

**University Choral Rehearsals in China and Canada:
A Comparative Case Study**

by

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B.A., Central China Normal University, 2001

A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of

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Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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The purpose of this study was to explore similarities and differences of choral rehearsals at one university choir in China and one university choir in Canada, focusing on strategies of repertoire selection, rehearsal organization, and conductor behaviours. The research method was comparative case study. Four rehearsals of one university choir in China and six rehearsals of one university choir in Canada were studied. Interviews with the conductors, observation of rehearsals, field notes, and conductors' lesson plans provided the data. Similarities and differences were found in the three focused areas: strategies of repertoire selection, rehearsal organization, and conductor behaviours. Pertinent findings include the following: 1) There is no ideal choral program for all choral conductors. 2) Conductor behaviour is largely affected by the underlying philosophy that guides a conductor's teaching as well as social conventions. 3) Although the two choirs in the study had different natures and cultural backgrounds, their conductors demonstrated some common traits, especially those current trends which are supported by the majority of music educators around the world, for example, multicultural music.

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to my family,
for their faith and enduring support:
to my mother Aijun, my father Haoqing, my husband Jack,
and my lovely sons: Aaron and Dylan.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Prelude

Ever since I began participating in a children's concert choir when I was eight years old, singing has been an important part of my musical life. I took part in a lot of singing activities throughout my school years and eventually, I decided to pursue professional training in voice and music teaching. After I received my undergraduate degree in music education at Central China Normal University, I conducted a middle school choir for nearly three years before I came to Canada. Currently enrolled in the graduate program of music education at the University of Victoria, I have been a member of the university Philomela Women's Choir for three years. My choral experiences in China and Canada have stimulated my interest in choral education. The first semester I was in Philomela, I wrote a short reflection to the conductor regarding the similarities and differences in Chinese and Canadian university choral rehearsals from my own experience. I realized that I was in a unique position to investigate this topic. Having experienced choral music in two very different cultures and completed graduate coursework, I have accumulated the skills required for conducting a comparative study of choral education. First of all, I have experienced music learning and teaching in both China and Canada, and formed an idea of what they are, albeit rather subjective. Secondly, I am a fluent Chinese speaker and my English has improved considerably in the past five years, a fact which facilitates this type of research. Thirdly, my own experiences as a conductor of a middle school choir and graduate assistant for a university choir and a

chorister at elementary, secondary, and university levels have equipped me to select choral education as my particular focus. Therefore, I made the decision to conduct a comparative study in choral education. Providing the framework for this study are several topics, each of which will be discussed in turn: 1) the history and ubiquity of choral singing; 2) the impact of multiculturalism in Canada and China; 3) the evolution of comparative study; and 4) research in the area of the university choral rehearsal.

The History and Ubiquity of Choral Singing

To sing like this, in the company of other souls, and to make those consonants slip out so easily and in unison, and to make those chords so rich that they bring tears to your eyes. This is transcendence. This is the power that choral singing has that other music can only dream of. (Garrison Keillor, as cited in *Why Choruses Matter*. n.d. ¶ 1)

Choral singing is a brilliant and theatrical form of musical activity. Its profound history can be traced to the choral speaking in ancient Greek drama. For centuries, this type of art has inspired people all around the world. In Western society, choral singing has benefited from the far-reaching influence of church music (Zhao, 2009). People convey their beliefs as well as their musical devotion by singing in a choir or appreciating this particular art. According to a survey conducted by Sparks and Allen (2003), nearly 28.5 million adults and children regularly perform in choral groups in the United States, more than any other art form. One or more adults in 15.6 percent of households in America performed in at least one chorus, and of

those, almost 45 percent performed with more than one chorus. The study also estimates the number of choruses in the United States to be 250,000.

In China, choral music has been recognized as a beautiful exotic art, although choral singing has not had a strong tradition in Chinese culture. It was introduced into China at the beginning of the 20th century. Since that time, many Chinese musicians have devoted themselves to introducing Western choral music, as well as to composing quality choral repertoire for choral groups. Nowadays, more and more professional and amateur choirs are emerging and performing both domestically and internationally (Xiao, 2008).

Due to its existence in various cultural settings and with choristers from various backgrounds, choral singing has had a close relationship with multiculturalism. It is very important for a choir to sing multicultural pieces, claims Parr (2006), who states that, “as music educators interested in music from traditions other than our own, we see this music as a window into the soul’s expression in another culture” (p. 34).

The Impact of Multiculturalism in Canada and China

The world is big. Some people are unable to comprehend that simple fact. They want the world on their own terms, its peoples just like them and their friends, its places like the manicured little patch on which they live. But this is a foolish and blind wish. Diversity is not an abnormality but the very reality of our planet. The human world manifests the same reality and will not seek our permission to celebrate itself in the magnificence of its endless

varieties. Civility is a sensible attribute in this kind of world we have;
narrowness of heart and mind is not. (Achebe, 1996, ¶ 15)

Communication and cooperation are two major themes in the world today. Despite the fact that there is still ample evidence of division and discrimination among the world's many cultures and races, inter-ethnic and inter-ethnic harmony have been accepted as ideal and championed by people of insight. Canada, for instance, is a country with diverse cultures. The *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, adopted by Parliament in 1988, provided a framework for the implementation of multiculturalism in national organization, such as public education and art organizations. The following statements from the Act clearly explain Canada's position:

It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada to

- (a) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage;
- (b) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity and that it provides an invaluable resource in the shaping of Canada's future. (*Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, 1988, ¶ 2-3)

The department of Canadian Heritage, working towards the mission of “a more cohesive and creative Canada,” plays “a vital role in the cultural and civic life of Canadians.” Two strategic outcomes are being sought:

1) Canadians express and share their diverse cultural experiences with each other and the world.

2) Canadians live in an inclusive society built on intercultural understanding and citizen participation (*Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, 1988, ¶ 2-3).

The Citizenship and Immigration Canada goes further to explain the significance of multiculturalism in Canada:

Canadian multiculturalism is fundamental to our belief that all citizens are equal...Acceptance gives Canadians a feeling of security and self-confidence, making them more open to, and accepting of, diverse cultures. (*Canadian Multiculturalism: An Inclusive Citizenship* n.d. ¶ 2)

The Canadian Multicultural Policy encourages us to look at things from different angles. Especially in choral singing, when a conductor is working with a group of diverse cultural backgrounds, he or she inevitably gives attention to multicultural influence. Take the University Philomela Women's Choir I sing in, for instance; it has singers from different cultures. Once I was invited to teach a Chinese folk song to the choir. The conductor thought that it was a good chance for the choristers to learn Chinese music from a native Chinese speaker and musician.

In China, a country comprising 56 nationalities, multiculturalism plays a vital role in people's lives. In recent years, Hu JingTao, Chairman of the People's Republic of China, professed a goal of constructing a harmonious society. This expressed goal has had a direct relationship on the nurturing and protection of cultural diversity in that country. Cultural harmony begins with

the harmony built within a specific community. Because each person is born within a special cultural background, it is necessary to eliminate cultural discrimination and bias in order for these individuals to form a proper and positive attitude of cultural diversity (*Literature and Culture of Chinese Minorities*, 2007).

As has been shown by the discussion above, multiculturalism plays a significant role in both Canada and China. To paraphrase Pang (1994), to respect and learn from others will help us gain more holistic perspectives, thus leading us to a better development. Comparative study of choral practice between a Canadian and a Chinese choir is therefore is both fitting and timely.

Comparative Study

Comparison is essential to anthropological research and educators from diverse areas have shown increasing interest in cross-cultural studies in the last few decades.¹ Along with the increasing global communication of academia facilitated by technology, comparison has also facilitated a wider and more holistic perspective on the practice of music educators (Benson & Fung, 2005; Campbell, 1991; Reimer, 2002; White, 2002; Wong, 2002).

Studies comparing music education in China and North America have addressed a number of issues from various angles, including elementary music teaching, piano pedagogy, music educators' practice, and music textbooks, etc. Kuzmich (1995) compared beliefs and practices of music educators in Sichuan, China

¹ A number of cross-cultural studies have been investigated in all disciplines. In music education, there are many articles in *International Journal of Music Education* and other academic journals which explore musical teaching and learning from a cross-cultural approach.

and Ontario, Canada. Morrison and Yeh (1999) investigated preference responses and use of written descriptors among music and non music majors in the United States, Hong Kong, and the People's Republic of China. Wong (2002) documented and compared the content and pedagogy used in the music lessons of the elementary schools in Hong Kong and Vancouver. Brand and Dolloff (2002) reported on the use of drawing by Chinese and North American music education majors as a means of examining these students' images, expectations and emerging concepts of music teaching. Benson and Fung (2005) compared teacher behaviors, student behaviors, and student achievement in private piano instruction in the People's Republic of China and in the United States. Chu and Kennedy (2005) explored selected current arts and humanities texts in both Taiwan and the USA. Although these studies provided valuable information for researchers who are interested in cross-cultural study, none of them has addressed issues of choral education in China and North America. The importance of comparative study is obvious. It informs researchers from various backgrounds to help them look at objects from different angles and gain wider and more holistic perspectives, especially in Canada, a country with a strong multicultural policy. There appears to be a gap in the existing literature that needs to be filled. There is a need to explore similarities and differences in choral education between two cultures.

University Choral Rehearsal

A wide array of studies has investigated aspects of choral education in North America. Many have examined problems of choirs in general. Furthermore, I have identified 116 journal articles researching problems in different age levels of choral

rehearsal. The research identified seems to concentrate on issues emerging in middle school and high school choirs, especially topics of student recruitment, rehearsal motivation, repertoire selection, and vocal techniques which investigated the boy's changing voice. Within these 116 articles, 38 focus on high school choirs, 22 focus on middle school choirs, 14 focus on elementary choirs, and 11 focus on community choirs which include church choirs and military choirs. However, receiving the least attention from choral scholars, only 9 out of 116 articles have investigated the choral rehearsal at the college/university level. Malone (2001) discussed the pursuit for excellence in chorus. Graves (2000) explored multicultural choral music in relation to the choral canon in selected university choral programs from 1975 to 2000. Stukenholtz (2007) studied initial warm-up and sight-reading exercises at the college and high-school levels. Olson (2003) and Weiss (2002) explored practices of voice majors in choir. Cox (1986) compared choral rehearsal time usage in a high school and a university. Bell (2002) and Spurgeon (2004) studied choral classes for undergraduate music education students. Walker (2003) conducted a preliminary investigation on the value of gospel choir in college and university music curriculum.

According to my investigation of the Chinese literature, choral singing has not been a popular research topic for music educators. In *China Music Education*, the most authoritative music education periodical of the country, few articles have addressed issues in choral education. Within the 59 volumes spanning 2003-2007, only seven articles were related to chorus. Three of them discussed choral rehearsals at the elementary/secondary level and four discussed choral rehearsals at the

college/university level. Su (2007) and Xu (2003) studied the quality and practices of choral curriculum at normal universities. Peng (2007) discussed thoughts regarding curricular reformation of the normal university chorus. Zhu (2003) defined the nature of choral courses for college music education students. These four articles all explored issues of choral education for music education students.²

Clearly, there is a dearth of research on choral education at the college/university level in both Canada and China. This is curious in light of the fact that choral singing is often a required course for music students or an elective course open to all students at colleges and universities.³ It is evident that there is a need for more investigation in this particular area. In addition, due to the fact that no study has compared university choral rehearsals in China and Canada, there is a need for comparative research in this area.

Purpose

Therefore, the purpose of this cross-cultural study is to explore similarities and differences of choral rehearsals at one university choir in China and one university choir in Canada. In order to narrow the study to a manageable size, I limited the investigation to three focus areas: strategies of repertoire selection,

² This is a special condition of China. Most universities in China offer choral courses for music/music education students. Sometimes they accept students in other majors as well. There are other university choirs rehearsing for the purpose of performing/competing. However, these rehearsals are not part of the curriculum so that they don't happen in a regular setting and students will not get credit(s) for singing.

³ In the School of Music, University of Victoria for instance, there are many ensembles which are offered as elective courses to students and some to community members as well: Philomela Women's Choir, UVic Chamber Singers, UVic orchestra and chorus, etc. When I was pursuing my Bachelor's degree at Central China Normal University, chorus was a required course for all music education students.

rehearsal organization, and conductor behaviour. The following question guided my research: what are the similarities and differences in university choral rehearsals in the areas of strategies of repertoire selection, rehearsal organization, and conductor behaviour?

