TOWARDS A MODEL OF EFFECTIVE CHORAL CONDUCTING:
IMPLICATIONS FOR MUSIC EDUCATION, MUSICAL COMMUNICATION
AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Colin Durrant, BA., MA., FRCO., PGCE

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ABSTRACT

TOWARDS A MODEL OF EFFECTIVE CHORAL CONDUCTING: IMPLICATIONS FOR MUSIC EDUCATION, MUSICAL COMMUNICATION AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

A profile of musical competences of postgraduate music students indicates that conducting skills are generally weak and held in low esteem. Data collected from universities and colleges confirm that conducting (and specifically choral conducting) is not a significant part of undergraduate or postgraduate music or music education programmes across higher education in the UK. This contrasts with the situation in the USA. This study seeks to determine what is teachable in conducting, considering that many music graduates will conduct in some form or another in music careers.

From the research literature and historical, biographical and anecdotal evidence, a theory is developed to establish what is needed for a conductor to be effective. This takes a philosophical approach, exploring the phenomenology of conducting and aspects of tacit knowing, craft knowledge and human compatible communication in relation to the conducting activity and the behaviour of the conductor in rehearsal and performance.

Analyses of research activities seek to validate and nourish the theory. Firstly, interviews were held with a selection of choral conductors to find out what they do and what they think, in order to find common approaches and priorities in choral conducting. Secondly, an analysis is made of a questionnaire given to (i) participants in a choral conducting masterclass and (ii) students at the end of a postgraduate taught conducting module. Finally, participant and non-participant observations are made in universities, schools and the community in Utah, USA, where recognised effective choral conducting teaching is already in place. Analysis is made of how such programmes of study and subsequent choral practice relates to and supports the theory. While the thesis does not attempt to deal in depth with the psychology of conducting nor learning theories, implications for the learning of choral conducting (what can be learnt and how) and a framework for teaching and practice within higher education in the UK are then explored.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the people who have assisted me in the preparation of this thesis, particularly those who have supplied me with data by taking part in interviews, questionnaires and observations, as well as those people who were willing to review the video material. I express my thanks to Desmond Sergeant and Graham Welch for their wisdom and supervision. I also recognise the support and encouragement given to me by many friends, including Therees Hibbard, with whom I had many informal discussions and John Cooksey, who also arranged and provided me with opportunities to carry out research activities in Utah, USA. Lastly, I acknowledge the forbearance of my family, Claire, Chloe and Simone, and only regret that my parents, who gave me a good start and instilled in me the value of education, are not here to witness the completion of this study.
‘Better try over number seventy-eight before we start, I suppose?’ said William, pointing to a heap of old Christmas carol books on a side table.

‘Wi’ all my heart,’ said the choir generally.

‘Number seventy-eight was always a teaser - always. I can mind him ever since I was growing up a hard boy-chap.’

‘But he’s a good tune, and worth a mint o’practice,’ said Michael.

[The Assembled Quire in Under the Greenwood Tree, Thomas Hardy]
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to provide a knowledge base which will enable the planning, development and improvement of courses of tuition at higher education level in the art and practice of choral conducting. It necessarily deals with musical matters, but is not a study of conducting practice per se. While aspects of conductors and the conducting phenomenon will be explored, the study is, essentially, one of music education practice.

The impetus and need for this study of effective choral conducting arises from (i) the researcher's own interest and experience as a choral conductor for over twenty years and (ii) the researcher's teaching of postgraduate music students on an Initial Teacher Education programme (ITE), who are being prepared for the school teaching profession in the UK. Most of these music graduates are very able in one or more aspects of musical skill and knowledge, mostly, if not exclusively, in the western classical tradition; the majority of postgraduate music students reach a high standard in vocal or instrumental performance. This is likely to be the consequence of one area of performance specialisation in which they have been instructed for a period of at least three years at a conservatoire or university.

It is a feature of contemporary schooling, for example, that music teachers are expected to organise and direct or conduct vocal and instrumental ensemble activities, yet preparation provided in higher education courses for this part of the role of the school music teacher seems lacking. Personal experience of teaching postgraduate students over seven years indicates a deficiency in undergraduate training of communicative, technical and expressive skills in directing, conducting and rehearsing vocal and instrumental ensemble; skills which undoubtedly form an important part of the role of the school music teacher. Suspicions that conducting classes were rare at undergraduate level, or were only for those wanting to embark on a 'professional' conducting career, were substantiated in discussion with such students as well as by witnessing some conducting behaviour weaknesses revealed by students during the conducting classes in the postgraduate year.
Effective communication through conducting (in the sense of, for example, being able to gesture appropriately or expressively) was seldom in evidence.

A profile of subject specific competences for postgraduate music students intending to follow an initial teacher education (secondary) programme was devised by the researcher in 1993 as part of a process of assessment and development. The profile was discussed with, and endorsed by, a group of heads of music departments at ‘partnership’ schools and by local music inspectors and advisers at a number of meetings\(^1\). Necessary competences were categorized under: 1. Knowledge and skills; 2. Application; 3. Attitude. Subsequent profiling of such postgraduate music students has shown a deficiency in their perception of the skills required as conductors for school ensembles. For example, twenty one students were asked to complete a profile of their music competences at the beginning of their academic year 1993-94. They were asked to express on a 1-5 scale how they rated their musical knowledge and skills in the following competence areas:

The student is able to:

1.1 demonstrate specific instrumental/vocal performance skills with a degree of accuracy and musicality;

1.2 demonstrate sufficient keyboard facility for effective use in the classroom;

1.3 demonstrate effective conducting technique for use in school rehearsals and performances;

1.4 demonstrate knowledge of musical history in at least one genre;

1.5 demonstrate skills in composing and improvising.

The rating scale was: 1 = non-existent competence; 2 = low competence; 3 = adequate competence; 4 = reasonably high competence; 5 = very high competence.

From the twenty one students the ‘positive’ responses (i.e. 4s and 5s) to each

\(^1\) ‘Partnership’ schools are those that are involved directly with higher education in initial teacher education; meetings are regularly held with heads of music departments, local advisers and others in order to make links, provide course coherence and development and foster research interests relevant to the teaching profession.
competence were as follows:

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From this it can be seen that, along with skills in composing and improvising [1.5], conducting [1.3] was considered by the music graduates as being generally a competence which at present ranged from 'non-existent' to 'adequate'. Most students reported that they had not received conducting experience or instruction during their undergraduate study. The positive responses to each skill category from the same competence profile with twenty three different students on the programme at the beginning of the following academic year (1994-95) were as follows:

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While the responses in this group of students were a little more positive in respect of all the competences listed, conducting competence was still regarded as being less secure than competence in instrumental or vocal performance, keyboard skills and knowledge of musical history, though only marginally better than competence in improvising and composing, echoing the previous year's data.

A survey by Louise Gibbs (1993) on the professional development and training of instrumental music teachers reported comparable results. In her study, fifty seven specialist music teachers were given a list of subject areas within music and asked if any of these had been part of their studies. Also, they were asked to rate their perceptions of how well the subject was taught (not very well; quite well or very well). The ranking of musical subject areas (from highest to lowest) by teacher perception of training coverage was as follows (see Fig.1):
Conducting appears at the bottom of the list, supporting the evidence obtained from the researcher's own students that both conducting and improvising are musical skills that are consistently rated as being poorly covered in course of undergraduate music study in universities and music colleges in the UK.

1.2 DATA ON CONDUCTING COURSES IN THE UK

In order to evaluate the belief that little systematic training of conductors (choral and orchestral, but particularly choral) takes place within higher education in the UK, information was gathered through prospectuses and music department brochures of course provisions. While a prospectus cannot always be relied upon to give detailed or accurate information regarding
attitudes towards every aspect of musical training and skill development, it will generally outline the nature of music programmes and describe the courses that are offered with some degree of accuracy as they are subject to validation and scrutiny by internal and external bodies.

Information was requested from all universities, music conservatoires and colleges in the UK where Music appeared as a separate taught degree subject. Forty eight responses were collected, mostly through the official prospectus or music department brochure, though in some instances a personal letter was sent in response to a specific request for details of choral conducting courses. From the prospectuses it was clear that a great deal of music-making occurs in most institutions in an ‘unofficial’ capacity (i.e. not as part of academic credited courses), and that students are encouraged to take an active role in formulating and conducting concerts in ‘extra-curriculum’ time. The collected data of conducting courses was arranged into four categories:

1. undergraduate conducting
2. undergraduate choral conducting
3. postgraduate conducting
4. postgraduate choral conducting

the number of institutions offering courses in these areas were:

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It should also be noted that the majority of these courses were options within a music programme for students at undergraduate level. Within each prospectus, only a limited amount of information can, understandably, be supplied.

1. UNDERGRADUATE CONDUCTING
Offered at:

East Anglia   Yr 1 special option
WCMD³

³ Welsh College of Music & Drama
An example of the rather limited information supplied can be found in the Music handbook from the University of East Anglia, where it is stated that ‘a conducting course’ is part of Creative and Performance Studies in the first year, and ‘Conducting’ is a subject offered in the second and third year honours programme. In a similar handbook from the University of Hull, conducting appears as an integral module of the first year programme, and is described as follows:

While every professional conductor has an individual style, those styles are all founded on certain basic skills. The module covers the elements of baton technique and gives students experience at dealing with such problems as awkward pauses and tempo changes. It also includes advice on how to rehearse effectively.

Here, recognition is given to rehearsal strategies as well as conducting technique as a part of the module, and, as referred to in the review of research literature and conducting methodologies, clearly this is an important part of the conductor’s role particularly in relation to conducting school and other amateur ensembles.

2. UNDERGRADUATE CHORAL CONDUCTING
Offered at:

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4 Guildhall School of Music & Drama
5 Birmingham Conservatoire of Music
6 Royal Academy of Music
7 London College of Music
Southampton  Yr 1 foundation
Roehampton  option
RAM  Yr 3/4 church music

The Southampton course provides 'complimentary studies in keyboard musicianship, sight-singing, choral conducting and musical study skills' as part of a first year foundations of music unit. At the Birmingham Conservatoire conducting (orchestral, choral or band) appears as an optional study within the graduate diploma programme.

3. POSTGRADUATE CONDUCTING
Offered at:
   East Anglia
   RCM\(^8\)  one year orchestral
   RNCM\(^9\)  select students
   Surrey  option

An MMus in conducting is offered at the University of East Anglia with the prospectus giving the following description:

The course is designed to develop to an advanced level the skills and interpretative abilities required of the modern conductor. The course comprises: practical coursework (score reading, aural perception, baton technique), written coursework, work studies (standard repertory, pre-Classical and contemporary styles and techniques), rehearsing with vocal and instrumental ensembles inside and outside the University.

The description of the Surrey MMus, where Conducting is an option chosen as Stage A study (stage B being a dissertation or folio), is less detailed, indicating only that the course comprises technical tuition and conducting opportunities.

4. POSTGRADUATE CHORAL CONDUCTING
Offered at:
   East Anglia  English Church Music
   RAM  Church music (also an elective in Yr 3/4 BMus)

\(^8\) Royal College of Music
\(^9\) Royal Northern College of Music
While both the above offer postgraduate qualifications in church music, only part of the courses involve conducting and choir-training techniques as an aspect within the study.

As is evident from these sources, the opportunities within higher education courses to develop conducting skills, either generic or specifically choral, are not extensive in the UK. Nowhere does conducting feature as a significant part of a whole undergraduate music programme. More emphasis is still placed on traditional keyboard harmony skills than on conducting, and more overall emphasis is placed on compositional skills. In particular, there is a notable development of music technology in Music departments. However, it is likely that students might, if they wish, gain opportunities to conduct ad hoc groups and choirs and orchestras ‘outside’ the official credited music programme, and such activities often form an important part of university and collegiate musical life. While these activities are to be commended, as they encourage enterprise on the part of students, there is usually little opportunity for analysis and discussion of the student’s conducting technique and effectiveness, or any actual instruction.

1.3 ANALYSIS OF UK CONDUCTING COURSE OUTLINES

From the course descriptions (see Appendix 1) it can be seen that (i) conducting as a generic activity does not feature prominently within music undergraduate programmes as a whole in the UK; (ii) conducting is rarely offered at postgraduate level; (iii) conducting at undergraduate level usually occurs in one or possibly more (East Anglia) elective modules; (iv) conducting at postgraduate level is highly specialised and selective with only small numbers of students (2 at WCMD and 2 at RAM); (v) no unique and specific choral conducting option is offered at undergraduate or postgraduate level.

Specific reference is made to choral conducting in the following ways: (i) as two sessions out of 10 (Lancaster) where the greater emphasis is placed on orchestral study; (ii) generic development of techniques of rehearsing and leading choral or instrumental music (Exeter); (iii) students make up the choir for choral conducting experience (Southampton); (iv) the balance of study of choral and orchestral conducting by agreement (WCMD); (v) observation of
conductors of Philharmonia Chorus (RAM). Certain references are made in the course outlines to areas that are generic to all conducting and rehearsing techniques, including visual communication, expressive indications, psychology, baton technique, aural skills, metre indications, tempi, preparation, cut-offs and endings, for example. Also, many courses place emphasis on score study, analysis and preparation. In some, this includes knowledge of instrumental, choral and orchestral techniques. All of these areas of knowledge and skill are described in the attributes of the effective choral conductor. However, there are a number of areas that are not referred to in the outlines. No indication is given of any knowledge of the human voice, warm-up exercises, singing and demonstrating within the courses, or of motivation strategies, which will certainly be the concern of the choral conductor in the school context and other amateur groups. No mention is made of personality in relation to the rehearsal (though 'rehearsal psychology' is referred to at East Anglia, C3), of making people feel confident and comfortable, creating an appropriate environment or use of language (verbal or non-verbal). Most reference throughout the outlines is made to technical, interpretative and stylistic aspects of conducting, the analysis and preparation of the score and (in some) aural skills. Little reference is made to the aesthetic and expressive potential of the conductor in rehearsal and performance.

The implication presented is that there are teachable areas of conducting technique - these being largely technical and analytical; but there are areas left uncovered, namely, behavioural, styles of communication and choral development. These areas are referred to extensively in this study in (i) the review of research and other literatures (Chapters 2 & 3), (ii) the development of the model (Chapter 5) and (iii) its evaluation (Chapter 6), as significant attributes of the effective conductor.

1.4 CONDUCTING ATTRIBUTES

First hand experience of initial teacher education indicates that in schools, music teachers (or in some cases - directors of music) are expected to train and conduct the school choir often with the minimum knowledge and experience in the art and craft of conducting, and even more often, with little evident knowledge or understanding of the voice, particularly the adolescent voice (not least because of the paucity of UK research data in this area). Expressive,
well-focused singing often gives way to forced tone as conductors ask young singers to sing out, up, loudly and even aggressively. Many music teachers select repertoire on the basis of the music they would like to conduct rather than through considered evaluation of appropriate material for developing young singers. Cooksey (1992) in his research studies of the adolescent voice, is keen to point out that choir directors need to understand the maturation process in the male changing voice. He makes a strong case for careful selection of musical material for the adolescent:

... boys will sing better, maintain a healthier attitude about themselves as individuals, gain confidence in performing and contribute constructively to the development of a truly comprehensive music program ...

[Cooksey, 1992: 50]

The contrast between the experiences, competences and perceptions of music graduates and the actual professional role of the music teacher in schools suggests that effective conducting should be the preserve not only of those involved with professional choirs and orchestras; rather, attention should be given to the development of appropriate skills in all individuals who intend to conduct groups of any age-level and status. The choral conductor of amateur groups in schools and communities as well as of the leading professional choirs should have already developed appropriate technical and musical skills and explored ways of effective communication prior to taking up the post.

What is technical and expressive choral success, and how does the choral conductor achieve this? Are there specific skills that the student musician can learn and develop to ensure such success? Can such skills be taught? It is hypothesised that, by establishing criteria for an effective choral conductor, it might then be possible to determine how the student choral conductor could be enabled to fulfil such criteria.

In Conscience of a Profession (1987), which is a compilation of lectures and articles from his life, Howard Swan writes:

It seems to me that a satisfying interpretation of a choral score depends

10 Cooksey has researched extensively into the stages of change in the adolescent male voice in the USA and the UK, and maintains that five or six measurable stages of change (from unchanged through to full baritone) coincide with specific, identifiable vocal pitch ranges.
upon three factors. First, the conductor appraises the technical resources of his instrument (the chorus) and accepts its limitations together with the capacity to learn how to sing well. Second, the director understands the score from the standpoint of its structural and formal detail and is well acquainted with the writing style of the man who wrote it. Finally, the conductor evaluated those personal traits or characteristics within himself which influence the singing of the chorus. Not only are these factors musical but are emotional and aesthetic as well.

[Swan, 1987: 71]

Pfautsch (1973) gives even more clear ideas about the nature of a good choral conductor, which includes the acquisition of ‘expressive and effective communication between conductor and chorus, encouraging responsiveness’ (op.cit.:57), as well as other technical and idealistic aspirations. He deals extensively with rehearsal technique and preparation. The implication within such writing is that there is a considerable amount of skill involved in all aspects of choral conducting, including the achievement of an effective and efficient rehearsal. Communication skills are also important as well as musico-technical knowledge. In these, the personality of the conductor can play a significant role.

The success of any rehearsal depends much upon the role the conductor assumes, his self-image as a person, as a musician and as a conductor, his attitude towards the group and its purpose, his personal relationship with individual singers and his approach to the rehearsal.

[Pfautsch, 1973: 70]

Such multi-faceted conducting attributes ought not be left to chance and should form an essential part of the education of the musician who will be in charge of teaching ensembles in schools and the wider community.

An account of the life of William Boyce (Dearnley, 1970), organist, conductor and composer in the mid-eighteenth century, drawn from a biography by John Hawkins (1788), describes Boyce’s considerable professional success in terms of his personal attributes:

He was endowed with the qualities of truth, justice and integrity, was mild and gentle in his deportment, above all resentment against such as envied his reputation, communicative of his knowledge, sedulous and punctual in the discharge of the duties of his several employments,
particularly those that regarded the performance of divine service, and in
every relation of life a worthy man.

[Dearnley, 1970: 120]

The role of the conductor is to communicate the composers’ musical
intentions to the performers and ultimately to the audience. Much has been
written and documented about conductors, but such writings rarely make
explicit the ways in which conductors are effectively able to communicate
their intentions. According to Otto Klemperer in Conversations with
Conductors (ed. Chesterman, 1990)

At first you cannot learn it. And you cannot teach it. I give four beats
so, and three so. I can tell you this in a few minutes. But that’s all I can
tell you. Not more.

[op.cit.: 5]

Georg Solti:
It’s a mystical subject really... [op.cit.:49]

Eugene Ormandy:
I think it was Nikisch who said “Conductors are born, but not made.” I
think he was right.

[op.cit.:124]

Ricardo Muti refers to conducting as:
a combination of many mysterious things, with those that are very
explicable.

[op.cit.:140]

Fuchs (1969) exposes the contrasting opinions of well-known
conductors on the teachability of conducting. John Barbirolli, for example,
looked for the ‘certain something’ in aspiring conductors which he
considered unteachable. Similarly, the opera conductor Giorgio Polacco
expressed the view on several occasions that ‘to teach conducting is
nonsense’ (op.cit.: 9). Such views, according to Fuchs, were shared by
Toscanini and Furtwangler and none of them accepted conducting students.
However, a great number of other equally prominent figures did spend some
of their time teaching conducting, - Fritz Reiner, Pierre Monteux, Bruno
Walter, Henry Wood and Adrian Boult (who also wrote short texts for his
students) are but a few. Pointing out that courses on conducting appear in major music schools throughout the USA, Fuchs asks the question what is being done in such conducting classes if it is not teachable, and proposes a compromise to the complex argument over the teaching of conducting. While there are situations when particular aspects of conducting can be taught to students of even limited ability, he suggests, ultimately, the great conductors will require much of Barbirolli’s ‘certain something’ - a ‘complex of instinctive and teachable qualities’ (op.cit.:10).

Notwithstanding any debate about the existence of particular personality traits and/or ‘instructive qualities’, there is research evidence to indicate that the student or teacher in charge of an amateur group of instrumentalists or singers can benefit from guidance as to what are appropriate and inappropriate behaviours, verbal and non-verbal, musical and non-musical (see Chapters 2 & 3).

What exactly are the criteria by which a conductor is judged? Are criteria universally applicable? How would Georg Solti fare with a high school choir, and how would a high school music director manage with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus? Are the criteria for establishing an effective conductor in these instances similar? Regrettably, these questions can only remain speculative. Research and observations have shown that there are indeed identifiable characteristics of an effective conductor. (Chapter 3 outlines some of the research in this area.) Anecdotal discussion with singers and players has revealed that they know when a conductor makes them feel comfortable; inappropriate gestures and/or verbalising can send out psychologically negative messages to performers. For example, Thurman (1992) refers to ‘other-than-conscious bodymind programming’ in the relationships between students and teachers and conductors and singers. Language, body language, facial expressions and gesture can imprint all sorts of coded messages in the mind. Thurman suggests that certain behaviours are more suitable than others in the teaching / learning situation and the conducting / singing situation. Those behaviours which are more consistent with the way human beings operate successfully are termed ‘bodymind compatible learning’, as opposed to ‘bodymind antagonistic learning’ in which excessive control and labelling are predominant behaviours. In the context of teacher / conductor, Thurman uses the terms ‘developmental

11 See Chapter 5 for a full explanation of the terminology and expansion of this topic.
leadership’ which he believes orients the group toward fulfilling their innate learning capacities where the satisfaction of individuals and the group is paramount; where intrinsic motivation is predominant; and where personal or group achievements in the past are compared with personal or group achievements in the present.

[Thurman, 1992: 100]

and ‘coercive leadership’ which is

incompatible with innate bodymind drives and processes; oriented to the satisfaction (ego gratification) of the leader; extrinsic motivation must be predominant in order to succeed; achievement is determined by comparison to other more or less successful individuals or groups, and to “standards of excellence” rather than an evolving ability to be curious, explore, discover, learn, evolve bodymind programs and express oneself unself-consciously.

[op.cit.: 101]

This perspective places the conductor in a strong position to influence the outcome and learning curve of the choir. In this analysis, communication is as vital as musical ability; and an emphasis is placed on aspects of the conductor’s role that are not always fully explored and on the conductor’s skill that is not always taught.

1.5 TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF EFFECTIVE CONDUCTING

To attempt a definition of an effective conductor that could act as a basis for construction of courses of tuition is not easy, and needs, in part, to be formed in relation to the actual function of a conductor and the context in which s/he operates. Following Howard Swan’s position, a conductor has to ‘know’ (in terms of structural, expressive and technical detail) the music and know how to communicate that knowledge in rehearsal and performance. But it would seem that, by reading anecdotal accounts and watching conductors in action, there may be something more. A fuller description of an effective...
choral conductor is likely to embrace at least the three following clusters of attributes.

Firstly, an aesthetic awareness, sensitivity and overall reflective and speculative conception of the nature and character of music and its potential to affect performers and audience emotionally is presumably paramount in an effective conductor. Secondly, an effective conductor is likely to need high levels of expertise in (i) knowledge of how the voice (and instruments) functions and its expressive capabilities; (ii) control and awareness of the potential of physical gesture; (iii) efficient planning and executing of rehearsals; (iv) knowledge of musical style; (v) aural analysis and auditory perception skills in order to hear what is going on; (vi) an ability to put things right in a manner appropriate to those being conducted. Thirdly, an effective conductor is likely to have personality characteristics that will foster the development of a relationship with those being conducted; these will include certain communication skills, which, as outlined by Thurman (and others in later chapters), are seen as desirable. Whether, as Ormandy suggested (Chesterman, 1990), these are skills of intuition, or whether they are teachable skills is still open to debate. Aesthetic awareness and sensitivity and philosophical (reflective and speculative) considerations may be gained through contact with music and the study of aesthetic principles and philosophy; knowledge of the voice and its functions and the development of aural skills can be acquired through effective teaching. However, it is the aspects of personality characteristics and the nature and style of communication that is more ambiguous and will need closer scrutiny in relation to whether and how such skills can be taught.

Robinson and Winold (1976) ask a series of questions in relation to the training of conductors, while probing the ingredients of a stimulating as opposed to ‘lackadaisical’ choral performance, and suggested perhaps that there are certain inherent skills that make a conductor particularly effective. They put forward arguments for the training of choral conductors which should include a set of basic skills beyond mere conducting techniques, namely:

- a thorough understanding of vocal production as it applies to the choral singer;
- a sound program of basic musicianship training;
- and a comprehensive knowledge of those principles of style that lead to the
proper performance for choral literature of all periods.

[Robinson & Winold, 1976: 49]

1.6 UK PERSPECTIVE

In the western world and especially in the UK and USA, choral activity has been an integral part of the cultural life of schools, churches and communities for many years. The influence of the church in the nineteenth century, particularly in England, and the subsequent patterns and development of music education (especially the use of sight-singing systems) influenced the emergence of the choral society (Rainbow, 1968; Scholes, 1941). Even today, the British choral society is still apparent in many communities, and though the traditional male church choir is not as prevalent as it was twenty or thirty years ago, many of the cathedral choirs of England still maintain regular, even daily singing of the services. It is likely that these cathedrals and their choirs will attract large audiences at major Christian festivals. Many cathedral choirs have made concert tours and produced professional recordings which are popular in Europe and North America (e.g. King’s College, Cambridge Chapel Choir, St Paul’s Cathedral London Choir, Winchester Cathedral Choir). Unlike America, church choirs in Britain will usually be conducted by the ‘Organist and Choirmaster’ - one person. While this person will normally have had training and rigorous examinations in organ studies, it is unlikely that the same amount of training and examinations will have been taken (or offered) in choral conducting. Knowledge and experience gained in choral conducting will, almost by default, be due to the close association of the role(s) of organist and choirmaster. Directors of Music (to append an alternative title) at cathedrals and churches will rather, on the whole, have been appointed for their organ playing abilities, which are more easily measurable (an FRCO diploma, for example, is almost a mandatory qualification), than their choral conducting abilities. As a good violinist does not necessarily make a good leader of an orchestra, so a good organist does not necessarily make a good choral conductor. As stated above, there are other skills involved. Undoubtedly, it is important to have in a leader of an orchestra a violinist who

13 National Federation of Music Societies.

14 Fellow of the Royal College of Organists - a coveted diploma which demands a high standard of performance in set pieces and keyboard tests (including transposition and extemporisation), as well as two written papers requiring competence in stylistic harmony, counterpoint and knowledge of musical history.
commands respect for his/her violin playing, but other technical, social and managerial skills gain importance. The organist who takes on the role of choral conductor has also to develop other skills. Conductors must have ‘ears’ that are sensitive to instrumental colour, homogeneity of tone, sensitivity to the expressive character of the whole piece - a vision or model of how it should sound. In short, conductors require a prior mental and aural image based upon knowledge and past experience with music (further elaboration of this ‘processing’ occurs in Chapter 7).

Judging by music undergraduate course literature (see above), to a large extent there prevails the assumption in the UK that conducting skill is a ‘natural’ ability, and that it will be absorbed and developed through experience, both of having been conducted and by actually engaging in the activity of conducting. While recognising the potential significance of ‘craft knowledge’, an argument can also be made that there are musical, technical and personal skills necessary for effective conducting which are teachable and susceptible to formal education procedures.

Ways in which choral conductors are trained in the UK could be perceived as unsystematic and unstructured, and while courses (summer schools, weekend, day) may be available for those wishing to improve their skills in this field, little or no systematic training appears as a significant part part of any music education at higher education level. This contrasts vividly with the USA, where a large number of systematic and structured programmes throughout the country allow students to ‘major’ in the area of choral conducting. As a teacher of such a programme at the University of Cincinnati, Leman (1992) refers to the original premise for the existence of the conductor as being -

> to bring about a technical and expressive unity of elements of music in live performance by groups that are made up of individual musicians.  
> [op.cit.: 290]

and that -

> the traditional training of choral conductors [in the USA] includes many of the skills that are needed for technical and expressive success.  
> [ibid]
1.7 SUMMARY AND INTENTION OF THE STUDY

This chapter has sought to put forward the reasons for this research, namely that there is a perceived need for training in choral conducting to be included more extensively in undergraduate and postgraduate music and music education studies in the UK, not just within the province of initial teacher education. This has become apparent from the researcher's own teaching experience with postgraduate and other students, as well as from discussions with school teachers and choral conductors generally. The study is also propelled by the researcher's own work and experience as a choral conductor in school, church and the community.

Following the contrasting UK and USA perspectives and practices outlined, the purpose of this study will be to investigate definitions of effective conducting in relation to (i) underpinning principles and beliefs, (ii) specific musical and technical expertise, (iii) behavioural traits and communication skills of choral conductors. This research study will adopt an innovative approach to the research question; it might be regarded as a 'tour' of conducting through reflection and speculation, philosophical consideration using a wide range of literature, as well as descriptions and analyses of a series of practical research activities. The researcher enters the field as a reflective practitioner, with a series of questions surrounding the nature of effective choral conducting. Such questions cannot be successfully considered, let alone answered, by exploring only one method or activity, and so the tour with its occasional 'detours' is mapped out (see Chapter 4). It puts forward values, assumptions and strategies of conducting theory and practice in an attempt, through 'knowing-in-action' (Schon, 1987 - see Chapter 5) to gain insight into the dynamic phenomenon of the effective choral conductor.

The 'tour' (see also Fig.2) firstly examines the emergence and development of the role of the conductor historically and link with evidence of conductors who have been noted for their effectiveness in some way or another (Chapter 2). By looking more closely at what performers and conductors themselves do, have written or said, it may be possible to determine more clearly how effectiveness is perceived and whether it is considered an innate 'gift' or a skill that is teachable. In Chapter 3, a review of
research literature and conducting methodologies enables assumptions outlined in this chapter to be authenticated and provides further means to analyse effectiveness. Its outcomes provide a framework upon which a model of the effective choral conductor is developed. Consequently, Chapter 4 discusses and develops the model, exploring aspects of knowing, communication and the nature of conducting. Chapter 5 considers appropriate research methodologies and establishes a rationale for the approach taken in this study. Chapter 6 tests the validity of the model of effective choral conducting through the presentation and analysis of the research processes and activities. Chapter 7 revisits the model in the light of the research activities, analyses and explores the nature and types of learning in relation to the knowledge and skills that a model effective conductor should ideally have and determine the constituent knowledge and skills of conducting that are teachable. Finally, in Chapter 8, proposals for teaching conducting in higher education in the UK are put forward, as are suggested related areas for further research.
historical perspective

reflection & speculation

biographies & experienced conductors' self-analysis

'interviews & subjective thoughts

'Effective' Choral Conductor

conducting methods

research evidence

observations

Fig. 1.2: Diagram of intention or 'tour' of study of the Effective Choral Conductor.
CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

This chapter explores conducting in its historical context, tracing its development through the ages in relation to the function and role of the conductor. It firstly considers the generic features and then more specifically the choral conductor. Further insight into the role, personality and behavioural traits of the conductor is then sought by reference to the comments and writings of some of the more contemporary leading conductors and performers.

2.1 THE NEED FOR A CONDUCTOR

The art of conducting is a comparatively new form of musical behaviour (Boult, 1963). The first signs of a need for a conductor became apparent in the court of Louis XV with Lully and his 'twenty four violins'. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries performance practice varied from country to country and, while opera in Italy and Germany was generally directed from the harpsichord, it became increasingly necessary in French opera and ballet with its rhythmic choruses and dance scenes to use a baton-director. Anecdotal reference to Lully's septic toe\(^1\) suggests that his music required some form of control mechanism, and thus he began to bang a large stick on the floor (presumably missing the floor from time to time!). Such practice of using a baton-director, or at least someone to beat time, soon followed in Germany and Italy when it became necessary to exercise more control on large ensemble performances, essentially in order to keep a group of performers in time with each other (Headington, 1974). Headington refers to a picture of the Cantor or musical director of St Thomas's Church, Leipzig in 1710 'wielding a paper roll in front of a group of strings, wind, organ, drums and singers' (op. cit.: 97).

Carse (1949 & 1964), a noted musicologist and writer on the development of the orchestra, has charted methods of orchestral conducting, gleaned from various original sources between 1732 and 1820 (1964: 339-342). As can be seen from this evidence, the most prolific development in the

\(^1\) It is alleged that his conducting stick occasionally hit his toe instead of the floor, which made it infected and eventually caused his death (Headington, 1974: 97). There is more reliable evidence, however, commenting on Lully's tyrannical and egotistical behaviour with his court orchestra, which may indicate the reasons for his conducting behaviour (ibid; Bukofzer, 1948: 237).
art of conducting took place in the first half of the nineteenth century. Carse indicates that the musical conductor before the nineteenth century, in addition to composing music for the chapel, court, theatre or other establishment, was 'charged with the responsibility of seeing that it was properly performed' (1949: 289). Terms 'kapellmeister', 'maestro di cappella', 'maître de musique' were used, 'kapellmeister' being generally associated with the role of composer, which was the essential qualification for holding such a position in the eighteenth century. Throughout the eighteenth century, such position-holders were composers first and directors of music second.

Separation of the roles of composer and conductor became more common between 1800 and 1850, but it became increasingly apparent throughout the nineteenth century that composers were not necessarily the best conductors and vice versa (Carse, 1949). Also at this time, conducting with a baton became more prevalent, suggesting that the role of composer-conductor was gradually changing and that the conductor was beginning to establish a role distinctive from the composer. The new status of the public concert also influenced this role. The qualities required of a conductor were changing and becoming increasingly involved with personality traits as well as musical attributes: 'leadership, assertiveness, authority, organising ability and personality in addition to his artistic gift' (Carse, 1949: 291).

2.2 THE KEYBOARD DIRECTOR

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the keyboard continuo was an integral part of the music, the keyboard-player, particularly if he was the composer as well, often assumed control. This was especially so in choral music, where in leading rehearsals and performances he would assume a responsibility comparable to the principal violinist-leader in instrumental music. Indeed, in well-endowed courts and churches there might well have been two harpsichords in performance - one for the continuo player and the other for the conductor (Dart, 1969: 55). This was especially the case for opera performances where the continuo player would be required to play the secco recitatives. According to Lang (1963), the role of the harpsichord-conductor was to keep a check on any singer or player who got lost in the score by playing their part until they caught up. It was also his role to clarify articulation, keeping the rhythmic momentum intact especially throughout
long held notes, and generally emphasising the beat (op.cit.:716). Such practice, particularly prevalent in Germany during the eighteenth century, was dependent to some extent on the relationship between the keyboard-conductor and the ‘concertmaster’ (violinist-leader), the latter being largely responsible for the preparation and rehearsal of the performers, while the conductor assumed ultimate direction. (This compares with the present practice where large choirs will have a chorus master whose role is to prepare the choir for the conductor, as is the case with the London Symphony Orchestra Chorus, for example.) The baroque and early classical keyboard-director usually had the musical score in front of him and was able to assume a baton-conducting role naturally, while the violinist-leader often had greater influence and control over the playing (Carse, 1964: 87 & 169). Hence, the responsibility for the music’s direction was unclear unless the composer was present.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the conductor was moving away from the keyboard, as performances would increasingly involve the works of a variety of composers rather than just the works of the keyboard-player-composer-conductor (Dart, 1969). As composers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries no longer relied on the continuo to provide the inner harmony, the role of the keyboard-director further diminished. The principal violinist, as precursor of the baton-conductor, used the bow to conduct, the violin remaining in the hand; as the music became more complicated in terms of tempo variation and required more careful rubato phrasing, so the principal violinist played less and less and conducted more and more (Meyer-Brown & Sadie, 1989: 218). The renaissance practice of beating time with a scroll of paper on a hard surface (Schoenberg, 1967; Robinson & Winold, 1976) carried on into French opera, with a time-beater standing in front of the orchestra. This apparently was a noisy business and seems to have disappeared after about 1789.

Lang (1963) refers to a number of composer-conductors who were meticulous in their requirements of players and singers. Mozart and Gluck were two such, the former ‘infusing his enthusiasm in both orchestra and singers’ (op.cit.:718) while the latter was dreaded by performers, insisting on the highest standards with numerous and exacting rehearsals (Carse, 1964).
Evidence for the need of a time-beating conductor is recounted in the writing of particular composers. Spohr (cited in Carse, 1949) referring to the Theatre Italien in Paris in 1820 wrote:

they wavered several times so much that the conductor (Grasset) was obliged to beat time for them.

[Carse, 1949: 295]

2.3 CONDUCTOR AS INTERPRETER

With the expansion of the symphony and symphony orchestra in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the need for a conductor as an interpreter of the music as well as a time-beater became increasingly necessary. It became more difficult for players to be aware of balance with increasingly large orchestral and choral forces. Entries were less obvious in the musical score, dynamic variation increased and more sensitive adjustment generally was needed to maintain a suitable balance and precision. Clearly the mechanisms by which a small classical orchestra could be kept together were unsuitable and insufficient for a Mahler or Bruckner symphony. The music of Berlioz and Wagner required an independent ‘specialist-conductor’ with a baton, and both composers wrote treatises on this ‘new art’.²

Carl Maria von Weber’s influence on the development of conducting during the nineteenth century is outlined by Kreuger (1958), who refers to him as ‘the first great master of modern conducting’, and, as a broadly educated musician, ‘revealed a musical versatility which none of his contemporaries or forerunners possessed’ (op.cit.:119). Weber is reputed (Kreuger, 1958) to have rehearsed meticulously and imposed his artistic will on musicians in a friendly yet unyielding manner. The baton was introduced into the Dresden opera by Weber after successful experimentation in Prague, where it became the tool for ensuring homogeneous fusion of vocal and instrumental ensemble. A drawing by J. Hayter shows Weber conducting with a large baton in London in 1826.

Mendelssohn in 1835 provided direction and control over his music with a baton which ‘put an end to the old method of violin direction at Leipzig’ (Carse, 1949: 301), which meant that the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra was one of the first to be regularly conducted. Some contemporary accounts (for example, Spohr’s autobiography) suggest that the advent of the conductor brought orchestral playing to a higher degree of perfection (Carse, 1964: 222; 1949: 303). Accounts of Mendelssohn’s relationship with the Gewandhaus reveal particular personality characteristics which must have had an important part to play in the development of the orchestra. Kreuger (1958) writes, based on contemporary accounts:-

He approached his task with the devotion of a priest in the temple and, far from seeking to draw attention to himself, did everything to submerge himself in the orchestra. He even beat the second part of the triple bar to the left, where it was visible only to the orchestra! Contemporaries tell how the play of his expressive features mirrored the course of the music and how one could read the approaching nuances and effects on his mobile countenance.

[Kreuger, 1958: 123]

Berlioz, in his treatise (1855) advocated the use of the baton and full orchestral score for the conductor. He was himself a fiery conductor and had an irresistible power of command when conducting his own music; however, accounts reveal him as lacking in the interpretation of other composers’ works. In addition, the writings of Wagner (1869) and Weingarten (1896) emphasised theories of the conductor’s art and the emergence of a ‘true profession’ (Meyer-Brown & Sadie, 1989: 336).

The baton-conducting practice in the rest of Europe took several years to become established. In France it had a troubled development, with the practice of beating time audibly with a stick, common in the time of Lully, still in evidence well into the nineteenth century notably in the ‘Opera’ in Paris.

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3 Berlioz did not take up conducting until 1835, when he wrote in his Memoirs ‘the conductor must feel as I feel. They require a combination of irresistible verve and the utmost precision, a controlled vehemence, a dreamlike sensitivity, an almost morbid melancholy ... it is exceedingly painful to hear my works conducted by someone other than myself.’ A caricature by Doré (1850) shows Berlioz conducting with glowing enthusiasm (Berlioz conducting at the Société Philharmonique at the Jardin d‘Hiver).
In Italy, the emergence of the baton-conductor was slower than in France, Germany or England, where the principal violinist was reluctant to relinquish his status. Using the violin bow as a means of conducting was clearly too cumbersome and inadequate to control large orchestral (and choral) forces. The violinist Habeneck (1781-1849) was likely to have been the last representative of the violinist-conductor of a large ensemble (Apel, 1966: 178).

Spohr, writing in a letter to Wilhelm Speyer in 1820, described the customary practice of conducting in England as ‘topsy-turvey’ (Carse, 1949: 319). Indeed, Spohr introduced the baton-conducting practice in opposition to the keyboard-director, and wrote of the result:

... the audience were at first startled by the novelty, and were seen whispering together; but when the music began and the orchestra executed the well-known symphony with unusual power and precision, the general approbation as shown immediately in the conclusion of the first part by a long-sustained clapping of hands. The triumph of the baton as a time giver was decisive, and no-one was seen anymore seated at the piano during the performances of symphonies and overtures.

[op.cit.: 320]

It was supposedly Liszt who was one of the first conductors to use gesture and facial expression to indicate the character of the music and to stamp a sense of individuality on a performance. Wagner also became a particularly expressive conductor and his followers -

who watched the rehearsals and performances conducted by this phenomenal artist whose glance beheld everything and whose facial expression and histrionic talents of communication were pronounced exceptional by the best actors, emerged as the first group of modern, thoroughly competent and devoted masters of the baton.

[Lang, 1963: 964]

However, it was a long time before the conductor’s personality and

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4 Based on an account from Schünemann (1913) Geschichte des Dirigierens, where Baron Grimm refers to the conductor of the Paris Opera in 1753 as a 'woodchopper', owing to the custom of beating time audibly.
individuality became a customary distinguishing feature of musical performances. Nineteenth century audiences essentially came to hear the music, the virtuoso instrumentalist and singer, not so much the conductor. It was only really in the twentieth century that conductors did stamp their own interpretations distinctively on the orchestral repertoire. Some of the notable conductors were Arthur Nikisch (1855-1922), Arturo Toscanini (1867-1957), Willem Mengelberg (1871-1951), Fritz Reiner (1888-1963), Serge Koussevitsky (1874-1951), Wilhelm Furtwangler (1886-1954) and Bruno Walter (1876-1962). Each of these was noted for his distinctive style and idiosyncratic behaviours in rehearsal and performance, implanting particular interpretations on the music (Schoenberg, 1967). It is not uncommon at the present time, and has been so throughout the twentieth century, for a conductor to receive as much notoriety as the composer or soloist in a performance. Evidence from personal experience acknowledges that the public flocked to see and hear, for example, the series of Beethoven symphonies conducted by Otto Klemperer in London shortly before his death in the early 1970s. Today such conductors as Zubin Mehta, Lorin Mazel, Georg Solti and Simon Rattle guarantee a large audience, as evidenced in the concert listings in the British national press.

2.4 THE CONDUCTOR OF CHORAL ENSEMBLES

Although today the conductor is regarded as an interpreter of music primarily in the orchestral field, choral groups have needed a person to ‘beat time’ or control, in some way, the tempo of the music. Schoenberg (1967) charts the development of conducting from ancient times, where -

Horace asks the maidens and youths to pay attention to the Sapphic step and snap of his fingers. Thus Horace was, in a way, a conductor, marking the rhythms of his songs by foot and hand.

[Schoenberg, 1967: 26]

- to the thirteenth century, where in ‘Tractus de Musica’ by Elias Salomon is written that the conductor - one of the singers -

... has to know everything about the music to be sung. He beats time with his hand on the book and gives cues and rests to the singers. If one of them sings incorrectly, he whispers into his ear, “You are too loud,
too soft, your tones are wrong", as the case may be, but so that the others do not hear it. Sometimes he must support them with his own voice if he sees that they are lost.

[ibid]

While the conductor was not really considered an ‘interpreter’ of music until the nineteenth century, when large orchestral and choral forces and increasing demands of composers in terms of rubato phrasing, flexible tempi and rhythmic complexity made the conductor a significant figure, Robinson and Winold (1976) also point out that musical direction rather evolved from a need to control singers and instrumentalists. They provide evidence, from bas-reliefs and wall-paintings in tombs, dating from the ancient Sumerians c.2270 BC, the Egyptians c.1400 BC, the ancient Greeks as well as early Christian music, of some form of time-beating or extrinsic hand gesture as being a notable feature of choral singing. Such extant art has provided some indication of musical practices from ancient history. Robinson and Winold furthermore suggest that there might have been some interpretative gesturing in Vedic music of India as well as in the rhythmically free chanting of early Christian music.

The presence of gestures in early cultures is significant in that they indicate rather conclusively the existence of some kind of central control in primitive choral performances.

[Robinson & Winold, 1976:34]

Time beaters were in evidence in the Sistine Chapel Choir in the fifteenth century, where a roll of paper called a ‘sol-fa’ was used to indicate the pulse of the music (Schoenberg, 1967; Sadie, 1980:397). Similar practices were in evidence in Elizabethan England and also in the time of Bach’s predecessor at Leipzig (Headington, 1974; see above). Some fourteenth and sixteenth century prints show groups of musicians and singers being led by a person with a stick or roll of paper. Morley, in his *Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* (1597), gives us the following:

Philomethus: “What is a stroke?”
Magister: “It is a successive motion of the hand, directing the quality of every note and rest in the song, with equal measure, according to the variety of signs and proportions.”.

[Schoenberg, 1967: 28]
It is understandable that with rhythmically complicated, polyphonic music, some sort of control of the pulse and tempo would have been necessary. It is also evident that this was not so necessary in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when choral music in England became less polyphonic and thus less complex rhythmically. During the early Baroque the emergence of the harpsichord and organ continuo enabled small groups of singers and instrumentalists to depend on the distinctive and percussive (in the case of the harpsichord) sound of such continuo instruments to keep the performances together and relatively unified in direction. The performance venue would often dictate the need for a visual means of keeping time. This was the case in St Mark’s Venice, where large instrumental and choral forces were brought together, for example, in the antiphonal music of the Gabrieli and Monteverdi, in a vibrant acoustic where groups of performers were often distant from each other (Dart, 1969: 104; Bukofzer, 1948: 20).

In 1737, the English composer William Boyce was appointed conductor of the Three Choirs Festival. Samuel Wesley (in a lecture given in 1827; see Grove Vol.II on Conducting; also Fellowes,1969: 202), reported that his (Boyce’s) method was ‘to mark out the measure to the orchestra with a roll of parchment or paper in his hand’. It was also noted (Fellowes, 1969: 202) that Boyce ‘was a man of striking personality’, which suggests that his appointment as conductor may have been influenced by this trait. He certainly adopted the method of conducting with a parchment and held his appointment at the Three Choirs Festival until deafness prevented him.

Following the deaths of Handel and Boyce, choral music, which had been strong since the middle ages in England, fell into decline, as a number of composers of inferior ability to Handel wrote oratorios and other choral pieces (Scholes, 1941: 651). However, during the latter part of the nineteenth century a revitalisation of music generally and choral singing in particular took place. The work of John Curwen and Sarah Glover fostered interest in singing in schools and churches. Their prime concern was the improvement of sight-singing to enable church services to benefit. Such a profound effect did Curwen’s tonic sol-fa scheme have on music education (Rainbow, 1968), that great festivals of sight-singing took place in Crystal Palace and similar venues throughout the country often with 3000 singers with vast audiences of some
30,000. Choral performances required a great degree of control by conductors because of their size, though the main objective was involvement of the masses in the singing of (usually) Handel oratorios.

Following the success of events like the Handel festivals, the first of which took place in 1784 in Westminster Abbey, the amateur choral society emerged in England and Germany and developed throughout the nineteenth century. The two oratorios of Haydn, *The Creation* and *The Seasons*, exerted an influence on choral singing in Germany just as Handel's oratorios did in England. One of the first of such choirs, the Berlin Singakademie, gave a performance of Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, conducted by Mendelssohn in 1829 (Robinson & Winold, 1976). Another significant choir was the Vienna Singverein, which, in its early days, was conducted by Brahms. Paralleling the rise in congregational hymn singing in Protestant churches and singing in schools, the amateur choral society flourished and extended its influence also to North America (Goldman, 1966; Scholes, 1941). Robinson and Winold emphasise the influence this had on the development of choral art at this time, suggesting that -

> the impulse behind these groups was that ordinary people could be led into an uncommon experience within the existing society by the ennobling cultivation of choral art.

[Robinson & Winold, 1976: 27]

Such development heralded an increase in output of new choral pieces for large and smaller choirs and glee clubs (Goldman, 1966). Stanford, Parry and Sullivan were among the prominent composers who led the renaissance in England, whose large and small-scale choral works represent the most significant part of their output. As they abandoned the traditional recitative-aria-chorus oratorio structure and opted for a more Wagnerian influenced 'romantic' style of composing (Scholes, 1941), where there was a necessity for the conductor to do more than keep time. Consequently, a new generation of choral conductors emerged taking the role of 'controller' and 'interpreter' of large forces singing the standard oratorio repertoire. The tradition of choral societies continued with the performances of oratorios by Handel, Haydn, Mendelssohn and the newer composers, including Elgar and Vaughan Williams, who were prominent in the early part of the twentieth century. The conductor featured in both amateur and professional capacities, but the role
was essentially the same. The conductor was needed to provide the mechanisms for keeping large forces together as well as to create a single, unified expressive interpretation of the music.

The choral conductor in the latter half of the twentieth century continued to develop, with choral music making demands on the technical and interpretative skills of the conductor with, for example, increasingly complex rhythmic and harmonic structures as represented in the music of Britten, Bernstein, Tippett and a generation of younger composers. The technological improvement of recording facilities has promoted smaller professional choirs performing to a very high standard and a revival of interest in renaissance and early music, as well as a return, latterly, to simpler musical structures as represented in the music of minimalist composers such as Arvo Pärt and John Tavener.

2.5 PERSONALITY AND BEHAVIOURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CONDUCTORS

Historically, what most conductors have had in common is an acute ear, the charisma to inspire musicians on first acquaintance, the will to get their own way, high organisational ability, physical and mental fitness, relentless ambition, a powerful intelligence and a natural sense of order which enables them to cut through thousands of scattered notes to the artistic core.

[Lebrecht, 1991: 8]

So wrote Lebrecht in the introduction to his recently published book *The Maestro Myth* which attempts to uncover and expose some of the myths and mysteries surrounding the great conductors. Not only is this an investigation of the reasons for the successes of certain conductors, but it is also a rational treatise on the role psychologically, socially and musically of some of the most powerful (in the influential, musical sense) figures in recent western musical civilisation. The orchestral world has had many pioneering, domineering and heroic figures as its conductors throughout the last 150 years or so. Furtwangler, Toscanini, Karajan, Klepper, Beecham have each, amongst many others, cut a distinctive mould in this area; their names have often carried more weight (particularly in the areas of advertising and musical criticism) than the composers whose music they have interpreted. Bernstein,
Mehta, Barenboim and Rattle are more recent examples of conductors who are sought after, not only by orchestras and their audiences, but also by recording companies, who see their names in terms of financial as well as musical prosperity. The character of the profession, insists Lebrecht, has been moulded by the styles, personalities and idiosyncratic behaviour of powerful, Caucasian and apparently heterosexual men, though with some notable exceptions.

Taken from start to finish, the story of conducting is a chronicle of individual endeavour and ambition, modulated by violent circumstances in the surrounding society. Conducting, like most forms of heroism, rests on the use and abuse of power for personal benefit. Whether such heroism is desirable in music, or a necessary evil, remains open to debate.

[ibid]

Examples of the earlier conductors, from Hans von Bulow (1830-1894) onwards, suggest that a conductor required some of the personality characteristics of a tyrannical dictator. Lebrecht points out that people such as Koussevitsky and Toscanini terrified their players by the manner in which they used their authority, often treating them like children in a very formal classroom.

More contemporary comments of the characteristics and attributes of a successful conductor, which point to certain personality traits, are outlined by various ‘established’ conductors including Eugene Ormandy, who states:

... he acts as a guide to the orchestra, building up in their minds a concept of the work parallel to his own, for the eventual public performance requires an enlightened and sensitive orchestra, playing not under a conductor, but rather with him.

[Green, 1987: preface]

Boult (1963) says:

He must have a power of leadership, an infinite capacity for taking pains, unlimited patience and a real gift of psychology. He must have a constitution of iron and be ready to appear good-humoured in the face of the most maddening frustrations.

[op.cit.: xiii]
It was Arthur Nikisch (1855-1922) who established much of the modern character of the conducting profession in his determination to make conducting a ‘creative’ act rather than simply interpreting the composers’ scores faithfully. He felt it important that each performance should have a degree of spontaneity and distinctiveness.

Like love-making, Nikisch held that conducting required spontaneity, boldness, imagination and a profound feeling for the work in hand. Routine was abhorrent to him.

[Lebrecht, 1991: 31]

In addition, Nikisch was reputed to be popular with all orchestral players with whom he came into contact, and was generally affable and liberal in his praise towards them. He certainly became a model for a whole series of conductors who followed in the early twentieth century - Pierre Monteux, Ernest Ansermet, Fritz Reiner, Georg Szell, Eugene Ormandy, Georg Solti and even Herbert von Karajan and Leonard Bernstein - to name a selection. Adrian Boult admired Nikisch in particular for his effective stick technique and method of rehearsal. In his small book *Thoughts on Conducting* (1963), Boult describes him as having a certain economy in his gesture.

To begin with, he made his stick say more than any other conductor that I have ever watched. Its power of expression was so intense that one felt it would be quite impossible, for instance, to play *staccato* when Nikisch was showing a *legato*. There was no need for him to stop and ask for a *sostenuto* - his stick had already pulled it from the players.

[Boult, 1963: 48-49]

Such evidence points to one of the key attributes of a conductor, namely the ability to extract the appropriate musical expression from the players and singers without the need for excessive talk in rehearsals. Research evidence, outlined in Chapter 3, also confirms that verbal explanations and verbal correcting of each inappropriate musical feature are not really necessary when acknowledgement and much effective correcting can be achieved by gesture and facial expression, particularly with highly-trained professional orchestral players who already have a thorough grounding in the repertoire. The essence of the Nikisch style was to favour such an approach in rehearsal.
(Nikisch also became one of the first conductors to be able to command substantial financial reward for his work.)

Lebrecht (1991), through detailed qualitative research, makes remarks on the personalities of many conductors. He describes the tenacious character of Karajan, a personality and figure of power admired by Helmut Schmidt (West German Chancellor) and Margaret Thatcher (British Prime Minister). Not only have we here a conductor of some reputation, but also a person for whom...

personal relations were, like all his prodigious gifts and possessions, permanently at the service of a higher cause - the pursuit of total and eternal power. [Lebrecht, 1991:131]

Karajan himself was concerned to find out some of the psychological and psychobiological effects and stresses that music had on conductors as well as listeners. He founded a Research Institute for Experimental Psychology at the University of Salzburg, where he took part in experiments on monitoring pulse rates, blood pressure and static electricity on his skin (Matheopoulos, 1982). He believed in a 'whole body' approach to conducting which enabled him to keep youthful. He learned to breathe freely during tense moments in the music and was a yoga fanatic. Matheopoulos (1982) in her book Maestro, which describes encounters with conductors from personal interviews, wrote, in relation to Karajan, that the mystery of the art of conducting

cannot be explained in concrete terms ... [sic] like the healing effect of music both on those who listen and on those who make it and are constantly renewed by the hidden force inherent in and emanating from it ...

