motivation: Workload dissatisfaction
Gender discrimination	Music: Love of classical music
Generational gap	Music: Music ensemble
Generational impact	Music: Musical
Geographical location	Music: Musical groups
Grief	Music: Musical training
Guest speaker: Amelia Earhart	Music: Performance skills
Guest speaker: Assistant director	Music: Solfege
Guest speaker: Co-director	Negative attitude
Guest speaker: Guest lecture	Negative experiences
Guilt	Nursing
Historical context	Nurturing
Historical importance	Open-mindedness: Dependency on others' skills
Hospitality	Open-mindedness: Differentiated experiences
Importance of participation	Open-mindedness: Interest in research methods
Inclusiveness	Open-mindedness: Intergenerational dynamics
Individuality	Open-mindedness: Multifaceted learning
Inferiority	Open-mindedness: Organic development
Innocence	Open-mindedness: Post-pandemic impact
International relations	Open-mindedness: Seeking collaboration
Joy	Open-mindedness: Seeking different perspectives
Lack of access	Open-mindedness: Seeking diversity
Lack of communication	Openness
Lack of expertise	Opportunities
Lack of preparedness	Sadness
Organized	Secrecy
Organizing	Seeking input
Overstimulation	

Parental expectations
Parental support
Parenthood
Participation
Patriotism
Pattern
Pattern recognition
Peer pressure
Performance enhancement
Personal accomplishment
Perspective-taking
Playfulness
Popularity
Positive environment
Positive mindset
Positive reinforcement
Positivity
Pricing
Professional growth
Project-based learning
Prompting for more information
Purpose
Quotation
Relationship
Relationships
Relevance
Religious event
Religious involvement
Remorse
Resistance
Risk
Sabotage

Self-care
Self-imposed pressure
Self-worth
Sense of belonging
Show choir
Social belonging: Family benefits
Social belonging: Peer acceptance
Social belonging: School pride
Social emotional learning
Social exclusion
Social interaction
Socioeconomic inequality
Standstill
Storytelling
Structuring
Suggestion
Synergy
Technical terminology
Timing
Trends
Trial and error
Understanding
Value
Versatility
Visual aesthetics
Visual representation
Vocal techniques: Auditory processing
Vocal techniques: Singing technique
Vocal techniques: Vocal warm-up
Vocal techniques: Voice control
Vocal techniques: Voice parts
War
Workplace relationships
Worry

Participant 8 Coding

Academics	Diversity: Interest in extracurricular activities
Advancement	Diversity: Non-traditional background
Ageism	Diversity: Specific expertise
Assumption	Editing
Assumptions	Embarrassment
Career	Embodiment
Career transitions	Emergence
Caution	Engagement: Context is not clear for coding
Cautiousness	Ensembles
Challenge	Equity
Choral music: Acapella	Fairness
Choral music: Artistic tradition	Financial planning
Choral music: Choral music	Flexibility: Increase in options
Choral music: Contemporary music	Flexibility: Lowering expectations
Choral music: Daytime choir	Flexibility: Undercharging
Choral music: Interest in voice	Gender segregation
Choral music: Music analysis	Hiring
Choral music: Musical diversity	Hiring: Job hiring
Choral music: Popularity of contemporary acapella	Hiring: merit-based hiring
Choral music: Popularity of show choir	Hiring: Request for interview
Choral music: Show choirs	Humor
Choral music: Sight-reading	Idealization
Consumerism	Impact on community
Copyright	Importance: Importance of choreography
Cost effectiveness	Importance: Importance of humanities
Critical thinking	Importance: Importance of humanity
Cultural difference	Importance: Importance of music education
Cultural influence	Importance: Opportunities for children
Culture	Inadequacy
Dehumanization	Inadequate preparation
Determination	Independence
Disconnection	Ineffectiveness
Discrimination	Inexperienced
Dissatisfaction	Interest in pop culture
Diversity: Co-curricular	Job insecurity
Diversity: Importance of prior experience	

Lack of empowerment
Lack of recognition
Lack of relevance
Lack of time management
Language education
Limited perspective
Long-term success
Marketing
Narrative
Naturalness
Noisy
Normalization
Ownership
Passion for music
Performance production: Rehearsal process
Performance production: Visual elements in performance
Performance-oriented: Analyzing performances
Performance-oriented: Contest
Performance-oriented: Emphasis on performance
Performance-oriented: Performance preparation
Performance-oriented: Schedule planning
Performance-oriented: Success orientation
Performance-oriented: Summer activities
Permission
Persuasion
Pop music
Positive impact
Practice
Privilege
Public scrutiny
Quality over quantity
Race awareness
Reading
Recommendation
Rejection
Religious diversity

Removal
Requirement
Resistance: Accidental profession
Resistance: Fear of being fired
Resistance: Opposition to diversity
Resistance: Perceived rigidity/constraints
Resistance: Resistance to education
Revision
Rules and regulations
School
Secondary school
Seeking feedback
Self-awareness
Self-evaluation
Self-restriction
Self-sabotage
Sharing ideas
Skill diversity
Skill level
Socioeconomic status
Source evaluation
Specialized knowledge
STEM education
Striving for improvement
Struggling to express oneself
Theory: Emphasis on theory
Unclear communication
Unclear statement
Upcoming events
Value perception
Verification
Visual storytelling
Vulnerability
Workload
Youth

Participant 9 Coding

Access control
Acknowledgement
Committee
Cynicism
Diversity: Creative frustration
Diversity: Early morning
Diversity: Event security
Diversity: Interest in visual design
Diversity: Minimizing distractions
Diversity: Preference for subtle background noise
Diversity: Price range diversity
Diversity: Questioning the value of visual design
Diversity: Summer camp
Diversity: Women's suffrage
Equal treatment
Events
Fear of failure
Feminism
Inadequate resources
Irrelevance
Job application
Materialistic
Nonchalance
Novelty
Payment
Project management
Promise
Quality check
Questioning societal norms
Realization
Religious experience
Resource limitation
Violence
Women's rights

Participant 10 Coding

Aesthetic appreciation	Performance: Exploring different arrangements
Age gap	Performance: Ice breaker
Career aspirations	Performance: Impressive skills
Clothing	Performance: Intensive training
Conflict	Performance: Minimal communication
Cultural background	Performance: Performing
Cultural tradition	Performance: Possible request for follow-up interview
Disgust	Performance: Recognition of overlooked aspects
Distance	Performance: Relationship between show choir and musicals
Emotional impact	Persistence
Emotional response	Punctuality
Expenditure	Repetition
External feedback	Scholarship
Failure	Sexual orientation
Feeling out of place	Sharing
Future goals	Social activities
Happiness	Social pressure
Health	Transportation
Individual differences	Work
Interest in performing arts	
Judgement	
Location constraints	
Obligation	
Open-endedness	