Methodology

In order to inform university choir conductors in China and Canada, I conducted my research in the form of a comparative case study. Case study, as described by Creswell (1998), is a bounded system. It may contain a process, activity, event, program or multiple individuals. In my research, I chose to use “university choral rehearsals” as the case to be studied. I observed and studied four rehearsals of one university choir in China and six rehearsals of one university choir in Canada⁴ so that two individual cases were explored and compared.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

The following delimitations provided boundaries for this research. First of all, the research setting was a university rehearsal classroom. One university choir in China and one university choir in Canada were studied. These two choirs were both elective courses offered to undergraduate music students. Certain conditions applied in order for students to be accepted and the students received credit(s) for singing in the choir. Second, both of the choir conductors selected had been conducting their respective choirs for over five years so that they were not novice conductors. However, the conductors’ gender, personality, and educational background were not

⁴ This is due to the different rehearsal duration. The choir in China met once a week, 90 minutes a session. The choir in Canada met three times a week, 50 minutes a session.

focused on in my research. Third, since this study sought to explore certain aspects of university choral rehearsals which related more to conductors, students' learning style was not compared. However, students' interaction with and responses to the conductor which related to my three main foci were considered during data analysis.

My sampling strategy was based on convenience. The purpose was to save time, money, and effort, but not at the expense of information and credibility (Miles & Huberman, 1994, as cited in Creswell, 1998). As a graduate student, I did not have a research grant to support my study. Therefore I decided to choose one university choir in my hometown and one choir at the Canadian university I attended. This allowed me to conduct my research with a minimum cost of time and money. I started data collection in China first. I had expected a mixed choir; however, to my surprise, the choir consisted of female singers and male auditors.⁵ It was already too late to find another choir so I decided to proceed. Lincoln and Guba (1985) contend that "... what will be learned at a site is always dependent on the interaction between investigator and context, and the interaction is not fully predictable...All of these factors underscore the indeterminacy under which the naturalistic inquirer functions" (p. 208). As a naturalistic researcher, I was dependent on the context I had selected, however unpredictable that might be. In support of my strategy, I was exploring certain aspects which were related to the choral conductor: strategies of repertoire selection, rehearsal organization and conductor behaviour. These aspects are rarely affected by the gender of choir members. Quality repertoire, effective organization, and competent conducting are important no matter what the make-up of the choir.

⁵ Due to the uneven numbers of male and female students, the faculty decided to change the class to a women's choir and have male students audit the rehearsal.

According to the journal articles which investigated these three topics, most of them discussed choir in general. For instance, Gorelick (2001) suggested that a detailed, advance planning rehearsal schedule is a key element in achieving successful choir program. This principle certainly applies to choral rehearsals of choirs of all types, age levels, and gender.

Assumptions

In conducting this research, I assumed that the two university choirs studied would represent the current situation of university choirs in China and Canada. Both universities have a good reputation in their respective countries. Their choirs are considered to be successful in these two communities. From my personal experiences as a university chorister in China and Canada, I saw similarities and differences in the rehearsals in two countries. Thus, I also assumed that there would be similarities and differences found in this research.

Overview of the Project

Chapter 1 has been an introduction to my research. It included the significance of my topic, the reasons which led me into this field, the purpose of the study, delimitations and limitations, as well as my assumptions. It has provided the reader with an overview of my project. Chapter 2 is the literature review. It explains in more detail previous research into the area of my study, identifying what is missing, and informing me of methodology and strategies for the study. Chapter 3 is the methodology. It elaborates on the process I used to design the study and the instruments I applied in data collection. In chapter 4, a detailed description and a within-case analysis of the Chinese case is presented. In chapter 5, a detailed

description and a within-case analysis of Canadian case is presented. Chapter 6 presents a cross-case analysis of the Chinese and Canadian cases and explains the similarities and differences of university choral rehearsals in the two countries. Implications of the findings and suggestions for future research are given in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this cross-cultural study is to explore similarities and differences of choral rehearsals at one university choir in China and one university choir in Canada, focusing on strategies of repertoire selection, rehearsal organization, and conductor behaviour. The review that follows will examine pertinent literature that informed the study, specifically in the areas of cross-cultural studies in music education, university choral rehearsals, and choral music education focusing on the three target areas: repertoire selection, rehearsal organization, and conductor behaviour.

Cross-cultural Studies in Music Education

Six articles have compared music education in Greater China and North America in recent years. Within these six studies, two of them have investigated general music teaching. Kuzmich (1995) compared beliefs and practices of music educators in Sichuan, China and Ontario, Canada. Findings showed a relatively teacher-centered model in Sichuan and a relatively student-centered model in Ontario. The music teachers in Sichuan were assigned a common curriculum based on a unified text (plus local variants). Their teaching effectiveness was determined by the results of student examinations and by winning contests that would bring honour to a school. In contrast, music teachers in Ontario have had more opportunities to research and learn, to design music curricula, and to be creative in teaching. Similarities were found in this research as well, including similar beliefs in teaching

music, such as fostering life-long learners, and so on. Wong (2002) documented and compared the content and pedagogy used in the music lessons of the elementary schools in Hong Kong and Vancouver. The difference was an achievement-oriented teacher-centered approach among the cases in Hong Kong, versus an enjoyment-oriented child-centered approach among the cases in Vancouver.

Another two of the six articles compared different learning styles of music and non-music majors in Greater China and North America. Morrison and Yeh (1999) gave three types of music samples to music and non music majors in the United States, Hong Kong, and the People's Republic of China. The participants' preference responses and the use of written descriptors were collected. The four major findings were: 1) Chinese participants were significantly more positive in their overall ratings on the three samples than those from Hong Kong and America; 2) Hong Kong participants evaluated all three styles similarly whereas Chinese and American participants gave much higher scores to the styles common to their own culture; 3) American participants gave more analytical comments when written responses were asked whereas Chinese and Hong Kong participants gave more metaphorical comments; and 4) Music majors manifested more positive preference responses than did non music majors. Within an international context, Brand and Dolloff (2002) reported on the use of drawing by Chinese and North American music education majors as a means of examining these students' images, expectations, and emerging concepts of music teaching. The main difference between the groups was that Chinese drawings showed little difference between the ideal teacher and self as a

teacher, which was in contrast to the North American drawings that demonstrated significant differences.

One study was conducted in the domain of instrumental teaching. Benson and Fung (2005) compared teacher behaviours, student behaviours, and student achievement in private piano instruction in the People's Republic of China and in the United States. Conclusions showed that there were some differences in time spent on teacher questions, teacher multiple modeling, student play and students' verbal response to teacher questions between the two populations. For example, Chinese piano students played more and American piano students talked more. However, these differences did not affect student success or non-success.

The final comparative study investigated curricular textbooks. In order to examine current arts and humanities elementary school textbooks in Taiwan as well as make recommendations for the future, Chu and Kennedy (2001) compared selected texts in both Taiwan and the USA. Findings were that the selected Taiwanese texts did not feature sufficient musical material in comparison with their US counterparts. In addition, organizational methods of the Taiwanese texts fostered confusion among teachers.

Although these studies provide valuable information for researchers who are interested in cross-cultural study, none has addressed the area of choral education in China and North America. There is a need to examine the similarities and differences between two cultures in terms of choral education. With the focus on choral rehearsals at the university level in China and Canada, this study will help to bridge research in choral education in two communities.

University Choral Rehearsals in North America

As reported in Chapter 1, numerous studies have investigated various aspects of choral education in North America. Many of them have examined problems of choirs in general. In this section, I will examine more closely those studies which investigate college and/or university choirs. Within the nine articles identified, five of them investigated different aspects of choral pedagogy. The following section will discuss the findings of these five studies.

Choral Pedagogy

Malone (2001) discussed the pursuit of excellence in a two-year college chorus. He offered some suggestions that would help achieve excellence: 1) start with finding quality literature; 2) insist on accurate pitch, pleasing melodic phrases with nuance and expression and impeccable intonation for harmony; 3) emphasize intervallic singing and rhythm; 4) work at a slow pace until the effective tempo can be achieved with precision; 5) invest time orchestrating dynamics and draw out the timbre to enhance the musical style; 6) spend time indicating the formal structure of the music for complete musical understanding; and finally, 7) offer musical experience in various media, such as solo, duet, and Broadway musical as well as from all style periods for well-rounded exposure.

Stukenholtz (2007) studied initial warm-up and sight-reading exercises at the college and high-school levels. Some useful suggestions for college conductors were proposed: 1) directors need to remember to develop singers' tone quality as well as other elements such as rhythm and harmony relating to the music to be used later; 2) directors should use a variety of collections of warm-ups modified to the literature

currently being used with their choirs; and 3) warm-up and sight-reading exercises need to be practiced in both major and minor keys, and in parts as well.

Cox (1986) compared choral rehearsal time usage in a high school and a university. Results comparing nonperformance activity,⁶ ensemble performance activity,⁷ and sectional rehearsal activity indicated that the university choral conductor spent more time on performance activities while the high school conductor spent more time on nonperformance activities. In sectionals, the university choir was divided into sections that each group was able to go to a different room to work, while the high school choir had all sectionals within the one rehearsal hall.

Bell (2002) and Spurgeon (2004) studied choral classes for undergraduate music education students. Bell (2002) identified effective rehearsal strategies for undergraduate choral conductors. Five conductor rehearsal behaviours were ranked the most important to a successful choral rehearsal experience: 1) clear and easy-to-follow direction; 2) conductor's enthusiasm during the rehearsal; 3) error identifying and correcting; 4) appropriate repertoire that matches the group's ability level; and 5) instilling confidence in the singers. Spurgeon (2004) investigated vocal pedagogy skills for undergraduate choral conductors. She advocated the following pedagogical skills for conductors: 1) understanding the basic physiological aspects of tone production: breathing, phonation and resonance; 2) having the skills to diagnose vocal problems and seek for solution; 3) knowing how to model tone quality; and 4)

⁶ Nonperformance was defined as "the chorus or any part of the chorus is not singing or speaking in ensemble during the observation interval" (Cox, 1986, p. 10).

⁷ Performance was defined as "the entire chorus is singing or speaking in ensemble during the observation interval" (Cox, 1986, p.10).

understanding male and female voice: tonal expectations, ranges, and healthy tessitura.

Students

Two studies (Olson 2003; Weiss, 2002) explored practices of voice majors in choir. Olson (2003) proposed 12 aspects that may help vocal majors discover the benefits of singing in a choir. Among them were the following: 1) solo opportunities are offered; 2) future job opportunities can result from choral performance experience; 3) how to read and follow a conductor can be learned; 4) a healthy rehearsal behaviour can be developed; 5) the art of ensemble singing can be learned; 6) a rewarding, enjoyable experience can be never forgotten, and so on. In contrast, Weiss (2002) was interested in determining how to enable vocal majors to participate in a college/university choir without compromising vocal development or risking vocal injury. Rather than develop a list of recommended behaviours, he recommended two specific techniques to be used by vocal majors: Stemple's vocal function exercises and traditional *messa di voce* vocalises.

Literature & Curriculum

The final topics investigated in this series of nine articles were literature (Graves, 2000) and curriculum (Walker, 2003). Graves (2000) explored multicultural choral music in relation to the choral canon in selected university choral programs from 1975 to 2000. Findings showed that multicultural repertoire performed by leading university programs is increasing, conductors are giving more attention to multicultural repertoire, and articles addressing multicultural issues are growing in numbers.

Walker (2003) conducted a preliminary investigation on the value of gospel choir in college and university music curriculum. Findings showed that gospel choir was perceived to have musical, authentic, and academic values in college and university music curricula.

University Choral Rehearsal in China

With respect to the Chinese literature, only four studies have examined choral rehearsals at the college/university level. Su (2007) and Xu (2003) investigated the quality of the choral program and the practices of choral educators at normal universities. Xu (2003) examined the goal of normal university choral rehearsals. He believed that in music teacher education, choral programs should focus increasingly on students' comprehensive skills in singing, conducting, and organizing choral rehearsals. Su (2007) reviewed the history of the choral program reformation at normal universities in China. She identified several changes that had facilitated the development of choral programs, including more flexible curricula, more creative teaching modes, and more normative evaluation standards.

Interested in a more global issue, Peng (2007) investigated the normal university choral program with a view to suggesting reforms. He identified several problems including the facts that: 1) choral rehearsals are too performance-orientated so that choral conducting and organizational skills which should be learned by normal university students are neglected; 2) different institutes have different choral curriculum and some are given more importance than others; and 3) students show less interest in choral singing than in solo singing. He recommended reconstructing the normal university choral program in order to address these problems. Zhu (2003)

was also interested in curricular reform and proposed several suggestions for choral rehearsals at normal universities. First, choral rehearsals should not be completely performance-orientated; conducting and organizational skills should be reinforced. Second, students should switch parts from time to time in order to learn other parts and have a better mastery of the whole piece. Third, children's choral pieces should be introduced, while still maintaining in the repertoire some challenging SATB pieces.

With so little extant research in choral education at the college/university level in both Canada and China, there is a definite need for further study. In addition, due to the fact that no study has been conducted comparing university choral rehearsals in China and Canada, all aspects of this research are worth exploring.