[Matheopoulos, 1982: 276]

The ‘mystery’ of conducting is acknowledged by Bernstein, who suggested, in an interview with Matheopoulos, that it is ‘the most potent love affair you can have in your life’. The flamboyant composer-player-conductor reduced the art of conducting to

... love. We love one another. Every orchestra I conduct is a love affair. [op.cit.: 10]
Bernstein here goes beyond the notion of 'loving' the music as enjoying or simply liking it, but rather draws a deeper analogy of people coming together to discover new music and fulfilling a musical need with sexual satisfaction. He also draws a compelling comparison between conducting and the process of composing:

... I'm composing the piece as we go along: now, I bring in F sharp, now we bring in the basses, next the trombones, now we bring in the choir. It's an unbelievable experience, as if I were composing a piece which I knew very well on the spot.

[op.cit.: 11]

Such a creative approach to the art of conducting supports the notion that something new and spontaneous is needed in each musical performance, not only for the listeners in the audience, but also for the performers, in order to enrich the musical event in meaningful way. Bernstein has indeed been noted, by various critics, for his 'extreme' interpretations and extravagant gestures, but his performances have undoubtedly also created reactions, which players and singers who have worked with him have recognised. One notable controversy was his intention in 1977 to conduct a performance of Beethoven's C sharp minor Quartet Opus 131 with the full strings of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. His powers of persuasion and personality made it work, and, after much disagreement Bernstein started:

... and after half an hour of the first rehearsal, there were tears in their eyes.

[op.cit.: 17]

One measurement of an effective conductor can be evaluated by the reception and reaction of orchestral players and singers, who are notoriously sceptical of a new person on the podium. The account described above points to the fact that Bernstein was obviously successful in his dealings with the Vienna Philharmonic and was generally able to capture the admiration of many under him.

Although he never really came to like conducting and maintained a love-hate relationship with it (Carpenter, 1992: 250), Benjamin Britten regularly conducted his own and other people's music during most of his active working life. Many players and singers have found his conducting
inspiring. Carpenter (1992), in his biography of Britten, quoted several. Emanuel Hurvitz, sometime leader of the Glyndebourne and English Chamber Orchestras, said:

... players would give just anything for Ben to be conducting rather than anyone else.... He was a conductor who made the orchestra feel they wanted to play for him.

[Carpenter, 1992: 250]

The harpist Osian Ellis points out that Britten knew the names of his players and liked them, thus perhaps accounting for him as

... the one conductor who made you play your best - you couldn’t do enough for him. I don’t know another conductor who does that for you.

[op.cit.: 251]

A great deal of Britten’s own music was choral and vocal, and the researcher’s own experiences of singing in a choir under his baton validates the comments made. Acute musical sensitivity and understanding were some of the conducting attributes that he conveyed to the performers (and audience). Professional singers too have been inspired by his conducting. Janet Baker referred to

... his marvellous shaping of the phrase but at the same time [one was] given room, a sort of freedom, to yield to the inspiration of the moment. Only the very greatest conductors have this ability.

[ibid]

Much of the anecdotal evidence describing impressions that particular conductors have made on performers and audiences is curiously nebulous in attempting to define, in any specificity, an effective conductor. It is certain that all the features of character and personality outlined in the references quoted do give some indications of what makes an effective conductor, but it is apparent that all such characteristics do not match all good conductors. For some, stick technique is considered important; while Nikisch had it, Britten according to himself and others, did not. Boulez does not use one. Yet each, in his own individual style is, or has been, considered an effective or even ‘great’ conductor. Boult (1963: xiii) prepared a formidable (by contemporary
norms) list of qualifications for the practising conductor, which, if taken literally, would ensure that very few today would actually aspire to such musical heights. (It suggests, for example that an orchestral conductor should be a proficient player on five instruments.) Most of the writing in his book is concerned with the technical aspects of conducting taken from a personal standpoint; its tenor is much like an advice manual - of what to do and what not to do. Boult does, however, make an analogy between rehearsing and teaching, saying that the role of the conductor in this context is to stimulate and motivate the musician to listen, think and react to what is going on around him. He suggests, for example, that the use of positive comments during rehearsals are much more helpful in creating a pleasant working environment and good personal relationships in preference to negative comments, such as ‘don’t...!’ Here he promotes the idea of rehearsing to get the feel of the whole piece rather than perfecting bar by bar, which he associates with an atomistic ‘American’ approach. The only real reference Boult makes to working with amateur choirs, from his own experience as conductor of the Bach Choir, is to propose a plan of the rehearsals which should be adhered to. Boult’s own perception of the role of the conductor was more in line with the ‘chairman of the committee’, (Lebrecht, 1991) which often made him appear efficient, but somewhat dull in comparison with some of his contemporaries such as Beecham or Sargent. However,

Boult was a musician of exceptional sensitivity and intelligence, qualities that he hid behind the stiff British bristle that decorated his upper lip.  

[Lebrecht, 1991: 41]

2.6 SUMMARY

This chapter has examined the role of the orchestral conductor and choral conductor historically as well as surveyed some of the writings about the personality and behavioural traits of conductors. From the descriptive accounts of conductors, it is apparent that much of what has counted as effective conducting or what has made a conductor ‘great’ has been partly dependent on personality and the ability to inspire. Various conductors appear dependent on a sense of authority that enables them to get what they want from players and singers; some are reputedly tyrannical, some gentle.
Yet, they have been seen as complete musicians in their own right. Certain sets of musical skills, particularly aural, must be in place. In addition, certain characteristics seem important from several sources. Awareness of the aesthetic and expressive potential of music, sensitivity and a wide musical knowledge are desirable prerequisites; also, most of the renown conductors are able to articulate a philosophy on which they base their conducting technique and interpretations of music. These descriptive and anecdotal accounts vary in opinion as to whether conductors need to be trained or already have the essential musical and technical skills in place.

Further evidence in the development of a definition of a model of choral conducting effectiveness will now be sought from the research literature and methodology texts on conducting.
In addition to an array of texts describing conducting methodology, formal research studies have been undertaken during the last twenty years on various aspects of conducting, including conductor effectiveness, rehearsal styles, gesture and communication skills. Such research studies have essentially been USA-based, where contemporary music education programmes are concerned with the training of conductors for school and church choirs and bands, as well as for professional music groups. The methodology literature has tended to focus on the communication skills of the conductor and the application of musical and psychomotor gesture skills in the rehearsal situation. The research literature can be categorised into three distinct but linked areas, namely: (i) research that draws on philosophical and aesthetic theories in relation to the conductor’s expressive gestures; (ii) research that draws on psychological theories of communication and learning and (iii) research that focuses on creating ‘observation instruments’ to look at behavioural patterns of conductors in rehearsal and / or performance. Although, inevitably, there is a degree of cross-fertilization in the categories outlined, a number of writers, for example, refer to the aesthetic theories of Reimer, Langer and Meyer, while essentially seeking to provide a psychological insight into conducting communication. Most, though not all, of these research studies have adopted post-positivistic (i.e. more experimental, quantitative) paradigms (Guba, 1990).

The various texts and research literatures on conducting and conductor effectiveness will be reviewed together under the following areas: (i) principles and beliefs underpinning the conductors’ preparation for his/her role; (ii) musical-technical skills associated with the choral conductor in rehearsal and performance; (iii) behaviours, including personality traits of the conductor in relation to interpersonal and communication skills. Further subsections in each area will expedite the review, though many writers and researchers are concerned with more than one aspect of the conducting phenomenon.
3.1 PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING PREPARATION

3.1.1 SCORE PREPARATION

The main focus for a number of texts on conducting appear to be on the areas of preparation, rehearsal and performance. The amount of score preparation will bear some relation to the confidence that the conductor exudes in the rehearsal, which, in turn, will influence the outcome in performance (Boult, 1963). It is expected that a conductor has to begin the study of the music before the first rehearsal. Green (1981) emphasises the importance of this preparation and draws attention also to the development of an understanding of the historical context of the music to be performed. The preparation is both technical and artistic (op.cit.: xiii). Green suggests exercises for practice in preparation of the music - singing through individual parts of a score, developing 'inner hearing' by pitching various notes of the scale after hearing only one note on the piano, memorising several lines of one part of the score and then writing them out from memory (op.cit.:3). The most important guiding principle is that the conductor should 'constantly carry in his mind a musical sound.' (op.cit.:2). Boult, in his earlier technical handbook, written in 1920 for his conducting class students at the Royal College of Music in London, similarly emphasises the need for familiarity with the overall structure and character of the score, and while more detailed study will be necessary at some point, 'it should never interfere with the perspective of the work as a whole' (Boult, 1920: 20). Kaplan (1985) states that the purpose of score study is 'to know it so well that it becomes part of you' (op.cit.:12). He gives an example of a procedure for internalising and knowing Tallis’ motet If Ye Love Me. This includes sight-singing each of the four parts and following eight steps which, he believes, will facilitate acquaintance with the music. Boult (1963) (see also Chapter 2) also makes the point in his list of requirements for the aspiring (orchestral) conductor that, in addition to knowledge of the musical score, ...

he should be a master of four or five orchestral instruments

and that ...

he should have played in an orchestra for some years, perhaps on different instruments. [Boult, 1963: xiii]
Finn (1946), who devoted much of his life to the interpretation especially of sixteenth century a cappella music, put forward the argument that choral musicianship was a highly specialised competence, and stated that the choral conductor needed understanding and skill of areas of music that included comprehensive technical musicianship (i.e. including aural, performance and gestural skills) and a philosophy of music which is based on history, psychology and aesthetic criticism:

To produce a singing ensemble of musical value, he needs complete information about the rudiments, all the refinements, and all the related acoustico-psychological elements of choral technique. He is grievously at a disadvantage if he enters the rehearsal room without so competent a measure of skill as to be able to instantly diagnose and remedy all symptoms of ineptitude or inertia in single choral lines and in the ensemble.

[Finn, 1946: 4]

With particular reference to twentieth century choral music, Moe (1973: 146) states that -

the possession of a clear image of the work prior to rehearsal is an absolute necessity.

and refers to Aaron Copland (1963) who wrote that -

No man has the right to stand before an orchestra (or chorus) unless he has a complete conception in his mind of what he is about to transmit.

[op.cit.: 137]

Kahn (1975) emphasises the importance of developing the inner ear for the student conductor, and suggests particular aural exercises. These include the provision of a progressive score-reading list from Bach two-part inventions (where the student should internalise the individual parts and the whole musical shape) to more complicated contemporary music via Bach fugues, Haydn quartets and Mozart symphonies. He considers such aural development especially important when dealing with amateur and young players and singers, where quick spotting of incorrect notes, he believes, will help in maintaining an efficient and effective rehearsal.
Strouse (1987) promotes the premise that a conductor should have a detailed understanding of the music's stylistic, historical and technical aspects (see Chapter 7 on the learning processes in this regard). He refers to what he believes to be the integral link between the conductor's preparation to ensure a secure knowledge of the musical score and the conducting gesture and communication skills (see below). He argues that preparation must involve consideration of the gesture as well as score analysis and puts forward two areas in which a conductor must prepare to communicate the composer's intentions:

1. development of a theoretical and emotional rationale for the composition's structure;

2. the practical transformation of these analyses results into conducting gestures that will translate the objective score information into physical motion, reflect the emotional energy of the piece and thus elicit an emotive response from the players and the audience.

[Strouse, 1987: 12]

In the introduction to her empirical research study on conductors' mental imagery, Jackson (1994) states that score preparation is a highly abstract experience, accomplished largely through the use of 'aural and kinaesthetic imagery' (op.cit.: 5). Mental imagery, she believes, is fundamental to the conducting process (ibid). The purpose of the study was to assess the potential relationship between mental imagery and conducting by comparing the functional (cognitive) brain processes of a conductor engaged in imagery (related to conducting) to the functional brain processes of that same conductor engaged in the act of conducting. Also, in order to be able to provide a link between brain research and music research, Jackson wanted to be able to describe the differences in functional brain processes between a novice and an expert conductor. She set up an experimental situation with six conductors (three novice conductors from Ohio State University and three expert conductor/teachers from around the US) each wearing an 'electro cap' with twenty one electrodes,¹ and played them three pieces from the band repertoire. From the results Jackson concluded that novice conductors were

¹ The electroencephalograph can 'measure minute electrical charges moment by moment throughout the brain and has been found to adequately reflect the processing of music and musical imagery' (Jackson, 1994: 5).
capable of 'extremely vivid musical imagery' (op.cit.: 148) and posed the question, 'is this an untapped resource that may improve conducting education?' (ibid). Consideration should be given, she believed, to devising a teaching technique that would incorporate the use of musical imagery for score preparation in the conducting curriculum. Further research could usefully compare such an approach to the more traditional methods of concentrating on physical gesture.

A research study developing a choral conducting pedagogy based on score minaturization was carried out by Wine (1994). The purpose of his study was to create a method whereby fundamental conducting gestures could be taught in direct correlation to existing music literature. He reported findings in previous studies on error detection that most conducting students cannot work directly from a full conductor's score, it being too complex for them to give effective cues; also that few conducting text books 'attempted to make direct correlation between the conducting gestures being taught and the enhancement of skills in score-reading' (op.cit.:1). The intention of Wine's research was to develop an approach for presenting the score in a minaturized format, following a pilot study which informed him that students found the minaturized score was significantly effective in teaching them to identify and prepare conducting gestures. Wine stated that his study was not experimental, though twenty eight undergraduate conducting students were asked to respond to the minaturized scores, and in essence the study presented a 'constructivist' (Guba, 1990) approach to the problem of score study for conducting students. The results provided a choral conducting curriculum of twenty four pieces of music (or extracts) which would correlate with a variety of prepared conducting styles and gestures. (Music for this curriculum included Britten's arrangement of the folk song Sally Gardens, Morley's madrigal April is in my mistress' face, Mendelssohn's He watching over Israel, and Dawson's arrangement of the spiritual Ev'ry time I feel the Spirit.)

3.1.2 AESTHETIC CONSIDERATIONS

A study of selected conductors' perceptions of aesthetic rehearsal techniques

While there was no clear definition of a 'minaturized score' presented in the study, examples were given of scores where particular cues were colour-coded and highlighted on handouts (and transparencies) for students.
was carried out by Rives (1983), who looked at choral rehearsals in relation to aesthetic principles outlined by Langer (1957), Meyer (1957) and Reimer (1970). The purpose of the study was to look at perceptions and descriptions of four choral conductors in Arizona. Rives’ study involved focused-interviews with each of the selected conductors, and an analysis of the responses to see what common elements in respect of aesthetic awareness in rehearsal and in theory were evident. He interpreted and classified the responses into six sections:

(i) items addressing the conductors’ approach to the expressive aspects of the music’s elements during rehearsal;
(ii) psychological factors affecting the expressive aspects of choral rehearsing;
(iii) musical ‘style’ as an important factor affecting rehearsal;
(iv) the creative aspects of choral rehearsing;
(v) the discursive and non-discursive aspects of rehearsal;
(vi) the importance of listening through the development of ‘inward’ and ‘actual’ hearing.

[Rives, 1983: 50]

The intention of the study was to explore the extent to which choir members were able to enhance their own individual awareness of the expressive elements in choral music through conductors’ aesthetic rehearsal techniques.

The nurturing of the choir members’ abilities to perceive and respond to music aesthetically is the development of their aesthetic sensitivity. Developing the choral musician’s aesthetic sensitivity is the *sine qua non* of aesthetic music education and this aspect of the choral experience should not be left to chance.

[op.cit.: 4]

Rives’ argument asserts that choral conductors should consider adopting techniques that are in accordance with aesthetic theory. He cites Langer, who refers to discursive and presentational symbolic forms, music being a non-discursive form. Because music’s meaning cannot be literally defined, its expressive character is essentially not discursive - it cannot be accounted for verbally, as words themselves have defined meanings. Rives makes the case, therefore, for efficient and effective rehearsing as much as possible through
non-verbal means. Considering the non-discursive nature of music and the limitations of verbal explanation to convey music’s expressive meaning, conductors would be advised, he maintains, to concentrate on and develop expressive gesture in order to convey more successfully the expressive character and aesthetic qualities of the music in rehearsal. Such an approach would more likely enhance individual aesthetic response, as each singer gains differing, non-verbal meanings and values from the music. This is a fundamental part of the conductor’s role, and something that is often neglected, Rives suggests, in undergraduate choral conducting programmes. He puts forward three considerations for such student courses:

1. Courses must be offered in philosophy of aesthetic music education.
2. Choral methods and conducting courses must be taught within an aesthetic framework.
3. University performing groups must be rehearsed utilising aesthetic rehearsal techniques.

[op.cit.:101]

Whitten (1988) emphasises the role of the choral conductor as a music educator who has the aims of developing the whole aesthetic understanding (i.e. gaining insight into responding appropriately to the expressive intentions of the composer) and ‘cultivating artistic discernment’ (i.e. knowing when this has been achieved) (op.cit.: 42) in addition to the goals of high standards in performance. This suggests that choral conductors will need a solid philosophical understanding of their role and a set of principles underpinning the basis for their work, and that development along these lines will require structured study and tuition. Whitten refers to the ‘integrity’ of teaching and performing choral music and argues that an understanding of psychological aspects of dealing with a group of singers is desirable as well as being musically prepared. He outlines strategies for rehearsing and promoting healthy voice use as well as motivating the student-singer.

3.1.3 HISTORICAL, VOCAL AND MUSICAL KNOWLEDGE

Decker and Kirk (1988) encourage the student to study the musical score thoroughly, considering it vital that the conductor should be aware of the music’s historical perspective as well as the intimate details of actual musical
Historical awareness gives the conductor's interpretation authenticity and conviction. Understanding of the composer's intent heightens the choir members' interest as well as that of the listeners.

[Decker & Kirk, 1988: 31]

The emphasis in this text is aimed at encouraging the student conductor to think about the music in technical, stylistic and historical terms. Only when an understanding of the music is apparent in such terms can the conductor make a valid attempt to portray the music's essential character effectively in rehearsal and performance.

As Boult (1963) laid out some of the desirable requirements of an orchestral conductor, a number of writers also have indicated the generic and specific musicianship skills required of the choral conductor. Whitten (1988) puts forward a case for the conductor being a 'complete musician', and as a solid 'performing musician'...

must have a technical facility on his chosen instrument - in this case, the voice - as well as senses of style, finish and communication.

[op.cit.: 37]

A comparative research investigation into the rationale and practices regarding the treatment of choral blend and the approach to rehearsing of some notable choral directors was made by Knutson (1987). He felt that such areas were an important yet neglected part of the teacher-training of choral conducting students. His research involved interviews with selected American choral conductors with the intention of looking at the various ways in which they believed choral blend was achieved, particularly in a cappella singing. Their responses focused on the vocal qualities, selection process and seating arrangements of their singers, although one or two comments referred to the responsibilities of the conductor. F. Melius Christiansen, a Norwegian/American, conductor of the St. Olaf Choir in Minnesota, stated that, in order to improve the intonation of the singers, attention should be given to -

frequent testing of voices for proper placement [i.e. physical location] in each section; establishing concepts of improved posture, breath support
and throat relaxation; and providing for adequate acoustics and proper ventilation.

[Knutson, 1987: 19]

Also considered as very important by Christiansen was the conductor's approach to the rehearsal, with the example that a conductor must be able to -

recognise a problem quickly and fix it efficiently with a great deal of enthusiasm and humor in order to maintain interest in rehearsal.

[op.cit.: 20]

In a similar, though smaller-scale research study to that of Knutson, Glaser (1992) made a comparison of the choral methodologies of five prominent choral directors in the USA. She examined aspects of the work of Christiansen, Williamson, Finn, Swan and Shaw, referring in particular to their comparative approaches to vocal technique, breathing, tone, blend, pitch, auditions, seating arrangements and conducting skills. This study provides an insight into the approach of the five choral music directors to the areas outlined with the conclusions that a variety of conducting styles, approaches and methodologies can be effective, provided they are based on knowledge of the voice and historical considerations.

A study of conducting stance and motion in relation to vocal production and musicality was made by Krause (1983). The study was concerned with the training of children's choirs and also referred to the work of Poch (1982) dealing with movement and non-verbal communication and their impact on choral tone. He cited the rehearsal technique of conductors who -

who are unaware of their own body communication. They give "how-to" instructions, but then contradict their verbal messages through the use of inappropriate body or facial movements. For example, a group of children are singing beneath the pitch even after effective verbal instruction on how to solve the problem has been given. The conductor tilts the head and lifts the chin while pointing towards the ceiling. The singers will automatically copy the tense position of the conductor, which unfortunately augments the intonation problem. Had the conductor provided a lifting gesture near the abdominal "power center" to encourage the support of the tone, the body language would have
agreed with the previous verbalization.  

[Krause, 1983: 58-59]

The study reinforces the notion of the importance of gesture not only in portraying the expressive character of the music, but also in its impact on technical-musical aspects such as intonation. The implication also is that knowledge of the workings and physiology of the voice is an important attribute of the choral conductor, especially of children’s choirs.

3.1.4 APPROACH TO THE REHEARSAL

Marvin (1988) places the rehearsal in the centre of a ‘map’ which displays the conductor’s ‘process’, and suggests that this, in fact, is the central feature in the demonstration of a conductor’s effectiveness.

No aspect of the “Conductor’s Process” will more directly affect the results of the conductor’s preparation than his ability to rehearse. Without effective rehearsing, insights into the score will not be realised. No matter how much the conductor is able to hear, no matter how visionary his interpretation, no matter how highly communicative his conducting technique may be, the principal foundation upon which the actualisation of the score rests is rehearsing.

[Marvin, 1988: 27]

As with Decker and Kirk, Marvin refers to rehearsing as a creative activity, motivated by the performance as the goal. Such creative activity is evaluated by the performance, and while the performance may well provide an aesthetic experience for performers and audience, so too the rehearsal should endeavour to provide the same. Marvin follows this tenet with descriptions of particular ways in which ensemble unity, which he believes to be the foundation upon which rehearsals rest, can be achieved - unity of duration, pitch timbre and intensity, and explains that these are the keys to understanding music’s structure and order. Marvin’s philosophical approach in his writing defines some principles for effective rehearsing in contrast to the more specifically practical guidance of methodologies. He makes a case for a conductor’s energy and desire as being essential ingredients in motivating a choir, and that this has been inspired in turn by the conductor’s own relationship with the music. Rehearsing, points out Marvin, is the ‘pivotal
3.2 MUSICAL-TECHNICAL SKILLS IN REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCE

3.2.1 CONDUCTING GESTURES AND PATTERNS

Method books, largely American, deal with various aspects of conducting. Much time and space in these is given to the explanation and presentation of beat patterns both as motor-control exercises and also in relation to specific musical examples. A number of texts concentrate on the style and fluency of beat patterns as well as the adroitness to perceive and change such patterns quickly according to the beats in each bar. Green (1981) for example, suggests practice exercises of irregular time-beating patterns in an arbitrary way, as well as attending to actual musical examples, e.g. Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*.

Certain methodology texts (e.g. McElheran, 1977; Kaplan, 1985) take the reader through the appropriate movements associated with beat patterns in conducting technique, starting out with the very basic patterns relating to particular pieces of music. In Kaplan’s *Choral Conducting* the first basic 4 beat pattern takes the student through Tallis’ motet *If Ye Love Me*.

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**IF YE LOVE ME**

**THOMAS TALLIS** (c.1505–1585)

St. John 14: 15-17

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**Fig. 3.1: Opening extract of Tallis’ *If Ye Love Me***

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Fig. 3.2: Diagram of basic 4 beat pattern according to Kaplan

The text refers to the preparatory beat and cut-off and suggests class practice which, he believes, will enable the choral conducting student to gain awareness of ensemble in the singers.

Decker and Kirk (1988) emphasise the communication aspects of the choral conductor's role. Here, a rationale for the conductor as a visionary and a communicator is effectively articulated, in which the choral experience is seen as a unique means of communication from composer to conductor to singers to audience. The authors outline the importance of developing an understanding of the composers' intentions as a preparation for presenting music to singers, and also put forward an argument for practising certain postures and gestures that will influence the singers:

The responsibility of a conductor is complicated and awesome. The development of technique for effective communication through gesture necessitates careful analysis and practice. Since choral compositions differ greatly, each demands gesture practice.

[Decker and Kirk, 1988: 7]

The text outlines posture and arm and hand gestures considered suitable for
each type of musical communication (e.g. marcato, staccato, legato) and places emphasis on developing an appropriate preparatory gesture not only to indicate the tempo and dynamic of the music, but also its essential mood and expressive character.

Green (1981) stresses the importance of conducting technique in rehearsal and recommends that the conductor gives conscious thought before rehearsal to points such as (i) the type of preparatory beat for each selection; (ii) where cues must be given; (iii) leads into difficult passages; (iv) gestures associated with dynamic changes; (v) time-beating - using a mirror in rehearsal (op.cit.: 120). Green also gives suggestions for the conductor who has the opportunity of working with professional musicians, a series of tips for the choral conductor who has one three-hour rehearsal with orchestral players before a choral concert, and has to develop efficient working practices -

of synchronisation, of building a masterful musical performance, of bringing forth the genius of the composer and the great musicianship of your performers.

[Green, 1981: 123]

This style of conducting methodology and practice provides as complete a picture as possible of all the technical aspects of conducting - the gesture in its minute detail, how to deal with poor intonation, effect dynamic variation in preference to an analysis of a more holistic depiction of the effective conductor. Green, however, does acknowledge that, after a certain point in technical expertise, the standard of the performance will depend upon -

the innate talent, the personal magnetism and the musical feeling of the conductor himself. Such things are not teachable.

[op.cit.: 123]

Kaplan (1985) is generally atomistic in his approach to all aspects of choral conducting, in the sense that the book examines conducting patterns and gestures in detail with diagrams and musical examples. The specificity of gesture (e.g. with reference to a moment in Elijah, ‘... a left hand pointing at the altos, starting gently, approximately on the fourth beat of the preceding measure and leaving the actual cuing process to the right hand alone, thus eliminating altogether the motion indicated ....’ [op.cit.:33]) makes the nature
of conducting in rehearsal or performance seem far removed from a spontaneous musical action. A distinction is made between signalling and expressive gesture by Goldbeck (1960), who states that signalling gesture is concerned with measurable elements of music, whereas expressive gesture is concerned with such elements as phrasing which are essentially non-measurable, in the sense that it is dependent on musical and social context. He illustrates this by referring to the opening passage of Wagner’s *Die Meistersinger Overture* and the main melody from the finale of Beethoven’s 9th Symphony. Both are in common time and would normally be conducted with four beats in a bar at an approximately similar tempo; while the signalling gesture might be similar, the expressive gesture is clearly not so, due to the difference in expressive intentions each piece. Goldbeck suggests that the root of the expressive gesture is neither conventional nor deliberate, ‘being the instinctive translation of musical rhythm into corporeal rhythm’ (op.cit.: 147). With regard to gesture, he concludes that the real art of conducting is to give as few signals or orders as possible, but give preference to suggestive and expressive gesture in rehearsal and performance. In analysing and describing the expressive gesture, Goldbeck makes an analogy with spontaneous dancing gesture, but stipulates -

yet the conductor never dances ‘the whole dance’. Or at least he should not. [op.cit.:167]

and that

unspontaneous dancing is the saddest thing in the world, and arbitrary gesture one of the most disagreeable to observe. [op.cit.:169]

As a number of writers point out, in many respects the choral conductor’s job is more demanding in the preparation and rehearsal stages than in performance, and, if the rehearsals have been carried out to a satisfactory level, the performance will arrive as a natural culmination of the previous work. McElheran (1977) suggests that a ‘transition’ in the style of conducting between rehearsal and performance in final rehearsals is a good way of establishing in the minds of the performers that the conductor is not going to over-conduct and give every cue in the music. He even suggests making sure -
that the last few rehearsals are on a low emotional level, deliberately under-conducting, with frequent stops and starts. The concert usually “takes off” after this type of preparation, but few people have the nerve to risk it. They make their final rehearsals just like the concert, which as a result may sound a trifle stale.

[McElheran, 1977: 104]

Such reservation of gesture is supported by a number of writers on conducting, with recommendations that it is unwise to make the choir too reliant on the conductor for every detail of the music. Green (1981), for example, puts forward the notion that, ultimately, the conducting gesture is ‘for the purpose of guiding the listeners to what you want them to hear’ (op.cit.: 241).

Marvin (1988) refers to the gesture as the means through which expressiveness is elicited, stating that -

mirroring musical nuances through illustrative conducting gestures visually supports the structure of the music as it moves through time. Thus, expressive gestures are employed to visually amplify sound-images, moment by moment.

[op.cit.: 25]

This is a rationalisation for controlled and creative use of conducting gesture, and Marvin further makes the case for the conductor being careful to ‘maximise important gestures and minimise unimportant ones’ (op.cit.:26) physically during rehearsal and performance. By this considered use of gesture, conductors, he maintains, will convey and highlight more effectively and efficiently the music’s meaning to the singers and consequently to the audience. Marvin makes a direct connection between the energy of the physical movement of the conducting gesture and the quality of response from the singers.

The quality of response is a mirror of the quality of the energy projected. The more meaningful the conducting gesture, the more focused the energy. The more focused the energy, the greater the power to elicit the desired response. Onward flows the circle of energy - from conductor to chorus and back to conductor. The cycle is revitalising for
This interpretation of the significance of the conducting gesture also implies a relationship with aesthetic underpinning of the choral rehearsal as well as the performance, a notion supported by Decker and Kirk (1988) and the research findings of Rives (1983). Marvin outlines a basic philosophy that the technique of the conductor can influence the revelation of musical meaning and hence communication and inspiration.

A similar view is expressed by Whitten (1988), who suggests that conducting gesture should be scrutinised:

Only techniques that are immediately communicative to performers and that are not distracting or misleading to the audience are viable. Conducting is not an end in itself; it is not for show.

[Whitten, 1988: 38]

This standpoint would imply that conducting is open to analysis and therefore it is something that can be refined and taught. There are inappropriate gestures, not just tasteless ones, that can give misleading messages to the performers regarding the music’s meaning. This reaffirms the belief (see above) that the practical aspects of conducting, alongside establishing a clear philosophical basis for it, is teachable. Boult (1963), although referring essentially to the orchestral conductor, emphasises the importance of considered gesture and chastises the conductor who feels he has to make a ‘display’ in performance. His own technique was very much the reserved, minimal movement style (as referred to above), quite the opposite of the more flamboyant artistry of Leonard Bernstein, for example (Lebrecht, 1991). Boult writes:

Do people really spend their money in the hope of seeing a ballet or a peep-show? ... I sometimes feel that conductors are insulting skilled orchestral colleagues not only in the way they speak at rehearsals, but by their behaviour at concerts, dotting every i and crossing every t, giving them credit for no sense or artistry, and never allowing the music to move, as it were, in its own way and sweep on to its goal.

[op.cit.: 46-47]
Observations of conductor behaviour have been used widely as a tool of research in North America, with a number of reliable ‘observation instruments’ constructed and tested. One such was devised by Karpicke (1987), who explored the relationship between gesture effectiveness in orchestral conductors and performance quality. With the assistance of a panel of expert conductors, Karpicke developed a list of conducting gesture functions and characteristics (from the literature review and writings of a number of conductors, including Boult, 1939 and Bernstein, 1959) along with their descriptions. These were identified as follows:


[Karpicke, 1987: 20]

Using the developed ‘Gesture Response Instrument’ (GRI), a group of twenty conductors of high school orchestras were videoed and observed from which ten were then designated as possessing ‘stronger’ ability as gesturers and ten as ‘weaker’ gesturers. Karpicke’s review of the literature examined the phenomenon of gesture and this was taken as the impetus for his own study on conductor gesture effectiveness. In his results he grouped together gestures into ‘functional’ categories (as listed above, i.e. gestures which indicate a particular musical purpose) in contrast to Lewis (1977) who evaluated her ‘prescribed’ gestures. Evidence of a causal relationship between gesture and quality of performance was not conclusive, according to Karpicke, in spite of the elaborate measures for quantifying performance. His conclusions from the study was that the ‘GRI’ was a reliable tool for assessing overall gesture effectiveness, but also that some further descriptive measures of performance quality was needed. While several studies have been made of gesture (reported in Karpicke’s study), none gave a reliable definition of gestural effectiveness of a conductor. However, such analysis and observation instruments, he believed, are a useful mechanism for student feedback in a teaching situation.

Humphreys, May & Nelson (1992) concluded, from their review of literature on teaching-learning strategies in school music, that high school students will become oblivious (i.e. cease to pay attention) to most
conducting gestures if these are inconsistent, or if inappropriate conducting strategies are employed during ensemble rehearsals (Yarbrough, 1975; Sousa, 1988). Choral and instrumental conductors in schools have often been observed using gestures that are more appropriate for professional ensembles than for school ones, with, for example, minimal accentuation of expressive gesture, facial expression and vocal inflection, all of which influences the students' attitudes (though not necessarily performance quality) towards the conductor (Yarbrough, 1975). Humphreys et al. (1992) suggest that school students need to become acquainted with the meaning of conducting gestures before they can respond to them. This finding might have implications for the teaching of conducting within teacher-education programmes. Other conclusions in respect of teaching-learning strategies that have relevance to the conductor are posited by Humphreys et al. with some degree of confidence. These include:

- teacher modelling can improve certain aspects of students' musicianship;
- performance skills are not diminished and certain musicianship skills may be improved when a portion of the ensemble rehearsal is devoted to non-performance learning activities [e.g. verbal instruction];
- high levels of positive reinforcement in the rehearsal setting result in higher levels of student performance.

[Humphreys et al.,1992: 657]

3.2.2 AURAL AND ERROR DETECTION SKILLS

Decker and Kirk (1988) consider the aural acuity of the conductor vital in the rehearsal situation is . They state that -

the crucial element is the conductor's ear. What he or she actually hears during the rehearsal must be carefully and continuously measured against what he or she wants to hear. It is the conductor's aural perception that moves a rehearsal forward.

[op.cit.: 108]

They then provide useful suggestions for improving the conductor's aural acuity, which will not only assist the conductor in hearing more aspects of the
music simultaneously during rehearsals, but also help diagnose problems accurately. (This also addresses Finn's (1946) arguments for competent skills in this area.) The principle described in their chapter on the rehearsal is of a goal-directed rehearsal with a number of learning outcomes planned for each piece of music to be rehearsed.

Using an experimental design, Crowe (1994) investigated the aural skills and error detection abilities of undergraduate conducting students at three mid-western universities in the USA. He adopted four score study styles: (i) no score study; (ii) study with score alone; (iii) study with score and correct aural example; (iv) score study at electronic keyboard. After four tests of progressive score difficulty from the band literature, Crowe found that the students having studied with the score and correct aural example were able to identify pitch and rhythmic errors significantly more effectively than when adopting other modes of score study. Students error detection became less reliable as the number of parts in the musical examples increased. Implications for the teaching style of aural skills in relation to conducting can be drawn, in that students, according to Crowe's research, benefit from actual aural musical examples to assist in score preparation. (Further exploration of the teaching styles and learning processes relevant to aural skill development is provided in Chapter 7.)

A similar experimental study was carried out by Van Oyen (1994) who investigated the effects of two instrumental score study preparation approaches on the error detection abilities of student conductors. His two modes of study were: (i) extended analysis time (using aural and sight-singing); and (ii) extended analysis time with recorded examples. Van Oyen's hypothesis was that 'podium detection' ability was acquired differently from normal aural training and sight-singing abilities. Forty seven music students from two mid-western universities, randomly assigned to a control group or one of two treatment groups, were asked to use sight-singing and aural training skills to analyse music in order then to detect pre-determined performance errors. The results, according to Van Oyen, demonstrated that error detection ability takes place independently of score preparation. He suggested further research was needed to examine how podium error detection can be dealt with effectively in the curriculum.

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3.2.3 MOVEMENT

An illuminating approach to the training of student choral conductors is outlined by Dickson (1992), who incorporates the use of body motion in conducting. This particular methodology is based on kinaesthetics, believing that abstract and mechanical beat patterns do nothing to help the student understand the real direction, shape and flow of music. Dickson accepts that for most adults, movement has become an unaccustomed activity, largely through cultural customs and practices (as, for example in many choral singing situations), unlike for young children who tend to move more easefully and naturally to music. However, the benefits of movement are significant for the choral conductor as well as for singers:

... instruction in kinesthetics, eurhythmics, dance and poetry, will develop the intuition and experience needed to effect a balance between the technical and expressive levels of music making.

[Dickson, 1992: 15]

Dickson recommends a three-stage methodology for teaching kinaesthetics:

'Stage I, the body's response to music, Stage II, the conceptualisation of music and its application in gesture, and Stage III, the incorporation of kinaesthetics in the music making process.' The process in a teaching context is firstly concerned with conducting students developing their own unspecified (i.e. instinctive) vocabulary of physical responses to music (Stage I); they then concentrate on shaping the music through expressive gestures, reflecting the music's design, direction and density (Stage II); and finally the intention is that students will feel able to incorporate kinaesthetic responses in a rehearsal situation with singers (Stage III). Dickson believes that such methodology,

... revolutionises the conductor's conceptualisation of music, improves gesture and transforms the way one teaches music and the value of the music one teaches.

[ibid]

A study of the effect of Rudolph Laban's movement theory on the ability of student conductors to communicate musical interpretation through gesture was made by Miller (1988). He noted that many school conductors and teachers had problems with gestural skills, which in turn, he believed,
prevented the expressive potential of much music being performed by school ensembles from being realised. He put forward a case for consideration of Laban’s movement theory in the undergraduate conducting curriculum, suggesting that the traditional approach to teaching conducting in the USA did not help the student with limited ability and experience with gestural expression. Classes in the first semester of conducting, argues Miller, should act as a foundation for gestural expression. Using two experimental groups of student conductors, one having had a course in Laban movement theory and the other not, Miller concluded that it was ‘worthwhile’ to give students Laban experience, though he recognised that it was difficult to ascertain whether effective gestural expressiveness was due to the Laban teaching method or the innate ability of the students. Nevertheless, Miller implied that there was room for further research in the use of movement to assist conductors in developing effective gestural expressions. The somewhat inconclusive results of Miller’s study may imply the need for a more qualitative and descriptive research design.

A similar study, to evaluate the application of Laban pedagogy of effort/shape and its comparative effect upon style in choral performance to conducting and the choral rehearsal, was made by Holt (1992). The premise was based upon the teaching strategies in undergraduate conducting programmes which, he believed, failed to relate musical style to movement. Holt put forward the argument that, if one is to teach musical style through conducting, the gestures of conducting must consequently be those that ‘communicate stylistic qualities and musical sensitivity and not merely imitative gestures dictated by conventional patterns of movement’ (op.cit.:5). As with Miller and other writers, Holt made reference to the teaching of conducting gesture in relation to the expressive character of the music. Referring to Poch’s (1982) work in developing conducting education in relation to Laban movement theories, Holt suggested that conductors would be able to improve skill in body movement by the study of these principles and so communicate more directly musical meaning to the singers. The results of Holt’s study were, however, problematic as it presented data that implied that certain Labanesque gestures (such as expansive shapes) were inhibiting the choir from responding rhythmically (op.cit.:5). Nevertheless, the overriding message was that there were elements of conducting that could be learned.

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3 The researcher visited Gail Poch in 1992 at Temple University, Philadelphia in order to investigate his use of Laban pedagogy in the undergraduate choral conducting curriculum.
Bartree (1978) also suggested that expressive movements are learned, giving the notion that perhaps conductors develop 'schemas' (i.e. a pre-determined vocabulary) of gestures in response to musical meaning.

McCoy (1986) posed the question as to whether movement activities could be effectively introduced into the choral rehearsal for the purpose of improving choral performance. Her study set out to determine whether differences in ‘choral performance proficiency, metre discrimination ability and attitude of students towards participation in a choral ensemble’ would be noticeable from two different approaches to instruction - one requiring both movement and vocal responses from the singers and the other only vocal responses. While McCoy recognised that there were a considerable number of variables arising in the empirical study, the results of the testing procedure (using Cooksey’s 1977 choral performance rating scale) provided evidence to suggest that the use of movement in the choral rehearsal had significant advantages for the choral performance and student attitude.

In contrast to McCoy’s empirical research design, Wis (1993) employed a more ‘naturalistic’ research model (op.cit.:184) for her study (Guba, 1990; see Chapter 4), which investigated gesture and body movement as physical metaphor to facilitate learning and to enhance musical experience in the choral rehearsal. Before establishing a movement ‘vocabulary’, Wis determined that it would be wise to ‘gather information about the kinds of movement and gesture utilized by those directors who ascribe to and regularly use a movement-based teaching pedagogy’ (op.cit.:183). Through her interviews and observations, she promoted Professor Eichenberger’s concept of ‘multi-neural networking’ (op.cit.:240), where there is a simultaneous coordination of body and mind. Eichenbrger’s belief (see also Eichenberger & Thomas, 1994) was that

the use of movement would help trigger and unlock the energy and freedom inherent in our everyday movement and that it would transfer this energy and freedom to the singing process.  

(ibid)

In the conclusions to the study Wis put forward the argument that the use of physical metaphor, as exemplified in movement appropriate to the music, is

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4 Professor Rodney Eichenberger is at Florida State University and is well known for his advocacy of movement in the choral rehearsal; he has been the subject of and inspiration for a number of research studies.
seen as a better alternative to verbal metaphor, and that movement can effectively 'unlock' singing abilities. A further implication for the choral conductor was that they should be prepared to ‘exhibit freedom and energy in their own body’ (op.cit.:250).

Further research in this area was later made by Hibbard (1994) in the form of a comprehensive study of the use of movement as an instructional technique in choral rehearsals. She made a case study of a well known choral conductor and teacher in the United States, who used movement (i.e. singers and conductors using appropriate movements to support vocal and choral progression and development) as a significant part of both the choral rehearsal and the teaching of conducting. In order to examine its effectiveness, the study investigated how movement is used in choral rehearsals. Also drawing on the work of Rudolf Laban, Hibbard made an informative analysis of movement and its relation to conducting gesture. She confirmed the view (expressed in Miller, 1988 and Holt, 1992) that a large number of conducting methods and texts tend to be concerned with beat patterns as the nascent theme with student conductors. Referring in particular to the work of Eichenberger (1987), Poch (1982), Ehmann (1968), Ehmann and Haasemann (1981), Hibbard pointed out that expressive conducting was more likely to be the outcome if students in conducting classes were encouraged to use the body freely and then develop the use of traditional beat patterns as the need arose. There were also a number of benefits for the singers (i.e. those being conducted) when they were involved in movement as a technique to explore the expressive character of the music. This was revealed in her extensive observations of and interviews with 'Professor Smith',5 whose philosophy, based on many years as one of the USA’s pre-eminent choral conductors and teachers, was to use movement with singers as a strongly preferred mode of instruction in the choral rehearsal and conducting classes. Hibbard also made reference to literature on psychology and brain functioning (Herrmann, 1990; Arbib, 1989; Pearce, 1985) as a further justification of the particular instructional technique which embraced movement:

Action schema and perception schema give people their individual means of re-creating a motor experience ... it is this concept that one of the reasons movement is so effective [as an instructional technique] is that it provides a kinesthetic memory, or use of “muscle memory,” that, when

5 A pseudonym for Professor Rodney Eichenberger.
the same movement is seen later in the conductor’s gesture, will remind them of the earlier physical experience and evoke the same vocal/physical/musical response.

[Hibbard, 1994: 160]

Hibbard noted several of ‘Professor Smith’s’ stated intentions in the use of certain movements and gestures which focused on aspects of improving vocal production, reinforcement of musical concepts, emphasis on musical nuance and stylistic interpretation (op.cit.: 261). He (and she) believed that the effectiveness of such a technique would be evident only when conductors became ‘comfortable’ with movement and were able to incorporate them into their own movement vocabulary or ‘repertories’. In conclusion, Hibbard put forward a rationale for movement as an instructional technique. Appropriate use of movement by the choral conductor in the choral rehearsal would (i) enhance rehearsal efficiency as an effective means of communicating the music’s expressive character, (ii) be used for multi-modal learning - for example, a means of gaining pitch or rhythmic accuracy, and (iii) enhance group effect. Further research, she suggested, was needed to ascertain techniques which are specifically idiosyncratic to the individual conductor and those that can be transferred to others (op.cit.: 277). As with Dickson’s work, an argument has been put forward for the incorporation of movement in the choral rehearsal as a means of developing understanding of the expressive character of the music. Kemp (1990), although not referring to conducting, also supports the use of kinaesthesia in music learning as a form of musical ‘knowing’, the awareness of the interrelationships between muscular, perceptual and cognitive behaviours being essential to the development of ‘musically sensitive and imaginative behaviour’ (op.cit.:223).

3.3. BEHAVIOURS, PERSONALITY AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

3.3.1 REHEARSAL STYLE

Watkins (1986) made a descriptive study of choral directors and their use of modelling, metaphorical language, musical and technical language and related it to student attentiveness. As with Rives (1983), Watkins referred to Langer’s aesthetic theories (1947, 1953) and suggested that music as a ‘non-discursive’ phenomenon presents problems in rehearsal situations that rely heavily on
verbal instruction. He referred to the work of Gonzo (1977, 1981) who identified three modes of instruction generally used by the choral director, viz. (i) explanation (cognitive - musical-technical), (ii) demonstration (modelling), and (iii) descriptive (metaphorical). In addition to these categories of instruction modes, Gonzo’s concern for the lack of training for conductors in rehearsal techniques was reported. In his own research Watkins observed the rehearsals of thirty-three high school choirs, and found that a majority of rehearsal time was taken up with musical-technical language, confirming Gonzo’s and Rives’ evidence that too much time is spent on the explanation / instruction mode in rehearsals. Watkins found that, where choral classes had more ‘on-task’ activity (i.e. actual singing) and less verbal instruction, the students were generally more attentive. His findings also support the argument that conductors need to concentrate more on making gesture expressive and informative in preference to spending time on verbal explanation of musical and technical points. (For example, it may be that stopping the singing to explain that a particular passage in the music needs a controlled crescendo followed by a quick diminuendo could be dealt with more effectively by the conductor’s use of appropriate gestures and facial expression.) Such a strategy would, arguably over a period of time, further encourage singers to look at the conductor.

Other studies have been made of conductor rehearsal techniques, style and skills. Fiocca (1986) made a descriptive, interactional analysis of junior and middle high school directors, through video material and extensive interviews, looking specifically at exemplary choral directors and identifying common rehearsal behaviours. The behaviours identified and analysed (using the Likert scale) were: (i) manner; (ii) vocal pedagogy; (iii) non-verbal; (iv) verbal; (v) conducting of rehearsal; (vi) class management; (vii) sight-reading and dictation skills; (viii) keyboard skills. Some of the findings, which largely endorsed Thurman’s study (see below) on effectiveness of choral conductors, included strategies which embraced the teaching of appropriate and healthy voice use, encouraging comments (improval feedback - Thurman, 1977), demonstrating what not to do as well as what to do, using a variety of rehearsal techniques and keeping verbal communication to a minimum. Conclusions from this research indicated that conductors need to be more aware of vocal technique, the changing voice and how to correct inappropriate voicing. Again, implications for teacher-education in
conducting and vocal knowledge may be drawn, especially in respect of knowledge of the functions of the voice and skill in dealing with the adolescent voice.

Parker (1990) made an empirical study of ensemble members’ perception of student conductor effectiveness, dealing specifically with rehearsal language which was categorised as (i) evaluating, (ii) informing, (iii) correcting and (iv) perfecting. His study revealed that, on average, 25% of rehearsal time was spent in giving information and reinforcement, 25% in giving musical information and directions and 50% in performing. This compares somewhat favourably with Thurman’s findings on verbal feedback and communication. Petty (1987) dealt in particular with pacing skills in rehearsal, using undergraduate choral students as research material. His observational procedures were based on Lewis (1977) and her conducting gesture observation instrument. His conclusions suggested that directors must be responsive to the needs of the choir in terms of level and age.

Conducting methodologies generally provide advice for developing efficient and successful rehearsal techniques; many point out that much depends on using gesture in an effective way, thus minimising the need for talk. McElheran (1977) advises adopting varied approaches in rehearsal to avoid routine. Rehearsal technique is developed after years of watching other conductors and trying out particular ideas. He advocates attending other conductors’ rehearsals in order to assess the effectiveness of various rehearsal strategies, but asserts that good rehearsal technique is essentially a specialised and personal feature of the conductor and his relationship with the choir.

Kahn (1975) refers to rehearsal discipline and suggests that conductors adopt a psychological approach with performers. He gives strategies for planning rehearsals and maintaining momentum; consideration needs to be given, he suggests, to the appropriateness of stopping to deal with points, and deciding when to accept that correction may not be reasonable at a particular stage of progress in rehearsing.

Pfautsch (1973) gives plenty of constructive rehearsal strategies, from giving consideration to the rehearsal environment, planning, seating, pacing, use of humour and general interaction to dealing with intonation problems. He
addresses the difficulties in defining what makes a good, effective choral conductor in rehearsal. While much can be learnt from models, he acknowledges, it is vital to establish what works best for each conductor personally in building a special relationship with a choir;

the choral conductor's self-image will determine the type and quality of preparation for rehearsing, the specific procedures employed in rehearsing and the boundaries of effectiveness while rehearsing.

Pfautsch, 1973: 60

Decker and Kirk (1988) put forward the argument that choral rehearsals themselves should be aesthetically satisfying and not merely preparations for performance. Robinson and Winold (1976) refer to the rehearsals as performances of the work 'in progress' (op.cit.:155), and that they really should be regarded as the focus of the choral experience with a 'corporate dedication' emerging. Decker and Kirk (1988) suggest that rehearsal planning is comparable to artistic creation (op.cit.:104) and that the conductor has a responsibility to the choir to ensure an effective rehearsal through planning, pacing and timing and sensitive behaviour. They place emphasis on communication of musical understanding through 'appropriate and sensitive gesture and eye contact' rather than relying too much on verbal directions. As with other writers, Decker and Kirk maintain that careful balance of singing activity with verbal instruction is an important part of effective rehearsing and should be the concern of each conductor (op.cit.104).

An analysis of the use of rehearsal time of five choral conductors was carried out by Thurman (1977). Each selected conductor represented a different social and environmental setting from a broad spectrum, ranging from a rural high school to a professional choir, within the United States. From his research study, Thurman concluded that 'positive reinforcement' was a most effective way of improving the general quality of the rehearsal. Such a perspective correlates with the concept (fashionable in USA psychology research at that time) that positive reinforcement, essentially a behaviour-modification technique, can shape the choir's behaviour (that is, moving towards a goal by encouraging, rewarding and reinforcing behaviours which are closer to the goal) and is part of an effective rehearsal strategy. Suggesting that 'approval' is necessary to the learning process, Thurman states -
The importance and appropriate use of conductor approval has not been sufficiently recognised by choral conductors. All observational studies presently reported show that approval of rehearsal effort is often a rather low priority item. Yet those who scientifically study human behaviour suggest that, when properly used, it can be a fundamental part of learning and of the development of dedicated behaviour.

[Thurman, 1977: 8]

He also pointed out that the effect of reinforcement is two-way, i.e. the behaviour of the ensemble reinforces the behaviour of the conductor - negatively or positively. Thurman made suggestions on the general pattern and pacing of choral rehearsals and, using the term ‘improval feedback’, put forward the argument that this was a necessary, and ideally frequent, part of rehearsal technique. Improval feedback gave the impression that, while the ultimate goal for a particular rehearsal might not quite yet be achievable, the ‘try’ was better than the one before. (This research was written in a 1970s’ tradition of behaviourist psychology which was concerned with ‘shaping’ behaviour towards a goal as a learning technique.) Such behaviour-modification, Thurman believed, would set a conducive atmosphere amongst the singers and thus the goal might be reached more easily and efficiently. Improval feedback implicitly disposes of ‘disapproval’ - that the goal was not achieved - and also of ‘approval’ - which means that it was. This kind of reinforcement is referred to by Thurman as the ‘lifeblood’ of an effective and efficient rehearsal style, and was a behaviour shown to be generally lacking in the five observed choral conductors. His empirical research also found heavy reliance (as did others) on verbal feedback from the conductors, this taking approximately 35-40% of rehearsal time. (The range of percentages of time spent on verbal communication was reported as being between 29.1% and 58.4%.) As with other research reported earlier, these findings point to the argument against over-use of speech in the rehearsal context.

Thurman also attached importance to ‘demonstration’ - either of what to do, or what not to do; ‘explanation’ - which can usefully fortify the conductor’s goals and the use of ‘imagery’ and ‘analogy’ to enhance the sense and expressive quality of the music (see also Gonzo, 1981). He pointed out, nevertheless, that demonstration, explanation and imagery need to be used sparingly and effectively in conjunction with each other as part of a
whole variety of rehearsal techniques.

The need for a study in the use of verbal imagery was outlined by Funk (1985), who stated that the choral conductor was always in search of effective ways of describing difficult things in rehearsal, and suggested that aesthetic sensitivity would more likely be developed in choral students by judicious study of verbal imagery by the conductor. On the assumption that one of the important functions of the choral conductor is to improve the expressive performances of the ensemble, Funk in his research made a number of findings which included that (i) verbal imagery was not a technique which could be planned ahead of time for the most part, (ii) verbal imagery played an important part in the pacing and vitality of rehearsals and (iii) it was an effective force when vocal skills are lacking. Above all, the imaginative use of language and imagery which was likely to come to mind was determined by the ‘serious reflective study of the expressive elements of the music’ (op.cit.:81).

3.3.2 COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION

Grechesky (1985) studied the relationship and interaction of conductor and ensemble. He theorised that behaviours exhibited in a rehearsal are critical to the successful communication of the musical ideas of the conductor to the ensemble. He synthesised the abilities and skills of the conductor into a three-fold process, namely, (i) conceiving the musical meaning of the score, (ii) communicating/teaching/conducting through expressive gesture, and (iii) reacting to/evaluating an expressive performance. His findings determined a case for expressive conducting, which, as with Rives (1983) and Watkins (1986), had philosophical underpinning in the aesthetic theories of Langer, Meyer and Reimer. Grechesky felt that much research in this area had previously been observational, providing interesting snippets of information, but lacking a ‘solid theoretical grounding or conceptual framework’. His conclusion resolved that -

> the connection between the theoretical concepts of Absolute Expressionism and the art of conducting was established and clarified.  
> [Grechesky, 1985: 144]

Using Thurman (1977) and Yarbrough (1975) as experimental paradigms,
Grechesky made a study on ways in which conductors communicate musical interpretation. His aim was to highlight the communication process in which the conductor transmits his musical understanding of the score to the ensemble. From rehearsals of twenty high school bands from Indiana he found conflicting results, however, as diverse conducting behaviours prevented reliable comparison. His natural assumption had been that the more musical bands would be conducted in a more expressive and effective manner. Nevertheless, Grechesky makes recommendations for conductors and teachers of conducting, suggesting that they should concentrate on ‘expressive and effective non-verbal communication skills’ (op.cit.:155) in preference to merely beating time and cueing. He provides a framework for a cohesive and coherent philosophy of conducting from his psychological research and recommends further collaboration between conductors and psychologists dealing with interaction and communication skills.