Research in Choral Education

Significant research has been conducted in the area of choral education. In their survey of research in choral music education from 1982 to 1995, Grant and Norris (1998) named six areas which had been given the most attention by music educators in North America: singing and vocal pedagogy, curriculum and materials, teacher/conductor behaviour, teaching methods and rehearsal techniques, teacher education and miscellaneous studies. My reviews of Chinese professional journals and papers indicated that music educators in China have mostly focused on rehearsal techniques and curricular reformation. The following sections will examine choral music education research in strategies of repertoire selection, rehearsal organization, and conductor behaviours.

Research in Strategies of Repertoire Selection

In North America, repertoire selection is considered one of the most important tasks of choral conductors. It has had a major impact on students' learning, and can potentially enrich both the conductor and students' experiences in general music teaching as well as choral rehearsals (Alfelstadt, 2000; Brunner, 1994 & 1996; Demorest, 1996; Forbes, 2001; Graves, 2000; Gorelick; 2001; Mims, 1996; Reynolds, 2000, Trott, 2004). For instance, Apfelstadt (2000) pointed out that finding quality, teachable repertoire appropriate to the context, compatible with the National Standards and interesting to sing is an achievable goal for music teachers. Reynolds (2000) suggested that repertoire selection helps students' musical understanding and appreciation. Music educators must make important decisions on what and what not to teach. Numerous researchers have contended that the capabilities of singers are the first things to be considered in the selection of repertoire (Bell, 2002; Brunner, 1994 & 1996; Demorest, 1996; Gorelick; 2001; Mims, 1996; Reynolds, 2000). Forbes (2001) identified that conductors do consider other criteria in repertoire selection, but suggest that these criteria do not seem to be applied consistently. Individual criteria are influenced by the style of repertoire, demographic characteristics such as teaching experience, program size, and socioeconomic composition of the school. Trott (2004) provided criteria for selecting literature indicated by collegiate choral conductors. He argues that students should experience performance music from all styles, periods, genres, and in a variety of languages. Furthermore, unaccompanied, piano accompanied, and orchestra accompanied performance opportunities should be offered to students.

In contrast, although students' capabilities and learning experiences were also considered, Chinese music educators largely stressed that the repertoire had an aesthetic function that could shape students' personalities and moral qualities (Chen, 2002; Gan & Ming, 2005; Ouyang, 2004; Zhao, 2004).

In both cultures, there is an increasing trend of including multicultural music in the choral classroom. For example, Graves (2000) surveyed three sources of data: (1) concert programs for college and university mixed choirs from all ACDA regional and national conventions from 1975 to 2000, (2) questionnaire responses from conductors of universities with a graduate choral conducting degree, and (3) research articles about multicultural topics in the *Choral Journal* and the *International Choral Bulletin*. Findings showed that multicultural repertoire performed by leading university programs is increasing, conductors are giving more attention to multicultural repertoire, and articles addressing multicultural issues are growing in numbers. Music educators in both China and North America have also agreed on the positive influence of multicultural music and its relation to choral rehearsals (Apfelstadt, 2000; Beynon, 2003; Grant & Norris, Graves, 2000; 1998; Ma, 2005; Morrison, 2004; Zhang, 2003; Zhou, 2005).

The studies above show both similar and different research foci of Chinese and North American music educators in choral repertoire selection.

Research in Rehearsal Organization

A number of music educators in North America have examined rehearsal organization and planning. In contrast, little has been found in Chinese literature.

Most North American music educators have agreed on the importance of structuring choral rehearsals because it significantly affects the success of a choral program (Brunner, 1994, 1996; Butke, 2006; Corbin, 2001; Cox, 1989; Demorest, 1996; Gorelick, 2001; Lamb, 2005; Phelps, 2005; Phillips, 2005, Zielinski, 2005). They have proposed different strategies in planning successful choral rehearsals. In the survey of Grant and Norris (1998), a three-step rehearsal organization was advocated by choir conductors. The three-steps included highly motivational warm-ups, learning and polishing the music, and reviewing some familiar and high motivational repertoire. Zielinski (2005) suggested seven building blocks which could help conductors plan their rehearsals. These seven blocks and their proportions in suggesting the level of importance and amount of time were: prepare (30%), practice (20%), prioritize (10%), personalize (15%), publicize (10%), project the message (10%), and polish the product (5%). Phillips (2005) advocated that an effective choral rehearsal involves three parts: structured warm-ups, alternately fast and slow-paced procedures, and self-assessment. Cox (1989) concluded that the procedures which contributed most to singers' interest included fast-paced activities at the beginning and end with an alternation of fast-paced and slow-paced activities in the middle. Butke (2006) agreed that a reflective process will help build more effective choral rehearsals. He explained that reflection included looking at the conductor's own teaching and learning and then reconstructing, reenacting, or recapturing the events, emotions, and accomplishments of that teaching episode. He also developed a new theoretical model of reflection: reflection-fore-action which includes a lesson plan, and a conductor's life story and educational philosophy which could be analyzed

through various reflective methodologies and were always included in the predetermination of what would be taught.

In addition, many music educators in North America have increasingly focused on incorporating sight-singing into choral rehearsals (Bradley, 2006; Daniels, 1988; Demorest, 1998; Gorelick, 2001; Grant & Norris, 1998; Henry, 2004; Lamb, 2005; Mims, 1996; Paulk, 2004). Findings suggest that there is no significant difference between performance groups that used movable do and groups that used fixed do (Henry & Demorest, 1994); students using movable do scored significantly higher than students using fixed do when individual sight-singing was examined (Demorest and May, 1995); the most popular method of teaching sight-singing was a combination of clapping rhythms and unison sight-singing (Daniels, 1988); an individual sight-singing test was important to improve individual and group performance (Bradley, 2006); and when sight-reading a piece, identifying the overriding concept and guiding perspective of a piece will assist students in combining the various mechanics of music-making into some semblance of hierarchical importance (Paulk, 2004).

The importance of warm-ups and the delivery of musical knowledge in choral rehearsals are valued by both Chinese and North American music educators (Corbin, 2001; Grant & Norris, 1998; Stegman, 2003; Strand, 2003; Xu, 2003; Zhao, 2004). For instance, Strand (2003) encouraged choral conductors to make students aware of the music traditions and performance practices that will profit students' decision making process when interpreting a score. Corbin (2001) provided activities that conductors could use in choral rehearsal, including comparison/contrast discussions

and completion of worksheets. These activities would help students' understand more choral knowledge and sing better.

Furthermore, the use of movement has also been explored by music educators in both countries, and the results highlighted the effective use of movement in choral rehearsals (Grant & Norris, 1998, Peterson, 2000, Ma, 2005). For example, Peterson (2000) suggested including student mirroring, walking the rhythm, unison tapping and clapping in the course of rehearsal. He also encouraged choral conductors to give more attention to movement stating that "once a repertoire of movement patterns has been established, I talk less and less because my intentions can be communicated with specific movements" (p. 30).

The foregoing studies have reflected the areas that music educators focused on in choral rehearsal organization. The following section will discuss research in conductor behaviour.

Research in Conductor Behaviour

Conductor behaviour has been a popular subject among North American music educators. Teaching style was seen to be relevant in determining how the conductor behaved in choral rehearsals. Gumm (1993) identified different teaching styles in choral education which were labelled as: Student-Centered Comprehensive Musicianship Oriented, Teacher-Controlled Comprehensive Musicianship Oriented, Student/Subject Matter Interaction Oriented, Task Oriented, Music Performance Oriented, Cooperative Learning Oriented, Concept Presentation Oriented, Content Oriented, Low Teacher Involvement Oriented, Discovery Oriented, and Nonfocused Low-Interaction Oriented. Gumm (2004) also explored the effects of choral student

learning style and motivation for music. Findings showed that learning style could predict a small but significant variance in student perception of the teacher's teaching style and that motivation for music could predict a moderate variance in each teaching style dimension. In the survey of Grant and Norris (1998), high task/high relationship behaviours were predominant among the conductors and the student-centered classrooms affected the highest achievement of students. Wis (2002) also stated that conductors can lead and empower their ensemble members by acting as a servant-leader. Several actions were suggested: continuing one's own development as a musician; continuing to work on refining management skills; and preparing "from the inside out"—observing, interviewing, reading relevant literature, and reflecting on conducting and teaching.

Over the years, North American music educators have studied what choral conductor behaviours would be most effective and beneficial for their rehearsals. Stamer (1999) discovered that some conductor behaviours were more effective than others in motivating students, behaviours such as good preparation, positive communication, constant feedback, and offering opportunities for solo and performances. Bell (2002) identified five conductor behaviours which were the most important (see page 18). Yarbrough (1975) investigated high and low magnitude of conductor behaviour on performance, attentiveness, and attitudes of students. Findings indicated no significant differences between the baseline condition and the two experimental conditions—high and low magnitudes, in terms of musical performance, attentiveness, and attitude. Three of the groups received their lowest rating under the low magnitude condition. Overall, students preferred the high

magnitude conductor, and the high magnitude condition caused lower off-task minutes. Yarbrough and Price (1981) examined videotaped teacher and performer behaviour during several high school ensemble rehearsals. Results suggest a strong relationship between off-task behaviour and individual teacher style, non-performance activity, and teacher eye contact with students. VanWeelden (2002) explored the relationships between ensemble performance and perceptions of conducting effectiveness. According to the findings, the conductor's body type and gender or college major of the student did not affect the rating of the conductor and ensemble performances. There were moderate to moderately strong relationships between the performance rating and conductor's posture, facial expression, confidence, and overall conducting effectiveness. Interestingly, eye contact was not significantly related to performance ratings.

Some North American music educators have researched specific behaviours of choral conductors. Ford (2001) and Kelly (1999) advocated the benefit of using non-verbal communication and conducting gesture in rehearsals that would enhance and clarify the conductor's musical intent as well as communicate and rehearse effectively. Wis (1999) stressed the use of physical metaphors in choral rehearsals. The use of physical gesture has several benefits for the conductor: diminishing singers' anxiety by focusing on the gesture; forcing singers to be actively engaged in the rehearsal and take ownership of their growth; having a quick method of evaluating individual participation; gaining many implications from using physical metaphor; and discovering more about music itself, thereby increasing understanding of the expressive possibilities inherent in the piece. Grimland (2005) examined

characteristics of teacher-directed modeling by looking at the practices of three experienced high school choral directors. Results implied that: 1) Elliott's "reflection-on-action" was important during teaching; 2) to meet various needs of choral students, conductors might want to increase their options concerning instructional strategies by being aware of the ways other than singing to use modeling during a rehearsal; and 3) it might be useful for teachers to engage in modeling techniques involving tools other than their own voices. Price (1983) studied the effect of conductor academic task presentation, conductor reinforcement, and ensemble practice on performers' musical achievement, attentiveness, and attitude. Results showed that a rehearsal that includes academic task presentations, directions, student performance, and feedback was the most efficient. This suggested that an ensemble director should not only concentrate on instruction and or student performance, but also give appropriate feedback.

In China, not many studies have investigated the behaviours of the conductor. Zhang and Zhou (2004) probed the fact that the conductor's high expectations and appropriate suggestions positively affect teaching and learning in the class. In Ouyang's (2004) thesis, which discussed the comprehensive accomplishments of the choir conductor, including fostering successful singers and life-long music learners and so on, he concluded that the teacher-centered interaction between the conductor and students and the high communication ability of the conductor could shape students' personalities in a spiritual way.

Discussion and Summary

In this chapter, studies relating to my area of research were discussed in three aspects: 1) cross-cultural studies conducted in music education in North America and Greater China; 2) studies conducted on university choral rehearsals; and 3) studies relating to the three areas of focus: strategies of repertoire selection, rehearsal organization and behaviours of conductors.

These foregoing studies provide valuable information for choral conductors and researchers. However, to date no choral education study has been found which compares strategies of repertoire selection, rehearsal organization, and conductor behaviour in two different cultures: Chinese and Canadian. The current study intends to fill this gap and inform university choir conductors in both countries offering relevant information to them in a comparative way.

The following chapter will explain and discuss the methodology used in the study.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

The Cross-Cultural Researcher

I have chosen to study choral rehearsals at one university in China and one university in Canada. My intention in selecting this focus for research came from my own experience as a choral conductor in China and as a graduate student in Canada. As a choral conductor for both a concert choir and a boys' choir at a middle school in China, I have always been keen to learn what is happening in other conductors' rehearsals, knowing that in doing so, I would accumulate useful insights for my own practice. While enrolled in the Master's Program at the University of Victoria, I have had the opportunity to observe music teaching and ensembles within a different culture. After gaining improvements in language, research skills, and musicianship, I am well positioned to be a cross-cultural researcher.

The Research Design

Philosophical Assumptions

No matter what the research design is, the researcher's philosophical assumptions will guide the study all the way through (Creswell, 1998). In other words, the researcher's philosophy provides the framework for capturing, understanding, and formulating knowledge. In my research, I posed the question: what are the similarities and differences in university choral rehearsals in China and Canada in the areas of repertoire selection strategies, rehearsal organization, and conductor behaviour? As I started to design my study, some friends asked me if I had

an ideal university choral program in mind. What is the ideal choral program? Am I able to picture it? In a Korean TV show I watched, there was a scene which informed me significantly on this issue. A professor of Chinese medicine told his students that there were no absolute medicinal or poisonous herbals in the world. Conventional medicinal herbals would become poisonous if used inappropriately. Likewise, conventionally poisonous herbals would become medicinal if used wisely. What a vivid example! Relating this example to philosophy, I argue that multiple realities exist, according to the concept of ontological assumption (Creswell, 1998). Adding to the argument is the fact that a qualitative researcher is not able to describe or interpret data without looking at the context hiding behind the colourful instances (Creswell, 1998). In my case, I am certainly not developing a universal, ideal choral program for conductors from around the world. Rather, I am relating what I have seen and heard in the data collection process to provide evidences of different perspectives (Creswell, 1998). Thus my readers will be able to establish an empathetic understanding, through my description, as well as convey what experience itself would convey (Stake, 1995).

Qualitative Research

Lincoln and Denzin (1994) define qualitative research as:

multi-method in its focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p.2)

Since my sample size was small—only one university choir in China and one university choir in Canada—my goal was not generalizability, but an interpretive, deep understanding of whatever aspect(s) emerged. In other words, this study was conducted in a natural setting. It is a typically qualitative approach.

Comparative Case Study

For informing university choir conductors in China and Canada in terms of comparison, I decided on a comparative case study design. Case study, as described by Creswell (1998), is a bounded system. It may contain a process, activity, event, program or multiple individuals. In my research, I have chosen to use a series of university choral rehearsals as the case. Since choral rehearsals in China and Canada were compared, my research has become a comparative case study as it contains two individual cases. I observed and studied four rehearsals at one university in China and six rehearsals at one university in Canada⁸ exploring and comparing two individual cases.

Description of the Two Cases

Since Creswell (1998) described that “a case study is an exploration of a bounded system or a case (or multiple cases)” (p.61), it is important to have a clear description of the two cases I studied and their boundaries. Comparing choral rehearsals at the university level in China and Canada was the target for my research. Both of the choir conductors that I selected had been conducting their respective choirs for over five years so that their teaching style and behaviour were already

⁸ The choir in China met once a week for 75 minutes a session. The choir in Canada met three times a week for 50 minutes a session. Thus, I decided to observe four sessions in China and six sessions in Canada to be able to get relatively equal amount of time in each case.

developed and relatively stable. However, the conductor's gender, personality, as well as educational background were not the focus of my research. Since this study was seeking to explore aspects of university choral rehearsals related to conductors, students' different learning styles were not compared. Although some of the students' responses were incorporated as they related to the three aspects I investigated, they were not the main focus. The two choirs I selected were both scheduled as elective courses for students. Students, of course, were getting credit(s) by enrolling.

Due to the limitations I mentioned before, my sampling strategy was mainly based on convenience. The purpose was to save time, money, and effort, but not at the expense of information and credibility (Creswell, 1998). I was lucky enough to have two suitable university choirs open their doors for me. These two choirs were relatively typical for representing university choral rehearsals in China and in Canada.⁹

Ethical Considerations

Data collection was conducted following approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee of University of Victoria (see Appendix A). As this study took place in two different countries, I was aware of the following issues during the whole process.

Consent

I prepared three different consent letters for conductors, students and authorities. I did not start to collect data until all my participants had signed and

⁹ These two universities both have a very good reputation in their own countries, thus I assumed that their choral rehearsals would be relatively typical to be studied.

agreed to participate in this research. I explained my purpose and plan to participants in detail, but applied no pressure for them to participate. Before starting each data collection session, I verbally described the information of the consent letters to obtain the ongoing consent from my participants. Appendix B contains my consent letters.

Confidentiality and Identity

It was my responsibility to protect the confidentiality and identity of my participants. The real title of the university and the real names of my participants were highly protected. All the data have been stored after anonymizing and are only accessible by me and my graduate supervisor. I am the only person who has the right to keep all the data for six years as I am looking forward to having part of my paper published in a professional journal. All the paper files have been stored in a locked filing cabinet and all the computer files have been password protected.

Risks

My study involved minimal risk. It did no harm to my participants' studying and lives.

Data Collection

When conducting qualitative research, one does not approach research problems with a pre-established method. Instead, one is open to implement multiple methods. (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995). As in a case study, Stake (1995) suggested multiple sources of data so that the researcher is able to triangulate the data. In other words, it should involve a wide array of data collection as the researcher is attempting to build

an in-depth picture of the case(s) (Creswell, 1998). In this research, I used interviews, direct observations, physical artifacts, and video tapes as my main sources.

Interviews

Two conductors were interviewed for the purpose of having an understanding of their teaching styles, repertoire selection strategies, and rehearsal organization. I conducted two interviews with each conductor. The first interview was unstructured with several open-ended questions. As described by Fontana and Frey (2005), an “unstructured interview can provide greater breadth than do the other types given its qualitative nature” (p.705). The first interview lasted approximately 30 minutes, and focused on general information and background as well as the conductor’s description of himself or herself. The second was a semi-structured interview. It uses an incomplete script and still strives for openness and flexibility (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Based on what I discovered in the first interview, I designed some customized questions to help me form a better understanding of the conductor’s teaching style, repertoire selection, and rehearsal organization. The second interview lasted approximately 40 minutes. All interviews were recorded by MP3 recorder, for the sake of transcribing and interpreting. The interview protocols are attached in Appendix C.

Observations

The choir I observed in China met once a week, two 45 minute sessions in a row with a 15 minute break in between. In Canada, the choir that I observed met three times a week, 50 minutes a session. Considering the different settings of these two

choirs, I observed four sessions in China and six sessions in Canada, for the purpose of observing an equal time with both choirs. Each observation focused on how the conductor implemented repertoire selection and rehearsal organization. Behaviours of the conductors were also noted. Creswell (1998) suggests that determining a role as an observer is especially important. The role of an observer can range from that of a complete participant/insider to that of a complete observer/outsider. The data recording of an insider tends to be more reflective as it draws upon the researcher's own experiences and understanding. The data recording of an outsider tends to be more descriptive with little interpretation of the researcher (Creswell, 1998). In my project, as an outsider who did not participate in the rehearsals during the whole process, I was able to concentrate on the conductors' teaching styles and behaviour. In Appendix D, I have attached the protocol for the observations. The most essential instrument of my observation was videotaping, as it facilitated the examination of conductor behaviour. Thus, I used a Sony camcorder with the focus on the conductor.

Physical Artifacts: Rehearsal Plan

Some conductors write out their rehearsal plans while some conductors do not. The two conductors I worked with did not write out a detailed rehearsal plan for each session. However, I was able to obtain their term plans as an overview and they both have elaborated how they planned for each session during the interviews.

Piloting the Instruments

A pre-testing interview was conducted ahead of my data collection. I had an interview with an elementary choir conductor to test my interview protocol and

questions. It was not necessary to practice the observation beforehand as I am familiar and comfortable with choral rehearsals. However, I did observe each choir for one session without videotaping because I wanted to establish a friendly atmosphere beforehand to avoid any awkwardness, and most importantly, to secure every student's consent for observing the class.

Storing the Data

Creswell (1998) highlighted the importance of storing data. I have made two copies of each original, always keeping one copy completely raw and clean. Since I have investigated two cases, I separately saved and compiled the data as well (see Appendix E).

Analysing Data

The first step in analysis is to compile the data, mainly through transcribing and editing. I transcribed my interviews manually, as I was comfortable enough to do it by myself and could not afford to pay transcribers. I placed the transcription on the left side and my comments on the right. Highlighters of diverse colors were used for categorizing. I used a journal to record which color was used for which category and to keep track of all abbreviations and definitions. In addition, I transferred all the video tapes of the rehearsals to DVDs as they are more flexible for viewing and editing. I counted the time use for different activities, such as student singing and conductor's presentation. I also counted the frequency of each distinguishing behaviour for the purpose of categorizing and comparing different behaviours of the two conductors.

After the data were collected, I planned the interpretation following three sequential steps: description, within-case analysis, and cross-case analysis.

Description is the first step of a case study and it is simply stating the 'fact' of the case which is investigated by the researcher (Creswell, 1998). In chapters 4 and 5, I will describe my two cases narratively in order for my readers to have a vivid impression of each particular setting.

Creswell (1998) suggested a within-case analysis to case study researchers. Each case is looked at individually, and meaning is drawn from each case without involving another. I gained a deep and individual understanding of each case first before I started cross-case analysis. Thus, within-case analysis was important for me to look at each case individually before I put them together and analyzed them comparatively.

Stake (1995) recommended cross-case analysis in a comparative case study. After themes were extracted from each case, I combined them and developed common and uncommon themes within the two different contexts in order for my audience to gain a holistic perspective of these two choirs.

Reporting the Study

I am presenting my findings in a paper form, following American Psychological Association (APA) style. Stake (1995) stated that a report can be organized in many ways as long as it contributes to the reader's understanding of the case. I paid special attention to logical sequence in the paper as this will enable readers to follow the arguments and observations made. I have written my paper

using descriptive and understandable language, for as Oberg (1998) stated, they are more effective than technical language in recreating an experience for readers.

Verification

Creswell (1998) summarized several ways of verification. Data triangulation and peer review were suitable for my research. In data triangulation, the researcher uses multiple sources to corroborate evidence and illuminate a theme or perspective. (Creswell, 1998). In my case, I used interviews, observation, and artifacts. As for peer review, Lincoln and Guba (1985) described it as an external check of the research process, thus offering the researcher an opportunity to listen to different voices. Since this study was conducted for my master's degree, my graduate supervisor has been the main peer reviewer, reviewing my research and witnessing the process from beginning to end. Also she provided me with many constructive comments. I have also had a second reader for my project. She has guided my research as well.

Summary

This chapter described the methodology used in this project. My research design of comparative case study has been thoroughly defined. The procedures of data collection and data analysis have been explained in detail.

The next chapter will provide an in-depth description of the Chinese case. Aspects relating to the three themes will be discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Image of Spring: A Description of the Chinese Case

Introduction

This chapter presents an in-depth description of the Chinese case. First I will present an overview of choir development in China in order to assist my readers in understanding the Chinese case. Next I will discuss the Chinese case in general providing my readers with a holistic impression, including the rehearsal environment, the profile of the conductor, and background information on the choir. Finally, I will describe in detail my findings, especially those related to the three focus areas: strategies of repertoire selection, rehearsal organization, and conductor behaviour.

An Overview of Choral History in China

In Europe, the history of choirs can be traced back to 1000 years ago. However, in China, the concept of choirs was introduced only around one hundred years ago ((Luo, 2007; Xiao, 2008; Zhao, 2009). Despite its short-lived history, it is still a beautiful art loved by many Chinese people. At the beginning of the twentieth century, “Xue Tang Yue Ge,” the early form of school music in China, inspired some Chinese composers to experiment in the writing of two and three-part songs. In the 1920’s, some choral pieces were written in more complicated harmonic structures, and thus had a better performing effect. The decade from 1930-1940 was a period of enormous development for choirs. It was a very special period in the history of China. Many people used choral music to express their firm determination to fight Japanese aggressors in World War II. Thus, a lot of magnificent choral pieces emerged during

that period of time. The *Yellow River Cantata*, composed by Xian Xing Hai during that decade, has become the most famous Chinese choral piece of all time. After the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, more and more professional and amateur choirs emerged, and choral music has become an important art form appreciated by people from different social classes and with much more open vision. (Luo, 2007; Xiao, 2008; Zhao, 2009).

An Overview of the Chinese Case

Where it Started

I started collecting data in China in May 2006. It was a beautiful season in the city where the university choir was located. Cherry trees were blooming and the warm breeze was playfully brushing my hair while I was walking into the university. The choir rehearsals were held in a large classroom on the sixth floor of the music building. It was a typical classroom. The entrance was at the back of the room and there were windows on the side walls which allowed lots of sunlight. In the front, there was a rostrum-console for playing videos and putting on slides, and of course, a big board for teachers to write on.