Osman (1989) made a study of assessment of the communication skills of choral conductors. She referred to the work of undergraduate teacher-training programmes, stating that -

without good communication skill the beginning choral conductor may not be able to lead an ensemble of amateur choral singers.


As most students would eventually be working with amateur choirs, Osman felt that it was appropriate that training programmes should reflect this and deal with aspects of communication skills more thoroughly. She identified the problem:

Research in teacher training for undergraduate conducting students specifically designed to evaluate the composite communication skills of the conductor in the rehearsal has too long been neglected. Many conductors and authors of conducting and choral methods textbooks spend much time in discussing conducting technique and score study. ... They have, however, very little research data on which to base their suggestions. [op.cit.: 5]

Osman’s research attempted, through systematic observation, to analyse the specific skills that are considered essential for effective communication in the
choral rehearsal, rather than merely providing an account of the variety of conductor behaviours in rehearsal. The purpose of her study was to design a 'Communication Skill Evaluation Instrument' (CSEI). By making a video recording of thirty-seven conductors, a list of forty behaviours were categorised as being 'necessary' or 'not necessary' for effective communication by an 'expert' panel of fifteen conductors. Also some seventeen elements of communication were rated on a 1 - 6 scale by singers in relation to the conductors’ competence in this field. These elements ranged from use of eye contact and facial expressions, to demonstration of appropriate energy levels. Such elements cover many of the essential ingredients of a good choral conductor and are useful pointers in assessing communication skills. The forty behaviours in written form appear somewhat cumbersome for observers to indicate as being necessary or not necessary communication-skill competences, though each has its own intrinsic worth. For example, anecdotal evidence would support the majority view that an important aspect of a choral conductor’s role is to -

B.19 'effectively use the voice as a model to demonstrate tone quality, phrase and other musical considerations.' ...

However,

B.27 'dresses in the manner appropriate for the position and situation.' ...

may well be more open to misinterpretation and much more subjective comment. Nevertheless, three of Osman’s expert conductors thought that behaviour 19 was not a necessary communication skill, and eight thought behaviour 27 was necessary! It is surely problematic if such diverse behaviours are compared, for example -

B.35 'displays an expressive conducting style.' ...

with

B.28 'speaks without frequent errors in grammar.' ...

when the art of conducting, particularly in concert, is concerned with gesture and not the spoken word. Here, perhaps surprisingly, one expert believed behaviour 35 to be an unnecessary communication skill, and only three believed behaviour 28 to be unnecessary. These results suggest that expert
conductors may not be able to agree on a series of necessary behaviours for effective communication. (An interesting comparison may be made on the apparent agreement of the panels evaluating the video recordings of the researcher’s observations presented in Chapter 6.)

3.3.3 CONDUCTOR ‘MAGNITUDE’ AND TEACHING STYLE

Gumm (1991) endeavoured to identify and measure teaching styles in his empirical study. He referred to the ‘magnitude’ of conductor behaviour (after Yarbrough, 1975), which includes the variables of eye contact, closeness, volume and modification of voice, gestures, facial expressions and rehearsal pace. Yarbrough’s study made an attempt to chart these behaviour variables in conductors. ‘High magnitude’ conducting involved (a) the maintaining of eye contact throughout the rehearsal, (b) keeping close proximity to the students, (c) using an enthusiastic variation in voice volume, (d) using a great variety of gestures, (e) using appropriate and contrasting facial expressions, and (f) keeping the pace rapid and exciting. At the other end of the scale, ‘low magnitude’ conducting involved (a) never looking at students, (b) remaining behind the music stand away from the students, (c) using an unenthusiastic voice, (d) using restricted conducting gestures, (e) keeping a neutral facial expression, and (f) keeping the rehearsal slow and methodical. Madsen et al. (1989) indicated that, as such degrees of magnitude can be demonstrated and recognised, so with training, a teaching style can be modified and made more expressive or ‘emotional-intensity-oriented’ (Gumm, 1991). As with Grechesky, Gumm’s study sought to measure the teachers’ attempt ‘to develop an aesthetic music performance’. He states -

The beauty of the music is brought out through the translation and manipulation of students’ musical thought and action. The process involves drawing upon images, ideas and sensations from students’ life experiences to bring about the emotional and psychomotor response of an aesthetic performance.


In his summary, Gumm identified eight ‘valid’ dimensions of music teaching style that can be used to describe an effective choral music director’s teaching style, these being: (i) student independence, (ii) teacher authority, (iii) positive learning environment, (iv) aesthetic music performance, (v) non-verbal
motivation, (vi) group dynamics, (vii) time efficiency, and (viii) music concept learning. He makes a very detailed analysis of variable teaching behaviours that encapsulate certain teaching styles, though does not test them for their effectiveness in relation to particular situations. Implications for teacher training are also briefly considered; questions as to what actually determines a teacher's style are put forward - training, personality, students' own learning style or philosophical beliefs. This is a highly complicated psychological thesis on the interaction of teaching behaviours and teaching style, which relates to the importance of appropriate communication strategies to enable the choral director to get the best out of an ensemble.

Another experimental research study on the interaction of personality traits in applied music teaching was made by Donovan (1994). Her study posed the question whether personality traits affect the musical success of students. Using the 'Myers-Briggs Type Indicator', six music instructors evaluated their music students in seven parameters of musical achievement, namely, (i) pitch accuracy, (ii) tone production, (iii) rhythmic sense and accuracy, (iv) technical facility, (v) sight-reading ability, (vi) vitality and intensity and (vii) musicality and interpretation. Teacher/student relationships were categorised into four personality groups for analysis, namely, (i) teacher / students with similar extraverted types; (ii) teacher / students with dissimilar types - extravert teachers / intravert students; (iii) teacher / students with dissimilar types - intravert teachers / extravert students; (iv) teacher / students with similar introverted types. Using a chi-square test of independence to investigate the relationships, Donovan found that significantly more student progress was made with 'extrovert' teachers and also that 'intuitive type' teachers paired with 'sensing type' students (see footnote) produced the highest scores. The implications for the teaching style of an effective conductor can be drawn from this research study, in that there are positive outcomes for the conductor / teacher to adopt 'extrovert' behaviour.

A study on rehearsal organizational structures used by high school choral directors in Ohio was made by Cox (1989). He put forward the argument that there was often conflicting advice between method texts on the structure of a successful choral rehearsal. Cox, by looking at successful

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6 According to Donovan, the MBTI is a 'Jungian-oriented self-report inventory which classifies people into dichotomous categories along four scales: extrovert - introvert; sensation - intuition; thinking - feeling; judgement - perception (Donovan, 1994: 21).
(according to state-level competition ratings) high school choral directors, investigated the relationship between rehearsal structure and either teaching style or student attitude. He made a statistical analysis of a series of questionnaires given to teachers, students and school administrators. Two consistent features in the rating of rehearsal success were (i) the enthusiasm towards the music and (ii) enthusiasm towards teaching. Cox admitted that these overriding features were likely to be present regardless of any rehearsal structure used. The implications for teachers in school choral ensembles are that teaching style seems to be of great importance, and that their awareness of their teaching style, students' perception of this style and its influence on student attitude and achievement are significant factors in effective choral conducting.

Strouse (1987), in his study linking the analysis of the musical score with the conducting gesture, maintains that a conductor's personality and communication skills are strengthened by a secure knowledge of the score and a mastery of rehearsal and baton technique (op.cit.:4). He refers to the conductor as entering into a dynamic human relationship with his ensemble:

... the decisive factor which insures an inspirational performance is the positive impact of the conductor's personality.

[Strouse, 1987: 5]

and puts forward the view that an audience needs to perceive the positive personality of the conductor in order to be able to be receptive to the interpretation of the music. He postulates the formula:

\[
\text{POSITIVE PERSONALITY} + \text{COMPETENT REHEARSAL SKILLS} = \text{MEANINGFUL INTERPRETATION}
\]

[op.cit.: 32]

Strouse suggests, with reference to Bamberger (1965) and Fuchs (1969), that a triangular psychological relationship is formed in the performance of music, with the conductor giving the audience guidance for listening as well as giving the performers guidance for performing and communicating with the audience.
Fuchs (1969) stresses the human aspect of the conductor’s work, dealing with relationships and building a psychological bridge to the performers. This he considers as fundamental as the possession of a sound conducting technique. However, the main argument permeating Strouse’s study is that the conductor’s knowledge of the musical score is integrally related to the conducting gesture and his ability to communicate with the performers and audience.

3.4 SUMMARY

It is difficult to summarize effectively or clearly literature containing many diverse approaches and research techniques and theorizations, therefore analysis of the nature of effective conducting remains in many ways inconclusive. The table at the end of the chapter attempts to draw together some of the issues presented. There appears to be some common agreement from anecdotal evidence, conducting methodologies and texts and research findings that:

- musical knowledge, gesture, ability to communicate and personality are all important;
- it is some ‘mystical’ combination of these and other characteristics that make a conductor effective.

Observations have shown that:

- certain behaviours produce more effective rehearsals than others;
- pacing is seen to be vital in maintaining motivation in singers;
- appropriate and effective gesture can create the desired expression from the performers more efficiently than verbal explanations;
• positive feedback is more productive than negative feedback;
• verbal imagery as a rehearsal technique can play an effective part in producing an expressive performance;
• a breadth of musical and vocal understanding and technical skill is an important requirement of an effective choral conductor.

As has been noted by some researchers, there is need for a qualitative and descriptive research design to supply more information about conductor effectiveness. This study proposes to adopt such a research methodology (outlined in Chapter 5) in order to provide a more holistic account of conductor effectiveness and the conducting phenomenon, in contrast to the empirical studies which have concentrated on specific aspects of the conductor and conducting behaviours.

What also will be addressed are the elements of conducting skill that can be taught. It would appear from the research and conducting methodology review that aspects of these conductor attributes are teachable. By practice, observation, analysis and participation students are likely to enhance skills that are already in place and improve their conducting effectiveness. These should be underpinned, according to a number of writers and researchers, by an understanding of the conductor's role and an awareness of the potential to create aesthetic sensitivity and expressiveness.

The next chapter develops a theoretical model of the effective choral conductor from the literature review and further consideration of aspects of conducting knowledge and practice.
Fig. 3.2: Table of Propositions by Researchers and Writers on Conducting

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**KEY:**

**PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING PREPARATION**
1 = Score Preparation; 2 = Aesthetic Considerations; 3 = Historical, Vocal and Musical Knowledge; 4 = Approach to Rehearsal.

**MUSICAL-TECHNICAL SKILLS**
5 = Conducting Gestures and Patterns; 6 = Aural and Error Detection Skills; 7 = Movement.

**BEHAVIOURS, PERSONALITY & COMMUNICATION SKILLS**
8 = Rehearsal Style; 9 = Communication & Interaction; 10 = Conductor Magnitude & Teaching Style
CHAPTER FOUR
DEVELOPING A MODEL FOR EFFECTIVE CHORAL CONDUCTING

This chapter sets out to develop a model of effective conducting by exploring the nature and complexion of conducting and the contexts within which such activity occurs. Various perspectives of conducting and conducting knowledge will be investigated; the phenomenon itself, and, in respect of teaching and learning within the choral rehearsal, the associated types of craft and tacit knowing and human compatible communication. It is anticipated that, through such exploration, a model for effective choral conducting might emerge and with it a clearer conception of what in conducting is teachable.

4.1 THE NATURE OF CHORAL CONDUCTING

Choral conducting is an activity which exists extensively in western culture. It has been practised over centuries, and there is no evidence to show that the activity itself is less prevalent now than in the past. In order to provide an operational definition for the purposes of this study it is necessary to outline the categories of choral conducting activity and their criteria. Put simply, a lot of people do it, at a variety of musical and educational levels. The categories identified are not intended to be hierarchical in any way.

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Fig. 4.1: Categories of Choral Conducting

Category 1:
There is a small group of choral conductors who reach our attention through media presentation, recordings and advertisement; they are the conductors of professional choirs, including small chamber groups sometimes specialising in

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1 Term used to indicate a style of communication, careful and thoughtful interaction, that enables people to feel positive about the experience. Taken from Thurman, 1992 and Hart, 1983 (see later references).
the performance of renaissance or contemporary music, for example. Such conductors often gain their reputation through touring the world and making recordings to an acknowledged high standard in a specialist field. The ‘star’ conductors of orchestras also have in their repertoire a large number of major choral works which they perform with professional orchestras in concert halls around the world. Choral works such as the requiems of Verdi and Berlioz and the second and eighth symphonies of Mahler require very large forces and can only be performed in suitably large venues. The chorus master, who will have the responsibility for training large symphonic choirs, may well not conduct the actual performances.

Category 2:
A more extensive group of choral conductors work with choral societies and similar community choirs around the country. They conduct amateur and local groups, perhaps reflecting the town, city or area in their name. Most towns and cities in the UK will have some community choir or similar, evidence for this being in the National Federation of Music Societies which lists its affiliated choirs. (The emergence and growth of the choral society during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was discussed in the historical survey in Chapter 2.) These choirs will vary in size, quality and experience and are likely to be of amateur status. Concerts performed locally may involve professional orchestras and professional singers and as soloists, but the conductor in the performance will normally be the conductor who trains and rehearses the choir. The repertoire will range from large scale oratorios, such as Messiah and Elijah, to smaller sacred and secular choral works of a wide selection of composers.

Category 3:
Another group of choral conductors work in schools. Singing is positively promoted as a performing activity within the National Curriculum of England (1994). A large proportion of schools both in the primary and secondary sectors in the UK have choral singing as an extra-curricular activity in addition to its place in the general classroom. In one inner-London borough, for example, the authority music inspector verbally reported to the researcher (April, 1994) that approximately 80% of primary and 60% of secondary
schools have a choir. It is to be expected that each has a choral conductor, or director who may lead the singing from an instrument - the guitar or piano, for example. Choral activities in schools as with other amateur choirs will range in quality and experience. The conductor will usually be a music teacher who will spend the majority of time on class music (or on other non-music subjects in the case of primary school teachers), and the choirs are likely to operate in extra-curricular time. Some primary schools, where there is no music specialist, may employ a choral conductor or recruit a volunteer to rehearse and perform with a choir. The repertoire will be wide-ranging and dependent on the interests of the conductor and pupils, but include standard choral repertoire and music from jazz and popular idioms as well as non-western styles.

Category 4:
A fourth area of choral activity is in the churches, cathedrals and college chapels in the UK. These have established the foundation on which the choral reputation of the country lies. American or Australian perceptions of choral singing in the UK are often associated with boys' choirs and cathedrals. Most cathedrals maintain regular (in some cases daily) singing of the services. This is a significant choral tradition, though involving a relatively small number of singers. A cathedral choir will typically have as few as twelve boy trebles and two each of altos (male), tenors and basses. A cathedral choir of 32 or more is considered large, and will only be found in the larger cathedrals like St Paul's in London. Apart from in the cathedrals, male only choirs are less prevalent today than previously, and it has become common for church choirs to be of mixed gender. There are pockets of strong choirs of parish churches throughout the country which continue to exist for a variety of reasons. In each there will be a conductor, or more usually an organist (see Chapter 1), who will assume responsibility for the choir, and perhaps lead the singing from the organ or actually conduct if there is an assistant organist or the music is unaccompanied. For the purposes of this study, the operational definition of

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2 Such information does not support the growing concern that choral singing in schools is on the wane. However, two separate groups of student-teachers teaching and observing in a variety of secondary schools in the south-west London area (May 1994 and October 1994) revealed, in discussion, little evidence of good practice in respect of quality and quantity of choral singing. More significantly, the 1994/95 Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of Schools stated that in too many schools singing was 'taught too infrequently' (Ofsted, 1996:31).

3 Gleaned from a variety of accounts, including conversations with American and Australian delegates at the ISME conference, USA, July 1994.
choral conducting will include those who train and rehearse a choir, which may involve some element of conducting. This will give further insight into choral conducting effectiveness.

These categories indicate the formal side of choral conducting and the public awareness of this activity. Of course, choral conducting also occurs in a variety of informal, even casual, situations. In some of these occasions someone may be conducting, which might simply involve indicating the tempo for the start of the music, perhaps in some of the ways described in the historical survey (Chapter 2). Thus, a significant number and variety of people are involved in choral conducting or directing of some sort, so effectiveness needs to be considered and evaluated in relation to the context in which it occurs. As with teaching and other professions, so choral conducting has degrees of recognisable competence which are evaluated continually by those being conducted, by those listening to the performances and even by the conductor him/herself. The expectations of those listening will vary according to the context. The criteria for evaluating a performance of a professional chamber choir will be different from those of a performance of a primary school choir, as the expectations from the conductor and audience will be different. What are the criteria used by singers and listeners when judging and evaluating conductors? What makes one conductor more effective than another? Does one particular category of choral conducting demand its own specific competences? Are there generic competences for all categories of choral conductors? Can personality characteristics be identified that are common to all choral conductors? This study seeks to examine such questions in relation to choral conducting as a teachable entity.

The research literature and biographical evidence on choral conducting supplies a variety of interpretations of ‘effectiveness’ in choral conducting. Underpinning principles, cognition and understanding of the aesthetic potential of a choral activity in rehearsal and performance are of fundamental importance. The conductor will need to have a belief in the integrity and value of music and singing. The attainment of quality goals should feature prominently in the manifestation of these beliefs and should impact on both singers and audience. The choral conductor will need to understand that s/he has the wherewithal to influence people’s commitment and aesthetic response to the music. A number of writers put forward arguments that gesture, verbal
and non-verbal language are tools to destroy or confirm a singer’s response aesthetically to the music and to the self-perception of themselves as singers (Rives, 1983; Grechesky, 1985; Thurman et al., 1992). Whitten (1988) and Marvin (1988) outline the desirability for careful and thoughtful preparation philosophically and psychologically of the choral conductor in relation to the singers, and so confirm his/her responsibilities to them.

Linked with the philosophical perspective of the role of the conductor is the approach to and the preparation of the music before rehearsals, in order to present to the singers its technical, expressive and aesthetic qualitities. Didactic texts refer to the score preparation, giving strategies for learning the music. Not only is the ability of the conductor to deal with the technical aspects of the music (accuracy of rhythm and pitch, vocal production) important, but also the portrayal of some understanding of the music in its historical, stylistic and textural capacity. How the text relates to the musical elements, how expressiveness can be presented within its stylistic context are essentially reflective and aesthetic questions which must be the concern of the choral conductor before the first rehearsal. In any formal situation, choral conducting needs a preparation beyond ‘knowing the notes’, in the same way that a choral rehearsal must be more than ‘note-bashing’. In the creation of an hypothesis of effective choral conducting, the development of a philosophical approach to the conductor’s role, which includes an awareness of the potential influence that the conductor can have, as well as sensitivity towards the aesthetic dimensions of the music, must be an important consideration. Rives (1983) commends the teaching of an aesthetics course as an integral and significant part of the education of the choral conductor (see Chapter 3). Ability to communicate these principles should underpin the conductor’s work at any level, in schools, churches, in the wider amateur community and among professional singers.

It is evident from the literature that the musicianship (i.e. the manifestation of particular musical skills, musical knowledge and musical sensitivity) of the choral conductor is considered to be of vital importance. Even if a conductor has a set of principles underpinning to his/her role, his/her job will be ineffective without technical and musical skills that can be displayed both in rehearsal and performance. Aural perception and auditory

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4 For the purposes of this study, the term ‘philosophical’ refers to principles underlying a conductor’s knowledge, beliefs, reasoning and actions in the approach to choral training and conducting.
acuity are essential attributes of a competent musician in a rehearsal situation; this is recognised by a number of writers and researchers, who suggest that a conductor must be able to identify inaccuracies and problems quickly and deal with them efficiently. This skill is contingent on knowing the music and being able to relate what is heard in rehearsal to the score. Several texts (Green, 1981; McElheran, 1977; Kaplan, 1985; Decker & Kirk, 1988; Goldbeck, 1960) deal with the technical skills of conducting, the effective use of conducting gesture being central to the attainment of required goals. Many performers are quick to be critical of any lack of clarity in conducting gesture. If ambiguity arises in the shape, direction or movement of the beat, problems of ensemble are likely to arise. However, gesture goes beyond beating time, but becomes an essential ingredient in the conveyance of the expressive character of music. Conductors will need to identify the several ways, for example, of conducting four beats in a bar, and be able to distinguish the appropriateness of the shape of the beat in relation to the character of music.

Whitten (1988) and Dickson (1992) put forward the argument that certain gestures are actually inappropriate even though they might be held to be technically 'correct'. Marvin's (1988) connection between conducting and energy flow supports Dickson's kinaesthetic approach to gesture rationalisation which will, they believe, have a bearing on the quality of vocal response from the singer. A taut attacking gesture at the beginning of, say, the Hallelujah chorus from Messiah will be reflected in a taut, probably tense sound from the singers, whereas a gesture which opens and allows the singer to 'release' the sound will sound more open and released. Hibbard (1994) further explores the kinaesthetic approach to choral conducting and to the teaching of student choral conductors with her case study and analysis of conductors' and singers' physical movements as an instructional technique for improving vocal production and expressive singing. Conductors then, along with knowledge of the music, will need mastery of the technical skills to provide appropriate gesture for the music being rehearsed. Certain gestures will indicate a particular sound; singers do respond accurately to visual cues, and experiments (carried out at a conference Designs for Developing the Voice and Choral Communication, Roehampton Institute London, February 1993) have shown that it is almost impossible for a choir to sing quietly and in

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5 Excessive movement in a passage that is quiet and reflective, for example, which may give an inappropriate message about the character of the music, even though the actual conducting beat may be clear.
a sustained legato style, for example, if the conductor they are watching is beating aggressively, jerkily and expansively.

Thurman (1992) states that we perceive all experience through our senses, visual, auditory and kinaesthetic, so that 'when people communicate with other people, sensory preferences usually “govern” the characteristics of conscious and other-than-conscious communications’ (op.cit.:71). For visual ‘primaries’ (those who file their experiences primarily through the visual sense), response to the conducting gesture will be uppermost. It is important that conductors are aware of the potential impact that can be made through inappropriate gesture. If conducting is concerned with the exchange of information, which, according to Thurman is what happens in all human encounters, then not only language but also movement and facial expressions are among the array of information that are presented and received outside conscious awareness (op.cit.:76). This leads to the examination of the behavioural and communication aspects of conducting which in many ways is essential to its success.

A choral conductor should have acquired necessary musical and technical skills before standing in front of a group of singers, and actions and behaviours should take place within a philosophical framework. However, it is largely the communication skills of the conductor that will ensure successful exchange of information for an effective rehearsal and performance. Returning to the anecdotal evidence from various performers and writers outlined earlier, much is inferred about the communication of the conductor, but little is specific or analytic. There are references to the ‘mystery’ or ‘hidden force’ of the conductor as well as analogies made with ‘love-making’. While it may be of interest to discuss the rather enigmatic definitions or descriptions, it will be more useful, especially for teaching purposes, to explore the differences between effective and ineffective choral conducting. Analysis of behaviours in this context can then be made.

4.2 EFFECTIVENESS AND THE TEACHING OF CONDUCTING

From his research on the development and application of a model for the teaching of conducting gestures, Lonis (1993) outlined a table of activities and skills ‘that must be considered for inclusion in a conducting program’
The assumption is, therefore, that failure to apply some or all of these skills would render the conductor to a degree ineffective. He categorises the identified skills under 'Cognitive', 'Affective' and 'Psychomotor' Processes, according to Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives (1956) and learning theories (1984) and relates these to Bloom's belief that, in order to make a skill automatic through practice, educators planning training courses must clearly define those basic skills that are required to bring about the desired outcomes.

The cognitive processes listed by Lonis are concerned with basic theory skills and aural skills, including:

(a) note and chord recognition;
(b) time signature, note length, pulse recognition;
(c) key signature, tonal centre, intonation recognition;
(d) instrumentation and transposition recognition;
(e) language usage, term recognition.

The affective processes are concerned with 'comprehension of feelings in order to make music from symbols', and included:

(a) affect of particular performance practices;
(b) absolute or referential basis of historical/theoretical perspective for aesthetic understanding;
(c) aesthetic awareness of performance practice as it affects each performance.

The psychomotor processes were concerned with 'basic physical gestures required to communicate intent or interpretation of the music' and included:

(a) stance;
(b) preparatory gestures;
(c) releases;
(d) left and right hand control and independence;
(e) beat patterns;
(f) cues;
(g) expressive gestures. [Lonis, 1993: 120]
While many of the skills outlined will be intuitive for a number of conductors, the identification of appropriate skills will promote both further insight into the nature of effective conducting and the recognition of ineffectiveness more demonstrably. To expand on this a little further, it is apparent that Lonis is suggesting that an effective conductor must firstly have a collection of technical skills pertaining to the ability to recognise musical features (such as inaccuracies in rhythm or pitch, inappropriate balance) aurally. A choral conductor will be ineffective if s/he is unable, for example, to recognise inaccurate notes and chords sung in a rehearsal, as these will need to be corrected. The education of conductors should, consequently, include aural skill training.

A knowledge and understanding of the context of the music historically and theoretically and its aesthetic potential is another pre-requisite of an effective conductor, and so if a conductor does not have such knowledge and understanding underpinning his/her work, then it is likely that the performance will not reach its optimum level. The basic psychomotor skills outlined by Lonis are related to the communication of the musical elements through physical gestures, which in the case of the ineffective conductor will be unclear, ambiguous and confusing to the singer. He believes his taxonomy of conducting activities, skills and behaviours will be useful in helping the student learn; that is to develop and apply a model for the teaching of conducting gestures. However, is it possible to conclude that the skills outlined by Lonis represent the totality of attributes necessary for a conductor to be effective? Does such a list obviate the notion of 'mystique'6 (the unidentified elements) of effective conducting?

While a teacher or lecturer can be very knowledgeable about his/her subject, or have well developed technical skills, it does not follow that s/he will be able to transmit such knowledge to the students. Poor ability to communicate with the students is likely to de-stimulate motivation and lessen their interest level. So a conductor may have sufficient musical skills without the ability to communicate and use such skills effectively. What are the minutiae of communication abilities; can evidence be gathered to enable a

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6 The word 'mystique', according to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, is 'any professional skill or technique which mystifies and impresses the layman'. A number of references are made in Chapter 2 to the 'mystery' of conducting by eminent conductors, this referring to the undefinable elements of conducting.
defining paradigm to emerge?

Thurman (1977) attached importance to demonstration, explanation and imaginative use of imagery and analogy in rehearsals as means of enhancing the expressive quality of the music, and Grechesky (1985), taking a theoretical approach, suggested that conductors need to concentrate on developing non-verbal communication skills in their interpretation of music. Others made more detailed analysis of specific observed behaviours, eg. eye contact, facial expressions, use of voice, to provide some clues as to how such behaviours contributed to the success of the conductor’s communication skills (Gumm, 1991; Osman, 1989). Less concerned with such atomistic detail, some research identifies the general personality of the conductor as being the real catalyst for successful communication. Strouse (1987) maintained that a positive personality and competent rehearsal skills led to a meaningful musical performance, and that knowledge of the musical score and secure technique will enhance the conductor’s confidence. Strouse’s thesis supports a conception that aesthetic awareness, musical knowledge, technical skills and positive personality all contribute to a conductor’s overall effectiveness. Swan (1987) endorses such principles and outlines the varying functions and roles of the choral conductor:

He is an organizer of time and activity, a technician as he works with the tonal and musical resources of his choir, a communicator of musical ideas to the performer and auditor, a listener to all kinds of live and recorded performance, and educator as he attempts to make those about him understand and appreciate musical values, a scholar and an interpreter of that which is found in the score.

[Swan, 1987: 88]

4.3 DEVELOPING A THEORY

While research in the field will have as its objective the identification of good practice in the choral conducting area, describing the current situation without considered reference to what might be will not on its own serve the purpose of developing a model of effective practice. A review of the literature will identify only those factors that have previously been listed. This may not cover all possible factors. The reason for examining choral conducting at all stems from a notion that all is not as it should or might be. The introduction to
this study outlined the inadequacies of conducting skill evident in student-teachers, and indicated also that many people came to conduct choirs without any special training or teaching in that field. Merely to investigate popular practice will not on its own formulate definitions of effectiveness, as clearly the researcher’s premise is that there are too many ineffective choral conductors.

The intention of this study is not only to describe the present state of choral conducting (though that in itself may serve to highlight and substantiate the problem or concern) but, in addition, to propose and develop a theory which may be supported by particular fieldwork. Theory - a rationale evolved to explain or relate independent phenomena or observations - emerges from experience, background, personal study and the review of appropriate literature. It is also developed from the perspective of the researcher as an expert or ‘connoisseur’ (Eisner, 1985) in the field. Theory is founded on practice, but theory must also give guidance, point people in certain directions and provide rationale for good practice. Plummeridge (1991) in referring to general conceptions of music education, emphasises the distinction between ‘theory as a prescription for practice and theory as a reflection on practice’ (op.cit.:9), and points out that all educational encounters must operate against a background of ideas, beliefs and assumptions which constitute theory. Research must be relevant to practice. The research in this case is to find evidence to substantiate good practice - provide the wherewithal for effective choral conducting. Theory needs evaluation and so support is sought in fieldwork.

4.4 THE CONDUCTING PHENOMENON

The development of a theory and movement towards a definitive model will, to a certain extent, focus on the phenomenology of conducting. In describing methods of philosophical enquiry within music education, Phelps, Ferrara and Goolsby (1993) refer to Heidegger’s view that:

all knowledge gathered by traditional research methods in the natural and human sciences is ultimately circular. Verification or corroboration of results takes place within the confines of the theory that structures the research project.

[op.cit.: 109]
Putting it in the context of ‘historical relativism’, Phelps et al. suggest that experimental research does not adequately inform us of the nature of the relationship and rapport between people - teacher and student or conductor and choir. Again, concurring with Heidegger, any truth being established must be understood according to the ‘context of one’s historical and cultural horizon’ (ibid). As in essence this enquiry is philosophical, it is unwise to expect that any fieldwork or experimental design will conclusively inform us about the nature of effective choral conducting. The nature of effectiveness in choral conducting can only be understood in relation to the context in which the choral conducting operates. What a conductor does that makes him/her successful in the field in one context may not be valid and appropriate in another. Is it possible that unidentified elements will have applicability and validity for those categories of conductors outlined at the beginning of this chapter? Can the mystique of the conductor have the same effect in a school choir as it may have in a large symphony chorus or a professional chamber choir? How does a conductor know how to behave or react in differing contexts?

Heidegger’s ‘interpretive’ phenomenological approach to aesthetic enquiry describes art as ‘dynamic happening’; it is interaction that makes it dynamic. He makes the distinction between ‘earth’ (erde) and ‘world’ (welt) as two of the fundamental elements of works of art (Phelps et al., 1993; Mehta, 1970; Guignon, 1993). Earth is concerned with the materials of art - the sound in music, as paint in painting or stone in sculpture. These materials are clearly essential to art; the Greek temple cannot exist without the stone. However, Heidegger adds another level - the world - which is concerned with contextualisation which gives art its meaning. The stone Greek temple within its religious and artistic context enables our appreciation of it as opposed to the stones that lie on the path, or the stone slab that forms a bench to sit on. The aesthetic element of the artwork can only be understood in terms of its context. With reference to the conductor and the choir, the implication is that we can only respond to the aesthetic and expressive potential in the performance (or rehearsal) by acknowledging the context in which the art (in this case the singing) occurs. The sound itself will not suffice, rather we are dependent on the expressive potential of the music and the conductor’s interpretation and conveyance of that potential, be it a simple reflective
Christmas carol with small children, or a rousing Hallelujah chorus with a large choir. The phenomenology of choral conducting is then concerned with the dynamic interaction or ‘happening’ between conductor and singers.

The strife between the earth and the world is possible only if an appreciating person allows that strife to show itself. Moreover, researchers must allow themselves to be transported into the world of the artist. ... This definition of art as a dynamic happening signals the need for an eclectic method that is responsive to the multidimensional thrust that music is capable of providing.

[Phelps et al., 1993: 137]

4.5 KNOWING-IN-ACTION AND TACIT KNOWING

Do conductors possess an instinctive ‘knowing’ that they have the ability to lead people - be they a small junior school choir or a large symphony chorus - into certain musical actions? Some conductors and teachers simply say they ‘know’ they can conduct or teach. Comparisons might be made with other fields of activity. Is becoming a tennis super-star, for example, something that is worked at, and is there an additional ‘knowing’ inside that such achievements are possible? Has everyone the potential capability to become a tennis star or choral conductor? While clearly environmental factors will play a large part in influencing outcomes, what part does a tacit knowing have to play in the evolution of such skills in particular people? The concept of ‘knowing-in-action’ is discussed by Schon (1987) who refers to it as the type of knowledge or ‘know-how’ where our knowledge is revealed through intelligent action.

We reveal it by our spontaneous, skilful execution of the performance; and we are characteristically unable to make it verbally explicit.

[Schon, 1987: 25]

Conductors, as evidenced in the biographies outlined in Chapter 2, are not always able to account for their actions or reason for their success and often prefer to allude to the mystery of conducting. However, Schon suggests that it is possible by reflecting on actions, to describe the tacit knowing implicit in them. Reference to the ‘sequences of operations and procedures, the clues
and rules we follow, the values, strategies and assumptions that make up our “theories” of action (ibid) can enable clearer understanding of the type of knowing that is often not verbalised; the type of knowing that is implicit in the seemingly spontaneous actions of the conductor. Schon states that knowing-in-action is dynamic, in contrast to ‘facts’, ‘procedures’, ‘rules’ and ‘theories’ which are static. What makes the actions of the conductor intelligent is the continuous quick decision making, detection and correction of errors and adjustments that are the permeating features of the rehearsal and the performance. Anticipation of problems, gained through intimate knowledge of the score related to knowledge of the singers’ capabilities, is part of the skill of the conductor in a rehearsal or performance. The adjustments in response to variations in the phenomena can be carried out by the ‘deployment of wide-ranging images of contexts and actions’ (op.cit.:29) gained from the conductor’s previous experiences and knowledge.

The concept of ‘tacit knowing’ is articulated by Polanyi (1983), who refers to ‘knowing more than we can tell’ and also, particularly in relation to art, ‘indwelling’ - entering into a work of art - as a way of understanding meaning. Understanding the phenomenon of conducting can only fully be established by being a part of the conducting phenomenon. Polanyi points out that indwelling as part of the structure of tacit knowing enables us to uncover meanings rather than just describing observations (op.cit.:18). He further argues that scrutiny of particulars of a comprehensive entity destroys our conception of the whole. Swanwick (1988) takes the point further in relation to our understanding of musical concepts. Our understanding of the aesthetic and expressive potential of a piece of music, and the effectiveness of a conductor in relation to it, accordingly, is more likely to materialise by ‘dwelling in’ the entity rather than making close analysis of the constituent elements. Objective observations will have their limitations.

In context of a learning situation, Broudy (1988) presents Polanyi’s distinctions between ‘focal’ knowing (i.e. knowing something specific) and ‘tacit’ knowing, explaining that the arts, as moral education for example, call upon a variety of approaches and modes of response (in addition to ‘replicative’ and ‘applicative’ approaches) to facilitate understanding. He distinguishes aesthetic learning as in need of perception accompanied by ‘imaginative reconstruction’, as ‘all aesthetic expression is indirect and
metaphorical' (op.cit.:58). Experience of actual conducting, of being conducted and by listening to the outcomes - the 'indwelling' in the entity (Broudy's 'knowing with') - will provide insight into the nature and definition of what makes the phenomenon effective. This research will endeavour, through dwelling in, to make explicit some of the characteristics of this knowing.

One way of facilitating construction of a model of effectiveness in choral conducting will be to look at how it is taught in relation to how it is practised. If courses are designed to deal with choral conducting, then an underlying rationale will be presumed, as will the essential technical and musical requisites and communication issues. Written course descriptions will inform what 'experts' in the area believe to be the elements necessary for effective choral conducting, and observation of how such elements are delivered can support the model. Students and teachers will at least have had the opportunity to think about and consider in practice their own paradigms. However, in describing the study conducted by Joseph Labuta (1965) A Theoretical Basis for College Instrumental Conducting Courses, Lonis (1993) poses the problem that, even when a successful conductor is identified, it is not really possible to determine whether the success is due to the teaching technique or the inherent personality and skills of the conductor him/herself. This question is the concern of teachers of any subject in relation to the success of their students - how much of the success of the student is due to the teaching and how much is elicited by the student's own motivation, skill and personality.

To analyse the conductor's art is possibly misleading. The biographical comments of the 'great' conductors do not refer necessarily, or even at all, to the clarity of their beat or other atomistic elements, rather to an 'essence' or Gestalt of their behaviours and principles. So it is perhaps the whole that should be considered in the quest for a model definition. Observing and noting specific behaviours, for example, in a rehearsal situation or performance will not give many clues to the overall effectiveness of that individual conductor. Who will determine what are effective and appropriate behaviours? What may be a relevant behaviour in one rehearsal may not be in another. A conductor may feel the need to concentrate in one rehearsal on, say, vocal production, while in another more on accuracy. That is not to say
that one rehearsal is better or is more effective than another, but rather that the conductor is responding to the needs of the choir as perceived at different times. In one rehearsal the conductor may intentionally be tackling small details, with extensive use of verbal language and repetition, while in another s/he may intentionally be facilitating a ‘run-through’ of the whole programme with little attention to detail, technical accuracy or vocal production; both are valid rehearsal activities. Effective musical gesture may not always appear in each rehearsal, yet it is considered an important and natural ingredient of the effective choral conductor as a whole. This suggests that the observation of conductors in only one rehearsal might be somewhat unrepresentative of the total picture.

As indicated above, effectiveness will be framed by the context in which the rehearsal is taking place; what will be appropriate for the conductor of a junior school choir will likely be different from that of a professional choir or a large symphony chorus. So many factors contribute to the essence of effective conducting that it would seem difficult and even unnecessary to measure small distinct aspects without relating to the totality (Polanyi, 1983). Effectiveness as a concept can only be meaningful within the context of the musical aims of the activity in process.

4.6 CRAFT KNOWLEDGE

Throughout this study much is made of the correlation between conducting and teaching. The former is often and the latter is occasionally referred to as an 'art’. Brown and McIntyre (1993) put forward the notion of teaching as ‘craft' knowledge and seek through their own research to identify definitions or states of effectiveness in teaching generally. Not wishing to denigrate the teaching profession by the implication that it ‘just’ a craft, Brown and McIntyre, with reference to other educational writers, clarify that craft knowledge is part of the practical experience of the teacher and is ‘integrated into the totality of their professional knowledge with all its broader educational and political features’ (op.cit.:19). As with the intention of this study with regard to choral conducting, so Brown and McIntyre confirm:

our concern is limited to the study and the articulation of the relatively routine and familiar aspects of what teachers do in classrooms, and with how they do the things they regularly do well. We are seeking
knowledge which is potentially generalizable (and so can be shared) and
the notion of professional craft knowledge is the best metaphor we can
think of. Teachers' flashes of artistic genius will be a bonus.

[ibid]

The comparison bears consideration; while there will be recognisable 'flashes
of artistic genius' in the work of the conductor, the day to day rehearsal
situation may have more connection with the conductor's craft knowledge -
the relatively routine and familiar aspects of what the conductor does well.

A philosophical approach to the notion of 'craft' in relation to 'art'
was articulated by Collingwood (1938), who, in developing a theory of art,
referred to technique as an essential tool of the craftsman, though technique is
insufficient in itself to make the craftsman an artist. (He makes an enlightening
reference to the Hymn of the sixteenth century English poet Ben Jonson,
stating that while Jonson had the skills of 'ingenious patterns of rhythm and
rhyme, alliteration, assonance and dissonance' displayed in the poem, it was
'his imaginative vision of the goddess and her attendants, for whose
expression it was worth his while to use that skill.' [op.cit.:27].) The artist
needs skill, and will more likely produce greater works of artistic merit with
better technique, because he is more able to elucidate his artistic imagery and
insights; however, the artist is dependent on imaginative vision (ibid). The
skilled craftsman, suggests Collingwood, uses knowledge as the 'means
necessary to realise a given end' (op.cit.:28) and it is the mastery of these
means that is the craftsman's skill. Using an example of a joiner making a table,
Collingwood points out that he has at his disposal knowledge of materials and
tools that are required to produce the specified table. So, ideally, the teacher
and choral conductor have equivalent knowledge to be able to realise their
specified goals. In the rehearsal situation, the choral conductor will call upon a
repertoire of means to attain the performance goal, and it is his/her mastery of
the various technical skills, understanding of what is required in order to
achieve goals, that will make the conductor a craftsman in rehearsal. Yet the
question remains, does the choral conductor in a rehearsal situation need that
imaginative vision or is it something only for the conductor in performance? If
the choral conductor has aesthetic sensitivity (the quality required to
distinguish the artist from the craftsman) this must surely be displayed in
rehearsal as well as in performance in order that the choir be immersed in the
expressive potential of the music. The technique of rehearsing must encourage
a sequence of responses from the singers. So, while the conductor will have the knowledge of the craftsman, will know how to proceed with the music and the singers in order to attain technical goals, s/he will also have the vision to guide the rehearsing towards the aesthetic goals.

A study of teachers' craft knowledge was made by Elbaz (1983) who identified five 'orientations of practical knowledge': (i) the situational orientation which is formulated according to the classroom, the school, the curriculum etc.; (ii) personal orientation where the teacher's knowledge encompasses not only intellectual belief, but also perception, feeling, values and commitment; (iii) social orientation which is shaped by social constraints and is used to structure the social reality of the knower; (iv) experiential orientation in which practical knowledge is shaped by multi-dimensional experiences, and (v) theoretical orientation which determines the contours of practical knowledge by considered relationship between theory and practice (op.cit.:15-21, 101). Again the comparisons are worth articulating with reference to the choral rehearsal.

Firstly, a conductor's craft knowledge is modified by the situation, the size and composition of the choir, the setting, the repertoire, the overall context in which the choir operates - all of which constitute a type of
knowing that is, or becomes, instinctive to the conductor. This is the type of knowing that will enable a conductor to contextualise the style of procedure with different choral groups. On a more technical level, for example, it will enable the conductor to know how to deal with specific acoustics in the rehearsal room which may influence the singers’ intonation, balance and blend.

Secondly, according to the Elbaz model, the conductor’s craft knowledge is also shaped by the his/her personal philosophy (the principles underlying knowledge and actions) and commitment as well as the personal perception, reaction and response presented during the rehearsal period. The social dimension of the conductor’s craft knowledge will be influenced by the nature of the group being conducted, which in turn will have a bearing on the choice and appropriateness of repertoire for the particular group and the expectations of the conductor in respect of the learning rate, motivation factors and general progression; this commits the conductor to developing effective communication skills in addition to understanding various social factors concerning the choral group. The experiential base of a teacher’s and conductor’s knowledge will have impact on all the orientations above, as it is experience that shapes and influences and alters decisions and actions people make; it is the phenomenology of conducting which is implicit in actions, allied to the tacit knowing that certain things we do promote certain outcomes. Experience tells the choral conductor that a particular gesture will inform the choir of the character of the music, the anticipated response will be manifest, with or without verbal prompting. Finally, the theoretical aspects of the conductor’s world are pinned not only by his/her academic and musical training, but also by general discourse and choral and conducting developments of the day, including, for example, reflection on new releases of choral works on CD, video and television close-ups of conductors in action in rehearsal and performance, as well as reading relevant journals and articles.

So the craft of conducting is involved with the everyday normal rehearsal, where careful progression in the standard of achievement in the performance of the piece of music is an essential part of the responsibility of the conductor. This progress will be maintained and directed by the ability of the conductor to interest and motivate the singers. In the same way a teacher in the classroom will need strategies for motivating pupils, so the conductor
will need a different set of strategies for maintaining singers’ motivation and progress, which will differ according to the social, professional and musical context. The conductor will ideally need to know something about the way people learn. At the rehearsal stage it is not the flashes of artistic flair that will necessarily inspire the amateur singer (though that is not to say such flair has no place in the rehearsal room) but rather the ability of the conductor to communicate the character of the music in an engaging and proficient manner.

4.7 HUMAN COMPATIBLE COMMUNICATION

A caricature of the conductor is of an elderly, white male standing on a podium in tails waving a baton and looking somewhat severe. This reflects the view that the conductor’s role is to dictate the music’s requirements to the performers in an uncompromising way, responding to inaccurate pitches and rhythms sternly and not allowing poor intonation to escape his notice. The biographical section earlier identifies a number of conductors for whom such a description or allegory fits. Discussion with many singers will also support this portrayal, with stories of excessive bad temper, bullying and abusive behaviour being common. One of the interviewees in the present research (see Chapter 6 and Appendix 2) recalled a number of conductors of community choral societies who, during final rehearsals before concerts, behaved badly; a comparison was made with mini-dictators. The response from the singers to such behaviour, he noticed, was invariably inhibited singing, forced tone and considerable tension. The rehearsal atmosphere was not conducive to music-making or developing aesthetic sensitivities. Such a style of rehearsing could be said to be antagonistic to a learning or music-making condition.

Referring to the work of Leslie Hart (1983), Thurman (1992) outlines the ways in which music teaching and learning has traditionally often been humanly antagonistic (brain antagonistic - Hart) rather than humanly compatible (see also the research literature review, Chapter 3) and encourages conductors to consider carefully the nature of their communication with singers. Hart (1983) asks fundamental questions relating to the student in school, and suggests that in many respects we expect students to learn in what in reality is a learning antagonistic environment. Learning is traditionally locked into a tight curriculum framework with standardized tests using written
and spoken languages as the predominant symbol systems. Variations from the tightly constructed modes of learning tend to be criticised and often even elicit a punitive response. Comparisons can be made with the choral conductor, who may not always provide the most humanly compatible mode of learning. If the philosophical foundation of a conductor’s role is to promote and induce aesthetic sensitivities in the singers, then the conductor will need to provide a human compatible situation (i.e. free from threat - see below) for the musical learning to take place. Thurman (1992) describes and compares the type of people who have experienced ‘bodymind’ antagonistic situations with those who have experienced ‘bodymind compatible’ situations. He describes the former as possibly being amongst other things - ‘uncooperative, untrusting, defensive, rebellious, belligerent, cynical, manipulative ....’ whereas the latter might be - ‘cooperating courteously, making their own decisions, disagreeing respectfully, actively making sense of their own world, gaining mastery over it ....’ (op.cit.:78). He thus suggests that the learning situation can influence the patterns of behaviour of the learners. Putting this in the choral rehearsal situation, the nature of the communication of the conductor will have a direct bearing not only on the musical responses of the singers but also on their attitudinal behaviour. Thurman takes Hart’s thesis on the human brain as the foundation of his arguments. Hart (1983) proposes that human bodyminds have three innate ‘drives’.

**DRIVE 1:** make sense of or ‘interpret’ interactions with people, places and things of the perceived ‘world’;

**DRIVE 2:** protection of the person from perceived threats to safety and well-being;

**DRIVE 3:** gain and increase mastery of personal interactions with the people, places and things of the perceived ‘world’.

Thurman continues by stating that brains carry out these innate ‘drives’ through four types of ‘bodymind processing’.

**PROCESS 1:** seeking sensory input;

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7 The term ‘bodymind’ has a scientific basis from the discovery that bio-chemical messenger molecules are located in various organs of the body as well as in the cells of the nervous, endocrine and immune systems, all of which affect the memory, learning behaviour and emotions - hence the concept of a unity of body and mind (see Thurman, 1992:iv-v).
PROCESS 2: detecting familiar and unfamiliar patterns within the sensory input;

PROCESS 3: formation, elaboration and selection of bodymind programs\(^8\) for carrying out the three drives;

PROCESS 4: 'downshifting' from the ongoing 'stream' of bodymind programs to protective ones.

[Thurman, 1992: 78-79]

Thurman puts forward the notion that all of the bodymind drives and processes have conscious and 'other-than-conscious' dimensions.

It is the nature of bodyminds to actively seek sensory experiences, to extract patterns from confusion (read here “involvement”, “motivation” and “attention”), to select an appropriate available bodymind program for interacting with sensed patterns (people, places, things) and to protect the “self” in relative safety.

[ibid]

Relating this to the choral rehearsal situation, human compatible learning will take place when singers’ bodyminds are exposed to large amounts of sensory input; this will enable the ‘pleasure-centres’\(^9\) of the brain to become activated as patterns are detected and gradual mastery of the music takes place. This mastery will in turn give singers self-esteem. The responsibility of the conductor is then to provide the environment in which sensory input can occur. Such an environment will need to be free from threat (see Drive 2). Part of the communication skill of the conductor, when particularly dealing with the amateur and perhaps tentative singer, is then to provide an encouraging, positive and constructive atmosphere rather than a critical, negative and destructive one. A rehearsal in which the conductor (or teacher) is taking control through informing the singers only of what is wrong with their singing is providing a threatening environment. In such an environment messenger

\(^8\) Program is referred to by Hart [p.190] as a sequence of steps or actions intended to achieve some ‘goal’, which once built is stored in the brain and ‘run off’ repeatedly whenever need to achieve the same goal is perceived by the person.

\(^9\) Messenger molecules that produce pleasurable sensations - often felt in the abdominal or chest area. These messenger molecules are released when the brain interprets an experience or behaviour as being relatively safe.
molecules that produce unpleasant feelings may be released because of the sensory input, and ultimately singers will be unable to gain mastery over the music. Consequently self-esteem will remain low.

**Conductor creates non-threatening environment**

- singers seek sensory input
  - pleasure-sensations develop
  - mastery over the music
  - self-esteem

*Fig.4.3: Process of establishing self-esteem*

The skills of the conductor are thus concerned with the ability to create the condition where, through careful manipulation and learning compatible behaviour, the singer can experience the sense of the music. It is more likely that this will occur if the conductor is not pre-occupied with technical accuracy at the early stage of rehearsals; the concept of just 'note-bashing' or 'getting things right' to start with may simply reinforce singers' feelings of inability or insecurity. Preferably, the conductor will offer an insight into the music’s expressive character which will be recognized by the singers, and relevant patterns will be identified, opening up the pleasure-centres of the bodymind. Such sensory input and detection of patterns is received through conscious and 'other-than-conscious' means. Communication is not solely dependent on verbal means; use of eyes, facial expressions, gesture, movement and general body language contribute to the ways in which the sense of the music is transmitted; this is frequently received other-than-consciously. The technicalities of the music might preferably be dealt with as the singers are ready for it (the conductor’s ‘craft’ in the rehearsal), when they themselves realize that, in order to gain further mastery over the music, they require information and correction. The motivation to gain mastery is stronger having previously received sensations that are pleasureable. Thurman suggests that
one of the roles of the conductor or teacher might be to help people overcome conscious controlling mechanisms that may well prevent them from using other-than-conscious capabilities to gain access to their ‘mastery potentials’ (op.cit.:83-84).

Such an approach gains support from Green and Gallwey (1987) in their beguiling book *The Inner Game of Music*. Here, the authors point out that in order to gain maximum benefits from anything we do, there should be awareness of the following:

- the quality of our experience while we are doing it;
- what we are learning as we do it;
- how close we are coming to achieving our goals.

By focusing more closely on feelings while engaged in a learning situation, sensitivity to received feedback is heightened, according to Green and Gallwey. The heightened sensitivity in turn motivates and quickens the learning rate and performance goals are achieved and consequently enjoyment enhanced (op.cit.:39). Hart (1983) emphasises the importance of feedback in order that learners may ‘find out whether their pattern extraction and recognition (see Bodymind Process 2) is correct or improving, and whether programs have been appropriately selected and executed’ (op.cit.:164). The responsibility of the teacher, or in this case the conductor, is not only to provide a positive environment in which the learning can take place, but also to provide feedback so that the brain can build programmes to work towards mastery over sets of skills. The singer can improve individually and collectively when the singer has some way of knowing what has been done well through immediate feedback; the brain then builds and stores programmes through the provision and heeding of feedback. Hart concludes:

> brain-compatible instruction requires that students *not* be permitted to pursue wrong programs at the outset, nor to practise making errors.

> [ibid]

The significance for the choral conductor is that, by allowing inaccurate or inappropriate practices to continue, the brain will be programmed accordingly, making it increasingly difficult to modify at a later stage.
McCoy, writing in the *American Choral Journal* (December, 1994) about the importance of eurhythmics\(^{10}\) in enhancing the 'music-body-mind' connection in conductor training, emphasises the importance of the quality of human interaction in the choral rehearsal. She points out that the conductor has a responsibility in dealing with people and their sensitivities towards the music by moulding the musical performance through accurate and efficient gestures and words and also that:

> a more productive and congenial rehearsal climate is maintained when the conductor regards singers not as mere sound sources, but as human beings with musical, physical and emotional needs, strengths and limitations.

[McCoy, 1994: 21]

If such theory merits consideration, it is the choral conductor who must be skilled in communicating a sense of appropriate feelings in the rehearsal situation. The conductor then has the responsibility to enable singers to overcome their own obstacles in order to bring quality to the learning experience in singing. This must be an integral and substantial component of the model of effectiveness in choral training and conducting.

### 4.8 SUMMARY

The model defined at the end of this chapter, emerges from the contributions to the literature reviewed above. This chapter has sought to define the effective choral conductor through reviewing some of the principles, musical-technical skills and behavioural traits and expectations written in the literature and related to experience. Also, aspects of the conducting phenomenon have been explored in respect of the tacit knowing, knowledge-in-action and craft knowledge that a conductor brings to the role. Further exploration of human compatible and brain compatible learning has sought to give an awareness and understanding of the capacity of the conductor to affect singers in voice use and in their achievement of goals. Effective human compatible communication will more likely enable individual and group potential in the choral situation to be realised. This has put forward the notion that the conductor should operate as a teacher, or rather a promoter of learning, in

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\(^{10}\)The theory that the natural rhythms of the body provide the origins of the rhythms of music was developed by Emile-Jacques Dalcroze, who stressed the importance of rhythm and movement in musical training.
particular contexts and provide conducive learning experiences through the creation of a positive environment and appropriate feedback. Modes and styles of rehearsing, gesture, verbal and non-verbal language and actions have been evaluated in relation to the emerging model. Throughout the chapter mention has been made of aspects of these phenomena that can and should be taught within choral conducting programmes.

4.9 THE MODEL OF AN EFFECTIVE CHORAL CONDUCTOR

A model effective choral conductor will have the following attributes:

1. **Philosophical Principles Underpinning Role**

- **a knowledge of the choral repertoire** - in order to be able to choose discerningly music that is appropriate for the particular choral group, in respect of their age, abilities, composition and vocal needs, from a wide range of eras and styles;

- **a knowledge of the human voice** - in order to be able to deal with a range of vocal issues and problems in an informed way in the rehearsal situation, including aspects of vocal production, healthy voice use, the psychology, physiology and workings of the voice to promote better and effective singing;

- **an image of the music prior to rehearsal** - in order to have clear technical and expressive ideas for presenting it to singers in rehearsal;

- **an awareness of the aesthetic potential of the music** - including the composer’s intentions in this respect, and the capacity to enable appropriate responses in the singers and the audience to emerge;

- **an understanding of the nature of the conductor’s role** - to take responsibility for the singers collectively and individually, and to act as a facilitator and promoter of appropriate musical learning.
2. Musical -Technical

- **appropriate aural and error detection skills** - in order to be able to hear inaccuracies in the singing, such as incorrect entries, pitches, rhythms; also identify inaccuracies, such as in language, diction, vowel shapes and textural nuances, endings of phrases, intonation, blend, balance within and between parts, and to be able to deal with them;

- **the ability to give clear intentions of tempo, dynamics, phrasing through appropriate gesture** - including clear preparatory beats, cut-offs, as well as conducting gestures that indicate suitable expressive and stylistic considerations; also ability to achieve rhythmic energy, agility and spontaneity within the musical structure;

- **the ability to demonstrate accurately and musically** - which will involve singing and/or playing at correct pitches, rhythms, also tonal quality, intonation for the singers to hear and emulate; it might also include demonstrating how not to do something;

- **recognition of the importance of warming-up voices** - of knowing and delivering strategies appropriate for the group, and the validity of physical and vocal exercises in relation to physical and vocal preparation for effective singing and rehearsing and vocal health;

- **strategies for establishing the character of the music at the earliest opportunity** - in order not to put undue emphasis on technical considerations at the expense of expressive and stylistic ones.
3. Behavioural - Interpersonal

- the capacity to create a positive non-threatening environment - with a balance of encouragement and correction, with realistic, attainable goals and positive feedback in a ‘safe’ atmosphere;

- the capacity to communicate clearly and unambiguously - with effective use of verbal, gestural, body and facial language;

- the desire to encourage healthy singing - avoidance of situations with language (including the use of own voice) and gestures which will induce tension, but rather maintain an emphasis on relaxation;

- the capacity to enable choral and vocal development - the skill to assist with voice and choral blend, allowing individual vocal exploration, and the careful use of extrovert behaviour to motivate singers;

- the ability to make singers feel confident and comfortable - with reassuring language, allowing mistakes, using human compatible communication and a judicious use of humour;

- the skill to pace rehearsals effectively - which will include using verbal language sparingly by encouraging response to visual cues by various means, get on with the music, avoid concentrating on one part while others get bored or demotivated;

- the expectation of the highest standards possible - by renewing expectations, setting appropriate goals for the group, particularly the development of musical and textural communication from the singers, and using qualitative feedback to the choir.

The model is not an absolute one, and, although attributes have been categorised, there will be a degree of cross-fertilization between and within the categories in the descriptors. The following chapter will consider appropriate research methods, procedures and activities to test the model for validity.
CHAPTER FIVE
DESIGN OF ENQUIRY

5.1 RESEARCH PROCEDURES

One of the motivating postulates on which this research was undertaken was that it should essentially deal with the conductor as a person and the conductor in action. In order to identify some of the characteristics of the effective choral conductor, and establish a model, a qualitative research methodology was deemed appropriate. It was felt that restricting the enquiry to a list of behaviours to quantify and evaluate a conductor's effectiveness would have provided only a limited perspective which ignored other aspects (such as knowledge and personality), even though to have a list of specific behaviours (Osman, 1989) to check through in a systematic observation schedule may have been intelligible and procedurally uncomplicated. The real priorities of each individual conductor could be more successfully revealed by a multi-faceted qualitative method of research. The aim has been to describe, generate and refine, discover and validate (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984) aspects of the conductors’ philosophies, practices and characteristics. Qualitative research needs to account for the phenomenology of conducting (see Chapter 4), though it should be understood that multiple contrasting views of the phenomenon may arise (Hammersley, 1992). Explanations of the phenomenology of conducting will be subject to individuals’ interpretations of the purpose of such research as well as to ‘incoherent rationales ... and a vehicle for ideology’ (Hammersley, 1992: 28). It must be accepted that subjective experiences and attitudes of both the researcher and participants play a significant part in defining the effective conductor. In this respect, the most appropriate methods of research will be concerned with areas where there is a notable degree of interaction between the participant and either or both the researcher and the group being conducted. The theoretical framework (that a conductor will have a series of philosophical, technical and behavioural attributes) that informs this study has already been specified through basic assumptions and philosophies, anecdotal evidence and historical practices as well as through the literature review.

Finnegan (1989) in her study of music-making in an English town, drew on the many-faceted worlds of local music through participant
observation, extended personal interviews, face-to-face and telephone interviews as well as documentary data, in order to build a representation of musical life in her particular local environment. The participant observation she regarded as central to the study, and in the appendix to the book wrote:

I have focussed on problems, but ... without the measure of participant observation that, with all its unsatisfactoriness, I did achieve, I do not feel I could have begun to understand what was involved in the meaningful practice of local music and its pathways.

[Finnegan, 1984: 344]

Denzin (1994) suggests that qualitative research may use many methods and that the researcher can be regarded as *bricoleur* with the research presented as a *bricolage*, stating that such multiple methods of research can add 'rigor, breadth and depth to any investigation' (op.cit.:17). The present study is undoubtedly shaped by the researcher's own current work and experience as a choral conductor and teacher, as well being previously a student and singer with a variety of conductors. Denzin supports the notion of the qualitative research as an interactive process dependent on a number of variables such as personal history, biography, gender, race and social class considerations. Hence, according to Denzin, the product of the research, the *bricolage*, is:

a complex, dense, reflexive, collage-like creation that represents the researcher's images, understandings and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis.  

[Denzin, 1994: 18]

This study will attempt to construct a multi-dimensional picture of the effective conductor, through a ‘tour’ (see Chapter 1) employing a variety of practical methods in order to gain as much insight into the detail of the surrounding ‘landscape’ and ‘landmarks’ as the tour proceeds. The tour will investigate the concepts of an operational conductor and then at a later stage consider appropriate training provisions and processes. The stages of the tour will be:

1. The postulation of a theoretical model. By exploring the writings of ‘experts’ in various fields associated with conducting, music teaching and learning, a list of defining descriptors will be created without an indication of
relative priorities or hierarchies among them.

2. Validation of the descriptor list. The ‘triangulation’ will draw on:
(i) conductors themselves: - the subjective, introspective expressions of experienced, able conductors talking about their own role;
(ii) views about conductors from (a) experienced singers who have sung with various conductors in a masterclass (some of whom may themselves conduct) (b) inexperienced trainee conductors - students who have completed a course in choral conducting as part of their initial teacher education programme;
(iii) observations of a variety of choral conducting situations, with varying levels of experience represented; by means of the video tape, some of the observed situations are further evaluated by (a) a panel of experienced conductors and (b) a panel of experienced teachers.

It must be accepted, however, that the researcher enters the field as a subjective, involved and informed practitioner and teacher, and also as one for whom aesthetic response to choral music is significant. Such an approach is acknowledged by Roberts (1994), who reported that his own research would have been impossible ‘if it were not for the fact that I could interact with my subjects as a knowledgeable and skilled musician’ (op.cit.:94) and that qualitative research should choose to ‘use rather than hide our own knowledge and experience’ (op.cit.:95). In his two major research studies (1991 and 1993a), Roberts examined the social world of music education students in Canadian university Schools of Music using unstructured interviews and participant observation. In such a context being an ‘insider’ and musically educated was of extreme importance in breaking down technical and social barriers. Roberts points out that:

emerging theoretical propositions guide the data collection process for information about emerging categories while the process of investigation spins around in an ever tightening spiral toward the centre of theoretical development.

[Roberts, 1991: 25]

As with this present study, the relationship between the hypothesis, developing theory and data collection is symbiotic. In such research the researcher is integrally involved in the design of the enquiry to support the

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1 Looking for evidence from a number of sources to substantiate the theory or model.
Peshkin (1994), speaking at a conference on Qualitative Methodologies in Music Education (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, May 1994), states:

I am subjective when I do research, as we all are, because of three interrelated aspects of self: first, the affective state of my being; that is, that I have values, attitudes or tastes. If you can show me somebody who has no values, attitudes or tastes, I will believe that there is someone who is not subjective when they do research. Second, I am subjective because of my history... Third, I am subjective because of my biography; that is, my personal attributes of gender, age, religion, occupation and so forth. My biography, as does everyone’s, shapes me, presses me, influences me in certain directions .... I want to know about my subjectivity as a researcher because of its capacity to influence, possibly dictate the choices I make in all phases of my research, with results that can range from the virtuous to the damning.  

[Peshkin, 1994: 47-48]

The latter statement is undoubtedly applicable to the present study, where certain choices are made, as for example, when deciding on which choral conductors to interview and which choral conducting classes to observe.

In his study on the management of selected educational process variables by master studio teachers in music performance, L’Hommedieu (1992) found it difficult to select appropriate research procedures, finding quantitative methods ‘shallow and disappointing’ (op.cit.:112) and pointed out that most qualitative methods had not, as yet, sufficient practitioners. Referring to the work of Eisner (1985), L’Hommedieu, as did Roberts, supported the notion of entering the research as a ‘connoisseur’, as someone who has experience and ability in the field; this qualitative approach endorses the view that to be knowledgeable is an asset to the study (op.cit.:115). Miles and Huberman (1984) also support the idea of familiarity with the field and state the characteristics of the qualitative research should include:

1. some familiarity with the phenomenon and the setting under study;
2. strong conceptual interests;
3. a multidisciplinary approach, as opposed to a narrow grounding or
focus in a single discipline;

4. good ‘investigative’ skills, including doggedness, the ability to draw people out and the ability to ward off premature closure.

[Miles & Huberman, 1984: 46]

It is reasonable to expect that, in dealing with qualitative methods, the researcher will have already developed hypotheses and will not of necessity be value-neutral. The interests and motivation for this research study have been articulated, and to a certain extent, a stance has already been taken: it is the belief of the writer that aspects of choral conducting are teachable. The researcher is already involved in the teaching of choral conducting and the researcher’s students have consistently indicated that the choral conducting seminars have been a significant part of their overall initial teacher education programme in enabling them to conduct more effectively than before.

As mentioned above, Hammersley (1992) suggests that there is not always a single objective description of each phenomenon, and that it can be valid to recognise that there are multiple and accurate descriptions of any phenomenon (op.cit.:28). He points out the intrinsic difference between theories and descriptions; that whereas descriptions are about particulars, theories are concerned with universals. In developing theories through qualitative research, Hammersley outlines two approaches - ‘grounded theorising’ and ‘analytic deduction’:

Grounded theorising seeks both to represent concrete situations in their complexity and to produce abstract theory ... [there is considerable ambiguity] ... about whether grounded theorising is designed to test theory as well as develop it...

[Hammersley, 1992: 21]

A grounded theory, according to Strauss & Corbin (1990), is one that is ‘inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents’, and suggests that in this kind of study the researcher will begin with an area of study and ‘whatever is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge’ (op.cit.:23). Strauss & Corbin also put forward the argument that creativity is an essential ingredient in developing a grounded theory, enabling the researcher to ‘break through assumptions and to create a new order out of the old’ (op.cit.:27). This research seeks to do more than describe, for merely to describe would be
implicitly to accept the status quo of choral conducting in the UK; it does, however, seek to analyse and interpret data within the context of making decisions about the validity of developing an effective choral conducting curriculum. Roberts (1994), however, suggests that the researcher should be prepared to revise assumptions and beliefs, in case 'we find ourselved tripping on our personal experience', and that judgements must 'surely derive from our own inner ability to compare our knowing with the observable data' (op.cit.:93). In her argument for the consideration and adoption of a 'constructivist' research paradigm, Lincoln (1990) proposes that its central focus will be

the presentation of multiple, holistic, competing and often conflictual realities of multiple stakeholders and research participants (including the inquirer's) ...

and that the presentation of the research (the depiction of hermeneutic and dialectic constructs\textsuperscript{2} ) should offer the reader a 'vicarious' experience which,

in addition to providing certain technical help to other researchers, should aid the reader in understanding the nuances and subtleties of conflict and agreement in \textit{this place and at this time} \cite[her italics]{Lincoln}. Further, the written report should demonstrate the passion, the commitment and the involvement of the inquirer with his coparticipants in the inquiry.

[Lincoln, 1990: 73]

In evaluating qualitative research methods, Eisner (1991), Miles & Huberman (1984), Woolcott (1990) and Bressler & Stake (1992), amongst others, provide a basis for a triangulation approach as a valid and reliable means to support emerging theory. In order to test the validity of the model outlined in Chapter 4, namely, that the effective choral conductor should have (i) a set of principles and aesthetic ideals underpinning the preparation and approach to music, (ii) a set of technical and musical skills and (iii) particular interpersonal skills and behavioural traits.

Firstly interviews would be carried out with eight choral conductors from a variety of choral conducting situations (e.g. professional choirs,

\textsuperscript{2} i.e. the depiction of individual constructs and the contrast and comparison of individuals' constructs: see Guba (1990: 26-27).
schools, churches, amateur choral societies etc.). Interviews would also seek to ascertain whether conductors felt unable to deal effectively with particular problems in their choral conducting and rehearsing, and to identify if such problems would be resolved in an appropriate teaching situation.

Secondly, a questionnaire would be given (i) to singers and observers who participated in a public 'masterclass' led by the researcher on choral conducting communication and (ii) to student-teachers having completed a short course of tuition on choral conducting tutored by the researcher, as part of their initial teacher education programme. The questionnaire would ask for responses to a series of descriptors of choral conducting which emerged from the literature review.

Thirdly, action research through participant and non-participant observations and interviews would be carried out in universities, schools and the community in Utah, USA, where recognised good practice is in operation. The study would look at choirs in performance and rehearsal, and classes in choral conducting with both undergraduate and postgraduate students. This particular research activity might be regarded as a case study of a flourishing choral community. Using these multidisciplinary approaches (Miles & Huberman, 1984) in the field would provide acknowledgment of the assumptions outlined and the developing model of effective choral conducting.

5.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.2.1 INTERVIEWS

The interviewees were known to the researcher, and were chosen in the light of their approachability and interest and willingness to take part in the research. A variety of conducting contexts were represented in the selection, as were a range of perceived (by them) conducting abilities and experience. The interviews (apart from the pilot - see below) took place in situations where the interviewees said they felt comfortable. These situations included a 'pub', home, school office and garden.

Two alternative strategies for the interview schedule were considered:
(i) to adopt a check-list style of structured interview with a substantial number of points to guide the interviewer and interviewee (as in the questionnaire);  
(ii) to adopt an unstructured style of interview where the interviewee talks about aspects of his/her choral conducting in more of an open discussion, where the interviewer merely prompts or guides the conversation.

A perceived problem with the check-list style of interview concerns the areas that are left out, responses being researcher controlled. Assumptions may be made that only the points on the list are important and worthy of consideration, whereas in reality some significant aspect of a choral conductor's style or technique, or the ideas of the interviewee may be omitted from the discussion. This compares with the observation instrument - the 'Communication Skill Evaluation Instrument' designed by Osman (1989) with her list of rehearsal behaviours. Here, some forty behaviours were categorised as being 'necessary' or 'not necessary' for effective communication by a panel of experts (see Chapter 3). Disagreement amongst the expert panel of conductors was apparent in the identification and categorisation. In the nature of such responses, it is the convergence and divergence of the respondees that is revealed. By providing a check-list there may well be some inappropriate assumptions regarding the points raised, and answers may well be contrived accordingly. A check-list devised after a number of interviews, however, could well be a valuable tool and support in designing and developing curricula for courses in the education and training of choral conductors. It might well become a tool for developing a set of competences in the choral conducting curriculum, in the same way initial teacher education in the UK has recently been encouraged to adopt the assessment model of profiling of teaching competences.

The open style of interview would allow the interviewee to expand more freely, as appropriate, on the conducting phenomenon, on aspects of preparation, rehearsal and behaviour that s/he regarded as relevant and important. This, therefore, was judged to be a preferable method for an initial testing of the validity of the model. Ely et al. (1991) outline styles of interviewing, and warn of the dangers of the interviewer either manipulating the interview and 'hogging the scene' (op.cit.:62), which will likely prevent reliable or sufficient information, or, alternatively, providing an atmosphere so conducive to friendly conversation that its direction and aim is lost. A pilot
interview was carried out in order to evaluate the nature and style of interviewing in relation to the information provided. The intention was that the interviewer would ask open questions related to the areas described, but also engage in conversation as appropriate. Ely *et al.* (1991) offer the view that -

... often an interviewer does no harm and indeed does some good by entering judiciously to let the interviewee know that you 'have been there' and can sympathise. A growing trust is the basis for richer interviews.  

[op.cit.: 61]

In the pilot interview, the general area of discussion was steered by the researcher, the intention being to allow the interviewee to be able to discuss any aspects of his role that were important to him. At the end of the interview, the researcher asked the interviewee if he thought the conversation was guided suitably and that he was given the opportunity to deal with as many important issues as possible. The interviewee reported that he felt it was a good discussion, but suggested that further interviews should not take place in the researcher's office, as there were a number of telephone interruptions and personal visits from others during the interview, which did disturb the flow of conversation somewhat. Following the positive response from the pilot interview, the researcher felt confident about arranging and carrying out further interviews.

Subsequent interviews were not held in the researcher's office. It was the intention, as piloted, to allow each interviewee the opportunity to interpret and contextualise the questions as appropriate to their work with their own choral groups. Firstly, the interviewees were asked to provide details of the choirs they conducted in order to put their responses into context. Talking about what they do rather than being asked for philosophies and analysis at the start was intended to enable them to feel reasonably at ease with the interview situation, especially with the presence of a tape-recorder. Then discussion normally followed the pattern of: (i) how they became choral conductors, including any training received, (ii) the philosophy that shapes their rehearsals and performance style, (iii) particular musical and technical emphasis in rehearsals, (iv) the methods and style of communication with the singers and (v) any problems encountered that they feel unconfident in dealing with. The end of the discussion usually focused on aspects of training
choral conductors and whether they believed it necessary for a systematic approach to this. Following the transcription of the interviews, each discussion was summarised according to the headings outlined in the literature review and the theoretical model, namely - (i) matters concerned with principles and aesthetic underpinning, (ii) musical and technical matters and (iii) matters concerned with the conductor’s behaviour, personality and communication. (The transcriptions and digest of each interview can be found in Appendix 2.) The selected conductors were known to the researcher and included conductors of professional choral groups, church, youth and school choirs, choral societies and university groups. The ages and level of experience of conducting represented by the selected conductors was wide-ranging.

5.2.2 QUESTIONNAIRE

In order to gain another perspective within the *bricolage* of choral conducting activity, a questionnaire was designed, taking the form of a series of descriptors developed from the research and conducting method literature and writings of ‘experts’ reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3. The people for whom it was intended and the contexts in which the questionnaire was introduced are described below.

The researcher directed a masterclass on choral conducting in October 1994. The class was open to the public, organised under the auspices of a national radio station and sponsored by a food company. In attendance were observers as well as ‘guinea-pig’ participating conductors, some of whom had prepared a particular piece to conduct. A four-part choir (known to the researcher) of about forty singers was provided as the group for conductors to work with. The music selected for the workshop was generally known to the choir (though not recently rehearsed for performance) and was chosen for its potential for expressive conducting, rather than for technical considerations (e.g. rhythmic irregularity or metre changing). The repertoire for the day included:

- Mozart *Ave Verum Corpus*
- Bruckner *Locus Iste*
Handel  Zadok the Priest
Britten  Rejoice in the Lamb (opening section)
Britten  New Year Carol
Purcell  Thou Knowest Lord the Secrets of their Hearts
Poston  Jesus Christ the Apple Tree
arr. Simpson  Sinnah Please!

The day started with the researcher talking briefly about some aspects of choral conducting followed by some 'warm-ups', where participants were encouraged to take part alongside the choir; these included both physical and vocal exercises with concurrent explanations of their purpose. Twelve conductors, ranging in age and experience, then each conducted and rehearsed a choral piece (or extract) and after each rehearsal discussion took place, led by the researcher between the conductor, observers and singers. Discussions were generally positive and constructive, though not without disagreements over particular issues as, for example, on how to deal with poor intonation. Emphasis throughout the day was placed on the reactions of the singers and how they responded to each conductor, for comparison with comments from the researcher as well as the conductors themselves. For example, one conductor when conducting the opening of Bruckner's motet Locus Iste, asked the singers to breathe through the nose. The researcher, feeling somewhat compelled to intervene sooner than usual, then asked the choir to try the two methods of intaking breath (i.e. through the nose and through the mouth) to start the piece and comment on which they found the more comfortable and appropriate. The response from the choir enabled the conductor to consider more carefully the matter of breathing and preparation of the choir's first entry. Rather than tell people what was 'correct' or 'incorrect', the prevailing style of the masterclass was to try things out, get reactions and responses from the singers and facilitate discussion, so that decision making was informed.

At the end of the masterclass, each singer and observer was asked to complete a questionnaire by responding to a series of descriptors that might be considered attributes of an effective choral conductor. The statements were grouped under (i) philosophical principles, (ii) musical-technical and (iii) behavioural areas, as determined in the previous chapter. Participants were asked to respond to each statement or descriptor by circling one number
between 7 and 1 as they felt appropriate on the scale:
7 = strongly agree, 4 = not sure, 1 = strongly disagree.
(The questionnaire appears in Appendix 3.)

The same questionnaire was given to a class of postgraduate music student-teachers at the end of a six-week course (3 hours per week) on choral conducting (November 1994). As with the masterclass participants, the students ranged widely in their experience of both of singing and conducting, some never having conducted at all before the start of the course. Results and analysis are revealed in Chapter 6.

5.2.3 PARTICIPANT AND NON-PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

A strong choral tradition exists in the state of Utah (McMurrin et al., 1993). This tradition is propelled and nurtured by the Mormon Church which has its world centre in Salt Lake City, the only large city in Utah. British pioneers, especially the Welsh, brought with them a strong choral singing tradition in the mid-nineteenth century. When they came across the plains and settled first in the Salt Lake Valley, Brigham Young, the leader of the Mormons, encouraged cultural activities which boosted the morale of the early Mormon settlers, which was low because of the persecution of them in other parts of North America. Indeed, on 22 August 1847, a choir, that would eventually become the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, sang at the first Utah Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS). This choral activity has steadily grown. Today, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir is internationally known and has a wide ranging programme (mostly of sacred or quasi-sacred music) which, since 1929, has included a weekly live national television broadcast. In Utah, the choir is regarded as a model for other choirs, as evidenced by the significant number of school choral directors who sing in it (see below). Many other large community choirs exist in Salt Lake City and throughout Utah, as well as a variety of smaller chamber and church choirs. There are also a number of outstanding choirs, mens’, womens’ and barbershop choruses, for example, devoted to specific repertoire. In addition, several children’s choirs have achieved a high standing and standard in the community (McMurrin et al., 1993).

From the days of the early pioneers, education was a priority manifest
in the provision of public schools, where singing featured significantly in the curriculum. A culture of music educators arose, and many of the renowned local choral conductors established their reputations within the public school system. The Universities of Utah, Weber State, Brigham Young and Utah State all have significant choral programmes and exert a distinct influence on the fine choral programmes in the high schools and junior high schools in the state. Their choirs have toured internationally and regionally, and have been recognised for their excellence with invited appearances at national American Choral Directors’ Association (ACDA) and Music Educators’ National Conference (MENC) conventions. A significant proportion of the community therefore take part in, or are at least aware of, choral singing in its various locations and contexts.

The researcher visited the University of Utah Department of Music (May 1995) to study what was recognised nationally as a strong choral programme both in respect of choral performances and choral conducting methods. There were university programmes in conducting at undergraduate, masters and doctoral levels. The observations included choral rehearsals, performances, conducting methods classes in the university and in local schools where the teachers were graduates of the University of Utah, or where students were working with school choirs as part of the choral methods class. An interview was also carried out with the Director of Music of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir in Salt Lake City and observations made of a rehearsal under his direction. It was noted that this particular choir (about 325 members) had school choral directors among its singers, ensuring therefore the continuation of musical traditions in schools in the area. The whole structure of choral singing appeared as a cascade or dissemination model, where choral directors were learning from each other both in the formal university environment and in the community at large.

Observations were made of experienced and newly qualified teachers in junior high and high schools in the Salt Lake area; also of another smaller university undergraduate programme where the choral director was a graduate of the choral programme of the University of Utah. Observations were made of students conducting in rehearsal and performance with an established concert choir and, in the case of the choral conducting class, with a ‘lab’ choir of non-choral majors. The researcher was also involved actively
in rehearsing the choirs and coaching students. In their validation of participant observation as a research methodology, Phelps, Ferrara & Goolsby (1993) acknowledge:

Although one gains greater precision and focus in the more neutral stance of non-participant observation, one loses many of the creative and spontaneous strengths and qualities of the researcher as instrument. [op.cit.: 162]

Using an observation schedule (Appendix 4), developed and extended from the model outlined at the end of Chapter 4, the observed classes and choir rehearsals were video-taped and analysed accordingly. Further analysis and evaluation of various selections of the video recordings was made by (i) a panel of three conductor / singers with the aid of the observation schedule, (ii) a panel of teachers without the observation schedule and (iii) a panel of five experienced conductors with the optional aid of the observation schedule. The panels were convened to test the validity of the researcher’s own analyses and the model. (The panel members are described in Chapter 6.)

Chapter 6 will present the findings from the interviews and questionnaires and the observations and make appropriate analysis and evaluations and seek validation of the model of an effective choral conductor.
CHAPTER SIX
REPORT OF RESEARCH ACTIVITIES
AND EVALUATION OF THE MODEL

This chapter reports the results of the stages of the evaluative processes described in Chapter 5, namely:

(i) interviews with conductors themselves: - the subjective, introspective expressions of experienced, able conductors talking about their own role;

(ii) views about the attributes of effective conductors through questionnaires from (a) experienced singers who have sung with various conductors in a masterclass, (b) inexperienced trainee conductors - students who have completed a course in choral conducting as part of their initial teacher education programme;

(iii) observations of a variety of choral conducting situations, with varying levels of experience represented; by means of the video tape, some of the observed situations are further evaluated by (a) a panel of experienced conductors and (b) a panel of experienced teachers.

6.1 ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS

It was evident that the personality of each interviewee determined the direction of the discussion and it was interesting to the researcher to note how some conductors focused on the problems of bad conducting (of others), some spoke only about their own work in a positive manner and others were unable to explain why they were apparently successful and were generally disparaging and self-effacing, even apologetic, about their work as choral conductors.

Clearly it will be inappropriate to expect a conclusive outcome regarding the nature and characteristics of effective choral conducting after only eight interviews. The limitations of the sample size are acknowledged, but the experience represented was wide ranging as were the contexts in which each conductor operates. The data obtained from the interviews represent a descriptive account of what people who conduct choirs believe
in, and think they do (Chapter 5) for comparison with the attributes described in the model. Another issue concerns the association between what conductors say in an interview about their work and what they actually do in practice. It could feasibly be the case that a conductor has a conception of what might be the 'correct' or 'expected' answer or point to make when discussing choral conducting matters with another conductor (i.e. the researcher) and deliver fluent responses accordingly, these bearing little relationship to what happens normally in a rehearsal situation (Hammersley, 1992).

In seeking to validate the model for effective choral conducting, it is useful to do so in relation to the context in which the conducting action takes place. Much of the research literature (outlined in Chapter 3) takes the (USA) high school context as the basis for fieldwork, often referring to teaching styles and strategies (Miller, 1988; Watkins, 1986; Fiocca, 1986; Gumm, 1991; Grechesky, 1985; Donovan, 1994). In these studies, any emergent model takes into account the various factors that are the concern of the school teacher/conductor. Student motivation strategies, behaviour patterns and certain musical and social skill learning may be more significant factors in the rehearsal situation with young people than with, for example, a professional choral group. In the following analyses, cross-references are made to the appropriate research literature.

6.1.1 PILOT: INTERVIEW 1

The first (pilot) interview was carried out with 'RS' in order to test the validity of the open discussion style of interview. RS is an experienced professional choral conductor in his late 50s, who regularly conducts two choirs, one a chamber choir of 50 singers, the other a large suburban choral society of 120 singers. He has taught choral conducting courses in a college of higher education at undergraduate level, where for two years he was also acting Head of Music. With his agreement, the interview-discussion was tape-recorded. RS was asked to outline what he considered were his priorities for the effective choral conductor. The interviewer engaged in conversation, prompting and gently guiding the discussion in the required areas. The discussion was flowing and relaxed, though there were one or two small interruptions. The main points from the interview are transcribed below as
DIGEST OF TRANSCRIPT

Philosophical

- Singers in both choirs are auditioned and re-auditioned to ensure the high priority aim of achieving a pure “wobble-free” sound especially in the sopranos and altos and as good a tenor and bass sound as possible considering the shortage of these voices; excessive vibrato in individual voices deemed culturally “unacceptable”;
- The music is always the starting point; the needs of the music in terms of style is stressed with each choir, which will influence tone, articulation etc.;
- The role of the choral conductor is an integral part of our civilisation - “the civilising process” is reflected in our “ability to participate in the noblest utterances of any art form” - eg. Bach B minor Mass, Brahms Requiem;
- Choral music is a “therapeutic agency” for a particular section of society - “the cultured minority” - whose needs are not always met in a society which is more often geared to populist interests.

Musical-Technical

- The choral conductor must be a good musician and be able to convey the technical and emotional requirements of the music;
- Stylistic awareness is of paramount importance in rehearsal; the music dictates the nature of the sound, eg. a “harder sound” is required in Bach or Mozart, singing differently in Brahms which needs “as much warmth as possible”; RS aims for the Leipzig/English sound, finding, for example, the American soprano sound “totally unacceptable”;
- Uses part-rehearsals as appropriate to learn the notes effectively;
- Expression and articulation important, especially in Baroque music; RS not really a singer, but knows enough about the “diaphragm”;

Stresses in the conversation are reflected in the text by underlining, and actual word-for-word text is indicated by “...”. (The full transcript appears in the Appendix 2.)
the choral conductor must be helpful by providing a clear rhythmic beat, giving leads, paying attention to balance and texture and words, especially consonant endings (RS considered himself a helpful rather than unhelpful conductor);

left hand should become independent to enable shaping of the phrases and dynamics, as well as indicating word endings - in a more specific way with a choir than with an orchestra; left hand varies in size according to the dynamics with “conscious phrasing in slow music”;

“attend to rhythm”, so a choral conductor must have a “good ear”, able to “sort out complicated harmonic textures” and deal with timbre;

choral conductor needs to “know what the music’s about” (some people may be musically able but rather unable to reveal that musicianship in conducting, while others may look good conducting but have insufficient musical ability - reference to student conductors);

 technique is regarded as a “fundamental thing” and something that RS concentrates on while teaching students;

attention is given to the orchestra rather than the choir in final rehearsals, with the schedule worked out “to the minute”; in the concert attention is given fully to the choir.

**Behavioural - Personality**

“body posture” and “facial expression” including eye contact considered important;

a choral conductor needs energy, “a sense of humour helps”, also a “seriousness of purpose”, “intensity” and “above all - imagination”;

tends to be as much fun as possible in the initial and earlier rehearsals, humour is “carefully poised”, becoming more critical later on as a performance approaches, “tension is engineered as concert approaches to get a bit more electricity into the proceedings”;

facial expression used extensively in performance.
Summary
The interview indicated that one of RS’s main considerations in rehearsal and performance was the music itself. RS approaches his choral conducting as a technical and knowledgeable musician and not so much as a singer. He clearly thinks about the stylistic issues of the music and seeks to perform as close to the composer’s intentions as possible. The tenor of his argument suggests that, to be really successful in this field, it is important to possess a high degree of aural ability, stylistic awareness and certain behavioural traits that will motivate the singers. His use of humour and engineering of tension appears planned. Clearly his choirs, by inference gathered largely from a particular socio-economic grouping, respond to his approach.

Evaluation of Pilot
As the transcript reveals, the interview took the form of an open conversation which enabled the interviewee to talk freely about himself as a choral conductor and teacher of student choral conductors. A number of the questions simply sought emphasis of certain points made. For example, the ‘wobble-free’ tone of the sopranos and altos referred to a particular event shared by the interviewer and interviewee, namely a visit to the choral conducting department of the School of Music at Cincinnati University, USA. The interviewee on reflection felt he was given the opportunity to cover all necessary aspects of choral conducting during the conversation without constraint or over zealous prompting. Priorities of approach and style became evident and were fairly easily categorised within the predetermined areas. (See also Chapter 4 for evaluation of style of interview.)

6.1.2 INTERVIEW 2

‘CR’ is a Head of Music in an inner-suburban city area. She is in her early 30s and studied music at Huddersfield Polytechnic and completed a PGCE at Roehampton Institute. The school has a student population of approx. 900 with ages ranging from 11 - 16. Her conducting activities involve a junior and senior orchestra and a choir, which she often rehearses from the piano. The music for the choir is generally for unison or 2-part voices.
DIGEST OF TRANSCRIPT

Philosophical
- choice of material influenced by what will interest the children but very varied, "trying not to go too religious" - aware of what can/should be performed in an urban mixed school;
- had to learn about conducting through a few courses and reading some books - feeling of being slightly unsure - "I think the real art of conducting - well, I don't know - lots of things."
- singers always have the music, never just the words, thus enabling better understanding of the music and its relevant theory while rehearsing, "not just singing for performance sake";
- CR likes to teach the singers everything during rehearsal time and does not like to send them home with the music;
- final rehearsals approach the state of the performance, singing through the whole programme so the singers are fully prepared;
- choral singing important as it involves a lot of people, particularly non-instrumentalists, insufficient curriculum time spent of singing which has negative effect on choir recruitment;
- social problems with older children and singing as well as difficulty in choosing appropriate material;
- CR insists that they "stand correctly" but also relax shoulders;
- room for higher education courses in teacher training to help develop conducting skills.

Musical-Technical
- important for conductors to keep a steady beat, piano used by CR to help in this respect;
- varied repertoire;
- warm-ups used "at the beginning of the year" as well as rounds, 2 parts and vocal exercises, breathing exercises, shouting exercises "just so they can understand their bodies" - CR makes up own exercises though claims not to be trained in choral at all;
- makes exercises out of the music, but admits to needing help on technical matters - "what can you do to make them get the high notes?";
- CR admits there is a lot more she could do in rehearsals but feels
she is lacking in vocal expertise - “a lot of the rehearsals tend to be note-bashing and polishing a few weeks beforehand, which I know isn’t really the right way to do it”;

° music usually learnt by rote, repeating phrases etc., which small children do easily;
° such details as diction, articulation etc. more concentrated nearer a performance;
° LH used as pitch indicator, “in tricky passages I move my left hand up and down appropriately and I never use a baton” and is unsure as to whether she should or not;
° CR essentially a “1234” type of conductor - “I try and not be, but I think that’s because I don’t know enough about it”;
° RH used for cues and conducting the beat, though less need for cues in most choral music performed by CR as it tends to be unison or two-part;
° CR personally feels exercises in actually conducting needed with someone directing conducting classes on PGCE courses.

Behavioural - Personality
° facial expressions vital in motivating and setting the appropriate atmosphere in performance;
° CR has to be enthusiastic and light-hearted, similar approach adopted in singing activities in Year 7 curriculum;
° makes positive and imaginative efforts to recruit boys to the mixed choir;
° lots of energy required “because you’re not only singing with them but telling them to be quiet, telling them what they’re doing wrong”, CR find it exhausting using the voice constantly;
° extrovert behaviour usually appropriate for choral rehearsals - “you have to be an actor’ in order to inspire the singers;
° similar personality and behavioural approach to choral rehearsing as to teaching in the classroom adopted by CR.

Summary
A general feeling of unease about conducting was apparent throughout this interview. Clearly the main focus of her work as a Head of Music was in the overall curriculum management in music and not only conducting the extra-
curricular activities and ensembles. CR was very aware of her inadequacies as a choral conductor, but was limited by time available for rehearsal and the expectation of concerts as well as musical assemblies and similar occasions. The ‘taster’ conducting in her higher education courses was not sufficient, especially in the choral field, as she also felt she lacked vocal expertise and understanding of the voice and what a conductor can do to help in a rehearsal situation. Nevertheless, CR’s infectious enthusiasm and energy was reflected in the involvement of the children in musical activities.

6.1.3 INTERVIEW 3

‘DB’ is a professional choral conductor and singer in his late 40s, who studied music at Cambridge University. He has, since school days, always been involved with taking rehearsals and directing concerts and this has continued. He is a professional singer, often singing solo roles or with a small ensemble and regularly conducts a small chamber and an octet of singers. He deals with both professional and amateur groups.

DIGEST OF TRANSCRIPT

Philosophical
- approaches conducting as a singer and thus is aware of the technical problems of singers and is able to make allowances;
- vocal expression important with 8 singers or 120 singers
- poor standard of singing and conducting in UK as compared with some Eastern European and American choirs, with generally “no real attempt to understand groups of singers”;
- DB is eager to overcome the complacency of groups of singers who seem stuck in a mould and do not change;
- relationship of words and music important - “neither impose the text upon the music nor the music upon the text”;  
- encourages singers to listen to Mozart - the piano concertos, where there is a sophistication of phrasing - principle holds good for all singers;
- important to develop sensitivities of individuals rather than go for mass submission - the conductor should not be a dictator or “terrify” the singers;
- priority of conductors is their love of the music - “some choirs
trainers - why the hell are they doing this? - they don’t love the music”;

- training needs to be about communication with people - make them love the music - “some conductors damage the poor/sods”;
- the basic rationale is about being sensitive to music and to people;
- there’s not enough thought about choral conducting, eg. choral societies do not know what they are looking for in appointing new conductors.

**Musical-Technical**

- attention given to the line of the text and shaping of vowels and general phrasing;
- effective practice is to get the choir to speak in rehearsal to understand the shaping of vowels, enunciation and punctuation;
- demonstration as well as gesture used extensively in rehearsal, trying to get people to think in speech patterns and apply awareness to vocal production
- choral conductors need to create images, colours and senses in rehearsal, “needs to be theatrical and needs a vocabulary for explanation”;
- important to make singers aware of the rhythm, getting the inner pulse prepared before singing, rhythmic singing is vital then other technical things will follow and fall into place;
- some choral conductors simply do not know the music well enough, which is an inexcusable situation;
- there is no finite performance - so conductors need to allow for spontaneity.

**Behavioural - Personality**

- music is the priority not the conductor. DB contrasts the behaviours of Solti and Abbado - “Solti’s dynamism is in danger of doing a disservice to music, whereas Abbado’s low key charm and personality shows his real love of the music not of himself”;
- important to have a sense of humour and the ability to communicate that;
important not to panic under pressure - "stand back and deal with the situation calmly ... you need to be in control of yourself if you are to be in control of 120 people";

• conductors need to show a serenity of purpose and expression - "he must be convincing in the communication of the music, allowing its character to bloom".

Summary
DB's interview dealt extensively with how inadequate some UK choral conductors are, as observed from his experience as a soloist with choirs as well as being a conductor. The overwhelming message was that choral conductors simply did not know enough about the voice or psychology in relation to the treatment of singers. He perceived a number of conductors as bad-tempered dictators and egotists and simply incapable, and gave a number of anecdotal accounts to support this view. Further emphasis in the interview extended to shaping of vowels and musical phrasing, which he felt to be most important in choral singing. Much concern was voiced over standards of choral singing and conducting in the UK in comparison with his experiences of choirs in other countries. Although DB presented a picture of his own work and methodologies, he also referred extensively to a more 'global' view of choral conducting and expressed the need for 'more thought' about it.

6.1.4 INTERVIEW 4

GM' is in his mid 30s and is a full-time Director of Music at a church in the USA where he coordinates the entire church music programme which includes conducting a range of choirs. He has undergraduate and postgraduate degree qualifications in music and vocal pedagogy. The main SATB choir in his church for regular Sunday services consists of 35-40 singers.

DIGEST OF TRANSCRIPT
Philosophical
• inclinations have always been towards church music as an outgrowth of training in keyboard and vocal skills;
• always wanted to do church and choral work and to be "responsible for the vocal development of everyone in my programme";
GM has belief in himself as music educator - singers should expand musically - “they should leave with more musical knowledge and technical expertise than they came in with” - that’s his responsibility;

planning very important - usually 4 weeks in advance;

considered important that the singers should feel good about the music and themselves singing - to “build their self-esteem”;

intention to improve individual technique - “with the end result being an improved corporate technique”;

a basic understanding of the voice is essential for the choral music educator.

Musical-Technical

1st rehearsal intends to get the ‘taste in their mouth’ of the music, taking some part of it and mastering it, but savouring its “essential flavour”;

vowel unification considered very important by GM - “if you have 25 people with unified vowels you have a fuller acoustic sound with proper intonation, proper overtones and proper blend”;

deals extensively with breathing and jaw relaxation in relation to individual production - GM feels that certain tension problems evidence themselves with a certain type of sound.

Behavioural - Personality

belief that GM has the ability to communicate through gesture and face - primarily the eyes - and can inspire people to want to sing;

own effusiveness an aspect of personality that inspires singers, “if I don’t feel enthusiasm about the music I approach - there’s no way I can communicate it or expect it from the singers”;

having a ‘good time’ with humour is important in rehearsal - he wants the singers to come back;

eyes give very definite communication, especially when satisfied, - “I’ve been told that every thought I have flies across my face”;

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talk and demonstration happens a lot in GM's rehearsals, striking on mental images is part of being a successful teacher, use of analogy - particularly unrelated to music to make a musical point;

communication the vital element of a choral conductor, - you can have "the best knowledge of choral literature and be a fabulous musician, but if you cannot communicate - just hang it up";

there must be connection between the conductor and singer.

Summary
An overwhelming feeling of confidence and assurance in what he was doing in the choral field was evident throughout the interview. This was no doubt empowered by his own musical training in vocal pedagogy. GM felt he was doing his job effectively and there were no technical/musical problems arising that he was not able to deal with. His views on the communication and education aspects of his role as choral conductor were emphasised throughout, including the attention given to the individual singer in relation to the choir as a whole. Inspiring people to sing was an important consideration of his communicating ability.

6.1.5 INTERVIEW 5

'AO' is in her early 50s, studied music at university and gained a PGCE qualification. She has been a primary school teacher with responsibility for music and has conducted a variety of children's choirs both within schools, including for some 13 years in a specialist music school, and in the larger urban community. She is presently conducting an ad hoc group of about 25 singers in a new university, though her 'official' role is within the chaplaincy of the music colleges and universities in London.

DIGEST OF TRANSCRIPT

Philosophical

interest in singing and conducting grew from an early appreciation of 16th century music, through listening and singing along with the radio;

because of own frustrations and awareness of limitations in
voice quality at an early age, AO evolved the theory that all children could enjoy singing without being put down;

- important to allow singers to “feel they have got a part to play, and an acceptable part to play”;
- enable singers to feel comfortable personally;
- present choir are keen and enthusiastic about becoming a choir rather than merely a group of people coming together occasionally;
- basic belief that the conductor does not have all the answers, but that “choirs are about communication within the choir”;
- conductor needs to have an intimate knowledge of the music - “in the sense of it actually meaning and being inside that person” - almost having a passion for it;
- choral conducting considered a “mutual enterprise” - requiring human input, it should not be competitive as it so often is;
- conductors need to know themselves.

Musical-Technical

- concentrate on the musical shape primarily in rehearsal in order that the choir understands something of the optimum way it could be;
- a variety of ways used to “releasing them in responding to the music”;
- AO used to spend time encouraging children to ‘play’ with their voices in order that they “knew what they felt comfortable with”;
- perception of sight-reading could be a barrier - AO encourages them also to listen - there are more ways than “doing it from the page”;
- always concerned with good tone, again through “getting them to listen to the sound they make”, - AO often uses individuals to model and not just herself;
- AO finds it quite problematic to start pieces with the appropriate tempo, particularly “communicating with my actions” (gesture), often tending to start too slowly.
Behavioural - Personality

- tends to model quietly, but aware of her own limitations vocally;
- anxious about singers who feel exposed on a part, but insists she hasn’t got all the answers;
- choral conducting to do with “drawing things out of people rather than trussing them in”;
- conductors need a certain “internal humility” rather than the dictatorial approach (though AO considers herself as probably erring too much on the self-deprecating side);
- personality should be one of “openness” to the people singing - important that singers do not feel that the “music was set between the conductor and the choir”, hence the conductor and the music should come alive;
- tendency for conductors to behave in a very isolationist, possessive and defensive way, often referring to ‘my’ choir - “I think it’s totally anally-retentive, tight-assed British syndrome”;
- concern expressed that a number of conductors do not make the ‘right connection’ and tend to copy what they know or have experienced without thought, hiding behind the premise - “I’m must be right because I’m the conductor”;
- most important for the choral conductor to have a course in psycho-therapy - “some use their experience in choirs as pseudo psycho-therapy and bring all their hang-ups to it”;
- conductors need to be aware of what they are doing - “if I look straight-faced, then no wonder the kids look straight-faced”.

Summary

The interview with AO was of special psychological interest. She was eager to refer to her perceived musical, or at least vocal, inadequacies, and this came out several times in the conversation. The main principle underlying AO’s philosophy and beliefs was that choral conducting is about enabling people to feel good and personally comfortable about singing. She saw it as more of a democratic process and revealed her abhorrence of the dictatorial approach that some conductors too often assume. She readily recognised that she did not have ‘all the answers’ and suggested that there was often little enough thought about the human connections that need to be made by choral conductors.
6.1.6 INTERVIEW6

‘SM’ is 40 and is a choral director in a church and school in the USA. She has responsibility for a mixed SA choir in the middle school (grades 7-8) and in the high school (grades 9-12) where she conducts a girls’ 3 and 4-part choirs and a mixed SABar. madrigal group. She majored in voice as an under-graduate student and has a master’s degree in vocal pedagogy.

DIGEST OF TRANSCRIPT

Philosophical

- number and proportion of boys and girls in choirs determines repertoire, though SM finds difficulty in finding suitable music for her girls’ 4-part choir;
- studies in vocal pedagogy an important aspect of her work as a teacher and choral trainer;
- SM believes the best teacher is to “go out there and do it”;
- emphasis on teaching them to become good singers, and thus tries to make choir operate rather like a group voice lesson;
- believes that “they’ve got to know how to read the music” before tackling the “other things”;
- knowledge of the voice more important than “knowing how to wave my arms around”;
- considers herself essentially a music educator.

Musical-Technical

- importance attached to individual vocal development of choir members, SM hears them individually and in small groups;
- a lot of emphasis in rehearsal places on vowel unification, which SM considers the essence of good choral blend and enables singing with a mature sound;
- further emphasis placed on sight-reading, which is part of the contests they enter and get judged on;
- one of the first things in a rehearsal is for the singers to mark the music and go through it as a sight-reading exercise - “I’m not mindlessly pounding out the notes - that’s not teaching
anything”;

○ something of the character of the music established by talking to them about the “time period”;

○ uses books to improve their sight-reading skills;

○ other technical considerations in rehearsals include “talking about blend, dynamics and all the other things”.

**Behavioural - Personality**

○ demonstrates how not to do things as well as how to do things;

○ sense of humour helps in rehearsal situation;

○ concerned to show singers her own love for the music which will help the singers “to do their very best to get it correct and all of that”;

○ encourages them to take pride in themselves as singers and as a group;

○ SM very aware of the age of the children she deals with and their “little life crises” - emotional states of individuals can affect the whole emotional climate of a rehearsal; SM asks them to “leave all that at the door”;

○ much ‘parenting’ going on as, being in a small school, SM has much influence over the children and knows them all, and is gratified when they major in music because of what she has done with them;

○ SM a “stern taskmaster” when it comes to performing and reputedly has perfected an “eagle-eye”;

○ uses face a lot in rehearsal and performance.

**Summary**

SM appeared to approach choral conducting and training very much from the standpoint of being a singer herself and having sufficient knowledge of the voice and skill in its use. She believed in the quite prevalent (American) model of choral contests as a motivating factor for her singers as well as because it was clearly expected. The sight-reading aspects, promoted by such contests, was considered a most important choral skill. Clearly operating as a ‘natural’ teacher, SM seemed reluctant or unable to describe in much detail any behavioural and personality characteristics that she might employ in the rehearsal or performance situation.
'DT' is in his 40s and is a conductor of a large amateur symphonic chorus of some 140 members and a newly formed smaller chamber choir. He claims not to have had a traditional musical education, but rather came to take up conducting through singing in a symphonic chorus himself, where at the age of 18 he could sing tenor, but not read music. Through experiences such as singing with Solti at the Royal Festival Hall, DT’s love of music was kindled and resembled a ‘religious conversion’. He recently gave up his school teaching career (not in music) to concentrate on choral conducting.

DIGEST OF TRANSCRIPT

Philosophical

- interested in repertoire of large choral works and smaller choirs, especially works with orchestras, - a cappella choirs have to be superb to be satisfying;
- interest in choral conducting gained through singing in an orchestra symphonic chorus, even though he could not read musical notation - this excited his love for music;
- particularly inspired by John Aldis, whose philosophy was that getting the notes right was only the first stage in getting to know a piece of music;
- DT excited when “people who I work with who are moderately talented can come up with the most extraordinary results”, the basis of which is hard work, confidence and good training;
- DT considers it an advantage that he has never known a lower standard of singing than the London Philharmonic Chorus at the RFH, which has consequently influenced his own standard setting;
- social aspect of choir is important, and the fun element should be evident, as well as making rehearsals interesting and busy;
- DT believes in need for more systematic training of choral conductors, in spite of his unusual way into it, though is wary about the method of training - “what I approve of is when conductors get together over a beer and talk through what we could improve on rather than be in a formal class when you’re
told the left hand is not high enough, little finger is poking out..." - important not to destroy natural self-confidence;

° chorus-masters are treated rather shabbily in this country as compared with others - “always the bridesmaid never the bride”;

° important for choirs to be able to picture what they’re singing about - (gives example of watching the film of Alexander Nevsky to gain insight into the music’s drama).

Musical-Technical

° always keen to get into the “nuts and bolts of the drama” when rehearsing, especially liking the 20th century large scale oratorio;

° tries to get through all the music within the first 3 or so rehearsals, balancing the amount of detail worked on to begin with in order to sustain interest and gain some satisfaction from achieving something;

° DT uses analogy of painting, giving undercoat, 1st coat, then top coat - “that’s the way I rehearse”;

° in rehearsals “you have to work hard at note-bashing in order to feel like you’ve got somewhere”;

° usually rehearses altogether for social as well as musical reasons, encourages the choir to listen when only one section is being rehearsed so that they are “hopefully taking on board a lot of the points you are making, so that when you go on to them, they’re already half way there”;

° DT feels at a disadvantage when conducting orchestra as he has no orchestral experience himself as a player - but he tries to be as good as possible;

° though not a specialist singing coach, DT feels able to help singers, - “I have a working knowledge of the voice and I know a lot of tricks, and I know what singers can and can’t do and how to adapt certain phrases to get the best out of the voice”;

° important to develop singers’ ears;

° DT concerned about the fact that “I haven’t been to public school, I don’t play the piano, I don’t know what a Neapolitan 6th is, I’m not a trained singer” and that he might one day be
"found out";

- some choral conductors are often too expressive for orchestras and conversely some orchestral conductors are not expressive enough for choirs and don’t give choral leads, - need for compromise.

**Behavioural - Personality**

- the choirs are appreciative of DT’s background, ie. as one of them - a chorus singer;
- dealing with problems in rehearsal rather like a parent dealing with children - “you don’t want to shout at them all the time, nag at them all the time and you don’t want them to get away with it all the time”;
- humour important element in rehearsing as well as a variety of behavioural strategies - “sometimes I get a bit short-tempered, other times I charm them into getting it right, other times I politely insult them”;
- DT considers himself to be a bit of a “rough diamond” in comparison to his mentor (John Alldis) who was a “real public school gentleman”;
- DT uses lots of eye contact with singers, especially near and in concerts, he aims for a physical quality in the music - “almost a sensual quality as well” - and tries to make performances 3-dimensional;
- gets very moved by the music which is reflected in his gestures and makes a difference to the way they perform - “I don’t just go through the motions”;
- very important for a choral conductor to have confidence in own abilities when standing in front of a large group of people;
- there is a tendency for choral conductors to ‘spoon-feed’ their choirs when conducting, which occasionally irritates orchestras - need for conductors to adapt technique to suit both - “they flail about like whirling-dervishes”, whereas they probably need to uses a much smaller space in their gestures.

**Summary**

The interview with DT covered substantial ground both about his own work
and the situation of choral conducting as he perceived it. He was keen to outline his unusual introduction to his role as a choral conductor, both regarding it as a positive and negative phenomenon; he was particularly wary of being 'found out'. It was clear, nevertheless, that DT has much success in the field, though did advocate a more systematic approach to choral conducting in the UK, taking it out of the 'public school' arena.

6.1.8 INTERVIEW 8

'JH' is conductor of a local authority Youth Choir and advisory teacher for singing in one of the more affluent outer London boroughs. She is in her 30s and has been a Head of Music in a middle school where she developed the choir work in addition to an already established strong instrumental and orchestral tradition. She is keen to do further research on young people’s singing. She is currently a committee member of the Association of British Choral Conductors.

DIGEST OF TRANSCRIPT

Philosophical

- JH believes everyone can sing and should be given the opportunity, though does not necessarily believe in massed choirs; likes to uphold a standard;
- young people are 'assessed' on entering her choir, and put into appropriate groups to help them;
- problems (eg. intonation) usually arise from inexperience rather than innate inability;
- enthusiasm is "number one";
- singing great choral works is OK with young people provided there is back-up;
- important to have goals, but also to realise that "you’re never going to get it all right first time",
- JH believes her job is essentially as an ‘educationalist’ to give students broad experiences of music, aiming not just for technical perfection, but for the highest possible standards;
- JH been influenced by several conductors she has sung under;
- JH believes a good conductor “makes me want to sing, makes it easier”;

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JH wants more openness in the choral conducting world, believing that everyone needs help, nobody has all the answers, there being a role here for courses in higher education;

JH believes “we need to get away from the jolly sing for pleasure idea, big sing-song” with something emerging at a higher level, but “you need the people who are trained to do it with a common philosophy”.