Charlotte-the Conductor¹⁰

The first time I entered the classroom, Charlotte, the choir conductor, was already standing behind the rostrum, reviewing the music the choir was going to sing. She seemed extremely focused, but occasionally raised her head and smiled at the students. I was reminded of my impression of her when I had first met her the night before. She was a small woman with a perpetual warm smile on her face. She seemed

¹⁰ Charlotte is a pseudonym.

to be a nice lady not only because of her smile, but also because she was very thoughtful during the whole process of my data collection, trying to provide me with as much information as possible. Charlotte assumed the leadership of this choir five years before I started my data collection. Before that, she majored in Chinese opera singing and music theory. She also held a Master's degree in conducting. She said: "I am trying hard to create an active and positive atmosphere in my class..." However, working with different singers every year, she did have some ups and downs. She also saw herself as an advisor and guide for the students, rather than as their leader. She explained: "It is not necessary that I need to claim I am their leader. I prefer to exert a subtle influence on them [students]." She was a mild conductor. Listening to her voice really relaxed me. Sometimes I thought students might be a little too relaxed to focus on the rehearsal.

The Choir

The choir rehearsed on Mondays from 4:30pm to 6:00pm. The first time I walked into the classroom, I discovered some interesting things about the students' seating. There were around 50 female students seated in the front rows. Each one was separated by an empty seat. Then there were around 20 male and female students seated at the back of the classroom. However their seating was more arbitrary. I got to know this interesting arrangement from the first interview with Charlotte. She explained:

We have cut men out ever since I took over, due to the lack of male students at this faculty. We need the balance...we have a new thing this semester which is that other students of this faculty are allowed to audit this course,

including male students and other females who are turned down in the audition. They are getting credits as well.

The title of the choir course was *Choral Organization and Rehearsal* and it was year long. Charlotte elaborated: “This course is part of the curriculum. Although I use most of the time rehearsing, choral knowledge should be involved as well.” Because students could only take it once during their undergraduate study, Charlotte had different students each year. The choir size was around 50 singers, excluding the auditors. Entrance was by audition at the beginning of each year. Charlotte said: “We mainly pick voice majors” to be able to get a nice sound out of the choir.

Over the five years, the choir had established a positive reputation in China, especially in the province. Charlotte said: “We have been participating in music/choral festivals of this province almost every year and have received excellent prizes and reputation.” I was thrilled to have the chance to observe their rehearsals.

Seen and Heard

I had two interviews with Charlotte. The first one occurred before I started my observations. The second one happened after I had observed two rehearsals. The interviews focused on her rehearsal plans and strategies of selecting repertoire. I observed and videotaped a series of four rehearsals. Each one was around 70 minutes. The following sections will discuss what I saw and heard regarding the three focus areas.

Strategies of Repertoire Selection

According to Charlotte, she would arrange five units for the academic year. These units were: various types of chorus, voice and breath training, Chinese style

technique and diction, pitch and rhythm training, and finally, a synthesis of the previous four units. She would select appropriate pieces to match the focus of each unit. The main books she used were *Selected Pieces for Women's Choirs*, three volumes, compiled by Chen Guoquan. The 26 songs she selected for the year that I was observing can be categorized in different ways: geographical origin, style, and voicing (see tables 1 -3).

Geographical categories	Number of the pieces selected and percentage
China	9 (35%)
North America	5 (19%)
Europe	12 (46%)

Table 1. Geographical categories

Style categories	Number of the pieces selected and percentage
Baroque	3 (12%)
Classic	0 (0%)
Romantic	7 (27%)
Contemporary	8 (30.5%)
Folk	8 (30.5%)

Table 2. Style categories

Voicing categories	Number of the pieces selected and percentage
Unison	1 (4%)
SA	4 (15%)
SSA	5 (19%)
SSAA	15 (58%)
SSSAA	1(4%)

Table 3. Voicing categories

Charlotte emphasized:

I am trying to introduce as much music as possible from around the world... I am trying to select a diversity of repertoire for my students in this class

because I want them to get to know diverse types of music and, in the mean time, to enrich their choral knowledge.

It seemed that diversity of repertoire was really important to Charlotte. When I asked her what strategies she used to select music and to order them from the most to the least important, she gave me the following list: 1) the delivery of knowledge, 2) multiculturalism, 3) students' capabilities, 4) students' interest, and 5) conductor preference. She said that even though most of the time was used in rehearsing, she still tried to let students glean some knowledge from singing. As for multiculturalism, she said: "As a conductor, you should introduce music from around the world and students will learn some characteristics of different types of music from singing. It may not give them a deep understanding of each individual style, but their acquaintance of styles will be wide." She seldom let her preference interfere with her teaching. She said: "It is students who are receiving knowledge. I, as a teacher and a conductor, should put their needs before mine."

Because it was a Chinese choir, Chinese music had a prominent place in Charlotte's repertoire. Charlotte said: "Chinese music is diverse and distinguishing. It was good that we brought Chinese music into the choral world. But the difficulty is that if you are too insistent that students sing in the authentic style, the resulting tone will be jarring and harsh." Her point of view was to seek a good combination of Chinese music and Western techniques. "As long as we are clear about the cadence and the diction, we can strive for a tone that is close to the Western choral sound. We really don't need to sing Chinese songs in a nasal way," she mentioned.

Charlotte also pointed out that it was not easy to access formal scores¹¹ for the choir. It was not that most choral scores in China were informal;¹² it was because there weren't many professional choirs in the country so that most choral scores were printed in numbered notation (see figure 1 for an example of numbered notation) to be more manageable for amateurs.¹³ Charlotte said: "We mainly use numbered notation in our rehearsal...reading staff notation is much worse (for the students)."

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

1=C 2/4

<u>1 1</u>	<u>5 5</u>	<u>6 6</u>	5	<u>4 4</u>	<u>3 3</u>	<u>2 2</u>	1
Twinkle	Twinkle	Little	Star, How I	Wonder	What You	Are.	
<u>5 5</u>	<u>4 4</u>	<u>3 3</u>	2	<u>5 5</u>	<u>4 4</u>	<u>3 3</u>	2
Up A-----bove The	World So	High, Like A	Diamond	In The	Sky.		
<u>1 1</u>	<u>5 5</u>	<u>6 6</u>	5	<u>4 4</u>	<u>3 3</u>	<u>2 2</u>	1
Twinkle	Twinkle	Little	Star, How I	Wonder	What You	Are.	

Figure 1. "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" in numbered notation.

Most of the time, the piano accompanist improvised in class. "If he could find some accompaniment for the solo, he would do a little arrangement and use it in class. But most of the time, he does improvise," said Charlotte. When she was asked if this improvisation posed a problem, she answered: "Of course, students have troubles following and I have troubles too. Because he is improvising, you don't know what is going on exactly. However, I don't require that much in my class. If it comes to performance, I will work with him beforehand."

Rehearsal Organization

¹¹ Formal scores here mean choral music written in staff notation with accompaniment (if it applies).

¹² A lot of choral music has been published in numbered notation in China as numbered notation is an important music reading system in the country.

¹³ Numbered notation has been used widely in vocal music scores in China as it is easier and more straightforward for singers to read than staff notation. It uses movable *do* and numbers from one to seven to indicate *do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti*.

From a long term view, Charlotte normally arranged five units for each year. Each unit lasted three or four weeks. These five units were as follows (see table 4).

Unit	Content
Unit 1: Various types of chorus	Introducing different types of choral music
Unit 2: Voice and breath training	Toning and controlling breath Breathing Head voice Concentrative resonance Uniform tone color.
Unit 3: Chinese style technique and diction	Maintaining voice and breath training Learning Chinese choral music.
Unit 4: Pitch and rhythm training	Practicing complicated rhythms and intervals, etc.
Unit 5: Synthesis of the previous four units	Reviewing the previous four units Presenting on the stage Cooperating with the conductor and other singers.

Table 4. The five units.

Because there were only 15 rehearsals in each term, Charlotte said the time was too limited to polish every single piece. She planned and taught based on the focus of each unit. For example, in unit two, she selected appropriate music which was good for voice and breath training, mostly legato pieces. “I sometimes ask them to just hum the tune because they are able to better focus on their breathing,” she said. She often adjusted her lesson plans, trying to get the best results within three to four rehearsals.

Charlotte did not write a detailed lesson plan for every single rehearsal. She said that as long as she knew what she wanted to do in the class, it was not necessary to write a detailed plan. Plus, she would change sometimes according to the rehearsal progress and student responses.

Unlike most conductors, Charlotte did not always begin her rehearsal with a warm-up. She said:

I plan my rehearsal according to the content of the class. At the beginning of the year, I give students a lot of warm up exercises to do, for the purpose of building up a nice sound. And also in the last unit, when we are wrapping up, I also do a lot of that. In the middle sections, I do a normal amount. Every unit has a point and I always follow that thread. The other reason is that students get pretty tired around 4 or 5pm. I won't get a good result if I ask them to build up a chord or whatever at the beginning of the rehearsal. Sometimes I let them sight read scores first, and then maybe do some sectionals and so on, and then before we put everything together, I ask them to do some vocal exercises. It depends on what I am doing in the rehearsal.

Reading music had a prominent place in the rehearsals. For example, during one rehearsal Charlotte spent 48 minutes reading scores in a 70 rehearsal. That was 69% of the total time. When asked about students' reading skills, Charlotte said: "As music education students, they are required to have a good grasp of sight-reading." Her goals were the following: students should be able to sing at least *sol fa* the first time through; they should be able to put together parts the second time through; and the third time through, they should be able to sing with words—maybe not the whole song, but at least one section. However, due to multiple reasons,¹⁴ the choir was not able to meet Charlotte's expectations, especially when they were reading from staff notation. She did not do extra exercises to help the students improve their reading skills. She said: "Time is limited...they are supposed to develop that in the *Sight Reading* class...Although I don't do extra exercises, I expect them to get some improvement through choral singing."

When asked about students' exploration in class, Charlotte said: "A choir should be a whole. Especially when you are rehearsing for a competition/concert, every chorister should be united by the conductor. I don't think there is much time for them to explore. However, when it comes to choral knowledge, I would love to give them the freedom to explore." Sometimes she would give a few different recordings of one piece and let the students discuss different sound effects and arrangements. However, she confessed:

¹⁴ Staff notation reading and numbered notation reading are both used in choral music scores in China. Thus a lot of Chinese students do not read staff notation as well as their Western counterparts. Besides, Charlotte said that the faculty had reduced "Sight Reading and Ear Training" lessons from 2-years to 1-year which caused some problems. Although the reduction only lasted for 2 years, the singers in her choir the year I was observing were those who had only received 1-year of "Sight Reading and Ear Training" lessons. That was another reason the average reading skill of the choristers was pretty poor.

I seldom do that. First of all, most of my attention is focused on rehearsing.

Second, these students are learning and they still have so much to learn.

Sometimes I don't think that they are willing to explore because of their limited music knowledge and their learning initiatives. There are seldom unique ideas emerging in my class.

Charlotte did like to ask questions to encourage students to think. However, she seldom got many responses. For example, she asked only five questions in one rehearsal. Except for receiving a few answers to one question, the other four had no responses at all. Charlotte commented:

This is not just a problem in my class. This is a problem for all classes in China. Students do not show initiative when learning; rather they wait for the teacher to tell them the answers. You feed the student a spoon and he takes a spoon. You don't feed him and he doesn't eat. His initiative and creation are getting weaker from this type of education. I am trying hard to create an active and inquiring atmosphere in my class but it is not working well.

Other methods Charlotte liked to use in class were visual and audio aids, conductor modeling, and student demonstration. When introducing a new piece, she would try to find some CDs or DVDs to play for the students. She thought it was very helpful and believed that students would be more involved as well. She also liked to demonstrate vocally for the students which was helpful for her women's group due to her vocal expertise. For example, in one rehearsal, she modeled 15 times. Sometimes Charlotte would ask a few students to model, like choosing one student from each part and asking them to sing together.

Charlotte evaluated students twice a year. In the middle of the academic year, she would do a group testing to examine how well the students knew their music. Students could form groups themselves with no more than two to a part. Each group would be asked to sing one piece and then choose another one themselves. The group testing was normally held in the classroom with all students present. At the end of the year, the choir always participated in a music or choral competition. If there was no competition, they would have a concert. The end-of-year evaluation was mainly based on student participation and what reward they received in the contest.

Charlotte believed that a good choir would have a good system. She was trying to manage her choir in as organized a way as possible. She would take attendance herself in every rehearsal. She said it was not just required by the department, but was a good way to get to know the students. Plus, like other conductors, she hated absentees: "When you plan for the rehearsal, you certainly expect all students to show up. However, I cannot prevent them from being sick, or whatsoever. But missing singers do affect the rehearsal progress." The seating was fixed after the second rehearsal of each term. She would do some arrangement in the first two rehearsals, but after that, every singer had to sit where she was assigned. She also used section leaders. They were in charge of distributing music and conducting the sectionals. They were also responsible for gathering students and were the coordinators between the conductor and the students.

Conductor Behaviour

I assume that Charlotte was a mild conductor as I seldom saw her using big contrasting volume or body language in class. I guess that was part of her personality.