**Musical-Technical**

- longest piece of music with young choir would normally be up to 15 minutes as they do not have the ‘weight’ for more;
- note learning tends to be the first priority in rehearsals, but making as musical a sound as possible all the time;
- JH often invites students out to conduct as a learning experience “for me and for them”;
- JH gets them to sing from memory as much as possible and talks a lot about memorising and “how to see a piece of music”;
- vital for the conductor to know the music really well, bad rehearsals often being the result of not knowing something well enough;
- composers are not writing suitably for young voices, as an advisory teacher for singing JH finds the root of problems often being “dreadful material”, need therefore for proper study of repertoire.

**Behavioural - Personality**

- enthusiasm is “number one”;
- likes to move rehearsals along quickly, which JH thinks she has learnt recently by watching other conductors;
- often discusses with students what she is doing in conducting, sometimes she gets others to conduct from the choir - “it’s like a mirror, of course if I’m their model they’re imitating me, then they appreciate how difficult it is”;
- JH found it difficult to talk about her personality in rehearsal - “I’m very British” - implying that we tend not to talk about or describe what we do, especially in conducting;
- there has to be a certain amount of ‘ego’ in a conductor, JH feels
at an advantage in knowing some of her choir really well as singing pupils;

- she hopes her 'sparkling' personality comes over in choir practices - [here she cited the disastrous replacement conductor who took her place conducting the choir while she was on maternity leave; he did not prepare rehearsals and treated it like conducting an orchestra];

- she loves her choral work, which she thinks comes across in her conducting;

- something ‘mysterious’ happens in performance to do with psychology, which she likes to talk about with the choir;

- JH uses her eyes a lot, she believes people talk too much in rehearsal and likes to be a “fly on the wall”;

- has watched herself conducting on video (“quite painful”), and thinks she moves around too much - “far too busy”.

Summary
JH came over as being very modest, and certainly did not find it very easy to talk about her own work and patterns of behaviour as a choral conductor. She had, however, strong views on a number of aspects, namely the repertoire for young voices and the need for a ‘higher level’ of approach to singing and conducting choirs, which would have its basis in training.

In order to contextualise some of the results of the interview discussions, a short analysis according to the school, community and professional categories of choral conducting activity outlined in Chapter 5 will now be made.

6.1.9 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Throughout most of this century in the UK and USA schools have promoted the development of choirs, orchestras, bands and other music performance groups. The success of them has depended for the most part on a variety of considerations ranging from the availability of suitable facilities and resources to the enthusiasm, dedication and personality of the music teacher (Humphreys et al., 1992). It is to be expected that in the school context,
motivation is an important factor in establishing choral groups. CR, a school teacher, in her interview reported as having to be enthusiastic and light-hearted in both choral rehearsals and in the singing curriculum for Year 7 pupils. She felt she had to make particular positive and imaginative efforts to recruit boys to the mixed choir. She also noted the energy level required, because she not only had to deal with the singing, but also with social skills - their behaviour (telling them to be quiet etc.) for example. In fact, CR suggested that ‘extrovert’ behaviour on the part of the conductor had to be adopted in order to motivate the pupils successfully. Strouse (1987) likewise noted the importance of the conductor entering into a dynamic relationship with his ensemble; while Gumm (1991) referred to the ‘magnitude’ of conducting behaviour in his identification of teaching styles. Also Donovan (1994) provided evidence in her study that students make more progress with extrovert music teachers (Chapter 3).

SM, another school teacher, commented on the importance of a sense of humour in her rehearsals and of demonstrating not only what to do, but also what not to do (Thurman, 1977; Fiocca, 1986). She attached emphasis to revealing her love of the music to the singers which, she felt, enabled them to get the best from the activity. Watkins (1986) in his research with high school choirs found that students were generally more attentive when there was not too much time spent on verbal instruction but rather when they were more ‘on-task’ with actual singing. This also suggests that pacing in rehearsals is a significant factor in keeping school choirs on task, so that there is not enough time for ‘off-task’ activity such as talking and other inappropriate behaviours. JH in her interview pointed out unequivocally that enthusiasm was ‘number one’ in the repertoire of behaviours for the choral conductor of young people. The pacing of rehearsals, ‘moving things along’, and a sparkling personality also were important motivating attributes in such contexts as well as not talking too much (Watkins, 1986). Of particular importance in performance and rehearsals is facial expression, according to SM, not only as the ‘eagle-eye’ of a ‘stern taskmaster’, but also as indication of the expressiveness of the music. Both SM and GM indicated that part of their music education training had been in vocal pedagogy, which they believed to be important, especially when motivating and considering new vocal ranges and parts for the changing voices of adolescent males and females (Cooksey, 1992; 1 Year 7 in UK schools normally indicates the first year of secondary schooling at the age of 11. Compulsory schooling begins with R (reception) at the age of 5, then Year 1 etc. 141
6.1.10 COMMUNITY CONTEXT

This category of choral activity was represented in the interviews with two conductors for whom large adult community choirs formed a major part of their conducting. They normally conduct regular once-weekly (or more frequent) rehearsals in preparation for concerts. RS attached importance to the musical knowledge and musicianship of the conductor, placing great emphasis in rehearsals in gaining a sense of style of the music. DT referred more to conveying the passion and drama of the music. Both considered that knowledge of the music and a clear image of what was wanted in terms of the expressive potential to be an essential attribute of the effective choral conductor (Strouse, 1987; Green, 1981; Finn, 1946; Grechesky, 1985; Boult, 1963).

As with conductors in the school context, AO, although conducting a smaller group of amateur singers, as well as DT with a large choir, wanted to make them feel comfortable and confident about their singing, and therefore considered it important to create a suitable, non-threatening environment (Pfautch, 1973; Gumm, 1991; Hibbard, 1994). In this context, as when dealing with young voices, care is needed in knowing how to deal with vocal matters which arise, though there was little indication of any real knowledge in this area from most interviewees. A number of references were made to bad temper and inappropriate behaviour from conductors infusing a sense of fear and tension in the singers collectively and individually (DB and DT interview; Thurman, 1992), while AO in addition referred to an irrational power complex apparent in some choral conductors.

6.1.11 PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT

DB and RS felt that it was important here to include reference to the historical contexts and information about about the music being rehearsed in addition to having a clear image of the music prior to rehearsal; (Green, 1981; Finn, 1946; Decker & Kirk, 1988). DB in dealing with small groups of professional singers attached importance to the conductor being able to correct minor inaccuracies effectively, the assumption being that major inaccuracies will not
occur. A good, discerning ear, therefore, is a stringent requirement of the conductor of these groups. Along with GM and RS, DB suggested that greater attention should be given in this context to such musical detail as vowel shapes, subtle shades of vocal nuance. While it would be admirable to be able to deal with such points in all choral contexts, it is especially vital in this professional one, considering the expectations and publicity often given to these groups. Unlike school and amateur groups, the motivation of the singers will normally be self-propelled, as they join such choirs having already achieved a certain degree of musical ability and interest.

In the summary of points raised in the interviews, the following points were mentioned by more than one interviewee, or were given special emphasis in one interview; these are included in the generic bullet summary below.

6.1.12 Summary of principles underpinning conductor’s role
- the music is the starting point
- relevant / appropriate repertoire
- approach rehearsal as a ‘singer’, ‘conductor’, ‘musician’ or ‘educator’
- develop sensitivities and self-esteem of individual singers
- reveal love of music and of conducting choirs
- responsible for every individual in choir
- expand singers’ knowledge and skills
- approach with humility - the conductor does not have all the answers
- conductor has intimate knowledge of music
- conductor has understanding of the voice
- aim for good tone and sound appropriate for the music
- social aspects of choir important
- belief in need for more openness among choral conductors and more systematic training
- everyone can sing and should be afforded the opportunity to do so
- realistic goals are needed and should be attained gradually
- common philosophy and approach to singing on a ‘higher’ level than merely for pleasure

6.1.13 Summary of musical-technical attributes
- attention to articulation and diction appropriate to the music
- clear, acute rhythmic awareness
• shaping of phrases in expressive gestures
• musicianship revealed in rehearsals
• sight-reading, note-learning, polishing
• repetition of phrases in learning process
• vowel shaping and unification
• demonstration
• create imagery and analogy
• mastery of detail, even of small section
• breathing, relaxation, ‘releasing’ the singers
• exploring, ‘playing’ with the voice in warm-ups etc.
• attention to and strategies for developing good tone, blend and dynamics
• appropriate tempo
• sing from memory

6.1.14 Summary of behavioural - inter-personal attributes
• use of facial expressions
• expressive use of eyes
• communication of sense of humour
• imagination
• enthusiasm, energy and ‘love’
• extrovert behaviour, ‘acting’
• remain calm under pressure - stand back from pressured situations
• effective communication
• modelling (demonstrating how to do and/or how not to do)
• drawing things out of the singers
• displaying openness with singers - non-dictatorial
• appropriate behaviour in correcting and dealing with problems
• expression of music revealed in a variety of ways
• sparing talk
• excessive movement and fussy conducting

There is no intended priority in the order of the points above, though clearly in rehearsal situations attention to musical details and other ‘behaviours’ will vary according to the context, the time of the rehearsals in relation to a performance and also in relation to the standard of the choir and expectations of the individual conductor. The interviews are only one strand
of the validation process, and it is evident that while each conductor may be effective to one degree or another, the whole picture emerging is an unverified one. A conductor may be able (and willing) to identify and discuss his/her own strengths and weaknesses as s/he perceives them. However, in order to obtain a fuller picture of the effective choral conductor and validation of the model, it is necessary to provide triangulation and seek information and perspective from those being conducted, especially those with experience of having been conducted by a variety of people.

6.2 ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRES

The questionnaires asked for responses to 33 descriptors of choral conductors (see Appendix 3) categorised under the principles, musical-technical and behavioural headings. The questionnaires were issued after a masterclass and a short conducting course where singers and student-conductors had experience of a variety of student-conductors and relied on a notional response from them. The data from the singers and student-conductors were collected separately and it is interesting to compare the results of the two groups as well as reviewing the responses generally. The results are classified under ‘positive’ response (i.e. those who circled 7, 6 or 5 to a descriptor) and ‘negative’ response (i.e. those who circled 3, 2 or 1 to a descriptor). The ‘don’t know’ responses (4s) are discarded for the purpose of this analysis. (The descriptors are abbreviated in this table - see Appendix 3 for full descriptors.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>% positive responses singers</th>
<th>% positive responses students</th>
<th>% negative responses singers</th>
<th>% negative responses students</th>
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<td>89</td>
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<td>1b human voice</td>
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<td>96</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1i excellent musician</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Held on 15 October 1994 in Bath College of Higher Education, UK (see also Chapter 4).
3 Autumn 1994.
### Table of Questionnaire Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>% positive responses singers</th>
<th>% positive responses students</th>
<th>% negative responses singers</th>
<th>% negative responses students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2a demo aural skills</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b correct major inaccuracies</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2c correct minor inaccuracies</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2d intention of tempo etc.</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2e demonstrate accurately</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2f sing</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2g style of music</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>2h attention to detail</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2i overall character of music</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>2j warm up singers</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2k independence</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a non-threatening</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b clear comm</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3c healthy singing</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3d vocal development</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3e confident &amp; comfortable</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3f avoid temper</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>3g sense of humour</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>3h aura of leadership</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3i spare verbal</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3j dress smartly</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>3k speak grammatically</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>3l be firm</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>3m expect highest standards</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Fig.6.1: Table of Questionnaire Responses

From the table it can be seen that there is a considerable level of agreement both to the descriptors and between the two groups of responders. There is 100% agreement from both groups in the following descriptors:

*‘an effective choral conductor should be able to:’*

1b display an understanding of the human voice
e know the nature of his/her role

2b correct major inaccuracies
d display clear intention of tempo, metre, entries and endings through appropriate gestures
3a create a positive non-threatening environment
3b communicate clearly and unambiguously
3c present a personality that is conducive to healthy singing
3e make singers feel confident and comfortable.

There is also considerable level of agreement to the following descriptors (i.e. 88% and above):

'**an effective choral conductor should be able to:**'

1a display knowledge of the choral repertoire
1c possess a clear image of the music prior to rehearsal
1d show awareness of the aesthetic potential of the music
1h motivate the choir energetically

2a demonstrate aural skills, including the identification of incorrect rhythms and pitch
2e demonstrate accurately and musically
2g attach importance to the style of the music
2i give an impression of the overall character of the music at the earliest opportunity
2j warm up the singers efficiently at the beginning of rehearsals

3d enable choral and vocal development to take place
3f avoid bad temper and impatience
3g display a keen sense of humour in rehearsal
3h display an aura of leadership.

Where there is significant disagreement to the descriptors (i.e. a larger % than agreement) both groups of responders concur:

'**an effective choral conductor should be able to:**'

2h attend to every detail at the earliest opportunity
3j dress smartly.

Where there is no really clear indication of strong feeling either in agreement or disagreement, it is usually shared by both groups of responders:

'**an effective choral conductor should be able to:**'

If inform the choir of the historical context of the music

147
2k gradually enable the singers to become independent of the conductor
3k speak grammatically.

Differences in response between the two groups of responders occur in the following:

'an effective choral conductor should be able to:'
2f sing (23% of singers gave a negative response; 0% of students)
3l be firm with the choristers (students thought this much less important than the singers).

The responses of the singers and the students need to be considered in context of their social location. It should be remembered that the students will have been working in schools, as well as possibly being involved in other choirs as conductors and/or singers. The singers may be members of more than one choir, a large choral society and a smaller church choir, for example. So, the descriptor 'be firm with the choristers' (3l) might well depend on the context in which a conductor operates. It is interesting that the student-conductors felt it unnecessary to give this descriptor much emphasis, yet they are all involved in secondary school experience and the management of music classes.

One descriptor of the effective choral conductor which received unanimous agreement has been 'display an understanding of the human voice' (1b). Only two of the interviewees (see above and Appendix 2) reported having received any sort of formal tuition in vocal pedagogy (interestingly both were from the USA); one other, however, was a professional singer as well as a conductor. DB in his interview pointed out that many conductors that he encountered reveal their lack of knowledge of the human voice by the way they gesture inappropriately, use threatening language or lose their temper in rehearsal (often the final one before a concert). This accords with the findings of Thurman et al (1992) who refer to human compatible learning as being the basis upon which good choral practice can develop (see Chapter 4). Knowledge of the workings of the voice is considered of paramount importance for the choral conductor; s/he has the power to influence not only the ambience of the rehearsal, but also the singers' efficient and healthy use of the voice (Cooksey, 1992; Swan, 1987;
The evaluation of the descriptors in the questionnaire confirms many of the conducting methodology texts, research literature findings and some of the interviews in respect of the responses to the musical-technical descriptors in the model of the effective choral conductor. As expected, aural skills, identification of inaccuracies, display of tempo and metre intentions and accurate and musical demonstration (2a; 2b; 2d; 2e) receive strong support (Kahn, 1975; Whitten, 1988). Also considered important is the style, character and the need for an overall impression of the music at an early stage of rehearsing (2g; 2i) (Boult, 1963; Rives, 1983; Strouse, 1987; Swan, 1987).

6.3 ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPANT & NON-PARTICIPANT OBSERVATIONS - UTAH, USA

6.3.1 CONTEXT OF CHORAL EDUCATION

The research in Utah is motivated by the fact that, within music and music education programmes in a number of universities and colleges in the USA, the teaching of choral conducting is prominent and integral. Within the University of Utah Department of Music, students on the four year undergraduate Music Education programme can take an instrumental or a choral emphasis. The individual courses with the choral emphasis are concerned with (i) ‘Basic Musicianship and Performance’ and (ii) Professional Education. The Basic Musicianship and Performance component involves courses on Theory, Private Performance (instrumental and vocal), Music History and Literature, Choral Rehearsal Techniques and Literature, Conducting, Choral Performing Organisations and Vocal Pedagogy. The Professional Education component involves courses on Teaching Methodology, Choral Methods, Instrumental Rehearsal Techniques and Literature and School Experience. There is a carefully sequenced developmental course structure throughout the four years of undergraduate music education. The detailed outline of Choral Music Education courses and their sequence appears in Appendix 1, alongside course descriptions of ‘Choral Conducting Techniques’, ‘Choral Music Methods’ and the masters ‘Choral Rehearsal Techniques’.
The undergraduate courses from the University of Utah (Conducting and Choral Rehearsal Techniques) do indicate that choral conducting is a distinct musical activity worthy of study. Within the outline a great amount of detail is given, much of it making particular reference to choral, vocal and rehearsal techniques. The acquisition and development of knowledge of the music of various styles and eras is a prominent part of the course content. Learning the music through practical activity is considered important, as is aspects of the conductors' skill in communication. The development of the students' own vocal techniques in relation to implementing vocalises 'to enhance self-expression and artistic choral singing' is also featured noticeably within the course. This, in particular, contrasts with the lack of evidence of such development within courses in the UK. On-going evaluation of the students' own conducting development features significantly. The implication here is that there is much about conducting that is considered teachable.

Altogether the Utah Choral Music Education programme appears as a coherent and full one, specifically designed for the choral conductor, dealing with matters that relate to many aspects of the role in a broad context. It does not seem to be designed solely for the 'high-flyer', but more for the conductor who will be conducting in community contexts - school, church, choral society or other location. It must be recognised that a very strong performance culture exists in schools and in churches in North America. It is particularly noticeable that children's choirs, especially those at secondary school level, have large numbers and achieve high musical standards. Often a school will appoint a choral director and also a band director, who will each have specific responsibilities in these areas, which will take up the largest proportion of their time (Knutson, 1989; Watkins, 1986; Grechesky, 1985; Karpicke, 1987). Some school choirs and bands will also be expected to take part in state and inter-state competitions (SM interview) as an integral part of the performance curriculum. There is, therefore, a perceived need for training in conducting within the teacher education programmes in North America (Rives, 1983; Miller, 1988; Knutson, 1989; Lonis, 1993). The Choral Methods Class (Year 3) takes the students into schools where a strong choral performance programme exists. In the introduction to this course is written:

Through the exploration of choral singing activities at the junior and
senior high school levels, students will have opportunities to apply their own technical and musical knowledge in the classroom situation. They will learn much more about themselves and how they can communicate with and motivate young people.

The course objectives are concerned with developing understanding of the adolescent voice, dealing with vocal problems, voice production, the organisation and arrangement of young singers, knowledge and application of rehearsal techniques, principles of groups dynamics and motivation strategies. Two Choral Methods classes were observed in a junior high school and are described below.

The postgraduate MMus ‘Choral Rehearsal Techniques’ course is concerned with enabling students to apply ‘proper conducting and rehearsal techniques to the interpretation and performance of choral literature from a variety of periods, and to develop communication skills to enhance this process’. It encourages students to discover and develop their own musical attributes and abilities so they can become successful in communicating and rehearsing with singers. This course had currently one student, and he was observed in the final rehearsal stage for his end of year recital and concert.

6.3.2 PANEL ANALYSIS OF OBSERVATIONS

In addition to the researcher’s own analysis and assessment of the observed classes, further assessment of some of the video material was made by three panels. Firstly, a panel of three singer/conductors (Panel 1) were asked to rate some of the video material using the researcher’s observation schedule (Appendix 4). They were asked to indicate when a conductor’s behaviour matched a descriptor of the model by writing in the conductor’s name on the schedule; they also had space to write additional comments freely at the end of the schedule. The three selected assessors were (i) a choral conductor and singer who has recently gained a PhD in choral music education from an American university (reviewed in Chapter 3); she has wide experience of teaching singing as well as performing and conducting singers in schools and adult contexts in the UK and USA; (ii) a conductor of a youth choir who also sings and teaches singing; she has a wide experience of teaching music in primary and secondary schools in the UK and Australia; (iii) a music graduate who is currently a deputy headteacher in a primary school with responsibility...
for music; her experience has included training and conducting choirs in both secondary and primary schools, as well as singing with a variety of conductors. A second panel (Panel 2) was asked to make comments on the video recordings of four student conductors in Hillcrest Junior High School. This panel consisted of nine teachers, most of whom were primary school music specialists or music coordinators with differing levels of experience in choral singing and conducting who were part-time students on a diploma programme at Roehampton Institute London. The video analysis formed part of a session on choral training and conducting. The observation schedule given to Panel 1 was not given to this panel; they were asked instead to write 'instinctive' comments (in sections on an otherwise blank sheet for each observed conductor) on their responses to the effectiveness of each student, particularly in terms of their preparation, musical skills and communication skills. Finally, a third panel (Panel 3) of five ‘experienced’ conductors was asked to evaluate seven selected conductors from the video material. The video selection represented various stages of professional development of conductors from student through high school choral directors to professional conductors (total viewing time approximately 2 hours). The experience and expertise of the five conductors in Panel 3 included conducting symphony choruses, choral societies and professional choirs, choirs of young people in conservatoires, youth choirs and choirs within higher education in the UK.

Panel 3 were given instructions to make written comments on the seven conductors using the Observation Schedule if they wished to; (they were invited to make a √ or x against the descriptors as appropriate). They were asked to indicate the level of successfulness of each conductor, including the failure to demonstrate a necessary attribute in his/her particular rehearsal context. In addition, Panel 3 were asked to rate the effectiveness of each conductor in their context, by giving a mark out of 10 (10 = highly effective, 1 = not effective). Each panel was given a brief contextualisation by the researcher of the observed conducting situations. No panel viewed all the extensive video material, as time would not permit, so selections were made in order to observe and comment upon a variety of conductors and rehearsal strategies.

4 The term 'specialist' normally refers to a person who will actually teach music throughout the school, whereas a 'coordinator', while having responsibility for the subject in the school, will more likely not teach it to all the pupils.
6.3.3 LIST OF OBSERVATIONS

The descriptions and analyses of the observed choral activities are set out below. The research was carried out 4-12 May, 1995. Some classes and rehearsals were observed on more than one occasion, so mention of each will either follow on or not be made; otherwise the observations are described in chronological order, following the order indicated above. Where a panel assessment has also been made, it will follow the researcher’s description and analysis. Then a comparative summary of the various assessments will be made. Reference to the descriptors are made in italics.

1. Undergraduate Conducting Techniques, University of Utah
2. Choral Methods Class ‘Lab’ Choir (+ Panel 1 assessment)
3. Final Rehearsal with Concert Choral and Chamber Choir, University of Utah
4. Bingham High School, Choral Classes (+ Panel 1& 3 assessment)
5. A Cappella Choir Class, University of Utah (Panel 3 assessment)
6. U of U Choral Methods Class 1, Hillcrest Junior High School (+ Panel 1, 2 & 3 assessment)
7. U of U Choral Methods Class 2, Hillcrest Junior High School
8. Ogden High School Madrigal Choir (Panel 3 assessment)
9. Weber State University, Concert Choir Class
10. Weber State University, Chamber Choir Class
11. Conference with the Director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir
12. Rehearsal of Mormon Tabernacle Choir (Panel 3 assessment)

6.3.3.1 Undergraduate Conducting Techniques, University of Utah

This was the third quarter of the undergraduate conducting course (each quarter has 2 x 1.5 hours per week over ten weeks plus ‘lab’ every other week for 50 minutes). The course outline is given in Appendix 1 (and described above). In the first quarter the main emphasis is on conducting patterns and independence of hands; in the second on stylistic aspects, refining cueing, dynamics; in the third on developing concepts of rehearsal effectiveness and preparation of pieces. In addition, music education students must take an additional quarter of conducting in their junior (i.e. 3rd) year.
In this particular class there were only two students, Ben and Jamie (in other years normally there would be about 10). The tutor had asked them to prepare a particular choral piece each for rehearsal with a student 'lab' choir the next week (described below); this would be made up of vocal and instrumental majors. This observed session (Thursday afternoon) was just with the tutor and the researcher, where aspects of the music, its preparation and conducting style were discussed and analysed thoroughly. Jamie had prepared Rachmaninov’s *Ave Maria* while Ben had prepared the chorus *He watching over Israel* from Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*. Understandably, the two students were a little nervous at being observed and videoed by a British researcher, but interaction and participation in the discussion between the researcher, tutor and students enabled a fairly comfortable environment to be established. The students in turn conducted their pieces with the other three people chanting or singing with occasional piano accompaniment. Attributes of the model (as described on the observation schedule and presented here in italics) notably considered in this session were:

- *display an understanding of the human voice* - they were asked to consider how good tone might be achieved by looking ahead and anticipating tonal problems and how to fix them (Thurman & Welch, 1992);
- *possess a clear image of the music prior to rehearsal* - this was clearly an important issue as the students had been asked to prepare each piece for this session and the lab choir. They were asked to analyse and work out the meaning of the text and its pronunciation, the harmonic form and generally learn each part of the music (Decker & Kirk, 1988; Marvin, 1988);
- *awareness of aesthetic potential of the music* - they looked at the nature of gestures in relation to the text of the music and how their gestures can affect tone and expressive response from the singers (Grechesky, 1985; Finn, 1946);
- *know the nature of own role as conductor* - this was emphasised throughout, particularly because they would be conducting fellow students and would need to establish this through knowing what they were going to do (Swan, 1987);
- *inform the choir of the historical context of the music* - analysis of the music through a structured approach was discussed in order to heighten the conductor’s and singers’ awareness of the music’s style (Green, 1981; Finn, 1946; Decker & Kirk, 1988)

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5 See Appendix 4.
Display clear intention of tempo etc. through appropriate gesture - much time was spent on this, as the establishment of an appropriate tempo, especially in the Mendelssohn, was proving problematic. Also, the nature of the gesture appropriate to the expressive style of the music was given attention, particularly in the climax of the Rachmaninov. The tutor promoted the notion that particular gestures should be learnt (Lonis, 1993; Kahn, 1975; Knutson, 1989);

Give impression of character of music at early opportunity - the students were asked occasionally to conduct without using their hands and so concentrate on portraying the character of the music by other non-verbal ways (Rives, 1983); this also meant they had to communicate clearly and unambiguously (Whitten, 1988; Watkins, 1986; Karpicke, 1987);

Paces rehearsal effectively - attention was given to the sequencing of the rehearsal, and students were asked to outline their priorities in the rehearsal (Strouse, 1987). So, before these two students were to rehearse with the lab choir, a thorough preparation and discussion of the music had taken place. They had thought about the structure, style and expressive character of each piece and rehearsed gestures. They had carefully considered the kinds of problems that might arise in the lab rehearsal and the possible solutions. Both students, when asked by the researcher, remarked on the importance of such detailed preparation, stating that, without it, they would feel very unconfident and unable to stand in front of a choir and teach and rehearse the music.

6.3.3.2 Choral Methods Class ‘Lab’ Choir

Ben and Jamie (see above), as part of their task in the undergraduate choral methods class, were to rehearse their prepared pieces with the lab choir of non-choral majors. This took place after the discussion seminar on a Tuesday afternoon. Each, in turn, did some physical and vocal warm-ups with the students, using methods familiar to them from the concert chorale and chamber choir. Jamie started with stretching, massaging, facial contortions, then used rhythm and counting games to focus attention. These went down extremely well, as Ben and Jamie’s manner and approach with their peers, in what could be a potentially challenging situation, immediately diffused any apprehension and played on humour to good effect. They clearly had in their minds the importance of creating a positive non-threatening environment and displaying a sense of humour (Pfautch, 1973). Ben even made fun of
himself by asking the singers to use the movement of a basket-ball player to help with the upper notes of a melodic pattern in the warm-ups, commenting that he himself hardly had a basket-ball player physique. Both considered the use of movement as a means of relaxation for the singers as well as facilitating easier and tension-free sounds (Dickson, 1992; Hibbard, 1994; McCoy, 1994).

With regard to the pieces, they were well prepared, and both Jamie and Ben had a clear image of the music prior to the rehearsal as evidenced in discussion in previous seminars. They were both nervous, but dealt fairly ably with the expressive character and aesthetic potential of the music and verified their feeling in gesture. Jamie's nervousness was shown by her looking down at the score rather more than was necessary considering her preparation and knowledge of it. Both effectively demonstrated aural skills by hearing and pointing out inaccuracies in pitches and entries. Demonstration included what not to do, particularly at one point with regard to treatment of the text. The style of communication was essentially 'humanly compatible' (Hart, 1983; Thurman, 1992), with singers being reassured and praised as appropriate and realistic short term goals being set. Interaction with singers was in evidence; Jamie at one point asked the singers to conduct with her, which clearly enabled a keener sense of the movement of the music. At another point, the singers were asked to stand around the perimeter of the hall, which gave them an insight into the spacious quality of the music.

The tutor judiciously interjected when help was needed to put things right or to move the rehearsal on. However, this was done sensitively, so that in no way were the student conductors made to feel threatened. There was a great deal of effective learning on all sides taking place in this lab choir.

Panel 1 Assessment:
There was general agreement that Jamie knew the score and what she wanted in terms of expressive and aesthetic response, but was not always able to communicate it to the singers; one member pointed out the lack of eye contact with the singers. The panel felt that she did not deal with the technical inaccuracies and intonation problems adequately. Although it was evident that Ben had a pleasant personality, the panel felt his actual conducting was somewhat insecure, and that he was not fully aware of what was happening in the choir; 'he conducts the music, but not the singing'. His
conducting gestures needed more variety in order to gain a wider dynamic range with the choir. The panel felt that the pacing of his rehearsal was good.

The panel picked up on the technical inaccuracies of the singing, intonation problems and inaccurate pitching, for example, and drew attention to the fact that a number of issues were not addressed by the conductors. The researcher had been impressed, at the time of the observations, by the way both conductors, in spite of their nervous dispositions, made great efforts to create a friendly working environment in what was clearly a challenging situation. This impression evidently was more prevalent at the time than was the awareness of the technical problems. Video-recording does not always convincingly convey the atmosphere of the moment. However, the panel members were entirely justified in making such criticisms.

6.3.3.3 Final Rehearsal for Concert with Concert Chorale and Chamber Choir, University of Utah

The Concert Chorale is a university choir of some 90 students for which academic credit is awarded. It rehearses four times a week during three quarters of the year, two days for 1.5 hours and two for an hour - 5 hours per week in total. The chamber choir consists of 24 students and meets twice a week for a one hour rehearsal; each member of this choir would also be a member of the larger concert chorale. Two performances of a concert were to be held in the Department of Music at the University of Utah David Gardner Hall during the first weekend of the research visit. The concert programme was a varied one with a challenging repertoire, including a Bach motet Der Geist hilft unserer Schwachheit auf, renaissance motets and madrigals, Handel, Mendelssohn, Verdi and Offenbach choruses, some 20th century English part-songs, an American spiritual and, for the chamber choir, the very demanding madrigal Les Chant des Oyseaux: Reveillez Vous by Jannequin. The programme was conducted by the Director of Choral Activities John Cooksey, the assistant conductor (Lane Cheney, who was the student on the masters programme) and, for one piece each, another student conductor (Jamie Eskelson, president of the Chorale and from the undergraduate choral methods class) and the researcher as guest conductor.

The final rehearsal was an additional evening one and was scheduled
for three and a half hours. The concert programme, with the exception of the
Bach motet and one other piece, was sung from memory. The choirs sang in
the university hall and used the acoustics imaginatively by performing in
various places, surrounding the audience in some renaissance pieces in order
to capture something of the essence of the acoustics of the European
cathedrals for which the music was written, and standing in a more traditional
arrangement on the stage for others. Both choirs sang in mixed formations
throughout.

The rehearsal began, as did each one normally, with warm-ups. This
involved massaging each other on the back and neck areas, massaging the
face, stretching exercises, the intention of which was to enable the singer to
relax. These were followed by a series of vocalises to concentrate on
breathing, extending the voice and focussing the singer. There was an
emphasis during these and in singing the pieces on movement of the body in
tune and time with the music. It was considered important to create a relaxed
and tension free approach to the singing. The main attributes of the model
demonstrated so far were - _warm up singers efficiently, encourage healthy
singing, display an understanding of the human voice_ - and already the
singers were beginning to feel confident and comfortable through the
creation of a pleasant and purposeful environment (Pfautch, 1973; Thurman &
Welch, 1992).

Throughout the rehearsal the members of the choir were invited to
interact by commenting on the way things were going. The director was also
coaching the student conductors; students themselves were enabled to feel
very much part of the rehearsal process, and, when things did go wrong there
was often rational discussion on how to deal with the problem. Nobody,
conductor or singer, appeared to be threatened by this. When tension did
arise because of a reprimand from the conductor, it was quickly dissipated
through judicious use of humour, in order that the overall purposeful
atmosphere of the rehearsal was not destroyed. All members of the choir were
involved in creating and delivering the _highest standards possible_ through
renewed goal setting and constant qualitative feedback.

Part of the strategy both for the director and the students was the
thorough preparation of the music, the _possesion of a clear image of the_
music prior to rehearsal, was considered vital for a successful rehearsal. Because of the plentiful (by UK standards) rehearsal time, most of the attributes of an effective conductor were already delivered, consequently most of this rehearsal was spent on fine detail - correct minor inaccuracies such as vowel sounds, use of vowels appropriate for the piece, pronunciation, and making more of appropriate expression and vocal timbre for pieces such as the spiritual. Constant choral and vocal development took place with the encouragement of individual vocal exploration during the rehearsal, and the use of movement as an enhancement to expression as well as a means of making vocal challenges attainable. For example, the singers were often asked to move freely during a renaissance motet and note the difference in the singing quality; they were regularly asked to conduct with the conductor in order to internalise pulse or maintain tempo; they might have shaped a melody with their arms, and were actually asked to move from the hips during the performance of the spiritual - to the left and then to the right. Also in certain pieces the conductor asked the choir physically to 'step into' the first chord of the music (McCoy, 1994; Hibbard, 1994; Dickson, 1992). Emphasis throughout the rehearsal was given to the meaning of the text, especially where the pieces were not performed in English. Altogether, the rehearsal was an exhausting but rewarding one, and the singers and conductors generally felt appropriately prepared for the concerts two and three days later. The rehearsal was well structured and paced efficiently and many attributes of effective conducting were in evidence. What was especially arresting was the professional way in which Lane (MMus student) conducted and rehearsed a significant proportion of the concert programme. He displayed a degree of competence that was demonstrated by a genuine communication with the singers and total commitment to the music. Lane was also able to address vocal and technical issues in the rehearsal with a confidence which was supported by sound knowledge and developing skills. (Indeed, the concert performances were of a very high standard and were received enthusiastically by the audience and the performers themselves.)

6.3.3.4 Bingham High School, Choral Classes

Bingham High School is a large high school of some 3000 students (15-18 age range) situated in one of the fairly affluent suburbs south of Salt Lake City. Over 400 students in the school are involved in the choral programme.
There are a variety of choirs to suit the needs of the students which include:

- Concert Choir (for beginners) - 70 singers
- A Cappella Choir - 140 singers
- Madrigal Group - 25 singers (who have to be in the A Cappella)
- Ladies Choir - 100 singers
- Mens Choir - 100 singers.

The choral director of the school is Leanna Willmore, who is a very experienced teacher and graduate of the University of Utah and of its masters choral programme. She has been a past president of the Utah Music Educators' Association and so is well known and respected within the choral fraternity of the state. She spoke of how she valued the connection with the University of Utah in developing her own learning, particularly in her masters programme, where she had learnt much about choral literature (especially renaissance), educational studies, history and musicology, and analysis of music. She also took individual singing lessons there. All this, she believed, led to a distinct improvement in her classroom choral teaching.

The observation took place during classes on a Monday morning, and included the last minutes of the concert choir (the beginners' choir) in the process of learning new material. This was immediately followed by a rehearsal with the madrigal group for 50 minutes. During this time a number of pieces in differing stages of preparation were rehearsed, including Debussy's *Trois Chansons*, challenging repertoire for a school choir! The choir was in mixed and variable formation. One notable feature was the involvement of the students both in discussion in the rehearsal and in the overall planning of the concert programmes and schedules. This was intentional policy. Constant interaction and asking for opinions during the rehearsal emphasised the ownership of the choral group and the music with the students; Leanna did not perceive her role in any dictatorial way, rather as an enabler and guide.

Each choir at Bingham High meets daily (i.e. five times per week) and therefore preparation of choral repertoire is thorough. Leanna is able to give challenging repertoire, as witnessed in this rehearsal, and her knowledge of the repertoire is significant in this respect - *display a knowledge of the choral repertoire* in that she has been able to select and advise on wide-ranging and suitable material for each choral group (Roach, 1989).
Warm-ups for the madrigal group included stretching, massaging, roaring and making facial contortions, and vocal exercises which gradually extended the vocal ranges into higher registers. This revealed her understanding of the human voice and ability to warm up singers effectively. In the rehearsal of the Debussy, she constantly portrayed the flowing motion of the musical phrases through her gesture. The singers were often asked to conduct as well, which enabled them to gain an insight into the character of the piece and become aware of the aesthetic potential of the music. There was use of imagery and analogy, with reference to the students themselves and what they were feeling and visualising in the music (Thurman, 1977; Watkins, 1986). There was also interaction in relation to what was going wrong and why. Singers were constantly involved throughout the whole rehearsal in singing and making decisions about the music. Leanna’s judicious sense of humour enabled singers to feel confident and comfortable and there was never any threat as a positive non-threatening environment was established with appropriate encouragement, praise and setting and renewing realistic goals throughout the rehearsal (Gumm, 1991; Pfautch, 1973).

At one point in the rehearsal singers were asked to face each other and not the conductor and sing a madrigal by communicating visually. This enabled singers to become independent from the conductor; an attribute that is beneficial in a small choir (McKelheran, 1977; Goldbeck, 1960). Leanna recognised that her conducting style should reflect the music and in the rehearsal gestures were appropriately flowing in pieces like the Debussy, rather than being preoccupied with beating time. This led to expressive singing and immediate contact with singers as they were, throughout, singing from memory. The warmth of the atmosphere and camaraderie of the choir was demonstrated at the end of the rehearsal by one student bringing donuts for everyone (including the researcher) to celebrate her birthday. The students all stayed around to chat even though they would be late for the next lesson. They were due to sing at a local spring fair on the following Saturday, this being one among many public performances of the group. Undoubtedly, this was an impressive school choir, and it was the knowledge, effective rehearsal technique and communication skills of their choral director that promulgated their success (Garretson, 1981).
Panel 1 Assessment:
The panel agreed that many of the attributes of the effective choral conductor were in place here. Leanna displayed knowledge of choral repertoire, the voice and the aesthetic potential of the music. She was able to deal efficiently with technical inaccuracies, and created a positive, dynamic and safe environment for the singers; ‘the atmosphere created is one of group learning’. The researcher’s own analysis was confirmed by the panel.

Panel 3 Assessment:
There was wide agreement here that Leanna was experienced and confident. The notable areas of agreement were in *making singers feel confident and comfortable*, enabling the singers to become independent from the conductor, pacing rehearsals effectively and that she was able to *give the impression of the character of the music* throughout the rehearsal. Three panel members felt she could have given further attention to text (particularly with the French in the Debussy) and tonal quality, blend and balance and that she also let some inaccurate pitching escape uncorrected.
Ratings: 9: 7: 6: 9: 7 (Mean score = 7.6)

6.3.3.5 ‘A Cappella’ Choir Class, University of Utah

As an alternative to the concert chorale, the students on the choral programmes have the choice to join the A Cappella choir, conducted by another faculty member, Ed Thompson. This operates at the same hour of the day as the concert chorale, though three instead of four times in the week. They are considered in competition with each other by the students, but not quite in that light by the faculty members. The styles and approaches of the the conductors of these two choirs are very different. This observed class took place at noon on a Monday and started straight into the first piece of music, a contemporary setting of *The Lord’s my Shepherd*. Warm-ups either physical or vocal did not take place. This particular class rehearsed a number of pieces including Vaughan Williams’ setting of *Just as the tide was flowing*, another contemporary sacred setting, a Kings Singers’ arrangement of *Ah leave me not*, an arrangement of *If I love you*, conducted by a student and two Gilbert & Sullivan choruses. The choir’s formation was blocked with the men sitting behind the women. For one piece, the formation changed and the
singers formed a semi-circle. Copies of each music were used by the singers throughout the rehearsal; at no point were they asked to sing from memory.

The conductor had sufficient knowledge of the choral repertoire to be able to choose a programme that was realistic, varied and challenging. Generally during the rehearsal, the emphasis was placed on technical aspects of the music. Any corrections that were made were related to inaccurate pitching, untidy cut-offs, inaccurate rhythms and dynamic markings. Notes would be corrected by listening and repeating, and mention of all corrections were verbally communicated. Dynamic range was referred to in terms of mezzo-forte, forte, mezzo-piano, entirely technically, with no reference to the expressive aspects and requirements of the music. No explanations, no imagery or analogy were given, just reprimands and corrections. Throughout, the conductor’s gestures were technically clear, precise and easy to follow (Kaplan, 1985; Marvin, 1988). Nevertheless, there was little in the gesture that portrayed the expressive character of the pieces. Communication appeared perfunctory, as there was little in the way of facial clues and any other non-verbal signals to convey the music’s meaning. Once or twice, the conductor displayed a somewhat abrupt and irritable manner; rarely was any humour in evidence. The rehearsal was quick and efficient; the singing was generally accurate. However, the sound produced by the very competent singers was often harsh and unsubtle, with little awareness of the variable quality of timbres appropriate to the different pieces that were sung. There was no interaction between the conductor and singers; the opinion of singers was not sought, nor was there any discussion about musical or other issues relating to the rehearsal apparent in this rehearsal. The conductor, for the duration of the hour’s rehearsal, remained rooted behind the piano. Consequently, the singers appeared rather uncommitted. There was no spontaneous movement or fresh ideas introduced into the rehearsal, and while it could be considered effective technically, it distinctly lacked the warmth that was evident in the previous choral rehearsals described so far.

Panel 3 Assessment:
A number of negative comments were made by the panel members here, which, in some respects tested the validity of the model more effectively. While it was agreed that Ed had knowledge of the choral repertoire, demonstrated aural skills through his technical error detections, and was
able to correct inaccuracies, it was generally agreed that this was an ‘uninspiring’ rehearsal which shown little evidence of awareness of the aesthetic potential of the music. Also, Ed failed to create a positive, non-threatening environment and did not avoid bad temper. One panel member wrote ‘the potential of the choir was not exploited’, one mentioned ‘too much distance’, while another wrote ‘you sound angry - they sing angry’, which attests to the correlation between the attitude and behaviour of the conductor and the vocal and choral sound.

Ratings: 4: 3: 4: 6: 6 (Mean score = 4.6)

6.3.3.6 University of Utah Choral Methods Class 1, Hillcrest Junior High School

The undergraduate Choral Methods Class meets in the Spring quarter as the last class before the students embark on their teaching practice in the following Autumn. It is held twice a week at Hillcrest Junior High School (age range 11-14 years) in an area of fairly low socio-economic status in the southern part of Salt Lake City. The school’s Choral Director is Susan Thompson, who is an experienced teacher and a singer in the Mormon Tabernacle Choir (see above). She had agreed that the eight students in the class should have the opportunity to conduct the choirs each Tuesday and Thursday morning. Two choirs were used for this - a girls’ choir of some 60-70 voices followed by a boys’ choir of about 25 voices. The boys were at various stages in their voice change (Cooksey, 1992). The girls’ choir met at 7.45 each morning and the boys’ choir at 8.45. Susan Thompson, along with the students’ tutor, John Cooksey, and on this occasion the researcher, gave feedback to each student during and after the rehearsals.

The task for the students was to arrange a song, appropriate for the vocal ranges and musical abilities for either of these school choirs. Then, each would be asked to teach their song arrangement. One student for each choir would be responsible for the warm-ups.

Firstly, with the girls, Stephanie went through some basic stretching exercises and vocal exercises, attending to some aspects of vocal technique, breathing, using vowel sounds etc., and, with her own experience as a singer, was able to make an effective and supportive start to the rehearsal, creating a
positive non-threatening atmosphere. Stephanie also made a particular point in the warm-ups of using hand and body movement with the singers to assist with pitching and fluency in the vocalises appropriate for girls' voices (Gackle, 1992); this included shaping the melody and stepping forward on each top note of an ascending vocal pattern.

Panel 2 Assessment: Stephanie
There was substantial agreement amongst the panel that Stephanie provided an encouraging, relaxed and friendly approach, demonstrated vocally, smiled and looked at the pupils. Further comments, all of which were positive, mentioned that she gave clear instructions, was easy to follow - helped by her hand movements, provided an effective model, turned to address all the choir and ‘did not spend too long on any one activity’. One member commented on her ‘creative and imaginative’ approach as she made various analogies during the warm-ups, and one mentioned the appropriate feedback to the pupils. This panel assessment gave further support to the importance of providing a conducive, positive atmosphere in the rehearsal setting and mentioned a number of interpersonal skills that were in evidence.

Adam then followed by presenting and teaching his arrangement for the girls of Boogie-Woogie Bugle Boy. He was quick to establish a commanding presence in this part of the rehearsal. However, it became clear that Adam was approaching the teaching in a somewhat atomistic fashion, with no introduction or image of the whole song given to the choir to begin with. The singers took a long time to get into the music, as it was not obvious which musical concept Adam was trying to deal with first. His attention was focussed on individual parts for some time before any attempt was made to sing it altogether. As a consequence of this approach, singers who were not being rehearsed remained inattentive and caused mild irritation to Adam when they chatted. A lot of the time was spent talking and explaining in technical terms and counting out loud rather than demonstrating vocally, which might have enabled quicker and more effective access to the music (Parker, 1990; Thurman, 1977; Rives, 1983; Watkins, 1986). He did, however, move around the choir, and was able to make something of the music towards the end of his rehearsal time. Susan Thompson, in evaluating his rehearsal, suggested he should show how the melody and parts of the song relate to each other; John Cooksey suggested starting a rehearsal with the familiar and set a context,
then move on to new territory. Comment was also made on the fact that Adam wanted too many things at the same time - melody and rhythm, and that he should concentrate on one aspect and make it secure, then deal with the other. While Adam often said in rehearsal that he wanted more sound from the singers, it was pointed out that he did not tell them how to get it. This would be an opportunity to deal with aspects of vocal technique that is important with any amateur choir, but especially when dealing with adolescent developing voices (Cooksey, 1992; Gackle, 1992). This would also enable the singers to gain access gradually to musical and vocal vocabulary.

Panel 1 Assessment: Adam
As with the researcher's comments, the panel confirmed that Adam spent too much time in the rehearsal talking, 'he explains rather than shows', and failed to demonstrate efficiently or give an overall impression of what he wanted from the choir. One panel member pointed out that - 'he wanted excitement from the singers, but did not provide it himself'. Also, he spent too long dealing with one part with the result that others were chatting and generally 'off-task'.

Panel 2 Assessment: Adam
This panel had strong feelings about Adam's rehearsal, with substantial agreement that he did not demonstrate the music, did not hold the pupils' attention, ignored whole sections of the choir for too long, gave too many instructions at once, lacked enthusiasm and did not provide the pupils with a context nor an idea of the whole song. Mention was individually made of his clear gesture, and that he did assist the singers when they got lost. However, there exists an overall consensus between both panel members and researcher that Adam's rehearsal lacked a number of important attributes of the model, especially ones that are relevant to the school context, as exemplified by the comments - 'too many instructions at once', 'disorganised', 'have they heard the whole song yet?', 'the conductor still hasn't sung - he never did!', 'becoming quickly frustrated with students - but instructions didn't make sense'. One panel member wrote - 'he should have been in a wartime movie with Bette Midler', which may have been a reference to his appearance as well as his manner!
Panel 3 Assessment: Adam
As with the other panel comments, Panel 3 referred to Adam’s inability to pace the rehearsal effectively, which was most noticeable at the start of his rehearsal. It was recognised by two of the panel that he did possess a clear image of the music prior to rehearsal, largely due to the fact that it was his own arrangement of the song. He did try to deal with the inaccuracies, but his lack of knowledge of the human voice as well as his inability to enable choral and vocal development prevented the effective reparation of inaccuracies. It was also noted that the arrangement presented its own technical problems and difficulties, especially as there was no introduction to the song or impression of the character of the music presented at the beginning of his rehearsal. All five panel members referred to his ‘talking too much’ and ‘wordy explanation’ in preference to vocal demonstration.
Ratings: 1: 3: 4: 5: 4 (Mean score = 3.4)

Next, Kelly introduced his song arrangement to the girls’ choir by asking them to think of Christmas and the feelings that were thus engendered. His song was a sentimental Christmas one, which demanded a different style of singing from the previous one. He quickly, therefore, established a sense of the expressive character and awareness of the aesthetic potential of the music by his introduction. He also showed that he knew what he wanted and had some clear ideas on how to achieve this technically and expressively. He was able to demonstrate by singing and he communicated clearly and unambiguously through facial and gestural means as well as verbally (Decker & Kirk, 1988; Whitten, 1988). Throughout his rehearsal, Kelly managed to keep all the singers reasonably attentive by not dwelling too much on single problems, but rather going for the whole picture as much as possible (Rives, 1983; Grechesky, 1985). There was also a judicious use of humour which relieved any tension. He became an actor and extrovert in front of the girls, which clearly helped him to get results (Gumm, 1991; Yarbrough, 1975; Donovan, 1994).

Panel 1 Assessment: Kelly
There was agreement here that Kelly’s personality enabled the girls to enjoy their singing with him, as he displayed a keen sense of humour. One panel member thought he needed to listen more to the choir and give some qualitative feedback, one commented that he looked at his music too much.
However, he seemed in control to the panel and was generally ‘positive and encouraging’.

Panel 2 Assessment: Kelly

A third of the panel members referred to Kelly’s ‘warm personality’. Even more substantial agreement occurred among the panel with reference to his ‘good rapport’ with the pupils, encouragement, his contextualisation of the song and ability to demonstrate. Further reference was made to Kelly’s clear instructions and hand gestures, he ‘showed high/low notes with hands - gave clues to children’, his sense of humour and knowledge of the music. The most noticeable comments from both panel members and researcher with regard to Kelly’s rehearsal were those connected with his personality and style of engaging the girls. He evidently had a number of necessary behavioural attributes of the model in place for motivating the singers and creating an appropriate atmosphere. The relative success of this rehearsal may have been due to the comparative simplicity of the musical material immediately following on from Adam’s more challenging choice of piece; but also it was apparent that Kelly’s interpersonal skills were used to good effect.

Panel 3 Assessment: Kelly

The main points of agreement among this panel were that Kelly created a positive, non-threatening environment and made the singers feel confident and comfortable. Also mentioned was his accurate demonstration of the melodic line and display of clear intention of tempo and dynamics, cut-offs through appropriate gesture. While Kelly possessed a clear image of the music there was no consensus within the panel of his level of vocal understanding and dealing within vocal issues effectively. One referred to his ‘personal understanding’ of the voice, but added that he did ‘not communicate this well’. Another panel member wrote that there was ‘no attention to singing as such, or any help with vocal quality or sound’. Yet another stated that he failed to ‘display clearly what he expects from the choir or the music’.

Ratings: 2: 6: 6: 5: 5 (Mean score = 4.8)

With the boys’ choir, Kristin did some warm-ups, then Heidi presented her arrangement for three part boys’ voices of Home, Home on the Range. At first she asked them to clap the rhythm of the music and confused them slightly with inappropriate terminologies - pulse and rhythm. There seemed
little point in this exercise, as most of them were familiar with the original song and the rhythm was not actually a problem. While there were certain communication skills in evidence, Heidi was reluctant to move from behind the music stand, use both hands and open out her gesture. Much of the time was spent on teaching the notes to the underlying parts, but in order to pace the rehearsal effectively, she also made an issue of the musical phrasing. The tutor’s (and the researcher’s) feedback during her rehearsal encouraged Heidi to consider being a little more dynamic in her approach and concentrate less on unimportant things in rehearsal.

Panel 1 Assessment: Heidi
The panel confirmed the researcher’s own analysis of Heidi’s rehearsal, namely that there was unnecessary attention to the rhythm of the song. One member suggested that there was ‘over-rehearsal of a simple tune’ and that ‘she seems to be working from a prescribed program in her mind rather than pay attention to what actually occurs in the rehearsal’, which meant that the beginning was rather pedantic and uninspiring. However, it was noticed that her general pacing and enthusiasm improved during the rehearsal when prompted.

Panel 2 Assessment: Heidi
This panel also noted that Heidi’s rehearsal improved as it went along. Here there was less of a consensus of views across the nine panel members. However, more than a third of them commented on the lack of effective demonstration, the lack of real enthusiasm (some saying the opposite) and the needless rhythm exercise at the beginning, thus agreeing with the assessment of Panel 1 and the researcher. Further comments included the fact that she did praise and encourage the boys, mostly conducted with one arm, had a clear beat, chatted too much and chose poor repertoire. However, one pointed out that, following the suggestion from the researcher to broaden her gesture, her ‘arm actions encouraged better singing’. As another member wrote, the ‘end sing-through sounded quite harmonious’.

Panel 3 Assessment: Heidi
There were some conflicting views in Panel 3 on the effectiveness of Heidi’s rehearsing; though the main areas of agreement were that she created a positive, non-threatening environment and that she failed to enable choral
and vocal development. The conflict of opinion arose as to whether she demonstrated accurately and musically, gave sufficient impression of the character of the music and communicated clearly and unambiguously. While one of the panel thought that the clapping exercise at the beginning was useful, the others did not see the point of it. Four of the five panel members commented on the conductor's improvement during the rehearsal.

Ratings: 3: 5: 5: 6.5: 4 (Mean score = 4.7)

The overall agreement by each panel and researcher that Heidi's rehearsal improved as it went along, suggests that direct tutor involvement was both necessary and beneficial in this context. Further support of the importance of reflective practice and the teachability of choral conducting particularly in the school context is manifest.

6.3.3.7 University of Utah Choral Methods Class 2, Hillcrest Junior High School

The subsequent class on the following Thursday morning took place without the students' tutor, John Cooksey, so the researcher acted as coach as well as cameraman. Procedure was the same with students teaching their arranged pieces to either the girls' or boys' choir. Heidi started with warm-ups for the girls, which included 'mee - may - mi - mo - moo' on an ascending scale. She encouraged gestural shaping to facilitate phrasing and ease on higher notes (Miller, 1988; McCoy, 1986). Also after face massage she asked them to sing 'red leather, yellow leather' moving up a scale. This was effective is establishing a purposeful atmosphere in the class as well as loosening up.

Margel then presented her barber-shop arrangement of Somewhere over the Rainbow. Confusion over the parts caused an anxious start to this part of the class, and it was clear early on that the song was challenging for the girls. The rehearsal, of necessity, had to concentrate on individual parts, and she had to be prompted to keep it well paced and avoid leaving some singers unattended for too long. She thus had to spend most of the time on teaching the notes, so towards the end she and the singers were asked to think of the expressive character of the music and make some acknowledgement of this in their singing.
Tom failed to energise the girls in the presentation of his musical arrangement, and the researcher had to intervene to suggest that he got them standing and do some warm-up exercises. He then did some stretching, which did wake everyone up. His teaching then depended rather a lot on verbal explanation; he kept stopping and consequently their concentration level dropped, as he did not maintain momentum, inspiration and motivation (Thurman, 1977; Watkins, 1986). His speaking was slow and at a rather monotone level. It demonstrated that an effective conductor, especially with young singers, needs to pace rehearsals efficiently and use various behavioural strategies to keep their attention. Enthusiasm and commitment are vital ingredients in effective rehearsing (Gumm, 1991; Donovan, 1994).

By contrast, with the boys' choir, Stephanie showed that a buoyant personality does motivate and elicit response. Her warm-ups included gestures with ascending phrases. Miriam followed with her arrangement of *The Monster Mash*, but as with Tom, she depended on verbal explanation rather than demonstration. She was reluctant to sing with the boys or give them real help in learning their parts. She remained somewhat aloof by standing rooted behind the music stand. The musical arrangement appeared too complex for the boys at this stage in their musical and vocal development. Finally, Kristin, while being generally encouraging to the singers, similarly seemed reluctant to sing with them while teaching. Although her arrangement of *Row your Boat* was certainly more attainable for the boys, she did at first attend to unnecessary activities such as clapping the pulse and reciting the words.

In the evaluation of the session, Susan Thompson raised some important issues of rehearsal technique with the students. She stated that it was "not necessary to teach kids how to be lively", and that at the end of the warm-ups it was preferable to leave the singers in a controlled state, making sure you get out of them exactly what you want to accomplish. She pointed out to Miriam that her arrangement was complex rhythmically and harmonically, and that examination of how new music is to be presented should be made. Susan stated: "our job is to teach them how to pull it out". She also pointed out that the music stand should not be a barrier between the conductor and the singers. Conductors should be above rather than behind
the stand. Altogether, it was realised that more thought about the actual
music, the balance between realistic challenge and attainability, and its
presentation to the young singers was needed (Madsen & Geringer, 1989;
Petty, 1987). Then the conductors will need to be decisive in their intentions
(Garretson, 1981).

All panel members had experience of teaching and approached the
assessment of the students at Hilcrest High School with notions of an
effective teacher in mind. The comments therefore were largely concerned
with the approach to the pupils, the management and motivation of the
classes, these being more prevalent than exclusively musical issues. Attributes,
particularly the behavioural ones, of the model were validated by the panels’
assessments.

6.3.3.8 Ogden High School Madrigal Choir

Ogden is a suburban industrial town situated to the north of Salt Lake City.
Its population is more mixed ethnically and socially than Salt Lake itself, with
a noticeable proportion of indigenous Indians. Ogden High School is large
and housed in what is referred to locally as ‘old’ buildings. The choral
director is Debbie Mason, a graduate of the University of Utah choral
programme and former President and Student Conductor of the Concert
Chorale, who, at the time of observation, is in her second year of teaching.
She started the choral activities from scratch, as there were no significant
musical traditions at Ogden High School before her appointment. The two
main choirs are the Concert Choir, which operates daily at 11.30 (regrettably,
it was not possible to observe this), and the madrigal choir which meets for 50
minutes daily at 7am!

This observation is of the Madrigal Choir at 7 o’clock on a Wednesday
morning. It is a mixed voice choir of about 25 singers aged 15-18. It had
recently been rated highly in local and state competitive music festivals and
the trophies were displayed on the piano in the choral rehearsal room.

The rehearsal started with extensive physical and vocal warm-ups,
rather necessary for such an early rehearsal. The physical ones were mixed in
with vocal ones and included massaging and smacking the face, making facial contortions, shaking hands in order to get the blood circulating, then focussing attention by the conductor asking the singers to copy her gestures and movements (clicking fingers, for example) and then catching them out. The singers were also asked to massage each others’ shoulders while humming and gliding through pitch ranges. Debbie Mason attached a great deal of importance to movement throughout the rehearsal and involved the singers in making appropriate gestures to help with pitching during vocalises and physically stepping into phrases (Hibbard, 1994; McCoy, 1994). While singing ascending arpeggios to the words ‘open the barbecue sauce’, the singers were asked to step forward and fling open their arms on the top note of each arpeggio. This facilitated a release of sound and a tension-free approach to the higher pitches rather than straining to reach each top note (Thurman & Welch, 1992). Another warm-up involved singing a chord slowly to ‘Hallelujah’ and moving up a semitone as directed while holding on to the final syllable. Here, Debbie concentrated on focussing the singers’ energy and blend by getting them to adopt a ‘bouncing on the feet’ movement and a lifting gesture with the hands as the chords ascended. Throughout this part of the rehearsal, the pacing was quick and efficient with good humour, thus creating a positive non-threatening environment for the students, who, largely, had only relatively recently become involved in singing activity.

The rehearsal then ran once through John Farmer’s madrigal Fair Phyllis and concentrated for the rest of the time on the Kings Singers’ arrangement of the song You are the New Day, which was in its early stages of development. As she started the latter, Debbie asked the choir to think out the meaning of the music and allowed them to talk about their own interpretations and thoughts of it. Interaction with the students enabled her to gain their trust and enabled them to feel valued in the activity. A significant amount of time was spent learning the music, especially an awkward tenor and baritone part. At one point in the music, there was intonation difficulty on one particular note in the baritone part. Debbie asked the singers to help themselves in the tuning by each making ascending spiral movements with the hand when singing it. This clearly did help and the intonation was likely to be more quickly improved by this action rather than merely informing them of the problem. She was able to demonstrate aural skills by identifying such inaccuracies and make positive steps to correct them. At the same time she did
not neglect the expressive character of the piece, showing awareness of the aesthetic potential of the music by getting the singers to sway with the music. This enabled the singers to demonstrate awareness kinaesthetically. Debbie also used imagery to give the impression of the emergence of a particular musical phrase, for example, stating - “move and sing as if you’re letting go a dove” (Funk, 1985).

Panel 3 Assessment: Debbie
The panel’s commentary on Debbie’s warm-ups and their effectiveness suggested that conductors have widely differing views on their purpose and effectiveness in the choral rehearsal. One asked if they were really effective, another asked ‘how great a proportion of the total rehearsal was this?’ a third stated that it was a ‘good warm-up incorporating physical gesture’, a fourth suggested that she ‘seemed to go through a list of warm-ups without truly understanding their purposes’ and a fifth commented - ‘good exercises - but no help from her on how to better them or improve’. Nevertheless, the panel generally agreed that she had good communication skills with the creation of a positive, non-threatening environment. The panel largely agreed that her gestures were clear, and, though she failed to deal with problems like intonation effectively, she was at least ‘creative’ in attending to such details, ‘tries every trick - keeps them going, good imagery’, ‘attempting a variety of ways to achieve goal’.
Ratings: 6: 9: 10: 8: 7 (Means score = 8.0)

Here was another example of a very successful school choral director in the early stages of her career. The attributes were extensive and, while she had clear musical and technical skills, there was also a great deal of evidence of expertise in the area of communication and motivation. She claimed that her undergraduate training had been invaluable in enabling her to be an effective choral conductor in rehearsal and performance.

6.3.3.9 Weber State University, Concert Choir Class

Weber State is a small university (by North American standards) situated on the southern edge of Ogden. There are 35 Choral Conducting majors within the music education programme. Conducting classes in the first quarter are
generic and then in the second year students specialise in either instrumental or choral conducting for the whole year. The Choral Director of the university is Mark Henderson, who was a masters graduate of the University of Utah and a doctoral graduate (DMA in Conducting and Musicology) of the University of Illinois. In discussion, Mark stated that from his study at Utah he gained a sense of choral sound, insight into a variety of repertoire for small and large choirs and vocal knowledge. At Illinois his studies were mainly concerned with performance practice, scholarship and conducting technique. Altogether, he obtained a thorough and broad knowledge and perspective of choral education.

The two choirs that were observed were the Concert Choir with 65 members, half of whom were music majors, and the Chamber Choir with 24 members, most of whom were music majors. All the students were undergraduates. Both choirs meet daily (i.e. 5 days per week), though Mark did admit that he would perhaps prefer less contact with the large choir.

The Concert Choir rehearsal took place in a choir room with raised seating; the choir was in mixed formation throughout (Glaser, 1992). The warm-ups concentrated on breathing and use was made of individual ‘breath-builders’ - tubes which somehow controlled the intake of air and encouraged proper abdominal coordination. As was demonstrated immediately with the piece *My Lord What a Morning*, it did make a difference to the control and shape of the long musical phrases. Other warm-ups included singing ‘ma - may - mee - mo - moo’ on descending chords, the conductor often shaping his own mouth to denote the vowel sounds he required. He displayed an understanding of the human voice and endeavoured to deal with intonation weakness as it arose through shaping and indicating gesturally. Another exercise to make the singers alert and focussed entailed each row of the choir singing scales in canon at various intervals counting ‘1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1’. The pace was quick with sparing verbalisation yet clear and precise instructions (Marvin, 1988).

The choir rehearsed Brahms’ *How Lovely are Thy Dwellings* when the conducting gestures were heavily dominated by a three in a bar beat pattern, which did not always enable a real sense of the legato line to be established. Here there were one or two moments of weak intonation and while the
conductor recognised this, he did not actually deal with it effectively, but just pointed his finger up in the air. This gesture can often cause tension in the singers, especially in the higher registers. Technically, the gestures were very clear, though little expressive indication was given facially, this meant that the choir’s singing was precise, but perhaps with a sense of subtlety missing.

With the spiritual *Lonesome Road* the choir gained independence from the conductor as Mark started them off, then stopped conducting and simply added an occasional verbal comment and pointed to the stomach to indicate the need for further support in the sound. Here, the singers were encouraged to use movement as they felt appropriate to capture the character of the music. In another contemporary piece with an improvisatory element, Mark asked the singers to stand gradually during a long crescendo passage. This assisted the rising musical phrase with added weight to its dynamic growth. In this rehearsal there was much concentration on technical elements in the music, and less so on establishing the expressive side of the pieces. Nevertheless, there was effective singing and rehearsing in evidence.

6.3.3.10 Weber State University, Chamber Choir Class

The Chamber Choir class immediately followed on from the Concert Choir. It took place in a Drama studio with mirrors along one wall. All the singing was done from memory. From the start of the class, movement was perceived as integral to the whole experience. Communication, not just between conductor and singers, but increasingly between singers themselves, became the focus of the class. The first piece was a contemporary setting of *The Last Rose of Summer* with initially the singers standing in two circles, one sopranos and altos, the other tenors and basses. They all conducted the music themselves using smooth conducting gestures with hands and arms. They then formed one large circle and sang it again, and then sang it while walking freely around the room. Finally, Mark asked them to stand still and walk around the room mentally while singing. The freedom of movement and walking while singing had been internalised and the sense of it was quite apparent in the performance when they stood still.

An arrangement by one of the students of an Irish folk song was performed while the singers were standing in two lines facing each other in
the middle of the studio. They were asked to mirror each other’s gestures and movements and gradually walk backwards towards the walls, arriving there at the end of the music. As this was a slow, expressive piece, the singers’ movements enabled a great sensitivity and real kinaesthetic performance to be realised (Hibbard, 1994; McCoy, 1986; Dickson, 1992).

Other examples of emphasising the significance of movement in the choral rehearsal were demonstrated in one faster piece by standing in a circle and pointing at each other, then mentally pointing and also facing outside the circle. Movement was freer in the rehearsal of the spiritual *Ain’t got time to die* with clapping and up-beat tempo giving it energy. Another piece was performed in darkness. Finally, Rao’s setting of *Sya Hamba* was sung with congas and other percussion; the singers were encouraged to use movement which perceptibly enabled them to get inside the music. At no point in this class did Mark actually conduct the singers, but stood on the periphery giving instructions on how each piece was to be rehearsed. There was little verbalisation from him and the singers were allowed to evaluate their experiences. There was evidence of real feeling for each piece performed; the music had been thoroughly rehearsed and internalised. Here, it seemed that the effective conductor was not actually conducting, but had given the singers a significant degree of independence and ownership of their performing (McKelheran, 1977; Goldbeck, 1960). The philosophy underpinning this way of working is that the conductor is the ‘enabler’, with students constantly internalising the ‘message’ and sending it out various ways, especially in body movement. Such a method supports the learning process. Mark spends much more time actually conducting at the beginning of this learning process, and the independence is ‘enabled’ at a later stage; reading the musical score is undoubtedly an encumbrance to this internalisation.

### 6.3.3.11 Conference with the Director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir

A conference was arranged between the researcher and Dr. Jerrold Ottley, the conductor of the Salt Lake Mormon Tabernacle Choir. It took place on Thursday morning. Also in attendance was the assistant director, Don Riplinger. They had recently appointed a third assistant, Craig Jessop, to the
music staff. Discussion centred upon the influence of the choir on the singing culture in Utah. Jerry outlined the historical connection with the Welsh pioneers who came west in the 1840s and set up a musical tradition, also the influence of Brigham Young, who emphasised the importance of culture and singing for all people (see above and Chapter 5).

Though the initial purpose of choral activity in the state was to involve all people, it was necessary, because of the demanding and high profile schedule of the Tabernacle Choir, to introduce auditions, which Jerrold Ottley did when he became Conductor. Auditions for the choir are both by submission of a tape and live interview to ascertain, through vocalises, vocal adaptability. Candidates are not required to sing a set song, but rather produce, for example, a *sotto voce pianissimo*. During a second test, musical aptitude is assessed. Choir membership is for those between the ages of 30 and 60 only, and within that age span, for a maximum of twenty years service. There are currently some 325 members. A large contact time, namely three times a week, is the requirement, as there is an extensive (some 300 pieces) sacred and secular repertoire (‘inspirational music’) to cover annually. While sight-reading was considered an important musical ability, Jerry did not give it the same emphasis as would, for example, be more typical for an equivalent British choral director. Re-auditions are held regularly with the aim of ‘rehabilitating’ as necessary.

In talking about a characteristic sound of the choir, Jerry stated that he aimed for sound that was appropriate to the music, a sound that was not specifically European or American, but a cross between those traditions. The intention is to avoid a large vibrato in the voices, but instead to obtain as smooth a sound as appropriate and flowing. Vocal teachers often teach people to sing with an operatic sound, which Jerry felt was inappropriate, but also he had no intention of trying to imitate boys’ clean sound, which often resulted, he believed, in tuning problems. His main concentration was on vocal health and the production of a tension-free sound. To this end, a voice teacher was employed as well as a ‘vocal mechanic’ to coach singers individually and deal with problems as they are identified. It is evident that the organisation takes a degree of responsibility for choir members (Swan, 1987).
There is a perception that the Tabernacle Choir represents the pinnacle of choral activity in the area and within the culture. Many teachers and choral directors of other choirs are singers in this choir. Both Jerry and Don spoke of their interest and concern in music education (Jerry had previously been on the faculty at the University of Utah and Don had taught in the public schools and at Brigham Young University). While Utah has a fine choral culture, Jerry pointed out the equally strong traditions of choral singing throughout the mid-west, with, for example, the Lutheran St Olaf tradition. There, large numbers of singers were involved in choral activity, and this extended significantly into elementary and high schools.

6.3.3.12 Rehearsal of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir

Following the discussion with Jerry Ottley and Don Riplinger, the researcher gained permission to attend and video some of the rehearsal with the choir that evening. Security within the Mormon building in Salt Lake is paramount, and it is unusual for permission to be granted for any form of recording during a rehearsal of the choir.

The part of the rehearsal that was observed concentrated mainly on three pieces, the bulk of time being spent on Haydn's chorus *Achieved is the Glorious Work* from *The Creation*. The rehearsal venue was the Tabernacle itself, as it would be difficult to find suitable accommodation otherwise for such a large number. The formation of the choir was mixed groupings. Jerry communicated with the choir through a microphone in order to be heard clearly. With such a large space, it was most important that each gesture and verbal instruction was precise, if not exaggerated. Programme planning is done well in advance and therefore rehearsals were also meticulously planned. With an experienced team within the directorate of the choir knowledge of the choral repertoire was extensive as was the possession of a clear image of the music prior to rehearsal (Boult, 1923; Strouse, 1988). Jerry's gestures throughout were expansive and tended to indicate a 'release' of sound rather than an attack. This showed an understanding of the human voice (Thurman, 1992). In addition, Jerry asked the singers to concentrate on air-flow in preference to an unattractive vibrato, especially with reference to a sopranos’ octave leap in the Haydn.
Not only was clear intention of tempo indicated through appropriate gesture, but also a particular precision because of the distances. Jerry also attached importance to the style of the music when referring to the need for a lighter approach to the Haydn than would be given to Beethoven or Brahms. He asked for a dance like quality and precise articulation in the 'Hallelujah' and 'he sole on high' sections (Decker & Kirk, 1988). Also, importance was attached to vowel unification. The pace of the rehearsal was particularly effective in the light of the amount of material to get through. Here was an experienced conductor with a well-oiled administrative and musical mechanism in place, which provides an effective example for choral conductors who deal with large choirs and community churches.

Panel 3 Assessment: Jerry
There was unanimous agreement amongst the panel that Jerry was an experienced and successful conductor. One commented 'a master conductor - mastery of conducting technique, knows what he wants, paces rehearsal to accomplish what is needed efficiently'. All agreed that he displayed clear intentions through appropriate gesture and attends to detail. While some commented on various musical-technical points, or a rather 'uninspiring approach', it was recognised that Jerry was indeed a 'professional' and rehearses efficiently and effectively.

Ratings: 7: 8: 8: 9: 8 (Mean score = 8.0)

6.3.4 SUMMARY OF UTAH OBSERVATIONS

The observations in Utah were concentrated at higher education level, and, in particular, on the choral education programme at the University of Utah. Courses have been reviewed at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Also, the researcher was invited to attend a doctoral examination within the Music Department, where the thesis under scrutiny was a quantitative research study entitled The Relationship among Choral Performance Quality, Choral Student Emotive and Aesthetic Perception, and Audience Reaction. It is not possible to comment further on the content of the thesis, except to mention that the candidate was a choral director of some repute in the locality, and that his examination was successful. Here, choral education operates within the structure of higher education at all levels. However, it is the interaction between the university and schools which has enabled choral
education to blossom, with the Choral Methods Class taking place in the school choir time and a number of choral directors being graduates of university choral programmes. The standard of choral activity in the schools visited was high. These were not isolated cases.

In the community, choral music features prominently, the Tabernacle Choir acting as a catalyst for further activity. The success and prevalence of good singing is a combination of historical, religious and traditional practice and effective education. Among the experienced choral conductors observed, there was evidence of knowledge, skill and understanding both of the human voice and choral conducting itself, and a widespread acknowledgement of education’s role in promulgating its effectiveness.

One of the noticeable features in the observations was the knowledge base of the conductors, which, with experienced ones in particular, was considerable in terms of (i) knowledge of the choral repertoire and (ii) knowledge of the workings of the human voice. Also significant was the quality of interaction between conductor and singers and the intention to create a positive, non-threatening environment. This was confirmed by the ostensible absence of bad temper, threatening behaviour and the kind of dictatorial manner which, anecdotally, has been associated with the conductor. Where one instance of bad temper did occur, one of the Panel 3 observers commented on the consequent tone of the choir (see 6.3.3.5 above). This points towards an informed approach to the choral conducting activity, awareness and information gained from structured teaching and learning. All these attributes feature prominently in the model.

Where the panels were providing evaluation of the video material, it is apparent that comments on the behavioural and interpersonal skills of those observed were the prime focus of most panel members in Panels 1 and 2. Here members of both panels tended to write, particularly when observing the student conductors, about their teaching styles, these being represented in the descriptors of the model. Panel 3 members generally included fuller details of musical matters, such as attention to intonation, tonal quality and correction of inaccuracies. An important point regarding the panel evaluations is that there is more likely to be an objective stance taken with regard to the indication of weaknesses and problems. The researcher had got to know some
of the students over the two weeks in Utah, talked to them, conducted and rehearsed them and socialised with some.

While there may be a risk that observations resulting from participant observations may be less than wholly objective, the nature of the participant process promotes the notion (outlined in Chapter 5) that the researcher enters the field as a subjective but informed practitioner. Video recordings cannot convey all the finer details of a class or rehearsal situation, nor do they convey adequately every nuance of a conductor's communication or the interactive environment that is established. A possible further variable is that a conductor's behaviour during a session that s/he knows is being recorded may not be wholly representative of behaviour in a session not subject to recording. The evaluations made by three separate individual panels of observers provide confirmatory evidence of the participant observer's evaluations, as well as adding further perspectives.

The assessments of Panel 3 indicate clearly that the relationship between the length of a conductor's experience and his/her effectiveness is not reliably linear. This is evident from the ratings given to Debbie (in her second year as a high school choral director: mean rating score = 8.0) and Ed (a university professor and choral director of long experience: mean rating score = 4.6). However, the lower ratings given to the three student conductors (mean scores = 3.4: 4.8: 4.7 respectively) do suggest the existence of a general relationship between experience and effectiveness.

The ratings given by the five experienced observers (A,B,C,D,E) of Panel 3 for each observed conductor are shown in fig. 6.2.
It must be recognised that rating scales are open to a number of subjective influences. Firstly, differences in ratings awarded may not simply reflect differences in opinions among observers so much as differences in perceptual focus, which may then give rise to differences in their ratings. Some observers may have attended to the behaviour of the choir, while others may have attended to the behaviour of the conductor. Ed, for example, who received ratings ranging from 3 to 6, was working with a choir of music students who would have extended musical experience and be skilled in music-reading. A conductor-oriented observer might have awarded the lower of his ratings, while an observer who was choir-oriented may have awarded the higher ones.

Secondly, it must be acknowledged that observers differ in the way they use rating scales. Some are ‘conservative raters’, who use only a restricted part of the scale, say between 5 and 9 on a 10-point scale (e.g. observers D and E), while others are ‘extended raters’, those who are more adventurous and use the full range of the scale (observers A, B and C).
are ‘cautious raters’ who use only the lower part of the scale, reserving the upper range for hypothetical exceptional performances; others may feel constrained from not wanting to award a pejorative grade, even when performances are poor (D could be classed as one of these). The chart (fig. 6.3) shows that the panel used the ratings in different ways, observers A, B and C using the rating scale more extensively than D and E. Nevertheless, each observer rated Leanna, Jerry and Debbie in the highest three and each one of these higher than Ed, Kelly, Heidi and Adam.

Validation of the model of conductor effectiveness must rest crucially on clear evidence that observers show significant agreement as to the relative effectiveness of conductors whom they see. Absence of any clearly agreed hierarchy would render the model meaningless. Using the ratings assigned by the five observers of Panel 3 for each conductor, inter-observer correlations were computed for their rank orderings of conductor merit. These showed a mean correlation of $\rho = .745$ (range: $\rho = .582$ to .919; the majority of these significant $p< .01$) thus indicating a high level of agreement as to the relative conductor effectiveness.
When the ranges and means of rankings were examined it was clear that two groups of conductors had been identified: one group having been assigned rankings above the median rank of 3.5 (n=3, Debbie, Jerry, Leanna) and a second group with assigned rankings below this median point (n=4, Adam, Ed, Heidi, Kelly). Means and distributions of rankings are shown in fig. 6.4.

![Fig. 6.4. Range of rankings awarded by observers of Panel 3 for seven conductors](image)

When rankings were examined by rank-correlation methods on a simple binary-ranking basis (i.e. above-median / below-median) the mean inter-judge correlations were found to range between \( \rho = .935 \) to \( \rho = 1.00 \) (all significant \( p > .0001 \)) with mean \( \rho = .974 \), thus indicating near perfect agreement between observers as to whether conductors fell into the more effective / less effective groups. Application of the Sign Test (Dixon & Massey, 1951) to these data showed the differences between above-median and below-median groups in frequency of identification of elements of the model to be highly significant \( p < .0001 \).
Using this binary basis for separation of the above - below median groups, those elements of the model that had been identified in the observations and comments of Panel 3 members were plotted visually (fig. 6.5) (\(\checkmark\) = characteristic observed to be present; \(x\) = characteristic specifically noted to be absent).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>descriptors</th>
<th>above-median ranking for conductor effectiveness (n=3)</th>
<th>below-median ranking for conductor effectiveness (n=4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>knowledge of choral repertoire</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark\checkmark\checkmark)</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark) xx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understand human voice</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark) xx</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark) xxxxxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clear image of music</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark\checkmark)</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark\checkmark) x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aesthetic potential</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark) x</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark) xx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nature of own role</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark\checkmark)</td>
<td>(\checkmark) x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aural &amp; error detection skills</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark\checkmark)</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark) x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clear intentions of tempo</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark\checkmark\checkmark)</td>
<td>xx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrate accurately</td>
<td>(\checkmark)</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark) xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>warm up singers</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark\checkmark)</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark) x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>establish character of music</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark\checkmark)</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark) xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>create positive environment</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark\checkmark)</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark\checkmark\checkmark) xx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communicate clearly</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark) x</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark) xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encourage healthy singing</td>
<td>(\checkmark)</td>
<td>(\checkmark) xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enable choral &amp; vocal development</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark) xx</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark) xxxxxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make singers feel confident</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark\checkmark)</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark) xx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skill to pace rehearsal</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark\checkmark)</td>
<td>(\checkmark) xxxxxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expect highest standards</td>
<td>(\checkmark\checkmark)</td>
<td>(\checkmark) xxx</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 6.5 Elements of the model observed by Panel 3

In every case, save for two characteristics (i.e. 'create a positive environment; 'encourage healthy singing') these elements of the model were identified.
more frequently in the case of the above-median group than for the below-median group. The two exceptions appeared to be identified equally between the groups. However, the above-median group was smaller by one member \((n=3)\) than the below-median group \((n=4)\) so that a judgement of equal presence of two characteristics between the groups is probably parsimonious to the above-median group.

As we have seen above, Panel 3 in particular have indicated by the unanimity of their comments, ratings and consequent rankings, that a number of attributes of the model need to be in place in order for a conductor, experienced or less-experienced, to be effective in rehearsal. It was noticeable, however, that experience does provide the conductor with a degree of confidence in dealing with musical-technical issues during the rehearsal, if not always most effectively. It must, nevertheless, be recognised that the video observations were taken at a particular time in a particular rehearsal context, and analysis of the observations refer only to what is revealed in the extract and in relation to each other. A number of variables must be taken into consideration. For example, the students conductors were rehearsing with young singers with whom they were not familiar, while the others were working with their regular choirs. The comments, ratings and ranking should, therefore, not be taken as absolute, conclusive evidence of the overall effectiveness of the individual conductors in question.

**6.4 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH ACTIVITIES**

The interviews, questionnaire and observations in particular have contributed towards the development and validation of the model of an effective choral conductor, as set out at the end of Chapter 4. The research has been carried out with those who conduct choirs at various levels, those who have been conducted, those who teach conducting and those who are students of conducting. The research has sought to determine (i) the principles underpinning the choral conductor’s role, including musical and vocal knowledge, (ii) the musical-technical skills, (iii) the behaviour patterns, interpersonal skills and understanding that is needed for a choral conductor to be effective. It has discovered that better choral practice will be a more likely outcome if consideration is given to the knowledge, skills and
behaviour patterns required of an effective choral conductor.

The model has been tested for validity as follows:

**Philosophical Principles Underpinning Role**

- **a knowledge of the choral repertoire**
  *Interviews:* RS; DB; CR; AO (4/8)
  *Questionnaires:* 92%
  *Observations:* particularly evident in the experienced conductors, though in the preparation of classes, the students were clearly aware of appropriate repertoire for the groups.

- **a knowledge of the human voice**
  *Interviews:* DB; GM; SM; DT; JH (5/8)
  *Questionnaires:* 100%
  *Observations:* as with above, this was evident generally in the way in which conductors warmed-up the voices before rehearsing as well as giving cues about how to use particular timbres etc.; this was noticeable with experienced conductors.

- **an image of the music prior to rehearsal**
  *Interviews:* RS; DB; DT; GM; AO; JH (6/8)
  *Questionnaires:* 92.5%
  *Observations:* Students in classes were instructed to prepare the music and know the score, where such an image was lacking the rehearsals were a little unfocussed (see some student conductors in the junior high school).

- **an awareness of the aesthetic potential of the music**
  *Interviews:* RS; DB; DT; SM (4/8)
  *Questionnaires:* 96%
  *Observations:* conductors used gesture to indicate their understanding of the music in this respect; teaching in practical situations enabled this to develop.

- **an understanding of the nature of the conductor’s role**
  *Interviews:* RS; DB; AO; SM; JH (5/8)
  *Questionnaires:* 100%
  *Observations:* particularly evident in experienced conductors.
Musical-Technical

• appropriate aural and error detection skills

  Interviews: RS (1/8)
  Questionnaires: 93%

  Observations: this is skill is context dependent with students generally being able to hear and detect errors in the school choirs; finer error detection evident with the experienced conductors, who dealt with stylistic issues, choral blend, diction and articulation.

• the ability to give clear intentions of tempo, dynamics, phrasing through appropriate gesture

  Interviews: RS; GM; SM; DT (4/8)
  Questionnaires: 100%

  Observations: important attribute dealt with in student classes; gestures throughout all observations were clear.

• the ability to demonstrate accurately and musically

  Interviews: SM; DB; GM; AO (4/8)
  Questionnaires: 99%

  Observations: the need for this was not always reflected in the conductors; some failed to demonstrate vocally.

• recognition of the importance of warming-up voices

  Interviews: (0/8)
  Questionnaires: 99%

  Observations: evident in all observed situations except the U of U a cappella choir class; some controversy over the purpose of warm-ups as indicated by Panel 3 assessments.

• strategies for establishing the character of the music at the earliest opportunity

  Interviews: DT; RS; GM; DB; SM (5/8)
  Questionnaires: 88.5%

  Observations: this is dependent on the stage of rehearsing, though some students did well to capture something of the character of music when introducing their arrangements to the school choirs. The high school conductors involved the singers in this through discussion.
Behavioural - Interpersonal

• the capacity to create a positive non-threatening environment
  Interviews: AO; DB; JH (3/8)
  Questionnaires: 100%
  Observations: this was noticeably evident in the all the choral groups, especially with conductors of school choirs, with the exception of the U of U a cappella choir.

• the capacity to communicate clearly and unambiguously
  Interviews: RS; CR; GM; AO; DT (5/8)
  Questionnaires: 100%
  Observations: much concentration on this was apparent in the final rehearsing of the U of U Concert Chorale and with the experienced conductors.

• the desire to encourage healthy singing
  Interviews: DB; GM; SM (3/8)
  Questionnaires: 100%
  Observations: as with knowledge of the voice, this attribute was evident in a number of ways in many observations; less experienced student conductors did not seem as able to deal with these issues.

• the capacity to enable choral and vocal development
  Interviews: GM; SM; DB (3/8)
  Questionnaires: 97%
  Observations: generally a developing feature with students in the schools and notably evident with some of the more experienced conductors.

• making singers feel confident and comfortable
  Interviews: CR; AO; (2/8)
  Questionnaires: 100%
  Observations: particularly noticeable with the two high school choral directors.
• the skill to pace rehearsals effectively

*Interviews:* CR; JH (2/8)

*Questionnaires:* 94%

*Observations:* experienced conductors were able to do this well, but this was variable among the students; where pacing was weak attention and focus of singers suffered. Particularly effective was Jerry’s skill and experience in rehearsal pacing as evidenced with the large Tabernacle Choir.

• the expectation of the highest standards possible

*Interviews:* GM; DT; JH (3/8)

*Questionnaires:* 88%

*Observations:* particularly evident in the final rehearsal of the U of U Concert Chorale, Weber State University groups and the Tabernacle Choir, where experienced conductors were in operation.

From the data presented, it is evident that some of the attributes are important in defining an effective choral conductor. However, there is insufficient consensus amongst the data to establish a hierarchy of attributes. For example, in the report of the interviews (see 6.1), only one interviewee focussed to any significant extent on the importance of aural and error detection skills, whereas, had each interviewee been asked specifically about such skills, it is likely that each would have agreed to their importance. Similarly, no interviewee referred to the importance of warming up voices in rehearsal, yet if asked, it is also likely that such activity would feature in at least some of their rehearsals. The responses to the questionnaires tended to support the descriptors, there being no request for a prioritisation of attributes. The results have thus proved the necessity for triangulation in the search for a definition, as reliance on only one source of information provides an incomplete picture. The observations have shown that particular attributes are important at particular points in the rehearsal process and in particular contexts. As the testing of the model’s validity stands, the main consensus within each category, noted either by its presence or absence, appears as follows: (i) a knowledge of the choral repertoire and the human voice as well as a prior image of the music and an understanding of the conductor’s role; (ii) the ability to give clear intentions of tempo etc.; (iii) the ability to communicate clearly. While these are important, other attributes are also.
As school concerts and musical performances feature increasingly in the public profile of schools in the UK and, with the inclusion of performing in the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum (1995), it is necessary to give consideration to training music teachers in conducting within higher education, initial teacher education programmes and beyond, especially if such music making is to be effective and of a musically high standard (Durrant, 1994; Durrant & Welch, 1995, Durrant, 1996). Evidence from the Utah observations points to the importance of teacher training in this respect. It is a model that could be beneficial to the UK system. It is not sufficient to rely on a languishing tradition of singing in schools and churches in the UK, rather it is important to bring awareness of the knowledge, skills and behaviour patterns necessary for effective choral conducting with expert education. It is too important an issue to be left to chance. The next chapter revisits the model in the light of the activities presented in this chapter and explores some of the learning processes appropriate to the development of a choral conducting curriculum.
CHAPTER SEVEN
TOWARDS A CHORAL CONDUCTING CURRICULUM

Following a recapitulation of the model of effective choral conducting and its validation through the presentation and analysis of the research activities, this chapter will focus on the some of the learning processes, methods and procedures implicit in the development of a choral conducting curriculum in higher education programmes.

7.1 THE MODEL REVISITED

The outcomes of the interviews, questionnaires and observations combine to support the validity of the model of the effective choral conductor, outlined at the end of Chapter 4. While no clear consensus or hierarchy of attributes was in evidence (see the summary of Chapter 6), there was no contradiction of the descriptors of the model, rather differing emphases according to the nature of the conversation in the interviews and the situation and context of the observations. The constructs of the model were derived from the review of methodology and research literature, as well as from deliberation of the types of knowing - knowing-in-action, tacit knowing and the craft knowledge - implicit and explicit in choral conducting activity, and also the nature and style of human compatible communication with references to the scientific 'bodymind' processes. The elements of the model that characterize the attributes of the effective choral conductor can be grouped according to (i) philosophical attributes or principles underpinning his/her role; (ii) musical-technical attributes; (iii) behavioural and interpersonal attributes. In order for a choral conductor to be effective, it is necessary that these attributes proposed in the model are in place and are demonstrable at appropriate times, as demanded by the music performed. The model, though derived from 'reality', is not absolute. The perceived absence of one or more of the attributes does not necessarily imply that the conductor is ineffective. The difference in conducting effectiveness that experience will make needs to be recognized. Such a difference was noticeable in the observations, where the experience of two school choral directors and the conductor of the Tabernacle Choir gave an unaccountable sense of confidence to the proceedings which was not so apparent in the less experienced conductors.
From the historical and research literatures, a number of principles have been identified which define aspects of the effective conductor (Chapters 2 and 3). Historical evidence points to the need for a ‘time-keeper’ in various eras in music performance and, in the nineteenth century, a growing need for an interpreter of music. Comprehensive knowledge of the musical score therefore became a significant part of the conductor’s attributes. Today it has become increasingly important, especially in Europe, for the conductor to have knowledge of stylistic and historical issues in relation to performance practice. That Handel’s choral music may require a different approach from that of Brahms’ in terms of articulation, treatment of dotted-notes or vocal timbre, for example, will be dependent on knowledge of appropriate performance practice. The principles and musical-technical requirements of a conductor have changed and increased with that knowledge and with the increasing technical complexities of the musical score (e.g. complex harmonies and progressions, atonal writing, instrumental and vocal textures, rhythmic and metre variations and complexities). Such musical knowledge is often taught through score analysis in music programmes in higher education throughout the UK. The significant output and widespread availability of recordings of renaissance and baroque music by small choirs of authoritative and authentic professional performances, reflects this scholarship. An absolute understanding of the function and role of the conductor is an important philosophical attribute.

Through varied means he endeavours to instil life and vitality into the music... the end result of which is a truly thrilling and genuinely aesthetic experience for both the participants and the listening audience. 

[Garretson, 1981: 5]

The musical-technical competences of the conductor require an ability not only to keep time, but also to identify errors and demonstrate efficiently how to rectify them. Also important is the ability to gesture appropriately and unambiguously, so that, as exemplified in the conducting of Nikisch (Boult, 1963 - cited in Chapter 2), it would be impossible for anyone to sing or play staccato when the conductor is indicating gesturally a legato. Such technical competences need to be brought to the attention of conducting students where they can be developed alongside relevant motor and aural skills.

Much reference is made to the personality and behavioural traits of the
conductor, from the ‘striking personality’ of musicians like William Boyce in the eighteenth century, to twentieth century conductors like Bernstein and Karajan. Boult, in his manual, made an analogy of rehearsing with teaching, claiming that the conductor should be able to stimulate and motivate (Chapter 2). He also believed in the idea of creating a positive environment, which would facilitate good working relationships between conductor and performers. This would be done by making positive comments in preference to negative ones in rehearsal. Boult also suggests that it is preferable to aim to release the character of the music in rehearsal rather than adopting a ‘perfecting-bar-by-bar’ method. Such an approach accords with some of the research findings and method texts reviewed in Chapter 3 (Thurman, 1992; Gumm, 1991; Pfautsch, 1973) in formulating evidence of effective conducting at all levels. Particular interpersonal skills can be shaped by the way language is used, the implication being that students of conducting can be made aware of the influence they have over singers through their careful and considered comments. Awareness of this is teachable. Most of the biographical accounts of leading conductors refer to their abilities to inspire, and although it is not within the capacity of any teacher to teach students to develop or generate charisma, it is possible to reflect upon and develop certain behavioural and interpersonal skills and patterns of operation that will be appropriate for getting the best out of singers individually and collectively.

The philosophy and principles underpinning the most successful choral activities observed in this research study correlates with the historical, biographical, methodological and research evidence outlined, and embraces the notion that attributes of an effective conductor are teachable. The teaching classes and choirs observed embodied many of the attributes outlined in the model. So that a consideration of developing a curriculum for the choral conductor can be established, it is necessary to distinguish those attributes that can be taught from those that cannot. Exploration of the learning processes involved in particular musical skills and knowledge will provide evidence for the teachability of them for the student choral conductor. While experience will supply a great deal of cognizance for the conductor of what works or does not work in particular situations, it is the belief that conductors can become trapped in an orbit of ignorance and be unable to perceive that certain strategies for dealing with those particular situations are embedded in teachable knowledge and trainable skills. How
does learning of a musical score take place? How can error detection skills be trained? How can appropriate interpersonal skills and behaviours become part of the characteristics of the effective choral conductor?

7.2 LEARNING PROCESSES

In order to build a foundation for a choral conducting curriculum, the following section will examine some of the learning processes involved in three significant, teachable aspects of an effective conductor's qualities depicted in the model, namely: (i) principles of musical knowledge: learning the musical score, (ii) musical-technical: developing appropriate aural and motor skills, (iii) behavioural: developing communication skills appropriate to the conductor-singer relationship, including motivating the singer.

7.2.1. LEARNING THE MUSICAL SCORE

One of the attributes commonly agreed among interviewees and respondents to the questionnaire was that the conductor should have knowledge of the music. What it is to 'know' a musical score remains undefined. Whether it is a mental visual image of the pages of musical notation, an inner aural image of the required sound or an insight into the composer's expressive and structural intentions, highlights the complexity of addressing the issue of teaching knowledge of the musical score. To know a score for conducting purposes is to acquire elements of mental and aural images with reference to the composer's intentions. However, the imagery for the conductor is not just to do with what is written on the page of the score. Tonal imagery is an image the conductor possesses of the quality of the sound. A mental conception of how, for example in the opening of Bruckner's motet Locus Iste, the balance of the choral voices should sound will enable the conductor to match the actual sound heard in the rehearsal with his/her tonal image.
The experienced conductor will have an image of the spacing of the chord, even possibly ‘hear’ it at its actual pitch. S/he will have a pre-conceived notion of the tempo, the required timbre, the shaping of the first phrase with perhaps a subtle expansion of the long held chords. The conductor will, with experience, be able to listen and adjust the balance and tonal quality accordingly through gesture and imagery. The creation of appropriate kinaesthetic imagery and gesture will facilitate a ‘bodymind’ condition in the singers, which in turn will enhance, for example, the intonation, preserving the distinct major tonality in the first and fourth bars. It is knowledge of the workings of the voice and of how psychologically to deal with singers in the rehearsal situation that will determine the successful tuning of the opening phrase. The conductor will need to be able to hear the tuning, match it to the inner image and explore appropriate strategies and helpful gestures, perhaps rehearse with particular vowel sounds, for example, in order to focus the sound. All these approaches require formal knowledge, craft knowledge and knowing-in-action which can be taught and will be enhanced by experience which cannot be taught. It also requires a nexus with aural skill development, which will be explored below.

A research study on assessing the potential relationship between mental imagery and conducting was carried out by Jackson (1994) (reported in 197...
in Chapter 3). Her conclusions to the study proposed that, as novice conductors were capable of vivid musical imagery (op.cit.:148), a conducting curriculum might consider incorporating the use of musical imagery to enhance student conducting effectiveness. The implications here are that the teaching of conducting should go beyond technical skills and attempt to provide a more imaginative and creative approach using imagery in relation to the musical intentions.

Marvin (1988) suggests that score study has structural analysis at its core, ‘the study of the relationship of the total design to the details that order its architecture’ (op.cit.:20). What is also important for the conductor is an understanding of interaction of the elements of pitch, duration, timbre and intensity with the text of the choral score, which he refers to as the ‘dialectical tension’ between words and music (op.cit.:21). How such learning is achieved is less certain than what ought to be achieved. But it is the ‘how’ of the learning process that must now be attended to. Research has given some insight into the way in which knowledge of the musical score is attained. Wine (1994) made a study of score miniaturisation as a pedagogy for choral conducting, stating that most conducting students find it difficult to work directly from a full conductor's score, and prepared a conducting curriculum of twenty four musical examples representing a variety of conducting gestures and styles. Crowe (1994) and Van Oyen (1994) carried out experimental research studies into the relationship of methods of score preparation with the ability to detect errors (see Chapter 3 for a more detailed review). Supporting Wine's hypothesis, Crowe's research concluded that the study of a score with a correct aural example was a significantly more effective method than study with score alone or with no score. Students benefit from hearing accurate versions of the music being studied in their pursuit of score knowledge. In particular, Van Oyen's study concluded that further research was needed to look at how error detection for the conductor might more effectively be taught, as success in students’ error detection abilities appeared to be independent of the method used for score study.

Knowledge of the structure of the musical score will enable the conductor to rehearse more effectively, conveying the direction of the music to the singers and ultimately the audience. One of the major tasks of the conductor at the beginning of each piece or movement is to choose and set a
tempo that is appropriate to the music and the capabilities (in terms of breathing and articulation) of the singers. This has to take into consideration not only the expressive character of the piece, but also its structural implications, a tension and resolution later on, for example. Likewise, setting the pace of a fugue demands insight into the harmonic and polyphonic implications. Setting the tempo will also require consideration of, for example, fast passages that appear later in the score, in conjunction with singers’ collective capabilities. The ‘Kyrie’ of the Requiem by Mozart, for example, has a stately opening subject, but the conductor on setting the tempo will have to bear in mind that a second fugue subject immediately follows with extensive semiquaver passages, which will require the choir to sing with meticulous, rhythmic articulation. Knowing the score also means developing awareness of how to build a musical climax, how to delay or move on certain phrases, where to pause in order to make musical sense. The final movement of Verdi’s Requiem provides an example of how a musical climax is built by the judicious use of crescendo, accelerando and delay in order to emphasise the momentous musical and emotional climax. Not all performance indications are supplied by Verdi in the score, therefore the conductor has to understand the structure and potential of the music in order to convey its drama, tensions, resolutions and expressive dimensions, as well as acknowledging the technical demands that the soprano soloist and the chorus have to encounter.

Swanwick (1994) in his analysis of the nature of musical knowledge, refers to Croce’s theory (1900) that knowledge has both ‘logical’ and ‘intuitive’ elements. He suggests that intuitive knowledge is central to learning, and that it has a significant function in scientific as well as artistic understanding. The logical elements of the conductor’s score study are, accordingly, founded upon the intuitive elements, which are fundamentally the ‘unreasoned’ creative and imaginative insights into music. The basis on which a conductor functions is concerned with those intuitive (instinctive, visceral) insights into the music first. Score analysis, the logical element of knowing the music, builds upon the foundation of intuitive knowing to give impetus to the transfer of the composer’s intentions to the conductor’s rehearsal. Whether musical knowledge can be as sharply defined is still debatable. The conductor can approach a score from a basic ‘instinct’ of its musical worthiness; however, it is the researcher’s belief that it is an array of experiential knowledge that will inform the conductor’s instinct.
Further insight into the nature of musical knowing is provided by Elliott (1995) who outlines several types of knowing, arguing that musical understanding, or 'musicianship' arises from a 'related network of knowings' (op.cit.:68). This analysis of musical knowing is applicable to the learning processes of the conductor. Elliott proposes that musicianship comes from procedural development of four basic types of knowledge; these are:

(i) **Formal musical knowledge**, which is largely concerned with the 'textbook' aspects of musical knowledge. Formal knowledge is in itself 'inert and unmusical' (op.cit.:61); it is a type of resource material, but is nevertheless an important component of the conductor's musicianship. Structural analysis and historical information provide a basis upon which the conductor can approach, rehearse and perform the music. Formal knowledge of musical style will, for example, enable the conductor to know that Purcell's music does not require or suit heavy vibrato, and that there are particular techniques and stylistic requirements in authentic baroque singing and playing. Similarly, formal historical knowledge of choral and instrumental performance practice in St. Mark's Venice in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may give the conductor information about the most suitable physical arrangement of the choir for a performance of the music of Gabrieli or Monteverdi. Such knowledge will also enable the conductor to be aware of the stylistic differences in performances of the *Requiem* of Mozart and Verdi.

(ii) **Informal musical knowledge** is the type of knowledge which is not available in text-books, but is particularly important for the conductor in the rehearsal. Informal musical knowledge is concerned with critical reflection, knowing when, for example, to make musical judgements, which is in itself dependent on understanding the context or musical situation. Elliott suggests that informal knowledge is 'situated' knowledge, and is related to formal knowledge, but is learnt by reflective practice, in this case, in the choral rehearsal situation, which - 'crystallizes in a student's efforts to develop practical solutions to realistic musical problems in relation to the standards, traditions, history and lore of a musical context' (op.cit.:64). A conductor may know about baroque articulation, for example, but will need to interpret such knowledge and reflect on when and how to convey this information to the choir. It may not be appropriate simply to tell them to articulate the notes,
when other technical issues are being dealt with. Such information will preferably be conveyed when the choir is ready for it; and such timing cannot be specified in advance, but is rather dependent on the conductor’s assessment of the situation and consequent decision. This type of informal knowing can be compared with the ‘craft’ knowing outlined in Chapter 4.

(iii) **Impressionistic musical knowledge** is the type of knowing concerned with the emotional responses to the music, non-verbal impressions and experiences from contact with the music. It is perhaps the type of knowledge that Swanwick refers to as ‘intuition’. Elliott (as Durrant & Welch, 1995) states that the cognitive and affective domains of musical experience and learning are inseparable - ‘musicianship includes educated or knowledgeable feelings for the nature of music making and the nature of musical works in the context of definite musical cultures’ (op.cit.:65). The conductor in this context will act and make judgements based on intuition or emotional considerations. This will determine the shape of an expressive phrase, the feel of the music at a particular moment. As with informal knowledge, this impressionistic knowledge is situated in reflective, thoughtful action, important in development of the aptitude to make musical choices, evaluations and judgements.

(iv) **Supervisory musical knowledge** is the over-arching knowledge that a musician or student uses to consider his/her musical development and needs - ‘it develops primarily in educational contexts centered on musical actions, interactions and transactions with life-like musical challenges’ (Elliott, 1995: 67). The conductor in this context will make overall judgements about the repertoire of the choir; consideration will be given to the musical development and needs of the choir, balancing, for example, a challenging choice of music with realistically achievable goals, as well as offering a varied (in terms of style and genre) repertoire.

Elliott’s philosophy proposes that musical understanding - that is musicianship - including knowledge of the musical score, will develop with practice and reflective and thoughtful actions in addition to formal procedures and analysis. Some of the implications for musical score preparation and associated learning process are that the student’s own creative insights and aesthetic (not Elliott’s term) response to the whole music provides the
motivation for logical score analysis. It is arguable that what motivates a conductor to conduct a piece of music is this insight - the initial emotional response to the music from which a desire to find out more will follow. Analysis will then be concerned with pulling the music apart, dealing with the intricacies of harmonic language and structure, melodic and rhythmic patterns and sequences, texture and timbre. From logical analysis of the score, further insight into the likely musical and vocal problems in rehearsal will become apparent. However, it is the actual making of music in a particular choral context that will provide a more complete musical knowledge and musical understanding of the score. The score learning process is inextricably connected with practical application of more formal study in a particular musical context. Score learning and conducting cannot therefore be taught or learnt effectively in a sterile, non-music-making environment.

7.2.2 DEVELOPING APPROPRIATE AURAL SKILLS

Aural development, largely in the shape of testing procedures, has featured in a variety of music education settings for many years. The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, for example, includes aural tests in its practical examinations. These have been to ensure candidates have a good ear with regard to rhythmic, intervalic and melodic perception, and also, for the more advanced grades, harmonic perception. Most public music examinations taken at ages 16 and 18 in the UK also include a significant, discrete aural testing component. It has been long recognised that aural skills form a fundamental component of musicianship (Thackray, 1980).

The aural skills that an effective choral conductor requires will, of necessity, be related to the nature and competence of the choir being conducted. These are concerned not only with the identification of errors in rehearsal and accurate demonstration of corrections, but also with the detection of stylistic inappropriateness, such as liberal vibrato in a Purcell verse anthem. Nevertheless, it is the training for these skills that is of interest. Traditionally, the UK music examination system has ensured a high standard of aural expectations through testing, while not, as a corollary, ensuring a high standard of aural training. Teaching aural at school and within higher education has largely involved testing students on their ability to reproduce on paper melodies, rhythm patterns, counterpoint and harmonic passages.
without a contextual reference (Thackray, 1980; Pratt, 1987). The examination has usually dictated the teaching method and style. Recently, some music examinations have adopted a more imaginative approach to aural perception with tests on the identification of variations to a given extract and such like, which will more adequately prepare students in their role as conductor in the rehearsal situation.

Kliwer (1974) states that aural training is integral to musicianship and that it ‘develops aural sensitivity, acuity and understanding’ (op.cit.:xi). In compiling a book of aural training procedures, he suggests that all musical concepts should be dealt with as ‘entities and interacting entities’ (ibid) in a musical context and that students should be made aware of all dimensions of music in their aural development. Thackray (1980) suggests that the problem with aural training for most teachers and students is to find an appropriate method that works in developing students’ abilities. Repeated testing is usually invalid, merely confirming ‘with depressing consistency and regularity that some students do well and others badly’ (op.cit.:4). In his outline for a course in aural training, Thackray proposes the need for a broad approach to include ‘perceiving’ (both by ear and eye), ‘singing’, ‘playing’ (from notation and by ear) and ‘writing’ (from dictation, verbal instruction and ‘out of the head’), thus developing both practical and perceptive skills. He maintains that it is preferable to adopt a balanced and ‘multi-sensory’ approach to aural development, involving a range of activities such as playing by ear, improvising, transposing, while attending to a wide range of musical concepts, especially ones that are normally neglected in aural training, such as ‘tempo, phrasing, timbre, form, style and idiom’ (op.cit.:6).

Interesting research has been carried out in the unit for Research into Applied Musical Perception (RAMP) at Huddersfield Polytechnic (now University), where a course designed to make aural training of more interest and of more use to music students has been established (Cargill & Pratt, 1991).1 The course is involved with the analysis, synthesis and application of aural skills over an academic year with three assessment points to measure ‘the application of knowledge rather than the accuracy of response’ (op.cit.:23). As with Thackray, building awareness of musical elements other

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1 The primary task of the unit was to explore the possibility of setting up undergraduate aural training courses that would fundamentally differ from those of conventional examining boards. See also Pratt,G. (1990) Aural Awareness: Principles and Practice UK: Open University and Henson, M. (ed) (1987) RAMP Musical Awareness: Conference on Aural Training Proceedings UK: Huddersfield Polytechnic.
than the pitch/rhythm based ones is the aim; Cargill and Pratt maintain that elements such as ‘texture and timbre, compass, range and density, the placing of sounds in space and the pace of large scale musical events’ (op.cit.:22) are often ignored in the teaching of aural skills. Students need to acknowledge the importance of these ‘other’ musical elements as well be able to develop skills in pitch and rhythmic awareness and perception. This ideally should be done gradually, systematically and on a continuum that is geared to the individual. An aural curriculum that is only concerned with a prescribed set of tests that are regularly administered without reference to the real capabilities of the student will only preserve a sense of inadequacy in that student. As with any learning experience, the individual student must be actively involved in the development of his/her own aural skills, not merely be the recipient of a battery of tests. As Peters and Miller (1982) point out:

Learning is based on experience and cannot occur efficiently without the active involvement of the individual. People learn by undergoing and becoming involved in specific musical experiences and musical problem-solving tasks. The order in which these tasks is presented is of crucial importance.

[Peters & Miller, 1982: 119]

The RAMP unit process allows the students to work at their own pace in order to master transcription skills, in preference to the more traditional procedure of hearing a musical extract played (usually on the piano) a set number of times. So, as exemplified in the article, students may listen to a top-class recording of a musical extract, listening for a wide range of features, not only melody, harmony and rhythm. Initially students may be encouraged to concentrate on the identification of features, then the identification of practical and technical definitions, with demonstrations reflecting real musical experiences in preference to conventional aural tests. Graphic notation of musical examples is encouraged as is critical evaluation and assessment. The practical value of such an approach for the student conductor would seem greater than the more conventional procedures, which often fail to develop the students’ abilities, but rather concentrate on testing them.

Further development of the more contextualised aural training would be appropriate for choral conducting students with, for example, requirements for students to be able to sing all parts of a choral piece to demonstrate their
abilities in this area, to be able to pick out inaccuracies in rhythm, pitch and intonation in practice and to be able to hear and deal with matters of balance, blend and tonal colour. Supporting such an approach, Decker & Kirk (1988) consider the improvement of aural acuity as paramount to effective conducting, stating that the important aural skills include -

... listen specifically for vowel unification, clarity of consonants, harmonic balance, specific intonation problems both horizontally and vertically ... with careful concentration and through repeated efforts [the] conductor will improve the ability to hear more aspects of the music simultaneously and to diagnose problems accurately.