When she was standing behind the rostrum, most of the time she used one hand to hold a microphone and the other hand to refer to the music. She did not use a music stand; her music folder was placed on the podium. When she was leading sight reading, she liked to conduct with one hand and used the other hand to hold the microphone in order to give instructions. Only when rehearsing the whole piece would she conduct using both hands. Interestingly, most students were too busy with their heads buried in their music to look up. She spent most of the time standing still rather than moving around.

When asked what language or behaviour she liked to use in class, she said: “I think I smile a lot. Even if you don’t say anything, your smile means you are complimenting their performance. I only give them a serious look when there is a problem with attendance or discipline. A smile projects confidence to the singers.” In one particular rehearsal, for example, she smiled 15 times. Most of the smiles occurred after the students finished singing a certain part. She did look more serious when she was taking attendance or dealing with anything else related to discipline.

However, there were more behaviours than just smiling, some which Charlotte did not realize or notice. For example, the following chart presents the frequency of some particular behaviours and languages she used in one 70 minute rehearsal (see table 5).

Behaviours or languages	Frequency	Behaviours or languages	Frequency
Eye contact	10	Self correction	1 (She said “sorry”.)
Smiling	16	Thanking students	1
Asking questions	3 (No response received.)	Modeling	19
Interaction (Conversation, reacting on students’ responses, etc.)	7 (5 times with some responses and 2 times without.)	Discipline	7 (She said “be quiet” for 3 times; “listen to me” for 1 time; “attention” for 1 time; and “please make notes” for 3 times.)
Positive feedback	3	Body language	No significance
Negative feedback	0	Using teaching aids	1 (Playing video)

Table 5. The frequency of Charlotte’s behaviours and languages.

The most frequent behaviours of Charlotte used in the rehearsals were: modeling, smiling, eye contact, and interaction. According to my review of literature, most of these behaviours have been proven to be effective in teaching and conducting. Grimland (2005) advocated the benefits of using teacher-directed modeling in rehearsals. Although Charlotte used her own voice to demonstrate most

of the time other than some other ways suggested by Grimland, her expertise would still benefit female singers. Good communication skills were agreed by many music educators to be effective in conducting choirs (Stamer, 1999; Bell, 2002; Ford, 2001, Kelly, 1999, Ouyang, 2004). We can also see from Charlotte's behaviours that both verbal (interaction and feedback) and non-verbal (eye contact and facial expression) communication occurred frequently. Student behaviour caused some problem for Charlotte forcing her to remind students a few times to be attentive.

There was one behaviour of Charlotte that I did not put into the chart above. Her cell phone was not turned off in her class. In one particular rehearsal, it rang twice so that she had to look for it in her purse and hang it up. I was not so surprised to see that. Cell phones seem much more important and have more functions to Chinese than to Canadian. According to Moxley (2008), who was an American university student living in China for two months around the time of the 2008 Olympics, Chinese use them not only for making calls, but also for text messaging, internet browsing, MSNing, gaming, and listening to music. Lots of Chinese people even have more than one cell phone. My cousin, an ordinary college girl, for instance, has two cell phones, one used exclusively for communicating with her boyfriend. She is able to manage talking with her mother with one phone and text messaging her boyfriend with the other phone at the same time. Even in Charlotte's rehearsal, some students were busy punching their cell phone keyboards when they were not singing. I wonder what was so important to keep them from not paying attention to the class.

Summary

This chapter has provided a general impression for the reader regarding the Chinese case. Aspects related to Charlotte's strategies of repertoire selection, rehearsal organization, and behaviour were presented in a unilateral angle. They will be compared to the Canadian case in Chapter 6.

At the end of my last interview with Charlotte, she commented on choral education in China from her view point:

Chorus benefits from church music in Western society. We have a different situation here. Chorus doesn't have such a strong cultural root in China. It is getting popular and canonical here though. But the situation of chorus in China is that it is too competitive. Conductors are keen to enhance the reputation of their choirs so that too much time is spent on pursuing trophies and prizes. I don't really agree with this. Singing progress is also important. We are not producing a name brand. A gold prize is a way to represent the strength of your group, but it is not the goal of your rehearsal. It is not good for students to learn that way. And it is hard on the conductor too. You have to build your reputation first before you are able to get any kind of support from the government and the community. I don't say that we don't need competitions. It is just that competitions are not the reason we are doing all this. We need to be open-minded and diligent so that students will really benefit from singing. The other thing is that some conductors in China like to follow the trend, with little consideration given to the practice of their choir. Just because European church choral style is popular around the world, we

do not necessarily have to pursue it. Every choir is different. Selecting suitable repertoire and technique is especially important.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Image of Fall: A Description of the Canadian Case

Introduction

This chapter presents an in-depth description of the Canadian case. Similar to the last chapter, I will first introduce the whole case in general, and then discuss the findings, especially those related to the three focus areas: strategies of repertoire selection, rehearsal organization, and conductor behaviour.

An Overview of the Canadian Case

Fall is a beautiful season. All the leaves have turned golden as a symbol of being mature. People also say that fall is the season for harvesting. And I did “harvest” in the fall of 2006—not fruits or vegetables, but valuable data from the Canadian case.

The Environment

The choir rehearsals were held in a classroom in the basement of the School of Music. I was already familiar with the room because it was the warm-up room for the Philomela Women’s Choir concerts as the auditorium was just across the hall. When I walked in from the back door of the room, I saw a large chalk board on the front wall. A grand piano was placed on the left side of the room in the front. A chair and a music stand were right in front of the chalkboard. In the middle of the room, individual chairs were arranged in rows. A clock was hanging on the left wall. I suppose it is important for both teacher and students to keep track of the time because we don’t hear bells ringing in Canadian schools.

James-the Conductor¹⁵

I first met James in his office. He is a nice, tall gentleman. Unlike Charlotte—often, women are more talkative than men—James’ language was always brief and concise. However he led right to his points.

James received his doctorate in voice performance and conducting in the late 1960s. He has been the conductor of this particular choir for 32 years, and accumulated amazing experiences. “It has been a good life,” stated James, summing up his conducting career, as he was retiring in two years. He described himself an absolute leader and guide of the choir. “Because we have lots to do in such limited time, I really need to go where I am going (in the rehearsals)...” he told me. However I observed him playing more roles than this both inside and outside of rehearsals. He was a web designer and a maintainer for the choir website; he was an organizer and a fundraiser when they were planning a concert tour; he was a host and a cook and a housekeeper when he had students over to his house for a choir retreat. I guess that is the reason that James would consider his conducting career as “a good life.” He was the kind of person who would be fully devoted and immersed when he was doing something he loved. When asked about his feeling for the choir, he said: “Every year my choir has different features...but every year they just seem to get better in all regards, so...I would have to say that this is the best team.”

The Choir

The choir’s name was Chamber Singers and the course title was the same. James told me that a student was able to take the course up to four times during his or

¹⁵ James is a pseudonym.

her academic years. James had around 35 singers every year. “There is a turn-over somewhere between a third and a half,” he explained.

This choir is an elective course offered through the School of Music. The singers met three times a week, 50 minutes a session from 2:30pm to 3:20pm. Male singers usually sat on the right side and female singers on the left. Occasionally James would rearrange the seating to build different sound effects for different pieces as well as to allow students to experience different acoustic environments.

In company with many choirs, there was an audition before the first rehearsal in September. James said: “In the audition, No.1 I am looking for the voice. Close second I am looking for reading ability.” Most importantly, students had to be committed for the whole academic year. “I accept anybody who can make the rehearsals and pay attention,” he added.

The choir normally held two concerts every year, one in December and the other one in April. The singers were also able to go on a concert tour every other year. However, this was not mandatory, due to some financial and time-management issues.¹⁶ Over the years, James has taken his choir to many different places around the world. They have gained a very good reputation from their concerts and tours.

Seen and Heard

Two interviews and six observations were the main data sources of the Canadian case. The first interview was conducted before the six observations and the second one was conducted half way through the observations. All the interviews and

¹⁶ Although the concert trip was sponsored, students were still asked to pay a portion of their expenses. Consequently, not everybody was able to afford both time and money to go.

observations were audio/video taped and notes were taken as well. The following sections discuss what I have found out from the Canadian case, focusing on the three areas: strategies of repertoire selection, rehearsal organization, and conductor behaviour.

Strategies of Repertoire Selection

When asked to name the most important strategy he considered when selecting music for the choir, James highlighted that his rehearsals were strongly performance-oriented so that “automatically the program is to result in a theme.”

James elaborated:

...you have to fit it into some sort of theme. Sometimes a theme is looser than another. I once did the program to be called Choral Music of the Sacred Kind. You know, most choral music is sacred. But I don't necessarily start with the theme idea. Sometimes I have a piece in my head that I really want to do [and] I'll make up a theme out of it.

The concert theme of the year I did my research was called *Seen and Heard*. Taking a detailed look at the program list, I was able to form an idea of James' strategies of repertoire selection. The program was described as seeking to present a variety of choral music styles learned from a variety of notations and from aural traditions. The selections were often paired: an early piece was followed by a later composition based on the same tradition.

There were eighteen pieces selected to fit in the program. James categorized them as follows (see table 6).

Style categories	Number of piece(s)
Western European Sacred	2
English Secular Folk	1
English/North American Folksongs	2
English/North American Sacred	1
North American Immigrant	2
North American Aboriginal	2
African-Aboriginal	2
African-North American	2
Western European Secular Folksongs	1
Polyphonic Aural	2
Modern American Choral Composition	1

Table 6. Style categories.

Looking at these 18 pieces from different angles, we can also categorize them in other ways: traditions and notations, voicing, and genders (see tables 7 & 8).

Categories of traditions and notations	Number of the pieces selected and percentage
Western notation	9 (50%)
Other notations	2 (11%). One in Gregorian Chant notation and the other one in shape notation.
Aural tradition	7 (39%)

Table 7. Categories of traditions and notations.

Voicing categories	Number of the pieces selected
SSATBB	1
SSATB	3
SATB	4 (One piece was call and response as well)
SSAA	1
SSA	1
TTBB	1
TB	1
Call and response (male)	2
Unison (male)	1
Unison (female)	1
Unison (all)	1
Solo (female)	1

Table 8. Voicing categories.

It is easy to see that James selected a variety of pieces for the choir. The choral arrangements were from SSATBB to unison and solo. When they were

rehearsing, the students were grouped differently according to the sound requirement of each piece.

Last, looking at the pieces from the perspective of voicing, there were nine pieces selected for all singers, four selected for females, and five selected for males.

James valued multicultural music highly, as evidenced in his program choices and in his own words. In addition, he was not afraid to try different vocal techniques with the choir. There were a few pieces which used techniques other than those associated with traditional Western church singing. For example, in “London Street Cries,” students were asked to sing like vendors hawking their goods in old London streets. In a Bulgarian folk song, the female singers used a nasal and chesty vocal sound which was very different from *bel canto*.

Interestingly, only one out of these 18 pieces had a string quartet accompaniment; the rest were sung *a cappella*. James explained:

I am interested in anything that I think is good for the singers to learn, to broaden their experience. If it happens to have an accompaniment, that’s great...But I have found a lot of music that I find most worthy to be *a cappella*.

James tried to find different pieces for every year. He didn’t think that finding quality music was a problem for him.

Well, I’ve been out there for forty years. You tend to run into a lot of things. Your fundamental education provides all of the tools for that and you know as a graduate student, you can only learn so much...you learn it through your life. The same thing happened with me.

The problem for him was fitting the music in the group.

You know, in the summer time...I don't know who is going to show up on the first rehearsal. And I've been very adventurous in my repertoire choice.

Hopefully, I will be able to do that repertoire with the group. It's very tricky.

James was very confident about the music he selects for his choir. He also considers student preferences. He said: "my biggest challenge is [to find music that], by the time we've done [it], they enjoy. I won't give them something that I don't think has enough quality that ultimately they won't enjoy."

Rehearsal Organization

James worked on a yearly basis. Every summer, he started to recruit new members for the choir and then selected repertoire for the whole year. James told me that he would always have a plan in his mind which meant he knew what needed to be accomplished at a certain stage. He did not write out plans for every single rehearsal. He said:

Earlier in the years I did, because it is very important to stay organized.

Especially when I have a long and complicated program, I generally do...and about a third or half way through, I am confident enough so that I don't necessarily do it every time.

When asked to describe a typical rehearsal, James told me that he did not have some sort of structure for his rehearsals: "It depends very much on where we are in the cycle. Earlier on in the process there's a great deal of time spent on going through the pieces for the first time." He told me that later in the term, the majority of time was spent on polishing the music. James did not do warm-ups. He explained that

because each rehearsal was a limited time, students were expected to be warmed up when they came to the rehearsal.