[op.cit.: 108]

Concentration, consequently, on the style and method of teaching to ensure real training and development in this field would be of benefit to the student conductor. This necessitates a progressive way of working aurally with frequent, formative and qualitative assessment. The use of CD and personalised listening equipment, as put forward by Cargill and Pratt, would mean that aural training would have less of a competitive element to it, and students would be able to work at their own level and interest without feeling inadequate because of their lack of absolute pitch, for example. Such methods could be adopted in formal assessment procedures as well as in the classroom. Research on the relationship of knowledge of the musical score with the ability to detect errors was carried out by Crowe (1994) and Van Oyen (1994) (see above and Chapter 3). Further research and development on applicable styles and methods of aural training would be welcome.

7.2.3 DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Developing a communication skills curriculum in a choral conducting context is problematic; yet, anecdotal comments on what makes a conductor effective regularly refer to behavioural traits, personality and communication skills.\(^3\)

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\(^2\) The International Baccalaureate Music Examination (since 1992) has a listening component, where students have personal cassette recorders during the examination, in order to listen individually to the musical extracts as many times as necessary to answer the questions.

\(^3\) The researcher’s own seminars on choral conducting with students and teachers (at Roehampton Institute, Goldsmith’s College and Trinity College of Music in London and elsewhere) normally start by listing what the participants consider to be characteristics of an effective conductor; responses predominantly refer to personality and communication skills.
Building awareness in students on what behavioural traits and actions are appropriate for choral singing is nevertheless necessary. In a similar way that a hospital doctor will develop a suitable ‘bedside manner’ to give patients and relatives unpleasant information about a medical condition, so a choral conductor will need to gain mechanisms and strategies to improve a choir’s singing, yet establish an environment in which the singer does not feel threatened. The nature of verbal and non-verbal communication in the choral situation has been explored in Chapter 4.

It has been discovered, particularly through the research of Thurman et al. (1992), that gesture, facial expression, verbal and non-verbal language all play a significant part in the development of successful, tension-free choral singing. This has implications for the training of student choral conductors; building awareness of these issues is of paramount importance. It is not sufficient to rely on the innate personality and behavioural traits of the student conductor, but rather, through experiencing appropriate exemplary conducting and rehearsing, a student will gain insight and develop awareness of what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Also, formal knowledge and information of the workings of the human voice will enable the student conductor to comprehend the impact on individuals and groups of particular behaviours psychologically and physiologically.

To return to Elliott (1995), six strategies are put forward highlighting a model of teacher-student interactions. These strategies are constructive ways of considering teaching methodology in the context of developing choral communication skills in student conductors in particular, though also in music education practice in general. He outlines the strategies as (i) modeling: which involves reciprocal teaching and learning, where the students can observe good practice, and the teacher moves the students towards the model; (ii) coaching: here interaction occurs between student and teacher as the task is being performed, involving talking, reminding, prompting and moving students towards the artistic goal; (iii) scaffolding: where students are supported in their endeavours and consequent fading: where the teacher’s role becomes less prominent; (iv) articulating: which involves the student in expressing their musical ideas and solutions to problems; (v) comparative reflection: where the student is encouraged to consider other ideas as an alternative to fulfilling the musical aim; (vi) exploring: which is concerned
with identifying other 'subgoals' and 'subproblems' to enable them to take musical ownership of the activity (op. cit.: 278-280). While these strategies of teaching interactions provide insight into the nature of interaction, the correlation with the choral conductor / singer interactions is less clear. There are times when, for example, the conductor is modeling, coaching, scaffolding and articulating, styles of interaction which have received support from researchers and writers (see Chapter 3). Consideration of the nature of such strategies can provide illumination of the role of conductor / teacher at different times (e.g. at the beginning of a series of rehearsals or near the performance) and contexts (e.g. with young inexperienced singers or with experienced professional singers). Student conductors will need to be enabled to evaluate reactions of their singers both in relation to process and musical product. This is ideally achieved through (i) gaining and assimilating information on how gesture, language and other means of communication influences the voice, choral singing and the attitude of the singers, (ii) observing good model choral conductors and (iii) reflective practice in the field.

With regard to the present study, it was apparent during many of the observations that singers were motivated and eager to improve when effective interaction between teacher/conductor and singers was in evidence. The interaction involved creating a positive learning environment through an acceptance and awareness of the singers' abilities, coupled with setting realistic musical challenges. A significant interpersonal skill in evidence was that, even with very early morning rehearsals, each teacher/conductor in the two high schools observed in Utah presented an enthusiastic countenance and discussed musical (and social) ideas with the class; this influenced the attitudes of the singers. Thurman (1992) puts forward some conditions for 'bodymind compatible learning', stating that the teaching learning situations will be more effective when there is:

1. a setting which provides for and encourages genuine, honest respect for all human beings;

2. a setting which provides for and encourages acceptance of everyone as unique, growing persons, regardless of their behaviour;
3. a setting which provides a balance between the needs of individuals and the needs of groups of individuals. [op.cit.: 95-96]

These conditions were met by many of the successful observed choirs. In a school situation, where the management and discipline of young people is also the concern of the teacher / conductor, the last condition is of particular significance in order to ensure that effective learning can take place.

These issues are not be simply concerned with the inherent personality of the conductor, but rather focus more on what behaviours and interpersonal skills will enhance the musical situation in rehearsal and performance. Related research studies include Donovan (1994) who investigated the interaction of personality traits in applied music teaching and found that students made more musical progress with extrovert teachers (see Chapter 3). Personality dimensions can be categorised as those which are ‘inherent’ and those which are ‘changeable’. The personality of the student choral conductor can, in effect, be manipulated to ensure that singers will respond in appropriate ways musically and behaviourally. Students can be encouraged to ‘act’ in an extrovert manner if particular musical outcomes are the consequence (Donovan, 1994; Strouse, 1987). Students, especially through the use of video recordings, might ideally be given opportunities to analyse their actions and behaviours in order to see if they actually present the desired image (Johnston, 1993). Basic communication skills, such as facial expressions, use of eye contact and use of humour, for example, deserve attention. It is apparent from the research literature and the research activities that these are attributes which form a significant part of the model of an effective choral conductor. For some students these will be attributes already in place as part of their own psychic order; for others it may be necessary to draw attention to the disadvantages of lacking communication skills and work towards improvement as would be done in other more cognitive areas of learning. Learning in this area can occur firstly through developing awareness of the problem and then secondly seeking ways to adjust behaviours appropriately. This, as part of Elliott’s ‘informal knowledge’, can really only be achieved in practical and reflective contexts. Such learning will go hand in hand with knowledge of the score, which will give the conductor confidence to look up at the singers rather than down into the musical score (see the assessments of the rehearsals of the university student conductors in Chapter 6).
7.2.4 MOTIVATING THE SINGER

Informal discussion with people who conduct choirs suggests that many operate instinctively; and while a number of the attributes identified and outlined in the model can be found in the 'untrained' choral conductor, it is the conviction of the researcher that 'choral education'\(^4\) will have distinct benefits. It is the belief that, with choral education more people will become involved in singing activity, more people will sing efficiently and healthily and, as a consequence, standards and expectations of choral activity will rise. This is something that is surely desirable, and particularly so in schools, where, as indicated in the introduction to the study, singing appears to be on the decline.

The use of 'warm-ups', identified in the model and validated by the observations, have distinct benefits for motivating singers. The judicious use of physical exercises, stretching, massaging, breathing, with concurrent explanations, help to prepare the singer physically for vocal activity, 'break the ice' and release tensions, while vocalises and improvisations not only 'lubricate' the voice and prepare the singer vocally, but also themselves can stimulate and motivate. Such warm-up exercises can be fun (laughter relaxes the facial and neck muscles) and at the same time serve a technical, musical and psychological purpose.

Further work needs to be done on developing appropriate repertoire for school choirs in the UK, which will in itself motivate involvement. Some convincing work has been done in this area recently by Doreen Rao (1993), who, as an American music educator and choral conductor, has provided a 'performance-based textbook'\(^5\) available in the UK for classroom students and teachers. In it she explores repertoire and teaching strategies for motivating and developing singing skills in schools. In accordance with the bodymind theories outlined by Thurman (1992) and Hart (1983), Rao asserts that enjoyment, challenge and skill development are correlated. The message is

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\(^4\) This term is intended to reflect the concept of educating the choral practitioner holistically, as distinct from the notion of 'training' which is more concerned with the development of discrete, particular skills.

\(^5\) We Will Sing! Choral Music Experience for Classroom Choirs  London & New York: Boosey & Hawkes
that musical achievement will be the outcome when human compatible learning takes place. This is not to adopt a psychological stance for its own sake, but rather to explore the ways in which people learn effectively.

It is evident that many people have negative perceptions of their singing abilities, which are likely to stem from an encounter in the past, a negative and unwarranted comment, for example, with the underlying assumption that there was no mechanism for improving singing ability. Fixed patterns and attitudes are difficult to remove. It is knowledge of singing, awareness of the capacity to progress and develop in singing ability and an informed, almost scientific approach that will facilitate progression and development. It is the responsibility of the choral conductor, especially of amateur and young choirs, to understand and deal with singing progression and development, in order that the reluctant or unconfident singer can become less reluctant and more confident. To take a common difficulty, weak intonation, individual or collective, can be tackled in the choral rehearsal situation in constructive ways (involving, for example, the shaping of the hand to influence the shape of the mouth raising the soft palette, other gestures such as pulling an imaginary string out of the top of the head, concentrating on particular vowel sounds to focus the tuning: Durrant & Welch, 1995; Rao, 1993). This approach would be preferable to simply informing singers of the problem and leaving the responsibility with them, a particularly unhelpful reaction with inexperienced singers. It is the conductor who, according to the model, should know of such strategies and take the responsibility for improving the situation, and not merely rely on the singers themselves to solve the problem. Gestures, language and all forms of communication are therefore vital ingredients in the encounter, with people’s perceptions of themselves as valued singers dependent on the quality and style of feedback from the conductor.

In order to motivate singers effectively, attention will be needed in the area of repertoire. Choice of repertoire for choirs is often questionable, revealing a lack of awareness and knowledge of what is suitable vocally for particular groups. School choirs occasionally have to confront music that is inappropriate in terms of vocal range. Little understanding is shown of the adolescent changing voice and the implications on the young person’s capacity to sing certain music (Cooksey, 1992; Gackle, 1992). Teachers (and
students) are often heard to deal with the situation by asking young singers to sing loudly and often aggressively, not realising that there may well be a technical and vocal problem to deal with and not merely one of dynamics. It may be that the chosen piece does not lie easily within the vocal range of all the singers. Information regarding choice of repertoire is a complex one, dependent on a variety of considerations, but it is preferable for choirs to be able to sing something where a high standard is capable of being achieved, rather than to struggle through inappropriate, perhaps too difficult, repertoire poorly. Equally demoralising can be repertoire that offers insufficient challenge, too much unison singing for school choirs, for example, or where there is little qualitative feedback from the conductor. Conductors should be able to assess what is sufficiently challenging, yet within the reach of their choirs. Stylistic and aesthetic considerations should feature within this capacity. This approach will more likely ensure that quality interaction, Heidegger's 'dynamic happening', takes place.

7.3 SUMMARY

While it is not possible to enter into the field of learning theory, aural perception or personality traits in any depth, this chapter has set out to illuminate, to a small extent, some of the issues and theories that would influence the development of a choral conducting curriculum. Exploration of the learning processes associated with three particular areas identified in the model, namely (i) score preparation, (ii) aural skills and error detection and (iii) interpersonal skills, including motivating the singer has been made. It has found that score learning cannot only be achieved through formal teaching and study, but that the relevant knowledge is embedded in a practical, reflective context. Though formal knowledge is required in order to establish a foundation upon which to rehearse and perform music, the successful conductor will need to be able to transfer this knowledge through practice, thinking-in-action, making judgements and evaluating singers and self.

The implications for appropriate aural training have been put forward, proposing that students will work more effectively at their own rate with individual tasks that they perceive as relevant to practical music situations and contexts. Finally, the nature of communication and skills necessary for an effective choral conductor have been described in this and earlier chapters. It
is evident that awareness of how people learn and are motivated in a particular activity is a key attribute of the model that each effective choral conductor will need. There is a distinct correlation between singers' motivation and the conductor's choice of repertoire; such awareness will be especially relevant for conductors in the school and amateur contexts. While the area of communication skills may be perceived as the most likely 'unteachable' area, it is the belief, put forward in this thesis, that it is essential to arouse awareness of these issues and attributes in potential effective choral conductors, through appropriate learning in formal and informal settings. The essence of reflective teaching is a critical analysis of action in the light of available evidence, placing a premium on empathy and the recognition of cues from the behaviour of others. Certain attributes of the model have been further validated by consideration of the learning processes and teaching styles appropriate to the choral conducting situation. A choral conducting curriculum can now be designed and constructed focussing on the teachable attributes of the model.
CHAPTER EIGHT
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

8.1 DEVELOPING CONDUCTING COMPETENCES

In order to teach choral conducting successfully, it will be necessary to identify the skills and techniques of the effective conductor that are idiosyncratic to an individual and those that are transferable (i.e. teachable) to others. From the model and its validation, a series of competences (operational descriptors) are synthesised, which might enable an effective conducting curriculum to become established. It is not, however, to accept that such competences represent all there is to become an effective choral conductor, rather it enables the identification of specific qualities that take us further than the assumption that it is something entirely mystic and unteachable. The idea of profiling the professional competences of teachers on initial teacher training programmes has recently gained momentum in the UK. It has indeed proved to be a useful mechanism for highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the developing teacher. If choral conducting is to gain a place in teaching in the universities in the UK, then it must be clear in an assessment context exactly what skills are being developed and what learning outcomes are being planned. (Informal discussion with some student-conductors who have been examined in conducting in one context or another has revealed a lack of consistency in assessment procedures; solid criteria for assessment, or even assessment itself, has often been absent.) As with the assessment of student-teachers in the classroom, ticking boxes cannot provide a satisfactory representation of the abilities of the conductor as to how effectiveness is achieved. However, it is necessary for the moment to examine in closer detail some of the elements that enable us to move towards the model, especially in the educational context, although the philosophy of ‘indwelling’ (Polanyi) and the phenomenology of conducting, the ‘dynamic interaction’, should not be ignored. Attention to specific detail can, nevertheless, cultivate some of the conducting attributes that are considered singly important and which constitute part of the whole picture of an effective conductor. A competence is a skill or knowledge that is conspicuously operating in the relevant activity. This is the basis on which a teaching curriculum will be constructed in the aim for a model choral conductor. The competences are set out below according to the areas previously outlined in the model, though it should be understood
that a single competence is not unrelated to any in another area. The first set may also be categorised as 'cognitive' competences (Lonis, 1993), which may help provide a more tangible conception of the principles and knowledge underpinning a conductor's role.

8.1.1 PHILOSOPHICAL - COGNITIVE COMPETENCES

The effective student conductor should be able to: -

• understand and articulate a basic rationale underpinning the conducting role;
• display a knowledge of the choral repertoire through appropriate choice of music for the choral group;
• display a knowledge of the human voice, demonstrated by dealing with vocal issues in an informed manner;
• display an awareness of the aesthetic potential of the music, and understand the importance of effective communication of such to the choir through a variety of means;
• inform the choir of the historical contexts of the music;
• possess a clear image of the music prior to rehearsal;
• function as teacher as well as conductor.

8.1.2 MUSICAL - TECHNICAL COMPETENCES

The effective student conductor should be able to: -

• demonstrate aural skills, including the identification of incorrect rhythms and pitch;
• correct major and minor inaccuracies and problems: pitch, rhythm, intonation, balance and blend;
• display clear intention of tempo, metre, entries and endings through appropriate gesture;
• display the expressive character of music through appropriate gesture;
• demonstrate (singing and/or playing) accurately and musically;
• teach language, diction and textural nuance within the rehearsal setting;
• achieve rhythmic energy, agility and spontaneity within the musical structure;
• take into account stylistic considerations of the music through appropriate information and gesture.

8.1.3 BEHAVIOURAL - INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCES

The effective student conductor should be able to:
- create a positive non-threatening environment by careful and considered use of comments and feedback and making singers feel confident and comfortable;
- communicate clearly and unambiguously;
- use appropriate imagery and analogy to communicate intentions;
- enable choral and vocal development and communication to take place;
- encourage healthy singing;
- use verbal language sparingly in rehearsal;
- plan, pace and time rehearsals efficiently and effectively.

From such operational descriptors, a profile for a choral conducting curriculum begins to take shape, which might ideally include coverage of the outlined areas. Awareness of these descriptors will at least focus attention on what is teachable.

8.2 CHORAL EDUCATION: A CHORAL CONDUCTING CURRICULUM

While accepting the value of the USA conducting programmes observed and detailed in the appendix, it is important, when constructing a suitable programme for the UK, to recognise cultural differences, which may make an indiscriminate transplant of such programmes inappropriate. Certain general characteristics of higher education teaching were noticeable during the time spent observing in Utah. Considerably more contact time between tutors and students occurs in both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in the United States. While observations were only carried out in the state of Utah, the researcher was assured that this was common practice throughout the US, and had witnessed similar situations first-hand in Cincinnati University and Temple University in Philadelphia on earlier visits, and had gathered second-

hand evidence from others, including Florida State University, where a very large choral programme exists.

Entrants to undergraduate university music programmes in the UK normally have wide experience, knowledge and skills in historical, theoretical and practical aspects of music, not only through GCE ‘Advanced Level’\(^2\) (and similar) syllabuses and examinations, but also through their instrumental and/or vocal tuition. The ‘A’ level system, where students in their last year of school usually take three subjects, demands a specialised approach to each subject. The broader syllabus and examination of the International Baccalaureate,\(^3\) for example, where students normally take six subjects to gain the diploma, has not received as widespread support in the UK as it has in the USA.

In conclusion of this study, a specific choral conducting curriculum will be proposed, designed for (i) an initial level of study, perhaps within an undergraduate music programme, and (ii) a more advanced level of study, perhaps at a postgraduate masters level. Each proposed curriculum is intended to fit within a modular structure within an undergraduate and postgraduate programme. The initial level courses are for those with little experience in choral conducting yet who have interest, intention and ‘customary’ musical skills and knowledge expected of undergraduate students. The more advanced level courses are designed for people perhaps already working with choirs in schools, churches and the community, and those who wish to further their interest, knowledge and skills in choral conducting. It is presumed that such students would have musical skills normally to degree level and a certain amount of experience in the field, either conducting or teaching. This programme would contrast with the MMus in Choral Conducting at Utah University, where the emphasis is on music performance, as its emphasis would be on choral education. In the Utah curriculum the required courses are: (i) General: Music Bibliography; (ii) Music History/Literature; (iii) Music Theory:

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2 General Certificate of Education Advanced Level Examinations are set by university examination boards and are generally intended as a pre-requisite qualification for UK university entrance, the syllabuses therefore reflecting the overall subject curriculum of the university programmes.

3 The IB Music examination (newly developed in 1992) has a significant performance and/or composition component which is unprescribed, and it also places a great deal of emphasis on the study of particular non-western musics as well as western and individual study. The general thrust of the syllabus is broad, though it does include specific study of required works and periods. (The researcher at the time of writing is Deputy Chief Examiner in Music for the International Baccalaureate.)
Advanced Form 18/19th Century; (iv) Conducting: Individual Coaching in Conducting, Instrumental Conducting Seminar, Seminar in Choral Conducting, Seminar in Choral Literature Research; (v) Recital/Thesis (2 performance recitals). Further elective courses are recommended in (vi) Orchestration; (vii) Seminar in Orchestral Literature; (viii) Departmental Choral Performing Organisations.

The Utah programme evidently is a well established conducting programme which is deemed to be suitable for those already in or embarking upon a choral conducting career in schools or churches. Mention has previously been made of the music making traditions and capabilities within the state of Utah and others in the US. There are few specific choral conducting posts in the UK as compared with the USA other than those at a highly professional level. The intention, therefore, with the proposed programme is to develop understanding and awareness of the issues surrounding choral activity, and also to increase knowledge and skill in those areas outlined in the model, for which little opportunity exists currently in the UK.

8.3 PROPOSALS FOR A UK ‘INITIAL’ CHORAL CONDUCTING CURRICULUM

It is important for any music student to be able to follow a cohesive programme, which reflects progressive knowledge and skill development in a number of areas. It is expected that, as appropriate, students will take courses in, for example, musicianship, composition, individual performance, history and analysis, music technology. However, where there is an emphasis and intention on developing an effective choral conductor at undergraduate level, courses would ideally be offered in addition in (i) Choral Conducting Techniques (outlined below with an example syllabus proposed in Appendix 5), (ii) Aural Skill Development, (iii) History and Repertoire and (iv) Singing.

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4 that is, where the principal or even sole activity of the person is to conduct choirs in a school or church; this was the case with two of the interviewees (GM and SM) and with a number of people in discussion in the USA. See also Chapter 6.

5 See data on courses in Appendix 1 which are summarised in Chapter 1.
8.3.1 CHORAL CONDUCTING TECHNIQUES

This course would need to concentrate on gesture and the development of natural and efficient movement. Following the studies of Dickson (1992), McCoy (1986, 1994), Miller (1988) and Hibbard (1994), students would ideally explore movement in an holistic way before learning and absorbing the traditional conducting patterns, thus gaining confidence in using their body expressively. Initially this could be a generic conducting course, though at a later stage it would be necessary to deal specifically with choral issues. As the focus of starting conductors would be on making them feel at ease with body movement, technical complexities ideally should emerge as students gain confidence and feel comfortable ‘moving’ to music. The course (or series of courses) would need a structured progression in the use of music with increasing technical complexity (e.g. complex and changing metres, a variety of tempi, polyphonic vocal writing), after students had become competent with more straightforward musical encounters (e.g. homophonic vocal writing, non-changing metre and tempo) (Wine, 1994; Strouse, 1987; Lonis, 1993). Alongside the actual conducting it would be important to encourage students to use their own voice efficiently and effectively in relation to rehearsal technique and vocal demonstration. Throughout, an emphasis would be placed on gaining effective and meaningful gestures in the context of developing effective communication skills and meaningful rehearsal techniques through practice. Extensive use of video-recording during the seminars would enable students to evaluate critically, reflect upon and monitor their progress (Johnston, 1993). A curriculum for ab initio students over, for example two course each of ten weeks, is suggested in Appendix 5.

8.3.2 AURAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT

This course would largely be concerned with (i) pitch perception; (ii) rhythmic perception; (iii) harmonic perception; (iv) awareness of structure, timbre, texture and expressive character of the music. These would be ideally developed through a variety of means, including singing, transcription, score analysis, identification, listening, in preference to the more traditional method of aural dictation. The course would deal with aural skills on a progressive and individual basis (see Chapter 7), and preferably extend beyond a single module. Assessment will consider not only accuracy of perception, but
complexity of students' response (Cargill & Pratt, 1991; Crowe, 1994; Van Oyen, 1994).

8.3.3 HISTORY AND REPERTOIRE

Here historical contexts and practices will be investigated in relation to the choral music and eras being studied, in order that students gain a clear insight into the style and performance techniques of the music prior to rehearsing (Green, 1981; Strouse, 1987; Finn, 1946; Grechesky, 1985; Boult, 1963; Wine, 1994). Analysis of structure and expressive character of choral music would constitute a formal part of the assessment as would written evidence of understanding of musical style in its historical context in essay questions or a brief research project.

8.3.4 SINGING

Whether as individual singers or in a choral context, it is important that students see and hear examples and results of good conducting strategies and techniques in rehearsal and performance, and should therefore be involved in a choral singing activity with an effective and experienced conductor. This part of the curriculum should ideally offer insight into the workings of the voice through healthy, tension-free singing and information (Cooksey, 1992; Thurman, 1992; Fiocca, 1986; Haasemann & Jordan, 1991; Welch, 1994), as well as developing opportunities and skills in sight-singing. The method and nature of qualitative feedback from conductor to singers is important in enabling the singer and student conductor to analyse and reflect upon the effect of feedback on the voice and general choral ambience. This would complement aural skill development, repertoire building and knowledge of historical and stylistic choral practices. Assessment would take place through ensemble choral rehearsal and performance and would consider the student's level of participation in the choir in terms of the group and individual development. This would be in relation to the musical accuracy of individual singers in (i) pitch, (ii) rhythm, as well as further musicianship skills in (iii) aesthetic sensitivity and (iv) personal vocal development. Students would also be required to submit at the end of each performance a written critical evaluation of their own and the choir's development in the module in respect of (i) knowledge of the choral repertoire, its style and historical context; (ii)
enhancement of technical and musical skills, such as aural, sight-reading and vocal skills; (iii) aesthetic response in accordance with the expressive character of the music and the composers' intentions.

8.4 PROPOSALS FOR A UK ADVANCED CHORAL CONDUCTING CURRICULUM

This curriculum would essentially be designed for those who already have an undergraduate degree or equivalent in Music, and have some experience in or intention in choral activity. The aim of the series of courses, or programme, would be to consider and develop the concept of 'Choral Education' in the UK in a broad but well defined context. A series of courses in Choral Education at this level might ideally include: (i) Choral Studies 1: Introduction to Conducting Behaviour; (ii) Philosophy and Aesthetics of Music Education; (iii) Choral Studies 2: Developing Choral Conducting; (iv) Singing and Vocal Development. In addition, students would be expected to follow a dissertation or performance course, in order that they are able to extend their interest and studies in some aspect of choral education. The programme provides both an academic grounding in aspects of choral activity as well as seminars to develop practical skills from an informed base. The proposed programme is outlined below with a rationale of the individual courses and how they relate to the model of an effective choral conductor.

8.4.1 CHORAL STUDIES 1: INTRODUCTION TO CONDUCTING BEHAVIOUR

This course would aim to provide students with knowledge and understanding of the nature of choral experience, by looking specifically at the role and influence of the conductor, exploring aspects of choral rehearsing techniques, dealing with singers and critically evaluating the choral repertoire. The syllabus would ideally contain much of the techniques and skills of actual conducting, including patterns, gestures and their implicit meaning in relation to vocal and choral sound as well as vehicles of verbal and non-verbal communication. There will also be a critical analysis of research and methodology literature, as well as consideration of their own conducting and singing experiences. The course would be practically based, following the theory put forward by Elliott (1995) that knowledge is gained in situational
settings, informally and impressionistically (see Chapter 7). Reviews and analysis of students’ conducting as well as others in relation to communication and how musical problems and issues are being dealt with is an essential part of the conducting learning process. The assessment will contain a rehearsal and performance of a 20 minute programme when students will need to demonstrate their ability to communicate effectively with the singers (the rest of the class or other choral group) and display their understanding of the voice in a choral context. This would be supported by a short written rationale and/or viva voice, which would focus on some of the issues raised in the practical rehearsal. The intention is that the course is formative, and although the course stands on its own integrity, it will be built upon in the other ones, especially Choral Studies 2. A number of the descriptors of the model will be covered in this course, largely the musical-technical ones and the behavioural and interpersonal skills concerned with communication (Decker & Kirk, 1988; Durrant, 1994; Funk, 1985; Garretson, 1981; Kaplan, 1985; Lonis, 1993; Pfautsch, 1973; Swan, 1987; Thurman & Welch, 1992).

8.4.2 PHILOSOPHY AND AESTHETICS OF MUSIC EDUCATION

Following the proposed outline by Rives (1983) and in particular the notion therein that conducting courses should include some understanding of the nature of aesthetic education, and also the model proposed by Lonis (1993) which would include ‘affective’ skills and processes, a course on philosophy and aesthetics of music education would set out to promote such understanding and relate it to music and choral education. An investigation and critical analysis is required of ways in which the arts generally and choral music in particular contribute to understanding the nature of human feelings and expressiveness, exploring aspects of aesthetic sensitivity in relation to choral direction, rehearsing and performing. It would need to make a critical evaluation of philosophical and aesthetic theories and literature in relation to music education. While this course is essentially academic in content, it would be to the benefit of the student choral conductor to consider some of the practical applications and issues surrounding expressiveness in the performing arts, music’s meaning and the way emotional responses and expectations are related to musical structures. Assessment would more appropriately take the form of an essay to demonstrate a student’s critical facility and relationship to
specific musical activity in an educational context. The descriptors of the model covered in this course would be those that underpin the role of an effective conductor, but also aspects of expressiveness and how it can be communicated gesturally will be relevant (Rives, 1983; Grechesky, 1985; Lonis, 1993; Miller, 1988; Strouse, 1987; Swanwick, 1994).

8.4.3 CHORAL STUDIES 2: DEVELOPING CHORAL CONDUCTING

A supplementary course in Choral Studies would seek to explore further extent the nature of choral experience dealing more fully with technical aspects of singing, repertoire and rehearsing. More extensive analysis would be made of communication skills, the science and physiology of the voice in relation to artistic and technical judgements in the rehearsal, the research literature in relation to choral effectiveness and problem solving. One aspect worthy of extensive coverage would be the use of movement in the choral rehearsal as an aid to expressive and healthy singing. Following on from Choral Studies 1, the essentially practical approach to learning would be supported by critical evaluation. The assessment would include both a 20 minute programme in rehearsal and a written paper outlining some of the technical, musical and communication issues encountered in rehearsal with a description and analysis of ways of dealing effectively with them. A clear understanding of issues and their possible solutions will need to be demonstrated and supported by appropriate reference to research and methodology literature. Many of the descriptors in the model will be covered in this course: (Decker & Herford, 1973; Dickson, 1992; Fuchs, 1969; Hart, 1983; Hibbard, 1994; Johnston, 1993; McCoy, 1986, 1994; Robinson & Winold, 1976; Thurman & Welch, 1992).

8.4.4 SINGING AND VOCAL DEVELOPMENT

To promote real knowledge and understanding of the human voice, a course in singing and vocal development would enable students to gain insight into the science and psychology of voice and its relation to choral and vocal activity. It would need to deal extensively with the nature of singing development, particularly with young and adolescent voices. Emphasis would be placed on healthy voice use individually and collectively and to facilitate identification of key psychological facets of singing and vocal development.
Inclusion of vocal motivation strategies and development in the choral context would be necessary in such a course. As with the other areas of choral education, both practical and academic approaches would be adopted in this course to illustrate techniques of singing and vocal development. The assessment would be in the form of a written evaluation of the singing development literature in relation to a chosen piece of choral repertoire. Significantly, this course would expand the knowledge base of the student in this area, but also provide ideas for encouraging, motivating and developing singing and choral activities in particular contexts: (Cooksey, 1992; Durrant & Welch, 1995; Ellis & Beattie, 1986; Gackle, 1992; Hargreaves, 1986; Ristad, 1982; Sundberg, 1987; Thurman & Welch, 1992; Welch, 1994; Welch & Murao, 1994).

8.5 SUMMARY OF CHORAL CONDUCTING CURRICULUM

The courses together form a philosophical, musical and behavioural approach to choral conducting. The belief, as implied in the model and reflected in the course descriptions, is that effective choral conducting will more likely take place with a secure knowledge base in (i) the choral repertoire, (ii) the particular score, (iii) the human voice, (iv) understanding the relationship between the conducting gesture and the music's aesthetic and expressive potential. It will also depend upon (v) skills in aural perception in order to be able to identify and, through knowledge, deal efficiently and effectively with musical and vocal problems, (vi) skills to be able to make musical intentions, gestural and verbal, clear and unambiguous, (vii) skills in communication to make the singing environment a positive and comfortable one and (viii) skills to motivate, inspire and improve singers individually and collectively through considered strategies and rehearsal techniques. These are the essentials of effective choral conducting.

8.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The development of the model of an effective choral conductor outlined in this study will require further qualitative validation through various research investigations. A number of possible areas as an outcome of the present study are proposed.
Firstly, it is difficult to make a balanced assessment of a conductor on one rehearsal or one performance; it would therefore be appropriate to make further study of a choral conductor on a longitudinal basis in a series of sessions over a rehearsal period. A valuable exercise would be to observe a school or amateur choral society conductor in a series of rehearsals over, for example ten weeks, in preparation for a concert. Also, similar research might be carried out with a recognised effective choral conductor of a professional group, though preparation time will likely be for a shorter period. This would enable a clearer picture to emerge of how the conducting attributes outlined in the model work together and complement each other at various times in the rehearsal period. Observation of both the conductor and the choir and recording the progress over the period would enable a more detailed evaluation of what counts as effective rehearsing at particular points in the learning process to become reliable. The development of priorities in rehearsing might well become a helpful tool for less experienced conductors.

Secondly, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the model as a basis for teaching a choral conducting course, it would be valuable to monitor the profile of developing competences of students during and after each course in action research. (There is also further research needed on the effectiveness of the recently developed profiling of competences generally in initial teacher education in the UK.) This would supply evidence of the desirability and effectiveness of the teaching process as well ascertaining whether such a method is itself valid and reliable. Within such research, further evidence of, for example, the use and efficacy of movement as a catalyst for tension-free, expressive singing might emerge, as well evidence of other attributes described in the model.

Thirdly, while some extensive research has been done on the adolescent voice, further work on the implications of the vocal capabilities of adolescents in relation to choral activity is clearly needed. This could particularly attend to the challenges faced by school choral conductors both in choosing appropriate choral repertoire and in considering rehearsal strategies to help and encourage those with changing voices.

Fourthly, in order to enhance the aural acuity and perception of students and conductors relevant to the context of choral conducting, further
research (as indicated above) is needed on evaluation of present teaching and examinations in this field and exploration of other ways of teaching appropriate skills effectively.

Finally, the whole area of communication and interpersonal skills and personality traits of the conductor would benefit from further study. It is incumbent on further researchers to establish a link between personality characteristics and effective conducting, and to examine whether certain behavioural traits have an influence on the singing capabilities, learning processes and performance outcomes of singers individually and collectively.

8.7 CODA

While it has not been the purpose of this study to explore the state of singing in schools or the community in the UK at large, it the belief that this research will be of interest to those in schools in particular who have the responsibility for musical activities and who wish to develop choral activity ab initio or extend their own professional knowledge and skills in this respect. The research has focussed upon the choral conductor or teacher and has put forward the argument that the choral conductor must have appropriate knowledge, skill and understanding in order to be effective in the role. The study should also be of interest to singers, those who would seek further understanding of the relationship, actual and potential, of the conductor and singer and the influence and effect the conductor can have upon the technical and expressive singing capabilities and the promotion of healthy voice use. In addition, those who wish to develop further qualitative research in music education may find the method and findings of this research of interest. Mention has already been made of the advantages of adopting such methodology (Chapter 5) and the value of entering the field as a knowledgeable and subjective researcher has, hopefully, been proven.

It is the conviction, substantiated by this thesis, that effective conducting is definable and that provision for teaching choral conducting in greater depth, developed both from a grounding in academic research as well as good practice, is necessary. If adopted this would make a contribution towards ensuring that the choral singing tradition of the UK lies not only in the hands of a few who practise with carefully selected people to a scholarly
level in precious and acoustically favourable environments, but also is developed and maintained for all people in schools, churches and the wider community who wish to cultivate singing. Such development will then be made from an informed and considered position.
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APPENDICES
APPENDIX 1
DATA ON CONDUCTING COURSES

UK COURSE OUTLINES

In order to gain further information regarding the nature, style, aims and objectives and content of courses in conducting offered at the institutions indicated, each was written to with a request for a course outline. Also, the researcher asked whether it would be possible for him to observe a conducting class, particularly a choral conducting class. The responses are supplied below. Data was collected from prospectuses and brochures for 1993-94 or 1994-95.

University of East Anglia

MMus: Conducting (not specifically choral or orchestral - not offered 94/95)
Objectives:
• to develop to an advanced level the skills and interpretative abilities required of the modern conductor
• to provide opportunities for practical work at rehearsals and concerts, and to develop a better understanding of programme planning
• to improve perception of stylistic features and to develop understanding of performance practice elements appropriate to the music being studied
• to provide a programme of work and supervision appropriate to the individual needs of each student.

Content:
(i) practical coursework - baton technique, aural perception, score-reading skills, rehearsing with the University’s vocal and instrumental ensembles, observation of rehearsals outside the university, participation in concerts as appropriate

(ii) written coursework - work studies (standard repertory, pre-classical and contemporary styles and techniques), programme planning, extended essay of 10,000-12,000 words on an approved subject.

Undergraduate

Conducting 1: an introduction to the technique of conducting

Conducting 2: This unit studies conducting gesture and its application using scores and recordings as the focus of practical sessions. Topics covered include performance preparation, how to accompany a soloist and score reading at the piano. There is
written work on stylistic, interpretative and practical conducting problems. Admission subject to audition.

Conducting 3: A continuation of C2. Topics include work studies, rehearsal psychology, programme planning and where practicable, the taking of rehearsals.

Conducting 4: A study of conducting methods and skills for final year students. Emphasis is placed on work studies and on advanced interpretative and practical problems. Where appropriate, involvement in rehearsals and concerts may be included. (Double unit over 2 semesters).

University of Lancaster

Undergraduate: Conducting and Orchestration

Summary:
The aim of the course (2 yrs of Pt II) is to develop the student’s skills in both orchestration and conducting. A major component will be the orchestration, preparation rehearsal and performance of orchestration exercises, one of which will be recorded.

Course Schedule

Initial Year:
1. Introduction aims, sources, score analysis, group work
2. General principles of orchestration
3. Scoring for small orchestra
4. Choral conducting - review of conventions and procedures
5. Choral workshop
6. Score analysis - Pictures at an Exhibition etc.
7. Conducting workshop 1 - review of orchestral and conducting techniques
8. Conducting workshop 2 - esp. score preparation also percussion techniques
9. Orchestration seminar
10. Conclusions/review

Final Year:
The final year course examines the role of the conductor as director of a musical ensemble. Each student is required to propose a project exploring certain aspects of the conductor’s craft. This will normally involve the planning, preparation, scoring, rehearsal and performance of one or more suitable musical items.

Assessment: 70% portfolio + VTR, annotated score, log, programme, original proposal and conclusions
30% exam orchestration and/or score analysis

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University of Exeter

Undergraduate: Musical Direction Course

Objectives:
To develop techniques of rehearsing and leading the performance of vocal and instrumental music, either through conducting or leading an ensemble as a vocalist or instrumentalist.

To learn beating techniques and gestural expression.

To establish a rehearsal priority through analysis of the learning/teaching problems of a particular piece.

Teaching methods:
A weekly rehearsal of previously prepared works.
A group and/or individual tutorial on matters arising.

Assessment:
In the 2nd or 3rd term to rehearse and conduct/perform a movement or section of a work. 20 mins for rehearsal, 10 for performance.
To submit a succinctly written account of rehearsal and interpretative ideas of a work. The aim of this analysis is to help clarify ideas that might not have emerged during the practical session, and to develop further the student’s own approach to performance.

University of Southampton

Undergraduate: New course beginning Feb 95
Course (2 hrs per week) for 2nd & 3rd yr music students who have successfully completed the sight-singing and choral conducting component in the 1st yr.

Course Description:
An extension of elementary instrumental and choral conducting techniques covered in the 1st yr, including review of basic patterns in 2,3 & 4; conducting compound meters; asymmetric meters (5,7 etc); mixed meters; advanced cueing, pauses, cutoffs, entries; mixed ensembles (strings and winds etc.); advanced expressive indications (dynamics, marcato, legato etc.); reading scores; conducting recitative; and working with soloists. An introduction to the history of conducting will be presented, in part, through films of the great conductors.
Aims of Course:
To provide students with a practical context in which to exercise analytical skills taught in other courses; to engage students' critical, aural and interpretative abilities in ways that playing in an orchestra or as a soloist does not permit.

Special Resources:
In addition to the lecturers teaching the course, an accompanist provides support for the choir made up of students in the class. The accompanist fills in missing parts and responds to students' tempo and expressive indications, giving students valuable 'hands-on' conducting experience. Students will also be able to view themselves on video.

Course Materials:
Primarily 4-part choral works with or without independent piano accompaniment; instrumental works will be chosen based upon the instrumental skills of those enrolled in the class.

Assessment:
Continuous based on performance in class.

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Welsh College of Music and Drama

Postgraduate: pathway on Advanced Diploma (restricted to 2 students per year)

Intention:
This course is intended for those who already have a strong musical background and significant experience in the directing of ensembles. The balance of choral to orchestral training is a matter for agreement at the beginning of the course, but all students should be given some training in both.

Primary Module:
60 hours of individual tuition. Preferably about 2/3 of these hours are given by one tutor, but the remaining hours may profitably be spent with conductors with a variety of professional expertise and experience. The problems to be addressed and the topics to be covered during these hours should include:

- visual communication of musical ideas and intentions
- rehearsal techniques appropriate to a variety of circumstances
- development of a thorough knowledge of instrumental, choral and orchestral technique (including the structure of professional music-making organisations and all matters connected with concert planning)
Secondary Module:
a) Preparation for and direction of at least one concert during the course, which will be assessed internally. It is the student’s responsibility to engage and assemble the musicians, provide them with adequate rehearsal and performance schedule, to book the venue, advertise the event and provide top copy for the programme. The duration of the concert should be not less than 25 minutes, with a programme chosen to demonstrate the conductor’s ability to handle music of at least 2 contrasting types (such as two symphonic or choral movements).

b) a separate course of study of at least 4 set works, approached from the standpoint of a conductor. These set works may form the basis for the final assessment.

c) a course of observation of professional conductors at work.

d) an agreed programme of conducting responsibilities with students in college and, where possible, with outside ensembles. In the case of orchestral conductors this should include the accompanying of a concerto soloist.

University of York

No specific course in conducting: students may be allowed to offer conducting in lieu of instrumental performance in recital option: - no student doing so at present.

University of Bristol

Course does not embrace choral conducting specifically; course outline not sent.

Royal Academy of Music

Postgraduate: 3yrs, normally only 2 students per year (‘highly selective’).

Introduction:
All those who aspire to conduct, at whatever level - from a school ensemble, youth orchestra or choir to a professional symphony orchestra - have one thing in common: their raison d’etre is to help musicians make music and to motivate and inspire them to the highest level of their ability. Those wishing to accept this responsibility should undertake training towards a comprehensive understanding of the conductor’s craft. This does not only involve a study of baton technique, or in Erich Leinsdorf’s words
"conducting knowledge", but also an ever broadening musical awareness and understanding. The long established mythology that surrounds "the conductor" confuses the uninformed and frustrates and antagonises players. The conducting programme at the RAM examines what lies behind the art and craft of conducting, the role and responsibilities of the conductor and seeks a better understanding of the complex relationship that exists between conductor and performers.

Conducting Classes and Practical Work:
Regular classes include:
- detailed study of specific repertoire, score reading, analysis, score learning and preparation;
- conducting and baton technique; beating patterns and subdivisions, preparatory beats and the means to communicate the score through gesture;
- rehearsal technique and orchestral training;
- study of the conductor's craft and responsibilities and the practical and musical relationship between conductor and orchestra.

Choirs:
Choral conducting, choir training and the responsibilities of the chorus master are considered to be an important part of the conductor's knowledge and experience. To support this, the Conductor's Course works closely with the Philharmonia Chorus and students attend rehearsals and concerts under eminent guest conductors.

EXAMPLE OF USA CONDUCTING COURSES OUTLINES

University of Utah
Undergraduate: Choral Rehearsal Techniques
Purpose:
The purpose of this course is to enable students to apply proper conducting and rehearsal techniques to the interpretation and performance of choral literature from a variety of periods.

Course Objectives:
To enable students to review and develop a proficient Gesture Vocabulary in conducting representing different styles and periods.

To enable students to gain knowledge of the basic stylistic components of the Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Early/Late Romantic and 20th century periods.
To enable students to continue to develop effective verbal communication in rehearsing music from different styles and periods.

To enable students to show evidence of the proper procedures to follow in score preparation.

To enable students to gain a general, basic repertoire of principles for conducting choral rehearsals.

To enable students to develop clear, concise chronological plans for rehearsing choral selections.

To aid students in developing an increasing awareness of the accepted stylistic practices with regard to the music being conducted.

To enable students to use effective conducting techniques in identifying and solving musical problems encountered in a musical score. Specific areas include: (i) tone problems (*further detail given*); (ii) textual problems (*further detail*); (iii) technical problems (*further detail*); (iv) interpretive problems (*further detail*); (v) stylistic problems (*further detail*); (vi) problems with form (*further detail*).

To enable students to develop and implement vocalises to enhance self-expression and artistic choral singing.

To enable students to begin to realistically assess their own potential for choral success.

To enable students to develop a strong basis for evaluating choral performances of standard representative choral literature.

To enable students to increase their knowledge of choral literature representing the Renaissance, Baroque, Romantic and 20th century periods.

**Course Structure**

I  Attributes of the Successful Choral Conductor (*further detail*)

II Establishing Criteria for Evaluating Excellence in Choral Singing (*further detail*)

III Conducting Gestures, Voice and Expressive Singing
   (a) Gesture Vocabulary (*further detail*)
   (b) Vocal Self-expression (*further detail*)
   (c) Vocalises to enhance Self-expression and Artistic Choral Singing (*further detail*)
IV Rehearsal Techniques and Score Preparation/ Interpretation

(further detail)
APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS
TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH 'RS'

CD Could we talk about you as a choral conductor and as a trainer of students? In your own conducting, what are the priorities that you take into consideration preparing choirs for concerts and in general rehearsals?

RS I'll try and enumerate them basically. The background: I conduct two choirs, one a small chamber choir of 50 singers and the other a choral society of 130. I aim in both to get a pure wobble-free soprano sound, similarly with the altos, and as good a tenor and bass sound as one can get given the shortage of these voices.

CD Does that affect your auditions?

RS Yes.

CD So you would refuse someone with a wobble?

RS Yes.

CD If you concentrate in a rehearsal on tone, what sort of mechanisms do you employ?

RS I do very little exercises; that's simply background for me - brought up that way. I do it from the music; if I want a particular sound or note, I might do a few easy arpeggio exercises for example, sitting on vowels, flow of tone, modify high notes above Bb to make it comfortable. Occasionally I'll ask for in a smaller choir or choir doing Mozart or Bach a slightly harder sound - to get the sound of 18th century Viennese.

CD So a priority in your rehearsing is to seek for an authentic sound?

RS No - that's much too much to claim that it's authentic - it's what I vaguely imagine it would be.

CD So stylistic ...

RS It's terribly subjective and very idiosyncratic.

CD That's a priority then with you is it?

RS Well yes, I suppose - certainly we sing Bach differently from Brahms - Brahms Requiem needs as much warmth as possible - vibrato doesn't go amiss and a certain amount of portamento and crescendo, whereas in a Bach cantata the opposite applies on the whole, but say the Rachmaninov Vespers .... hell of a lot of portamento ... that's how it's sung in Russia.

CD Looking at the performance we heard of the Rossini in Cincinnati, do you remember we heard the big choir - with that particular soprano sound? That would be unacceptable to you?

RS Totally unacceptable. Yes it hurts my ears and I can't see what they're doing, but I understand that it's no longer acceptable in English circles, though it was 30 years ago.

CD Do you think that's because of the boys' voice tradition?
RS Yes and St. Thomas' Leipzig and the English cathedral tradition - maybe. Ever since I can remember there have been wobbles in choirs and subliminally I took on board that I wasn’t going to put up with it.

CD Certainly we don’t find as much in the English choirs as we do in the American.

RS No. Here - in recordings of Elgar pitches and enharmonic changes would make nonsense of it - they seem to like it - on the contrary they seem not to like the opposite.

CD They must think of it as being boyish, virginal. Are there any other priorities in your rehearsal? Tell me what you do - what you tend to concentrate on - specific idiosyncrasies.

RS Notes. I basically tend to have part-rehearsals with the accompanist. I take either the tenors and basses away for a maximum of half an hour per rehearsal depending on the work. So there’s that. Quite a lot of work on expression - baroque quite a lot of work on articulation of runs, I go on about the diaphragm rather vaguely.

CD Do you do much exploration of the voice itself, or from the music’s point of view?

RS It’s always from the music’s point of view, though I do some diaphragm exercises and that sort of thing for runs. I’m not really a singer - they tend to be, I don’t ever really feel I know what I’m talking about compared with singers for example, though they may be far less able to conduct a choir that I am. Talk about pulling and pushing on diaphragm. Clarity of runs, getting main accent on first beat of 4.

CD If we could take you as conductor either in rehearsal or performance, are there any particular technical things that you do, for example give every entry or try to make them independent, how would you describe your style?

RS Basically I would have thought I was helpful rather than unhelpful - I tend to give leads where possible.

CD What are the technical skills of the conductor? Choral conductor - are they different from orchestral?

RS Similarities: attend to rhythm, good ear, sort out complicated harmonic textures, timbre problems - trombones, horns. Left hand has to be more independent in a way, give endings to words, consonant endings, more specific way than with an orchestra usually, so all sorts of extraneous movements which you have to make, which an orchestra does automatically. Come off exactly every time.

CD What about the basic gesture?

RS Basic gesture - conscious phrasing in slow music. Left hand tend to vary in size according to the dynamics and again body posture and facial expression very important - I do a lot of that.

CD Would you say that was important in training students now?

RS Yes. I make a lot of facial expressions - you must have musical 'nous' and
know what the music's about - sensitivity to respond to the music; on the whole students are not always able to do it. A lot of people who are natural in the mechanics of it are not always musical. A paradox - and sometimes those who are very musical are wooden in action. A fairly rare bird who actually has both.

CD Let's link that with the training of students. If you are doing a conducting class, do you have a sequence of events that you go through?

RS Yes, very simply we concentrate on doing it, but also get them to take notes. I tend to do a whole session on what the basic beats are - commonly known beat patterns over here.

CD So you find that people don't naturally conduct 4 in a bar. Is it something you have to teach?

RS Yes you do. Down -right -up for three. I write diagrams down so that they go in the correct directions - anything up to 5/4, 6/4, and then later having done those for information, I tend to loosen them up a bit in a fairly short course in the second week by getting them to come along with a tape of something orchestral, almost parodying a famous conductor and to get them to respond to the music - and with some it works quite well. I do a few vague exercise mainly to get the arm flowing - but not in a very coherent way - they tend to grow out of what I see them unable to do.

CD So you respond to ...

RS I respond to seeing them and take it out to demonstrate - we'll all get better at it. After that I hand out something with changing metre - a simple carol for example with 3/4, 4/4 - basically they can't do it - they often don't know what they're not doing. I find it more stimulating and makes them think when they have changing time.

CD So is there anything apart from the basic techniques of conducting that you teach them as well?

RS Yes - most of the time is spent on technique with a large group - I regard that as a fundamental thing. Again, I don't know much about vocal technique, because (I should) don't have time in a very short course, honestly; they practise actually doing it.

CD So they will sing for each other, look at each other and analyse each other?

RS Typical thing - practical - concert at the end of term - they each have a go at one small thing. Some can do quite complicated pieces for an occasion. What they will have done will be able to get a group going; will be able, however elementary, to pick out mistakes only by use of video or tape. Some can't conduct, listen and pick out at the same time. Certainly by the end of the course they will write reports on a couple of videos and analyse; so they can see their own eye contact or lack of it. Very useful - become aware of what they can't do.

CD Is there a lot we take for granted?

RS No - I wouldn't take it for granted, but then we can do it.

CD So you think there is something to teach in conducting?
RS Oh yes; even the sheer mechanics of of putting the first beat in the right place. I can only give them strategies to survive in such a short course. Style is important. Course is 22 weeks of one and a quarter hours.

CD Do you think more systematic training of choral conductors would help the waning singing and choral tradition in our schools?

RS No I don't. What is lacking is quality vocal training in schools.

CD Do you think conductors should take that on board themselves?

RS I think very generally work with choirs has been to express the music as much as possible.

CD Are there any basic philosophies / beliefs, however subconscious, about the choir-trainer?

RS Basically they are very conscious. You are actually being part of civilisation - the civilising process, passing on the ability to participate in the repertoire of choral music which does contain some of the noblest utterances of any art form - Brahms Requiem, War Requiem; some known, some well-known, and at the same time giving opportunities for young composers for new works - that's pretty well what it's all about. It's a very therapeutic agency for a section of society - the cultured minority - who otherwise could be neglected in a populist culture. They haven't got very many places to go really, and therefore that's what a local choir can certainly do, depending on the nature of the choir; humanistic.

CD Do you think you motivating this group of people, are there any particular personality, behavioural traits that a choral conductor needs or perhaps that you have?

RS Well, I don't know about me. First of all I think the conductor must be a good musician.

CD Isn't that a technical skill? I meant in terms of you as a person.

RS Energy. Probably a sense of humour, yet basically a seriousness of purpose. Ability to convey the emotion of the music whether it be light-hearted or deadly serious. A certain intensity of approach - towards the performance especially. Above all - imagination.

CD Finally, do you feel there is any difference between the conductor in rehearsal and the conductor in performance?

RS Basically, in earlier part of rehearsals as much fun as possible, relaxed atmosphere to certain extent, whilst getting on with some work. Fair amount of humour, fair amount of back-chat. Then I carefully engineer increases in tension as the concert approaches to get a bit more electricity into the proceedings and try to get people to prepare work at home and work as much as possible on nuance. Near the performance tension builds up. Come the performance day itself, as far as the choir's concerned, it's an orchestral rehearsal; with an unaccompanied concert, it's a bit different.

CD Do you have any priorities in a three hour rehearsal?
RS Yes. Top and tail it, leaving out the bits you know the choir knows well.

CD Is there any single skill important in that rehearsal?

RS Yes, the rehearsal schedule worked out to the minute, and try and stick to it. Organise the orchestra, especially in Baroque, don’t keep people waiting.

CD But very often you need that continuity in the Bach passions.

RS Most of the evangelist work should be done some other time, certainly you haven’t time to do it all in one rehearsal. For example, in the St. Matthew last Easter, I have an extra half an hour in the morning with the pro orchestra and ten minutes to spare in the afternoon; that’s having spent a bit more money. So the choir just sang through the motions while I concentrate on the orchestra. But occasionally I’ll ask them to sing full to get the overall balance in the rehearsal. The performance I then concentrate entirely on the choir with a lot of facial expression.

TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH ‘CR’

CD Describe the sorts of conducting activities you do.

CR Two categories: first, the extra-curricular, junior orchestra - low standard (3 notes up to grade 4), the senior orchestra, choir and also into the 2nd category which is in the classroom, which is completely different kettle of fish altogether; and obviously in the two orchestras you need different technique because with some beginners you’re dealing with notes - the senior orchestra is more advanced; and the choir is different because sometimes I conduct from the piano because I don’t have a piano player - so that’s a tricky one.

CD So that’s an art itself - I know, I’ve been there. Is there anything in your training that particularly helped you with your conducting? Was that part of a course?

CR During my degree (at Huddersfield) I did a course in conducting - yes, but it was orchestral conducting and it was just the pure basics, how to use your hands, how to give an up-beat etc.

CD So do you think there’s more to conducting than that?

CR A lot more to conducting than that.

CD And is that in your own philosophy of you as a conductor in the school?

CR I’ve had to learn really myself; I have been on a couple of courses and read books. I think the real art of conducting - well, I don’t know - lots of things. First of all trying to keep a steady beat, which some people can’t do at all, and then - difficult this one - help me...

CD Take a choir rehearsal - (that’s my particular interest) - you say that you’ve got some skills like keeping a steady beat which you might use with the piano as well, what is there about the preparation, the repertoire that you take into
consideration - is that varied?

CR Very, very varied - we try to do things that the children are interested in and a selection of songs from the shows or in a Christmas concert, Christmas music - trying not to go too religious (I have three Jehovah's witnesses in the choir). So, in a mixed comprehensive like this you have to be careful what you use. A lot of Christmas music is religion-orientated, so I manage to get a few other little numbers (eg. Jack Frost).

CD The rehearsal is a regular occurrence presumably?

CR Yes - there's a choir of 40 and generally they all turn up - usually about 30 which has its downfalls.

CD What sort of things do you do in rehearsals - how do you start off?

CR We've got half an hour once a week, and four weeks before a concert I put in two lunchtimes per week - so that gives us about an hour. You have to take a register at the beginning. Generally if starting off I do some warm-ups at the beginning of the year and so some two-parts and rounds are always best.

CD So what warm-ups are they?

CR Ma-may-mi-mo-moos vocal exercises, breathing exercises, shouting exercises just so they can understand their bodies. This is right at the beginning of the year, and really - always new people at the beginning of the year - teaching how to actually practise, how the rehearsals will take place, the rules and regulations of rehearsing, but as far as exercises - I'm not trained in choral at all, so I make up my own.

CD So on what basis do you make these up?

CR Just taking the pieces of music and making exercises out of them, but that's where at college I would have benefited, especially on my PGCE to actually have lessons in - what can you do to make them get the high notes, how do you ...  

CD So you feel you're lacking in vocal expertise?

CR Yes. There's a lot more I could do and a lot of the rehearsals tend to be note-bashing and polishing a few weeks beforehand, which I know isn't really the right way to do it.

CD Because of time?

CR Because of time.

CD Are there any basic principles that you take into consideration then?

CR I do it in rote - repeat this phrase, 'cos normally I'm on my own until the final rehearsal so I have to make sure that really I can get around the accompaniment and play the tune at the same time. So I start by doing it by rote - I sing it - they repeat it back - sing the next phrase and then from there onward. Small children find it very easy to pick up things in choir, it doesn't take much for them to actually get the notes and the words.
CD Is that because they’re listening rather than reading?

CR Yes. I always insist they have the music - never just the words, unless I didn’t have the music and refer to it more like a music lesson itself. I try to get them to understand that this means this and that means that, and what the Italian means, and working the way through so they can actually follow it themselves and tell them to refer - the notes are going up, coming down, then they pick up quite a lot of music theory at the same time. Not just singing for performance sake.

CD So what do you mean by polish up before a concert?

CR Little things like diction, articulation is obviously more concentrate towards the end.

CD And then you get a pianist in, so what happens then?

CR Then I can be free from the piano and use my body, hands and face - very important. A little story: the staff in the school find it very amusing when they come to concerts, ‘cos normally they only see the back of me and normally I stand very still etc., but they saw me teaching [conducting?] when they were all in front of me in a commemoration evening and they were amazed at the facial expressions, even before I started, getting them to smile, raise their eyebrows and to stand still and you have to sing and breathe every note for them. There’s not many times we get to sing without the music, purely through time - I don’t really like them to take the music home.

CD You see it as your job to teach them everything?

CR Yes.

CD So you think the facial expressions ......

CR The facial expressions are absolutely vital.

CD Is there any difference between rehearsal and performance?

CR I try to get my final rehearsals as I would be in the concert and we sing everything all the way through a couple of times - the whole programme as well - so that they can prepare themselves exactly for the next piece.

CD Is there any personality characteristic that is needed in a conductor of a school choir?

CR You have to fill them with enthusiasm - you have to drag the boys in and make jests of it and it’s got to be all very light-hearted. We have about 12 boys out of - you say “I’ve got enough girls - boys I need you”; I’ve got a little cartoon wiht a boy with an earring and a leather jacket saying “me sing, never!” and put it in the registers when sending notes around. I did have a couple of years ago a GCSE group with all the rugby boys and we did some unaccompanied singing in a concert which was...

CD So you’ve got enthusiasm and energy?

CR You have to have a lot of energy, because you’re not only singing with them but telling them to be quiet, telling them what they’re doing wrong. So you’re constantly using your voice - very exhausting, especially with little ones.
CD So are there any other personality characteristics that a conductor would find useful to have?

CR Trying the think of the right words...

CD Lunacy?

CR Lunacy - yes - you have to be completely extrovert, you have to be an actor - it's like you're on stage and their eyes are on you

CD So what about the gestures you ten to do; could you analyse your own gestures?

CR As far as vocal technique - I use my left hand as pitch indicator - both - but more my left hand especially on things they might find difficult. In tricky passages I move my left hand up and down appropriately and I never use a baton - I don't know whether I should or not.

CD Some people do - some don't. What do you do with the right hand then? Conducting the beat?

CR Yes and bringing them in. I think I'm a very 1234 person. I try and not be, but I think that's because I don't know enough about it.

CD Is there something about you conducting an orchestra than a choir?

CR The differences are with an orchestra bringing people in, lots of cues, in choir we tend to do unison or two part - it's unlikely we'll get into 3 parts, so it's more me singing every note with them. I never ever sing in performance - I mime, unless the altos are having difficulty, in which I will direct myself to them with eye contact and sing along with them and hope the audience don't notice.

CD Are there any particular things you do to make them look at you (when you're not behind the piano)? Is this a problem to begin with getting them to look at you?

CR No - because they all know they're looking at the music, or looking at me and shouldn't move and they should stand correctly. I do insist that they stand correctly; they relax their shoulders - and when they get on stage I will do some breathing exercises with them and physically show them what to do beforehand get them ready.

CD Is there an underlying belief / philosophy you have about choral singing - why do you do it?

CR I think it's important, because first of all it gets a lot of people involved who aren't instrumentalists. I must admit I don't so as much singing in the curriculum as I should do and if I did more singing in class - then I'd have a much larger choir because they'd be keen and enthused, but we haven't had the curriculum time to actually spend very much time on singing.

CD So you are linking that with your motivating them - enthusiasm?

CR I use the same kind of things I would in the choir - eg. Rooster Rag in concert
and the first year curriculum as well and Christmas carols in carols in class with
altos if they’re there and sing in assemblies from time to time. Getting older
children to sing is difficult.

CD Is that because of the material or is it social?
CR Material and social.

CD Is there something that would help you become a better choral conductor?
Something useful to know or do - general or specific?
CR Certainly on PGCE - exercise in actually conducting, and conducting maybe the
rest of the group, and having someone there directing conducting classes would
be invaluable. The materials - there are a lot a college where I got my ideas. A
six week unit choral and orchestral conducting course would be invaluable -
‘cos you feel awfully vulnerable if you haven’t done it before - when you’ve
got 40 faces on you constantly - it’s quite scary at first. Even though I’ve done
some orchestral training, when I came to conduct the senior orchestra, it was a
very frightening prospect.

CD There is then a role for higher education?
CR Definitely.

CD Are there similar things in terms of communication between a music teacher in
the classroom and a choral conductor? Are there similarities perhaps? Are you
very different as a choral conductor from what you are in the classroom?
CR I don’t think so.

CD So you’re extrovert, energetic?
CR You have to be - no way round it- because if you’re not they won’t be - they
mirror image you so much, especially the little ones.

TRANSCRIPTION OF CONVERSATION WITH ‘DB’

CD Tell me about the choral groups you conduct.

DB Small groups generally -chamber choir and smaller - an octet professional and
amateur.

CD How long have you been conducting?

DB Always done some - taken rehearsals at school and concerts. At Cambridge I
was a choral scholar in the choir at the university church. London - choral
society at Westfield College - chamber choir.

CD Would you outline your general philosophy underpinning your work?

DB I approach conducting as a singer. I’m aware of singers’ technical problems and
make allowances and can help in technical matters. Interesting effects on
working with small groups - work with the Swingle Singers where there was
extremely detailed and intricate approach to vocal expression. There’s no earthly
reason why if 8 singers can sing like that - 120 singers can sing like that,

CD How do you find the general standard of choral conducting in this country?

DB I’m appalled by the standard of singing and conducting in choral societies - in awareness of what is possibility. Personalities and weakness apparent in for example in cathedral organists - unmusical breed! It is poor in comparison with Eastern European and American choirs. No apparent improvement here. Learn on the job as far as I can see. Some organisations take courses - low rank occupation - assume it can be done. There is no thought or real attempt to understand groups of singers.

I went to a rehearsal of the Mozart Requiem with the LSO chorus at the Barbican. They know it - typical of complacent set-up. These people don’t know they’re living.

CD What priorities do you have in rehearsals?

DB Listening to 99% of choral groups - the line of text you hear at the end of a pp phrase ‘t’ ff? How often do they shape vowels? Why not turn the vowels as spoken? Why not indicate? I hear this complacency going on and on - it drives me demented. The trainer of the choir has not asked the right questions - this is the way we’ve always done it. Whatever group of singers I’m working with I start there - find that balance, learn to phrase.

CD How do you achieve this balance?

DB What is quite effective is to speak in rehearsal. Enunciate, describe the phrase. Indicate priority of punctuation. Certainly I do by demonstration (speaking) and gesture - overall sense of the music is never lost - neither impose the text upon the music nor the music upon the text. Listen to Brendel etc. playing the Mozart piano concertos. Singers should listen to Mozart piano concertos, the sophistication phrasing becomes apparent. This principle holds good for all singers.

I explain by example - speaking to demonstrate understanding of the text. I try to get people to express and think in speech patterns - and apply awareness to vocal production. Once they have switched on to the process, the gesture can be detailed enabling sensitivity of response. It is important to develop sensitivities of each individual rather than mass submission. Drag it out of amateurs - after 3 hours you feel fucked.

CD What other priorities do you have in rehearsals?

DB An important priority is the love of the music itself. Some choir trainers - why the hell are they doing this? They don’t love the music! They might as well be .... Music is the priority - not you as the conductor. Contrast Abbado and Solti - the way they seem in relation to the music: Solti’s dynamism is in danger of doing a disservice to music, whereas Abbado’s low key charm and personality shows his real love of the music not of himself, but this is personal taste. Either choral conductors are insecure personally (the wife beats them) or want to be in control.

CD What would be important considerations in the training of conductors?

DB Training needs to be about communicating with people. An effective conductor
is someone who has a deep love of music, right perspective and able to communicate in whatever way is open to that individual. A conductor needs to able to create images, colours, senses in a rehearsal, needs to be theatrical and needs a vocabulary for explanation. In some respects this can be trained or enlarged upon. Some of it can be learnt.

CD  What about personality and behavioural traits?

DB  I hate to terrify my singers to get what I want. Some conductors damage the poor sods. I often witness choirs being shouted at, terrifying them into submission - for the conductor's own ego. Conductors should make singers love the music. When you start a phrase / piece I like to make the singers aware of the rhythm - 1234 gives life - getting the inner pulse, preparation and rhythmic sense before singing. Explain, don't shout at them. An interesting revelatory thought - you don't shout at them, which is demeaning rather like beating your child in public.

Other personality traits: a sense of humour - and the ability to communicate that. Don't panic under pressure - stand back and deal with the situation calmly. Rehearsals must be conducted in a disciplined way, otherwise it will screw everybody up. You need to be in control of yourself in order to be in control of 120 people. Avoid petulant behaviour. You don't have to be a nutter to rehearse effectively. Standing back in order to gain a healthy perspective on things is vital. If disasters do occur, then leave it and go on to the next bit. A conductor supplies the ambience and general attitude within an overall comfortable secure, relaxed phase.

CD  What can be done to improve the standard of choral conducting?

DB  There's not enough thought about choral conducting. The basic rationale is about being sensitive to music and people. There is a marked inadequacy on the part of individuals musically and technically. I remember a St John Passion in Stratford, where I was singing Christus. The conductor simply could not conduct the recitatives - so I had to conduct them. He did not know the music well enough. How can you excuse that situation?

CD  Do you think choirs know what they are looking for in appointing conductors?

DB  When choral societies are looking for a new conductor, they are looking for a mould - the mind set of choral societies; it is difficult to shift them from that. They don't know what they are looking for.

CD  So to sum up the characteristics of an effective choral conductor.....

DB  In training: some will need things drawn out. Technical things will follow if singing is rhythmic - rhythmic singing is vital. All must develop an inner rhythmic pulse. As a Swingle Singer I learnt the importance of the 2nd and 4th beats in vocal music - holds the tension. Great singers have rhythmic awareness in place.

Spontaneity - allow for it in rehearsal and performance - there is no finite performance. Of supreme importance is the conductor showing a serenity of purpose and expression; he must be convincing in the communication of the music, allowing its character to bloom.
TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH ‘GM’

CD Tell me what has led you to become a choral director.

GM My inclinations have always been towards vocal music and choral music is an outgrowth of training in keyboard and vocal skills - not wanting a solo career in either one. So I trained first of all as a vocalist. But I always hoped to end up in full-time church work, where I felt I would be responsible for the vocal development of everyone in my programme. So I feel I should know about vocal technique and so my undergraduate and postgraduate degrees are in vocal pedagogy.

CD What are your main responsibilities?

GM I’m coordinator of the entire programme in the church - 11 choirs form 3yrs old to senior adults + handbell groups. The main choir has 48 enrolment and I generally work with 35-40 on a Sunday morning.

CD Do you have any basis belief about your role then in relation to music education? Do you feel yourself as a music educator?

GM Absolutely: the main role of each group is to provide music for worship, but I feel as an outgrowth of attending these programmes, they should leave with more musical knowledge and technical expertise than they came in with, feeling that’s my responsibility - to help them expand musically.

CD What are the things you feel are important technically in choir training?

GM My basic approach is to achieve a particular choral sound that I’m accustomed to and that I like. Certain schools in the USA disregard/ sacrifice individual quality (eg. Westminster College Choir) - I don’t go for that: there’s a sound that they want and you just have to go for it to achieve it, and some are wretched singers on an individual basis. So my philosophy is to improve the individual technique with the end result being an improved corporate technique.

CD What do you concentrate on in rehearsal? Getting the notes right....

GM I work in 4-6 week periods eg. the choir always has 4-6 anthems going in rehearsal.

CD So you plan?

GM Absolutely. I have everything planned now to Easter. We only get 90 minutes a week together - you can’t afford to waste time. So what usually happens is that I’ll plan 4 weeks in advance, looking first at the anthem that will be most immediately presented and work in reverse order and varying degrees of intensity.

CD When you are approaching an anthem for the first time, what are you doing - sight-reading - do you look for anything else?

GM Get the ‘taste in their mouth’ - savour the essential flavour of the anthem and within the first session take some section of the anthem and master it, just so they feel they have a foothold on the anthem, particularly if I know it’s going to be difficult or frustrating for them, eg. something rhythmic that’s going to
provide a challenge.

CD So it’s important for them to feel good about the music they’re doing?

GM Yes.

CD Any other musical issues that come out of this?

GM This is born out when I was with Rodney Eickenberger (Florida) - when I did my workshop with him. There’s one thing without which you can’t have - no intonation and bland sound that is vowel unification. We spend a lot of time on vowel unification, simply because if you have 25 people with unified vowels you have fuller acoustic sound with proper intonation, proper overtones and proper blend, whereas you can have a horrible Baptist choir with hundreds of singers not making any sound at all, because there are so many different versions of the vowel going on at the same time. That’s a very important concept. We talk a lot about individual production with regard to breathing and relaxation of the jaw if I can see or generally hear a problem. Certain tension problems evidence themselves with a certain type of sound.

CD So have you been taught this - is this part of your own training?

GM Yes. This is where I pull in the course I had in vocal pedagogy.

CD So you feel you couldn’t do this without a basic understanding of the voice?

GM No. It would be such a stab in the dark. If you don’t have an understanding of the voice - basically it’s hit or miss, isn’t it?

CD Let’s look at George Mann the great choral conductor - the communicator as it were. Are there any traits that you have personally - regardless of your musical ability - that are important in your training in rehearsal or performance?

GM Something I’m told repeatedly, and I feel is true, is my ability to (a) communicate what I want through either gestures or face, primarily face, eyes, and (b) inspire people to want to sing.

CD Do you have a role model in mind?

GM No. The ability to inspire people to sing as I understand is something that is an outgrowth of my own personality. I will say this, if I don’t feel enthusiasm about the music I approach - there’s no way I can communicate it or expect it from the singers. I’m sort of an effusive person anyway.

CD The music you do is the music you believe in.

GM Exactly. The choir is not going to have the sparkle of enthusiasm unless I bring it to them first.

CD That means cajoling them, humouring them, doing all those sorts of things in a rehearsal situation, as well as getting on with the job.

GM I bring a great deal of my personal personality into a rehearsal session. Having a good time (with humour) is very important to the rehearsal, simply because these people are all volunteers, and there’s no reason for them to come back if they don’t have a good time. So I want them to feel (i) they’ve enjoyed themselves and (ii) I want to build their self-esteem - they have an organisation
they are proud to be a member of.

CD  What are the characteristics of you as a conductor in performance?

GM  Apparently I give the eye area very definite communication and also, when they do particularly well, I react in a very satisfied and grateful manner. I think they appreciate that. I’ve been told that every thought I have flies across my face.

CD  So it’s not necessarily verbal communication, it’s gestural and verbal in rehearsal.

GM  Yes, I’m also very verbal in a rehearsal.

CD  Too verbal?

GM  No, I don’t think I’m too verbal - I do talk and demonstrate. I make great use of analogy. I remember hearing in a class that singing is 98% mental imagery. Part of being a successful teacher is striking on the mental images - what needs to be done with their body - very individual, subjective process, but if there is a certain effect I want or musical point I want to drive home, I’ll stop and come up with something totally unrelated to music - more related to their everyday life - something abrupt or shocking that will stick in their mind to illustrate the point - so they don’t forget it.

CD  So are you as a choral conductor a communicator? So, is this something you’ve either got or you haven’t got? Is the notion of an effective conductor teachable?

GM  I feel you can be taken to a certain point academically regarding the technique of conducting and have the best knowledge of the choral literature and be a fabulous musician, but if you cannot communicate - just hang it up. Part of a choir to me is inspiring loyalty and the desire to sing. To get a musical response from singers there’s got to be some sort of connection between conductor and singer.

TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH ‘SM’

CD  Tell me something about the work you do.

SM  I work with Junior High School students and right now Grade 7-8 in Middle school choir (mixed S & A); and high school G9-12 meet in the same class periods but are divided into 3 different groups, because we have a problem getting enough boys to sing, so I have to be clever about how I divide everything up. I have a 3-part girls’ choir (25), a select ensemble of girls (4-part) - the best singers, and madrigal singers - mixed ensemble (3 parts, S.A.Bar.). These boys may sing tenor or bass in other events, but in this choir all sing baritone - 5 per part. The number of girls in that groups is related to the number of boys that sign up. All my boys are very good singers, but it’s not the in-thing in my school.

CD  Does that determine repertoire then?

SM  Yes it does.

CD  You choose repertoire to match these groups?
The hardest thing for me to find is music for my girls ensemble. I can find a fair amount of contest literature and Christmas music, you don’t find much music for 4-part girls.

You run a church choir as well? SATB?

We do major works. Average about 35 (in the choir).

Did you n your own college have training in running choirs?

I majored in voice as an undergraduate student and music education and I had classes in working with choirs at secondary level.

So, do you feel that an important part of being a choral conductor is that you know something about the voice?

Yes - because I majored in voice. My masters degree is in vocal pedagogy - so definitely. At this level we had more classes in choral conducting and choral arranging, but I still say the best teacher is to just get out there and do it. I don’t think I had ever directed a choir when I was in school. It was not until I was out of school that I actually had to use all of this. I had to conduct in such a way that people understood me and so forth.

So you didn’t have specific training in conducting?

I took classes - what I’m saying is it wasn’t until I was out of school [her term for college] that I actually applied it.

Is there any basic overall belief you have of you as a choral conductor/trainer - is there an underlying purpose behind it all?

Mainly, I suppose, to teach them how to become good singers. I try to make it like a group voice lesson and I try to hear them individually and in small groups as much as possible. When they first start out with me (in 7th Grade) when they are shy about it, they don’t like to sing by themselves, but the more they do it, of course, the better it is. Now there’s fierce competition if there is a solo that they want to sing!

So you’re treating them as individual singers as well as a group. In the musical/technical things in a rehearsal, are you concentrating on vocal technique?

Yes - mostly vowel unification - to me that’s one of the most important things. That’s the secret of getting a good blend of having them sing with a mature sound - to me all of that is the correct vowel sound. So many high school choirs have that shallow, narrow sound of vowels and you can’t get a big sound without that.

If you’re starting a new piece then, what will you do in your first rehearsal?

We have to do sight-reading for contest and get judged on that; we would want to teach sight-reading anyway - the extra incentive is that we are going to be judged on that ability. One of the first things we do is to go through the music and have each student mark their music, then we go through it as a sight-reading exercise - before we do anything else. I’m not just mindlessly pounding out notes - that’s not teaching anything!
CD Do you try to establish something of the character of the music as soon as possible?

SM Yes. I try and talk to them about what time period it is.

[Details followed of contests and sight-reading tests - SM's concern is - can they sing the notes?]

CD So is that in accordance with your own philosophy - if you had your own way...?  

SM Yes; they've got to know how to read the music - you've got to get past that before you can do all the other things.

CD How do you train them, is it just by doing it?

SM I have books that we use. We start that in the 7th grade. By the time they get to high school they almost enjoy it, because it becomes a challenge for them.

CD Is there anything else that goes on in a rehearsal, musically or technically that you concentrate on?

SM Talk about blend, dynamics and all the other things.

CD Do you tend to do it by demonstration or analogy?

SM Both of those. Yes I do demonstrate - this is how not to do it, this is how to do it correctly.

CD Is there anything about your personality that you think is useful or important in a rehearsal or performance?

SM A sense of humour always helps in any sort of situation that's important. I think that my love for music comes through to them; they see how important it is to me - how important it is for them to do their very best to get it correct and all of that. I want them to have pride in themselves as singers and as a group, which I think they have. They're proud of themselves what they do - that's important too. Course, I'm working with that age group - you have to deal with all of their little life crises, which can affect the whole emotional climate of a rehearsal. If you have one child stomp in the door just having broken with her boyfriend or whatever - you kinda have to deal with that too. I try to tell them they just have to leave all that at the door, that's really hard for them to do. So emotionally volatile at that age. Junior High's even worse. Everything's a crisis - they're up or they're down - there's not much in between. So I feel I do so much 'parenting' - see, I have a unique advantage because I'm in a small school - I'm it! 7th thro' 12th grade, even 5th grade in general music classes. It's so gratifying when they tell you they're majoring in music because of what you've done.

CD Let's look at your personality in a performance. Are there certain things that you do when they're up on stage?

SM I'm a stern taskmaster when it comes to performing and I've perfected the 'eagle-eye'.

CD So you use your face a lot?
SM: Yes, I do— as well as actually conducting.

CD: Anything else?

SM: I don’t know.

CD: Is there something about conducting that you think is teachable?

SM: The knowledge of the voice is much more important than knowing how to wave my arms around. I think it’s them knowing how to be better singers— that’s the important thing.

CD: So you’re a music educator?

SM: Definitely.

TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH ‘AO’

CD: Can you give me an outline of the choral conducting and training that you have done or are presently doing?

AO: I began when I first started teaching in primary school in my early 20s, though in some ways I began before that because I was always passionately fond of singing myself— though I was absolutely certain that I couldn’t do it.

CD: Why was that?

AO: I felt inhibited that my voice was very small and very inadequate.

CD: Is that because somebody told you that?

AO: I knew a lot of people who seemed to have much better voices than I did— so I had a great sense of being 3rd rate as it were. I also had a burning sense of love of music, particularly 16th century music, and I used to groan along to the radio, so by 12, I did know a lot of 16th century by listening to it— singing along.

CD: When did you start to conduct?

AO: I started to conduct when in my mid 20s— my first primary teaching job and I had a theory that all children could enjoy singing— perhaps because I had felt so frustrated myself I actually wanted to make it possible for my children to not feel put down.

CD: So that belief has gone with you then? That all people have something to offer in singing?

AO: Yes.

CD: When you actually conduct, what are the main things you concentrate on?

AO: Primarily, I feel my way towards getting everyone to feel they have got a part to
play, and an acceptable part to play. So, I remember seeing some children looking uncomfortable with the part they were on - so I used to spend time encouraging all of them to 'play' with their voices so they actually knew what they felt comfortable with.

CD  The important thing is they felt comfortable?

AO  They felt comfortable personally.

CD  What sort of choir are you conducting at the moment?

AO  I'm conducting an entirely voluntary group of people from the University of Westminster, who came together initially about 18 months ago to sing for the annual carol service. They're a mixture in the sense that some of them are better singers than others, but they're all keen and enthusiastic and they're enthusiastic about being a choir rather than simply a group of people coming together occasionally. They want to do more things.

CD  What are the musical/technical things you might concentrate on in a rehearsal?

AO  Rehearsals tend to be limited and focused towards particular events. I concentrate always on the musical shape of what they're doing, so that even if time is limited, I would rather that they got some idea of the piece that they're dealing with and the optimum way it could be rather than standing out notes and getting it technically under their belts, ending the rehearsal with it still not being a piece of music. So I'll try all sorts of ways of releasing them in responding to the music.

CD  Are there any things that are difficult to control - do they respond to that?

AO  I think that they respond emotionally. I think technically some of them find that approach difficult, because they're generally middle-aged people, who have a history of singing in one circumstance or another which hasn't always been a very helpful circumstance.

CD  Some in my choir get very anxious if they don't get the notes.

AO  Exactly, or it doesn't come out as they want it to.

CD  I'll try to say - it'll come - look at the whole shape of the music.

AO  And I get those who are anxious about their sight-reading ability and feel terribly on the spot if they're only one or two on a part; - 'Oh dear, I'm going to be exposed.' I take a lot of time making it plain that I haven't got all the answers. Sometimes I'll model something for them quietly rather than leaving them.

CD  So it's important to demonstrate?

AO  If I feel I can demonstrate satisfactorily - but I'm aware that I don't always do it right.

CD  There's a lot of emphasis on sight-reading in this country - cathedral choirs need to be able to sight-sing. I wonder if that's altogether healthy?

AO  I think my present perception about these people is that it's is a barrier rather
than a help. It is helpful to be able to find your way through a piece of music, but you use a wide variety of means to do that; one of them is just listening - doing it from the page is not the only way.

CD Any other things you like to concentrate on say in a performance?

AO I will always go for good tone. I spend quite a lot of time getting them to listen to the sound they make. I'm still aware of my own lack of... I mean, I'm not a great singer and I never shall be a great singer. I can hear what I think it should sound like - but it might not be me who will be able to do it. So, I listen out for people in the choir who can do it. I've always done that certainly with children; so you hear somebody - say - 'Would you just sing that phrase? - that's the way it should go.'

CD What about you as a personality? Can anyone conduct a choir, or does it require a certain behavioural trait?

AO It's all to do with drawing things out of other people rather than trussing them in. I think you do have to have a certain internal humility; now I think I probably err too much on the side of - 'I'm not very good at doing that.'... But it's not good to go in implying that you have all the answers and they are simply to receive from you some piece of magic. Choirs aren't like that. Choirs are about communication within the choir.

CD Human condition.

AO Yes.

CD In your own mind, is there anything/one that's been a good model for you in terms of choral conducting? Anyone you admire?

AO Various - sung under or watched conduct and listened to the results: George Guest, Richard Hickox and more recently someone called Ian McMillan, who had the incredible gift of lifting everything.

CD Is there any particular personality condition about those people?

AO I think the main thing is openness to the people who were singing - so you didn't feel the music was set between the conductor and the choir, but the conductor and the music were both alive; and that comes back to the conductor needing to have an intimate knowledge of the music - not in the academic sense - but in the sense of it actually meaning and being inside that person - so there's a passion for it. You know what I mean!

CD I'm interested in the training of choral conductors. Are there any problems you encounter?

AO A larger problem than me feeling I'm a 'patchy' singer, I find it quite hard to communicate particularly pace with my actions. If I try and bring a choir in, I find I'm nearly always going too slowly.

CD So preparing tempo ... it's quite difficult. Is there any way in which you could be helped?

AO Well, the most helpful thing is to go on doing it - not just in your own little corner but with a variety of other people, to sing under other conductors.
CD We tend to act in a very isolationist way.
AO And a very possessive way.
CD Is that a British characteristic?
AO I think it's totally anally retentive, tight-assed British syndrome.
CD Almost defensive about what we do.
AO And my choir.
CD Did you have any choral conducting or conducting input in your musical training?
AO No. Singing in small choirs and larger choirs - but not conducting as such.
CD Do you think there is a role for training choral conductors?
AO Oh yes - I think there's a role for encouraging singers to feel what it's like to conduct a choir.
CD There's a lot of people (in churches) who don't know what they're doing.
AO And they hide behind this barricade - 'I must be right because I'm the conductor.' You get barely fledged young conductors conducting church choirs in the most stultifying fashion and just copying what they have seen or experienced. They don't make the right connection. Music needs us to come alive - needs all the human input and we need the music - mutual enterprise. It's often a competition - various people set up against each other.
CD If there's one thing for a choral conductor to be - can you sum it up?
AO Most important to have a course in psycho-therapy; some use their experience in choirs as pseudo psycho-therapy and bring all their hang-ups to it. Can release you from certain feelings - but you need to be aware of what you're doing. In my own history of conducting where I am now is very different form where I was 20 years ago. They need to know themselves - then that makes you more relaxed about the way you do things. If I look straight-faced, then no wonder the kids look straight-faced!

TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH ‘DT’

CD Could you please describe the choirs you conduct?
DT CEFC formed in 1984 now a top symphonic chorus with 160 on the books with 140 singing regularly, with very strong tenor and bass sections -which is quite unusual, but because the choir is so successful we're always getting new men along because they want to join a thriving section.
CD You rehearse once a week?
DT Yeah .. that's the idea, but during the coming May we have about 16 rehearsal calls, which is a little bit over the top, but usually once a week.

CD So you're able to do the major choral repertoire?

DT Yes - we haven't done things like Mahler 8 or Gurrelieder or anything absolutely gigantic - biggest thing is the Berlioz Te Deum.

CD And you've just started a chamber choir.

DT That's called the 'Cries of London' and we've just done our 1st concert in Waltham Abbey which was very very successful. We did 'Spem in Alium' with one voice per part. I want to concentrate on the repertoire of the smaller choir, mainly with orchestra rather than acappella because if choirs are acappella for me they have to be absolutely superb (eg. Tallis Scholars, The 16, Hilliard Ensemble) - anything less than that doesn't interest me at all. If you have an excellent amateur choir and working with an orchestra and doing things like Dixit Dominus, Bach Magnificat, they can actually be as good as any in the world. So that's my ambition for that choir.

CD Now how did you come into choral conducting, because you started on another footing?

DT I came to London at 18 and went along to the local church and started singing in the choir, and one of the sopranos in the choir told me I was a tenor, which was nice to know, quite a rare breed, so she asked me to come and sing in the London Philharmonic Choir. I couldn't read music at the time, so I did an audition for John Aldis and sang quite well. Because I was 18 and had a reasonable voice, he took me on. Within weeks I was singing with Solti in the RFH and my love of music was like a religious conversion. I spent the next 4-5 years singing with the LPC and then I thought I would take up conducting.

CD Did you learn from these conductors? Was there somebody particularly influential?

DT Mainly John Aldis himself.

CD So what made him good?

DT His philosophy was that when you get the notes right - that's the beginning of getting a piece right. Then you have a long way to go after that to make it work. Whereas with a lot of people, getting the notes right is the final product. He had this wonderful knack of making ordinary people do extraordinary things.

CD And that belief is now taken with you?

DT Yes. I find it very exciting when people I work with who are moderately talented can come up with the most extraordinary results, based on a lot of good training and just supreme confidence and ability to work hard.

CD Is there anyone else who's had an influence on you?

DT No, not really. It's a mixture of John Aldis and all the others put together, because the big advantage I have (- I have a lot of disadvantages) is that I've never known music at a lower level than the LPC at the RFH, so that's what I've always based my standards on.
Anything else about the general beliefs of you as a choral conductor / trainer that you’ve taken on board?

I’ve developed my own ideas from that [John Aldis] and I suppose the kind of music which interests me most of all is large choir and orchestra oratorio - probably 20th century most of all, especially where the music has a strong dramatic content and I really enjoy getting into the nuts and bolts of the drama. For example, when we did Prokofiev’s Alexander Nevsky, which is a wonderfully dramatic work, we hired the Phoenix cinema in East Finchley and showed the film to about 300 on a Sunday morning and it made a tremendous difference to the performance. They could picture when they were singing what they were singing about. That really interests me.

Could we now focus on you taking a rehearsal? If you’re starting a new piece or it’s an ordinary rehearsal, what sort of things do you concentrate on? Is there an order of priority in things you do?

First of all, I know how many rehearsals I have between the 1st rehearsal and the concert - usually 10, 11, 12. I hope to get them through the whole of the music within the first three - three & half rehearsals. Now if you work at too much detail you don’t get through it in the amount of time; if you work in too little detail you haven’t started to scratch the surface. So I take a little bit of the middle ground. If, for example, I’m rehearsing a mass, I will sing through the Kyrie and Gloria, I’ll work on the Kyrie and Gloria, possibly sing through the Credo a a sight-reading thing at the end. By the end of the rehearsal, we have a good working knowledge of about a third of the piece.

And they’ve got something about the character of the whole piece as well.

I suppose the equivalent might be when you’re painting something - you give everything an undercoat, 1st coat, then top coat - that’s the way I rehearse.

So you might not deal with note-bashing all the way through or something like that. Are there times when you concentrate on particular things?

When choirs sing a work for the first time they do take a lot of pleasure and satisfaction from sight-reading, but the you have to work hard on note-bashing in order to feel like you’ve got somewhere.

Do you tend to rehearse altogether - or do you split them up and have part rehearsals?

Usually it’s altogether, because most of the choirs I work with the sight-reading is pretty good, the social thing is so strong - if we had intervals at different times that would take a lot of the fun out it. I also think if your rehearsals are interesting enough - this is something I remember from John Aldis - the other members of the choir are listening while you are working with a section, and hopefully taking on board a lot of the points that you’re making, so that when you go on to them, they’re already half way there.

So it’s a general psychology that you’re developing in treating the choir, keeping busy while listening to other parts?

Yes. There are some conductors who have everybody singing all the time and have people marking their parts quietly while you’re working with one section.
I don’t actually subscribe to that. If people are singing they should be doing it with their full concentration not just chuntering away in the background.

CD If a choir’s success very often depends upon its conductor - what is it about you as a person that has made your choir particularly successful? I know it’s difficult to self-analyse, but are there behavioural/personality traits?

DT I think they appreciate my background is as one of them, which is fairly unusual. There aren’t many choral conductors who have been a member of the chorus for a long, long time. Some of them have been singers at university - a choral scholar or something - and not used to singing at that particular level.

CD So you’ve ‘been there’ - is it the same as an orchestral conductor who’s actually sat in the ?

DT I think it is. But then it’s a disadvantage for me when I conduct orchestras, I really don’t know what it’s like to sit there and count parts, but that doesn’t mean I can’t work at it and try and be as good as I possibly can.

CD So you feel you know something about the voice?

DT Well, I know a little bit about the voice, I wouldn’t say I was a specialist singing coach. I have a working knowledge of the voice and I know a lot of tricks, and I know what singers can and can’t do and how to adapt certain phrases to get the best out of the voice.

CD So do you know how to deal with problems? If your sopranos go flat do you shout at them or encourage them?

DT I think when you do have problems the worst thing to do is to ..... it’s rather like being a parent when you have problems with your children - you don’t want to shout at them all the time, nag at them all the time and you don’t want them to get away with it all the time, so it’s a mixture of all those things really. Sometimes I get a bit short-tempered, other times I charm them into getting it right, other times I politely insult them and try to use a bit of humour. Other tricks is to get them to sing it ‘up’ a semitone without them knowing it and then they know they can get all the notes by singing it out of tune, it’s purely a question of them not using their voices and their ears; it’s not that they can’t achieve the notes.

CD Psychological thing.

DT You have to develop singers’ ears. Most of my choirs very rarely sing out of tune.

CD Going back to the personality - what was particular about JA’s personality? Anything similar between you and him?

DT No - our personalities are completely different. He’s a real public school gentleman, I’m a bit of a rough diamond.

CD What about your actual conducting, gestures, facial expressions?

DT I like to have lots of eye contact with singers - not so much in the first few rehearsals, but near the concerts and in concerts I actually like a lot of eye contact. I like the music to have real physical quality - almost a sensual quality
as well; I try to make performances 3-dimensional.

CD So, is that reflected in your gestures this sensuousness?

DT Yea - I think it probably is. Fairly expansive - I get very involved and very moved by the music and seem very excited by it - and that it's very evident to the singers and possibly the orchestra as well, and it makes a lot of difference to the way they perform. I don't just go through the motions.

CD Do you think there are enough good choral conductors around in this country?

DT Well, I sincerely hope not, because my future career depends on there not being

CD I'd better not start doing choral conducting course in HE then. Is there a need for a more systematic training of choral conductors?

DT I think there is a need for it. I would have appreciated it to a certain extent. Just because I've come through a certain way doesn't mean I necessarily approve of that way. I do think there should be a more systematic training of choral conductors, both as conductors and as chorus-masters. In this country CMs are always the bridesmaid never the bride. That's a real put-down of their abilities. When chorus-mastering abroad, my name's been up there in the same type as the conductor. In this country, you're lucky of your name's on the poster at all. It's an indication of respect for the CM.

CD Would teaching choral conducting be able to solve any problems you have? Are there things you need help with? We tend to be quite defensive and protective about our own area, reluctant to share problems.

DT In order to stand in front of 130 people you have to have confidence in your ability; if you start questioning your ability and losing confidence, then you can't do it. What I approve of is when conductors like us get together over a beer and talk through what we could improve on rather than be a in a formal class situation when you're told the left hand is not high enough, little finger is poking out; if too self-conscious it can destroy the natural self-confidence you had to start with. I'm wary about the method of training.

CD There could be a role for the ABCD?

DT Oh yes!

CD Perhaps we ought to up its profile.

DT Anything with a title or letters it often attracts people who are attracted by that sort of thing. Committee people etc. people hard at work on the shop floor don't have time to belong, or are worried they might be 'found out'. It worries me that some day somebody's going to find out that I can't conduct or teach a choir.

CD Evidence shows you can!

DT Evidence shows I've got away with it. I haven't been to public school, I don't play the piano, I don't know what a Neapolitan 6th is, I'm not a trained singer. My success has been because I'm street-wise I suppose.
CD Plus presumably enthusiastic about it.

DT Yea - I hope so.

CD Finally, is there any difference between you the conductor towards the end of a rehearsing spree and you in performance?

DT Physically? Not too much; when you’re taking choral rehearsals you tend to spoon-feed them. The orchestra get terribly irritated by all that. So you have to adapt your technique to suit both. The biggest problem choral conductors have is that they flail around like wurling durbishers and the orchestra are playing loudly. The reason they’re playing loud is that he’s conducting loud. Choral conductors have to learn to bring it down to a very small space and to get the choir to respect that.

CD That’s a common mistake and then telling the orchestra to be quiet.

DT Something from my point of view I have certainly rectified. Some orchestra conductors are not expressive enough for choirs and don’t give choral leads that they’re used to. There has to be a half-way house!

TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH ‘JH’

CD Would you describe the sorts of choir work you do?

JH At the moment I conduct the Harrow Youth Choir, a choir of students aged from 12 - 21; we occasionally have a chamber choir which taken directly from the Youth choir. There are 70 in the choir, SATB, though I started it as a treble choir in 1983. We have a junior choir as well of treble voices which I occasionally conduct.

CD Were you asked to conduct this choir on the strength of you choral conducting abilities?

JH When I was Head of Music in a middle school I had a choir, we had orchestras and bands, everything was quite established when I was appointed, but we didn’t have a choir, so I started one and we entered a festival and we won and this was fun so we went on to Llangollen and Germany and things developed from there.

CD Is there anything important you believe about choirs and choir training? What do think it has to offer people?

JH Everyone can sing and should be given the opportunity, but I don’t believe in great massed choirs for everyone; I do believe in a standard and people need help, it’s a natural thing, but do need help.

CD Do you audition in your choirs?

JH We do in fact; we have an assessment, but, we don’t turn people away if they’re not ready to join the group, we put them in the direction of a group that will help them. If students are keen they will join the school choir if there is one; sometimes there are intonation problems and that maybe because they haven’t
had the experience.

CD Do you think children who sing in a choir over a long period of time will have their problems solved?

JH I do believe in enthusiasm - that’s number 1.

CD Do you think there is enough singing going on in schools? Perhaps in Harrow there is?

JH No. Definitely not.

CD Let’s look at you in the rehearsal then. If you’re taking an average rehearsal with this choir, what are the main things that you concentrate on musically and technically with this group of singers?

JH Difficult question depending on repertoire, which is very wide ranging and we’re not always working on major works. The age of the youngsters - they haven’t got the weight there, so the longest work we would do would be about 15 minutes for example.

CD That actually might be more sensible than trying to do an oratorio with a school choir, it really being too much for them.

JH Yes. I depends how its approached and what back-up they have. I do believe there’s a place for the great choral works with young voices, many people don’t believe that and wait until they’re older.

CD When taking this rehearsal with a small work, what sort of things do you concentrate on in musical terms?

JH Well, unfortunately it has to be notes. But I like to make it as musical as possible from the start. I say every sound you make should be musical.

CD So to achieve this would you sing through a work as much as possible or in phrases or.

JH My expectations are always high and I try and move my rehearsals along quicker; I’ve learnt a lot by watching other colleagues - orchestral conductors and you must realise you’re never going to get it all right first time, but something I’ve learnt in the last couple of years is to keep moving.

CD And try to aim towards a goal. How do you achieve this technically? What do you consider important that you do in a rehearsal?

JH Well essentially my job is as an educationalist, to give my students an experience, broad experiences of music as possible; I always have to bear that in mind. The aim wouldn’t be that we are performing something perfectly technically, but I’m always aiming to perform as high as possible standard.

CD There are a whole lot of other things that come into a rehearsal which are of educational value. If we look now at you as the conductor, do you conduct all the time from the beginning or do you have a pianist?

JH Sometimes I invite students to come out and conduct, so that’s a learning experience for me and for them. I do encourage that.
That's an interesting one. Who's gaining from that?

Everyone. It's like a mirror sometimes of course if I'm their model they're imitating me, then they appreciate how difficult it is. It's quite good to do it individually. The more you do it the freer it becomes. Then we can discuss what I'm actually doing when I conduct.

Have you had any lessons yourself in conducting?

Well I was fortunate when I was working in the middle school, when I was huge with children, I had some lessons. I hadn't done it before, because the usual method of learning conducting is by watching others, that's how he spent his apprenticeship following conductors around not actually having lessons. I feel influenced by several people. I've been greatly influences by people I've sung under.

What is it that the good choral conductor has then?

Makes me want to sing; makes it easier.

When you are conducting, do they respond to you, your gesture and your face, what is it that they're responding to?

I like them to sing from memory as much as possible, so very quickly I get them to do without the copies, so I talk a lot about memorising and how to see a piece of music.

And it's easier with children, adults find it much more difficult.

You just have to know it yourself, obviously it's very challenging for me, and if I have a bad rehearsal I know it's because I haven't known something well enough, and I really do have to know things from memory to really conduct a rehearsal properly.

Do you think that's an important premise for any conductor?

For me. Again I've learnt that from colleagues.

So what about the personality of Joy Hill? Can you analyse anything about your personality or character?

I find that very difficult to do. I'm very British.

Maybe that's the nub of the problem - if there is a problem, that we don't know how to describe what we do.

Yes I think you've hit the nail on the head there. I actually think I tell them I do care about them; I'm not just standing up there just to get the good performances - the ego - but there has to be a certain amount of ego doesn't there? It takes a while to establish relationships. I'm also lucky I teach a considerable number of the students singing individually or in small groups, so I know them very well. I have done classroom teaching in high schools as well.

Is it because you're a natural teacher that you're a conductor?
JH: It's something I haven't thought about.

CD: You have a sparkling personality, does that come over in choir practices?

JH: I hope it does. Interestingly, when other colleagues took over while I was having babies the last few years, it was disastrous, and they had all sorts of reasons why it didn't work. Too many people consider conducting a choir is easy and this colleague considered it was easy and didn't take enough time to prepare rehearsals and treated it like conducting a symphony with an orchestra, so I think sometimes they were unprepared, underestimated the enormity of the job, their hearts weren't in it, but there were personality problems.

CD: Did they know about the voice?

JH: No. They didn't always consider it was necessary.

CD: What is it that makes them come back next week?

JH: We're not laughing all the time, but I love it.

CD: That must come across. Are there any particular things you feel you could do with help on - any aspects of your conducting a choir?

JH: I'm learning all the time; through talking to people I respect, generally if there was more openness; everyone needs help, and we have to learn all the time, we don't stop learning, so I'm fortunate in people that I've met, like yourself.

CD: Could there be a role for HE in music degrees and postgraduate work?

JH: Definitely. There's an assumption that all is well and it's all carrying on, but it's not at all. You only have to look around the country to see the number of young boys singing. The reason I think is the repertoire. Composers are not writing suitably. As an advisory teacher this is my job for singing in schools, always finding the root of the problem is using dreadful material. So there's a proper role for the study of repertoire.

CD: Are there any particular difference between you as a rehearser and you as conductor in a performance?

JH: Yes something else happens in a performance, it has to really doesn't it? Something mysterious happens - it has to. the psychology, I talk about that with the choir as well.

CD: Is there something that happens to you in your body, face, using gesture, conducting patterns, is there anything else that you use?

JH: Difficult question. I use my eyes a lot; you don't talk do you? People tend to talk too much in rehearsal. I think I'm quite good at being a fly on the wall through advising others, being an advisory teacher, I'm always watching myself - quite painful, and I've had myself videoed as well. Far too much movement, far too busy; the more you learn, the older you become the less one does probably.

CD: Are there any things you would like to see happen in this country with regard to youth choirs?
I think we need to get away from the jolly sing for pleasure idea, big sing-song. Something of a higher level needs to come out of it, but you need the people who are trained to do it with a common philosophy.
APPENDIX 3

CHORAL CONDUCTING QUESTIONNAIRE
CHORAL CONDUCTING QUESTIONNAIRE

The following statements are descriptors of what could be considered attributes of an effective choral conductor. For my research purposes only, please offer your responses to the statements. Circle the number you think appropriate for each descriptor.

7 = strongly agree; 4 = not sure; 1 = strongly disagree.

1. [PHILOSOPHICAL]
An effective choral conductor should be able to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>§ display knowledge of the choral repertoire</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ display an understanding of the human voice</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ possess a clear image of the music prior to rehearsal</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ show awareness of the aesthetic potential of the music</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ know the nature of his/her role</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ inform the choir of the historical context of the music</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ function as teacher as well as conductor</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ motivate the choir energetically</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ be an excellent musician</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. [TECHNICAL]
An effective choral conductor should be able to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>§ demonstrate aural skills, including the identification of incorrect rhythms &amp; pitch</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ correct major inaccuracies</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ correct minor inaccuracies</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ display clear intention of tempo, metre, entries and endings through appropriate gestures</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ demonstrate accurately and musically</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ sing</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

277
§ attach importance to the style of the music
§ attend to every detail at the earliest opportunity
§ give an impression of the overall character of the music at the earliest opportunity
§ warm up the singers efficiently at the beginning of rehearsals
§ gradually enable singers to become independent of the conductor

### 3. [BEHAVIOURAL]
An effective choral conductor should be able to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>§ create a positive non-threatening environment</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ communicate clearly and unambiguously</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ present a personality that is conducive to healthy singing</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ enable choral and vocal development to take place</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ make singers feel confident and comfortable</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ avoid bad temper and impatience</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ display a keen sense of humour in rehearsal</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ display an aura of leadership</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ use verbal language sparingly in rehearsal</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ dress smartly</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ speak grammatically</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ be firm with the choristers</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ expect the highest standards possible</td>
<td>7 6 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Please add any further appropriate comments which are not covered in the statements above:
APPENDIX 4

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE
## OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

**CHOIR/CLASS:**

**DATE:**

### ATTRIBUTE & EVIDENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philosophical</th>
<th>OCCURRENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>display knowledge of choral repertoire</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evidence that choral material is appropriate for particular group - within their capabilities and vocal ranges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>display understanding of the human voice</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shows knowledge of how voice works by dealing with problems, eg. poor pitching, tone, blend and vocal issues in an informed manner, also shows awareness of how voice is produced etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>possess clear image of music prior to rehearsal</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has clear technical &amp; expressive ideas of presenting music and puts them into action by informing choir, eg. aiming for particular sound etc., knows what is wanted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>awareness of aesthetic potential of music</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>able to produce the expressive character of the music, and feelingful responses in singers (&amp; audience); demonstrates feeling for music in gesture and language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>know the nature of own role as conductor</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>takes responsibility for singers and music by setting realistic targets each rehearsal and by knowing what is appropriate to deal with</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>inform the choir of the historical context of the music</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inform the choir, as necessary, of stylistic issues, treatment of text, the composer's intentions, articulation etc. and other matters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>function as teacher and conductor</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>approaches rehearsal as a singer / educator promoting &amp; enabling learning about the voice, music etc.to take place</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Technical/Musical

<p>| demonstrate aural skills                                  |            |
| show evidence of being able to hear what is going on in rehearsal in terms of ability to identify pitches, rhythms and chords as well as tone, balance and blend |            |
| <strong>correct major inaccuracies</strong>                            |            |
| hear and deal with by aiming to improve incorrect entries, melodic phrases, pitches, rhythmic patterns etc. |            |
| <strong>correct minor inaccuracies</strong>                            |            |
| attend to such things as articulation, diction, vowels, more subtle shades etc. |            |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>display clear intention of tempo etc. through appropriate gesture</strong></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>clear preparation beats, cut-offs, breathing with singers for entries, shape phrases in gesture, clarity in rits, accelerandos, pauses etc.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>demonstrate accurately and musically</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sing/play correct pitches, rhythms etc. for choir to hear, demonstrate solution to musical 'problem', perhaps demonstrating what not to do</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>attach importance to style of music</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aim for sound appropriate to musical intentions of composer, create imagery / analogy to assist solution to problem, deal with articulation, tone etc. and nature of expressive character</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>give impression of character of music at early opportunity</strong></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>display through gesture or description the expressive content as well as technical detail of music; use of imagery / analogy</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>warm up singers efficiently</strong></th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>attend to breathing, relaxation through physical and vocal exercises at beginning of and during rehearsals; holistic approach to activity</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>enable singers to become independent from conductor</strong></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>occasionally deliberately avoid giving cues, make them count, sing next to different people from time to time or in various formations</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Behavioural / Personality</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>create positive non-threatening environment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encourage with praise as appropriate and setting realistic goals, avoid negative statements all the time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>communicate clearly and unambiguously</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>effective use of facial expressions, eyes and appropriate gesture as well as verbal language</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>encourage healthy singing</strong></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>use gesture and language that will avoid creating tension, avoid modelling inappropriate actions, give tips for vocal health</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>enable choral and vocal development</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>allow individual exploration, help with vocal techniques, voice and choral blend etc.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>make singers feel confident and comfortable</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>use of reassuring language, allowance for mistakes, use of human compatible communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>avoid bad temper</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>out of control if things go wrong, searching for errors, remain calm under pressure</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>displays sense of humour</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>makes music fun, jokes, laughs at self, eases tension, may use extrovert behaviour to motivate singers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>paces rehearsals effectively</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>uses verbal language sparingly by encouraging response to visual cues by various means, get on with the music, avoid concentrating on one part while others get bored or demotivated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>expect highest standards possible</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>renew expectations, set clear goals appropriate for group, use improvement/qualitative feedback to choir</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**OTHER ATTRIBUTE/BEHAVIOURS**
APPENDIX 5

PROPOSAL FOR INITIAL CHORAL CONDUCTING COURSES

Course 1

1: The use of natural and expressive body movement to music; principles of non-verbal communication and body language. Resources: variety of music to enable students to develop 'natural' movement patterns and conducting shapes.

2: Continuation of exploration of expressive body movement; using hands independently; singing with movement; expressive vocal phrasing; analysis of structure and character of music. Resources: 'simple' vocal music (eg. Britten's *New Year Carol*) for singing and movement.


4: Determination of pulse, tempo of music in relation to its natural momentum; starting and ending techniques; changing tempo; aspects of breathing and breath control in relation to gesture. Resources: selection of music with contrasting tempi and expressive style.

5: Conducting patterns; development of gestures within expressive 'natural' framework and 'traditional' patterns; appropriateness of gesture to music. Resources: selection of music with contrasting tempi and expressive style.

Course 2

6: Conducting styles; gestures as appropriate for styles of music; conducting syncopation, pauses, complex rhythmic patterns. Resources: music with syncopation (eg. 'gospel') and more complex rhythmic patterns (eg. Rutter's *Shepherd's Pipe Carol*).
7: Rehearsal strategies I; methods of teaching music as appropriate to the choral group; motivation; pacing of rehearsals; conducting in the primary and secondary school context.

Resources: unison and part-songs to teach young singers and other pieces as appropriate; (Decker & Kirk, 1988; Roach, 1989; Rao, 1993).

8: Rehearsal strategies II; continuation of consideration of strategies; use of imagery, analogy and demonstration in the choral rehearsal; teaching 'challenging' passages - methods and gestures.

Resources: songs with particular 'challenging' passages vocally and technically in terms of rhythm, pitch, vocal range; (Funk, 1985; Thurman, 1977).

9: Conductor as teacher; revision of issues raised in course; communication and the choral conductor; preparation for assessment; consideration of repertoire.


10: Evaluation of course; revision of criteria for assessment; students' practical assessments.

Assessment: Students would be required to rehearse (with the class or other choral group) a prepared choral piece (or extract) for approximately 10 -15 minutes. During the rehearsal they would be expected to (i) demonstrate knowledge of the score, (ii) demonstrate knowledge of the vocal and musical issues relevant to the rehearsal, (iii) identify and deal with inaccuracies, (iv) pace the rehearsal efficiently and (v) communicate effectively with the singers in order to create a positive and conducive singing environment and (vi) conduct with appropriate expressive and technical style.