Because the choir sang pieces in more than SATB voicing, James often varied seating plans for the students: “[From] time to time, I do that because it changes the landscape for them. Whenever we get an opportunity to go to a different room, I always go too.”

James did not particularly work on sight-reading in the class. He said: “That is something taken care of by the School of Music. Only if the students have difficulty with a particular line [will] I have them sing in *sol fa*.”

When introducing a new piece, James tended to go straight through and let the students sing it. He tried to give the students some context so that they would have an idea of what they were doing. However, he used very little time in doing it. James seldom used audio or video aids in his rehearsal. He thought those were not as important as spending the time singing. Plus, he made himself available so that if some students wanted to listen to the recordings they could just borrow them from him.

James seldom held sectionals during his choir rehearsals. He said: “My experience is that the more work you do, the less work they do on their own...The singers know that every time we go through something, the next time we do it, it will have to be there.”

James liked to interact with the students and most of them were pretty honest and generous about what they thought about the music. When asked how would he take different ideas emerging in his rehearsal, James told me:

I value them highly. But my problem is that...we really move on in every rehearsal and if somebody interrupts one of my thoughts to [offer a suggestion], I tend to...sometimes leave them aside because I am really going where I am going. I feel badly about that. But any [student] ideas that [reach] me through emails, phone calls, or meetings with students in the hall... none of the students would debate the point that I am very [receptive] to those ideas.

James was pretty satisfied with student attendance: "If [being late or absent] becomes distracting to the rehearsal, I have spoken very strongly to students in the past. But this hasn't happened particularly in this term." Furthermore, evaluation was not a big issue for him either. Because it was just one unit for the whole year, James said: "Generally speaking, I give anybody who comes to rehearsal and makes a good contribution anywhere between A- and A+, mostly A-s. And if there are some problems, some shaded Bs."

Outside the classroom, James did a lot of extra work other than just planning for the rehearsal. As stated earlier, he maintained the choir website, took care of CD orders, and planned and organized concert tours. His role was much more than just being a conductor and he made his choir more than just a choir, but a culture of the school.

Conductor Behaviour

James was very sure about his teaching style. He said: "[My rehearsal is] definitely teacher-controlled and task-oriented, no question about that. And my control comes from music."

When asked about his typical language or gesture in class, James said: “I am not sure...I think plenty of people who watch me could tell you that. You know, we don’t see ourselves in a mirror.” However, James believed that there is no standard mode of being a good conductor. He comments:

As my conducting students come up, I try to get them to realize that the worst thing is trying to copy me, mimic me. You have to develop your own personality; you have to develop what’s best for you and your students.

James thought that the most motivating behaviour of a conductor was connecting students with the music. He also believed strongly in passing on to his students the importance of organization. He said:

...in every schedule of the concert, there would be no question that there would be some conflicts with the concert schedule and rehearsal schedule...but we all need to be committed...I feel a strong responsibility to induct them into this profession.

Thus, James thought that as a conductor, it was important for him to model good behaviour and a professional attitude for his students in order for them to grasp the importance of organization.

James chose constant feedback as an important element for choral rehearsals: “I think I am very good at that. There is no learning going on if you don’t give students constant feedback.” It was true that there was lot of interaction between James and his students which made rehearsals vibrant. In one particular rehearsal for instance, 20 interactions were identified. Within those twenty times, 8 of them were

students questioning and James replying. James was able to answer the questions clearly and concisely enough to keep the singing time dominant.

Although James labelled himself a very strict conductor, he still smiled a lot in class. In one rehearsal, he smiled 16 times to the students. He was also capable of making a few jokes to retain a humorous atmosphere in the classroom. James was also a generous conductor, giving positive comments to his students. For example, there were 19 positive comments identified in one particular rehearsal. They often happened right after the students finished singing. Some typical language James liked to use when he gave positive comments were “good,” “very good,” “nice,” and “that’s it.” He often nodded and smiled when he gave those comments.

James was not a mobile conductor. His typical posture in the classroom was to remain seated in a high chair with a music stand in front of him. When he was rehearsing, he liked to be buried in the score. There was not much eye contact between him and the students. He said:

I do tend to be buried in the score a lot. It’s not necessarily because I need to be looking at the score. It’s a pose that I have. Yes, that’s true. It’ll change when we get to the concert...you’ll notice in a few weeks that I’ll change and get rid of the music.

Another noticeable feature of James’ behaviour was that he was not a dramatic conductor. His voice tone was always calm and quiet. He asked me that if he could be heard at the back of the classroom. He said:

My wife tells me that my voice fades at the end of the sentence or something. It’s true. I heard myself speak, and I don’t know why I communicate that way

because when I have a speech or something like that, I do very well and I can deliver very well and be well heard. But I do have a tendency to mumble.

I did notice that. However, the students seemed to be alright with it. During the six rehearsals I observed, no students said “I can’t hear you” or anything like that.

Summary

This chapter has presented a comprehensive description of the Canadian case. Aspects related to the strategies of repertoire selection, rehearsal organization, and conductor behaviour were discussed. They will be compared in the following chapter with the Chinese case.

James absolutely enjoyed conducting the choir. He told me:

[How successful the choir is] really depends on the nature of the ensemble, and how it fits in the culture, the institution. At this point of the time, I am one of the luckiest guys in the world because I have that kind of settled pattern of stuff...this age group is just phenomenal...their minds are totally open to all ideas. They are fast and it’s just wonderful...I would have to say that this is the best team.

The title of this chapter is called the image of fall. Not only did I conduct my data collection the fall season, but also I saw the maturity of James’ conducting, his personality, and his organizational skills overalls. And those must be his special recipe of running a successful choir for over 30 years.

CHAPTER SIX

A Cross-Cultural Perspective: The Comparison of the Two Cases

Preface

There is a Chinese story that I have heard ever since I was little. It is called *The Frog Lived in the Bottom of the Well*. A frog lived in the bottom of a dry well for his whole life. He never stepped out of it to see the world, not even once. Every time he raised his eyes to look at the sky, he could only see a small circle. Thus, he always thought that the sky was that small and he had no idea how big the sky actually was. This story tells us that we cannot always live in our small life circle. We need to broaden our horizons and look at things from as many different angles as possible. The idea of this story is exactly the reason that I decided to conduct a cross-cultural study. As mentioned in previous chapters, my purpose was not to identify a perfect university choral program, but rather to determine similarities and differences of two cases in order for my readers to generate their own perspectives. Thus, the sections that follow will elaborate the similarities and differences of the Chinese and Canadian case with respect to strategies of repertoire selection, rehearsal organization, and conductor behaviour.

Strategies of Repertoire Selection

The Main Consideration in Selecting Repertoire

Charlotte described her rehearsal as both performance and knowledge-oriented while James defined his rehearsal as strongly performance-directed. This self-declared focus impacted their repertoire selection significantly. Charlotte selected

pieces that would fit into her five units. These five units, as noted previously, had different emphases in choral rehearsal and knowledge delivery. In contrast, James would select pieces to fit into a theme and those pieces would be performed in the concert at the end of each semester. Both conductors told me that it was not difficult for them to find quality repertoire for their choirs. Charlotte's challenge was finding the music that was good for teaching vocal and choral concepts as well as suitable for performing. James worried more about how to fit the music into the choir's concert theme.

The Sources of Music

Charlotte had a few textbooks for her singers so that most of her repertoire came from them. Only a small portion came from other sources. James' music came from his own collection gathered from conference, festival, and seminar repertoire lists. Occasionally, he would write choral arrangements of some favourite folk tunes for his choir to perform. Other general differences I observed are the following: (1) In Canada, a lot of choral music is published in individual octavos whereas in China, most choral pieces are compiled in books. (2) In Canada, most choral music is printed in staff notation with accompaniment, while in China, most choral music is printed in numbered notation without accompaniment.

The Types of Music

Due to the fact that Charlotte's choir was equal voiced (women only) and James' choir was mixed (women and men), it is not logical to compare their repertoire selections in terms of voicing. However, both of them selected a majority of four-part music for their choirs. In both Charlotte's and James' selection of music,

there was a large portion of music that originated from their respective cultures and traditions. Nine out of 26 pieces (35%) were Chinese for Charlotte and 10 out of 18 (56%) pieces were North American for James. However, in Charlotte's case, the biggest portion of repertoire was European music (46%), probably due to its significant influence in the world; while in James' case, only 3 out of 18 (17%) pieces came from Europe. With respect to accompaniment, most of Charlotte's selections used piano, while only 1 out of 18 of James' pieces had accompaniment. The others were *a cappella*.

Multicultural Music

As I have stated in Chapter 2, multiculturalism plays a significant role in both China and Canada (*Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1988; Literature and Cultural of Chinese Minorities, 2007; What is Multiculturalism, 2004*). In choral education in both China and North America, conductors are giving increasing attention to multicultural repertoire (Apfelstadt, 2000; Beynon, 2003; Grant & Norris, Graves, 2000; 1998; Ma, 2005; Morrison, 2004; Zhang, 2003; Zhou, 2005). This trend was represented in Charlotte's and James' repertoire selections as well. Not only did both of them stress in the interviews that they valued multicultural music highly, but also in both cases multicultural music featured prominently in their selection of repertoire. In Charlotte's case, 75% of her repertoire was music of other cultures, including classic, contemporary, and folk songs from other countries. Thirty-five percent of her selections were Chinese originating from different nationalities of the country. In James' case, a large amount of multicultural music was selected for his choir as well, including folk, aboriginal, and other traditions. Except for traditional and

contemporary Western music, 56% of his selection was music from other cultures and traditions.

Other Strategies of Repertoire Selection

Besides multiculturalism, Charlotte and James also applied other similar and different strategies in repertoire selection. The similarities are that both agreed students' capabilities and interests were very important when selecting appropriate repertoire and both put students' interests before theirs. They would not select a piece that only they liked but that their students would not. This strategy paralleled previous studies which found that the capabilities of singers were the first thing considered in the selection of repertoire (Bell, 2002; Brunner, 1994 & 1996; Demorest, 1996; Gorelick; 2001; Mims, 1996; Reynolds, 2000). The only difference I have identified stems from the differing focus of the two conductors. Charlotte believed that the delivery of knowledge was especially important to her because the purpose of her rehearsal was for both learning and performing. This impacted her repertoire selection. On the other hand for James, how the music fit into the theme of the semester was much more important. Of course there was always learning going on in singing varied repertoire. It was just that he was not intentional about including it in his rehearsals. This difference between repertoire selection is not unusual. Forbes (2001) found out that criteria of repertoire selection do not seem to be consistently applied by choral conductors. Rather, criteria are influenced by various demographic characteristics such as program size, teaching style, and socioeconomic composition of the school.

Rehearsal Organization

Recruitment

Both Charlotte's and James' choirs required an audition. The audition was normally held before the first rehearsal of each semester. If selected, students would have to be committed for the whole year. Certainly, the first thing Charlotte and James looked for were good and matching voices, two of the most important components of a successful choir. Besides, James especially cared about students' commitment because he thought that it would largely affect the process of his program.

Semester/Unit and Lesson Plans

Charlotte and James both worked on a yearly basis. However, Charlotte received different students every year, while James did not. Thus, Charlotte could have a fixed plan every year with some minor changes made according to the quality of the group. She normally arranged five units with different emphases for the choir. In James' case, because an end of semester concert was the goal of rehearsals, he would choose a theme for each semester and then select appropriate music. The pieces from different years could be totally different.

Charlotte's unit plans were explicit. She said that every unit had a clear purpose and would last around three to four rehearsals. By contrast, James' unit plans were more flexible. He told me that he had some sort of unit plans in mind, but they very much depended on how well the students followed and other conditions¹⁷ as

¹⁷ For example, when did the accompaniment become available, when did the auditorium become available, and so on.

well. As long as all the music was well introduced and polished before the concert, it didn't really matter about the order of the pieces rehearsed.

Neither Charlotte nor James wrote out detailed lesson plans for each rehearsal. They thought that flexibility was more important than following steps as long as they had in mind what needed to be done.

Time Usage in the Rehearsal

Four rehearsals of 90 minutes each were observed in China and six rehearsals of 50 minutes each were observed in Canada. However, Charlotte always gave students a 15-minute break in between two sessions or dismissed students 15 minutes early. Thus, the actual rehearsal minutes of each case were around 300. Students' singing minutes, conductors' on and off-task minutes were counted separately in each case. Findings are: 1) Students' singing time was shorter in the Chinese case than the Canadian case; 2) The conductor's on-task minutes were longer in the Chinese case than the Canadian case; 3) In the Chinese case, the singing time was shorter than the conductor's presentation time while in the Canadian case, the singing time was longer than the conductor's presentation time; 4) The time used in discipline and attendance was longer in the China than the Canadian case; 5) The off- task minutes in rehearsal were longer in the China than the Canadian case; and 6) There was no time spent in sectionals in the Canadian case. The following chart displays the comparison of time usage of the two cases. The time used in the same aspect of all the rehearsals was totalled and then divided by the total rehearsal time to get the percentage of each category (see table 9).

Category	Chinese case	Canadian case
Singing	36%	49%
On-task minutes ¹⁸	45%	40%
Off-task minutes ¹⁹	6%	2%
Others ²⁰	9%	9%
Sectionals	4%	0%

Table 9. Time usage of the two cases.

In Cox's study (1986) comparing choral rehearsal time usage in a high school and a university choir, the results indicated that the university choral conductor spent more time on performance activities while the high school conductor spent more time on non-performance activities. In this study, James' time usage confirmed Cox's results. However, there was no research found regarding choral rehearsal time usage in China so that the representativeness of Charlotte's time usage cannot be reported here.

Warm-ups

Although the importance of warm-ups has been argued by many music educators (Corbin, 2001; Grant & Norris, 1998; Stegman, 2003; Strand, 2003; Xu, 2003; Zhao, 2004), Charlotte seldom did warm-ups in her rehearsals and James did not do any. By way of explanation, Charlotte believed that a person's energy was the lowest in the late afternoon and so beginning her rehearsal with a warm-up would not

¹⁸ On-task minutes here mean the time used in conductor's presentation and demonstration, etc.

¹⁹ Off-task minutes here mean the time used in announcements, discipline, and attendance, etc.

²⁰ Others here mean the time used in setting up, playing audio/video clips, student teaching, and other aspects related to teaching and singing.

attain a satisfactory result. She sometimes would do a few exercises before the choir would sing through a whole piece. In James's case, he asked students to come to the rehearsal warmed up because time was limited.

Teaching Aids

Charlotte would sometime use teaching aids in class, for example audio/video aids. She claimed that different teaching aids would enrich students' experience as well as attract more of their interest. However, James seldom used any teaching aids because he thought they were not as important compared to giving students more time to sing.

Sight-Reading

Music educators have increasingly focused on incorporating sight-singing into choral rehearsals (Bradley, 2006; Daniels, 1988; Demorest, 1998; Gorelick, 2001; Grant & Norris, 1998; Henry, 2004; Lamb, 2005; Mims, 1996; Paulk, 2004). However, most of studies conducted have targeted the high school level. No studies were found specifically researching the university level. For Charlotte and James, expending much effort to improve students' sight-reading skills in choral rehearsals was not important because music students were supposed to practice this skill in their sight-reading and ear-training class.

Evaluation

Both Charlotte and James evaluated students once a semester. Their evaluations were largely based on student participation. Group testing was used as the method to decide how well students knew the music. However, in Charlotte's testing, all the students would be present in the classroom, while in James' testing, the

groups came one by one into his office. Due to the fact that Charlotte would sometimes take her choir to compete in music or choral festivals at the end of the semester, her evaluation [on those occasions] would be affected by the prize or ranking her choir attained.

Other Aspects

Similarities and differences can also be found in other aspects. The similarities are: 1) In both Charlotte's and James' rehearsal, learning new music and reviewing old pieces were woven together. This was found in Grant and Norris's (1998) survey to be an important facet of rehearsal organization employed by many conductors. 2) Both Charlotte and James agreed that students' exploration in learning was very valuable. However, they also thought that there was not much time for students to explore and express different ideas in the choral rehearsal because a choir should be united as a whole when rehearsing and time was limited.

The differences are: 1) James' pace seemed much faster than Charlotte's. In Charlotte's 90-minute rehearsal, she would only rehearse around three pieces, including both old and new. In James's 50-minute rehearsal, except for some special occasions,²¹ he would rehearse around six pieces. Although some music educators claimed that choral conductors should alternate fast and slow paced procedures in the rehearsal (Cox, 1989; Phillips, 2005), Charlotte and James seemed to have worked out their own paces. 2) Although Charlotte rehearsed a lot of pieces each year, not all of them would be performed at the end. She told me that she did not have time to

²¹ James only worked on one piece in one of the six rehearsals. On that day, they rehearsed in the hall which had a very different acoustic environment compared to the regular classroom. He really wanted to do some intense work on that particular piece which could be facilitated by the different acoustic environment.

polish every piece so that she would emphasize only the most important aspects that students needed to grasp within each piece. However, James' rehearsals were very much performance-directed so that every piece had to be polished before the concert.

Conductor Behaviour

Aspects that Affect Conductor Behaviour

As has been mentioned in previous chapters, conductor behaviour is dependent on individual teaching style and roles. Additionally, James noted in his interview that the nature of the choir affects a conductor behaviour as well. Both Charlotte and James believed their rehearsals to be teacher-centered. Consequently, both of them had the control of their choirs. However, their self-defined roles were different. Charlotte saw herself as an advisor and a guide to the students while James envisioned himself as an absolute leader. To be fair, Charlotte claimed her rehearsal to be both performance and knowledge-oriented while James claimed his to be simply performance-oriented. This undoubtedly had bearing on their self-declared roles. All these aspects can be considered as the reference, but not the absolute foundation of their behaviours.

Some Typical Behaviours

The following chart is a comparison of some typical behaviours observed in Charlotte's and James' rehearsals.

Behaviours	The frequency of the behaviour appeared in the observations in China	The frequency of the behaviour appeared in the observations in Canada
Smile	62	95
Positive feedback	16	87
Negative feedback	5	2
Modeling	86	29
Interaction with students	26	118
Body language	9	5
Use of teaching aids	2	1
Discipline	32	6

Table 10. The comparison of the behaviours.

One can identify some similarities and differences from the chart above. The similarities concern issues of facial expression, negative feedback, movement, and rehearsal technique. First, both Charlotte and James smiled a lot to students. This behaviour is supported by VanWeelden (2002) who found that conductors' facial expressions are important in relation to performance rating. Second, both conductors did not like to give students negative feedback. Instead, they liked to say things like "you can do better," or "try it one more time." This was true especially for James. When he was not satisfied with the students' singing, he would rather comment with a joke which would ease the tension. Third, both Charlotte and James were stationary during rehearsals. In addition, both made little use of body language. The only body

language James would use would be stomping when students did not follow his conducting well. As for Charlotte, she would clap in the same situation or, if one part was weaker than the others, she would just sing along with that section. Fourth and finally, in language learning they both adopted “student teaching” as an effective method. For example, when Charlotte was teaching a song from Henan province, she asked a native Henanese student to assist students in learning the dialect. Similarly, when James was teaching a piece in Russian, he asked a student who had a Russian heritage to teach the correct pronunciation.

The differences involve issues of positive feedback, modeling, teacher-student interaction, use of teaching aids, and behaviour management. Regarding positive feedback, James was much more generous in offering students positive comments than was Charlotte. James’ attitudes are similar to Stamer (1999), who found that giving constant and positive feedback was one of the most effective behaviours of successful conductor. I believe the reason for the stark difference regarding positive feedback in this study is due to the educational philosophies of the two conductors. There is a dictum coming from the *Three-Character Scripture*, a famous book for early childhood education in ancient China, which says that to feed without teaching, is the father's fault; to teach without severity, is the teacher's laziness. It embodies the philosophy of Confucius. Most Chinese teachers do not praise students easily as they are afraid of them becoming too conceited. In contrast, most teachers in North America try to establish a positive learning environment as it is deemed to be important for preventing students’ low self-esteem. Second, with respect to modeling, Charlotte was far more apt to model vocally for her students than James. The benefits

of teacher-direct modeling have been advocated by Grimland (2005). Perhaps the reason that Charlotte seemed to be more willing to model is that she believed her vocal expertise would assist her female singers. Third, there was considerable interaction between James and his students. Most of the time, it was students asking him questions or giving him feedback on the music. Sometimes, a small class discussion would be initiated as well. In Charlotte's rehearsal, students seemed to participate less. Charlotte explained this phenomenon to be due to the Chinese character. She told me that she really tried to nurture interaction; however, the students did not show much initiative while learning. Fourth, Charlotte sometimes used teaching aids because she thought students would be more involved and attached to the music. In contrast, James claimed that teaching aids were not very important because, in his view, the most effective behaviour of a choral conductor was to link the students with the music and give them more time to sing. Fifth, Charlotte spent much more time in discipline and attendance, which caused more off-task time while James never thought of discipline and attendance as problems in his rehearsals.

Other Behaviours

Both Charlotte and James did not seem to be dramatic conductors. Their voices were gentle and quiet with no big contrasts. When they were rehearsing, both of them spent most of the time staying in their conducting areas. Interestingly, both of them liked to be "buried" in the score a lot which did not allow them to have much eye contact with the students. I could not help thinking about what I have learned from my conducting courses and how conductors are supposed to use facial expressions and eye contact to shape the music as well as conducting. However,

according to the findings of VanWeelden's (2002) research, eye contact was not significantly related to performance ratings in choral rehearsals.

Both Charlotte and James gave chances for a few students to perform and demonstrate in front of other students. In one rehearsal, Charlotte assigned four singers, one from each part, to demonstrate the song for the class. There were a couple who looked a little reluctant and shy, but they sang anyway. A similar instance happened in James' class. He wanted a few of the men to perform a song which they had rehearsed all by themselves. Instead of asking them to go to the front, he asked if they were ready to perform. However, the men said that they did not want to perform on that day so James immediately cancelled his original plan.

James played more roles in the choir than did Charlotte. Not only did he conduct the choir, but also he took care of other business as well, including fund raising, poster designing, and website maintaining, while Charlotte's role seemed simpler. It was not that Charlotte was lazier; rather, that conductor role(s) are dependent on the nature of a choir and how a choir fits into the culture. In Western society, chorus has become a very important cultural phenomenon and has been well supported by the community. Thus, conductors in North America seem to have more freedom to work independently and consequently, there are many different models of choir communities—some where conductors are responsible only for the music all the way to others where conductors are musical directors, business managers, and publicity experts.

Summary

This chapter has provided an examination of the similarities and differences between Charlotte and James's rehearsals. Findings have been organized in the three main themes: strategies of repertoire selection, rehearsal organization and conductor behaviour. Key similarities are: 1) both Charlotte and James considered student interest and capability as an important strategy in selecting repertoire; 2) neither conductor wrote out detailed lesson plans as they valued rehearsal flexibility; 3) both conductors preferred to encourage students rather than giving them negative feedback. Key differences are: 1) for selecting repertoire, Charlotte chose music to deliver the knowledge of her unit themes while James chose music to fit the concert theme; 2) Charlotte spent more time in non-performance activities while James spent more time in performance activities; 3) James gave more positive feedback than did Charlotte. Findings have been linked with previous studies in choral education.

The final chapter will discuss implications of the findings, strengths and weaknesses of the study, as well as recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER SEVEN

On a Long Road towards a Better Choral Education

Aristotle said: “the roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet.” (n.d. ¶ 1)

Project in a “Nut Shell”

Comparative study is a valuable research approach that has been implemented by many scholars in diverse disciplines (Benson & Fung, 2005; Campbell, 1991; Reimer, 2002; White, 2002; Wong, 2002). However, in both China and North America, no research has been conducted on university choral rehearsals in terms of comparison. My intent was to fill this gap and help choral conductors to look at their practice from a different angle. As a choral conductor as well as a bi-lingual researcher, I was qualified to investigate this particular area. The following question guided the whole process of my research: what are the similarities and differences in university choral rehearsals in the areas of strategies of repertoire selection, rehearsal organization, and conductor behaviour?

Comparative case study was my research design. I chose to use case study as it is a bounded system which provides an in-depth description and interpretation of the case(s) (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995). I selected one university choir in China and one in Canada as my two cases. Interview, observation and the physical artifacts were my data sources. Through these multiple methods, I was able to triangulate the data as well as provide more validity and reliability to the findings.

Two interviews were conducted with each choir conductor. The first one was open-ended and the second one was semi-structured. Four sequential rehearsals were

observed in China and six sequential rehearsals were observed in Canada. Relevant materials, like semester/lesson plans and scores were obtained as well. Field notes were constructed with all interviews and observations were audio/video taped.

All the data collected were analysed and synthesized. The two cases were first looked at individually to be able to provide an in-depth description of each. Subsequently, they were examined together. Similar and different themes were abstracted focusing on the three target areas: strategies of repertoire selection, rehearsal organization, and conductor behaviour.

Implications of the Findings

The findings indicate that there is no ideal choral program for all choral conductors. Despite educational background and experience, it seems that a conductor's decision making is largely affected by the nature of the choir, its cultural roots, and other related aspects. For instance, every piece that Charlotte, the Chinese conductor, selected had a clear indication of educational purpose as the choir was both performance and teaching-oriented. As for James, the Canadian conductor, he chose all his selections to fit into the theme of the semester as his choir was purely performance-oriented.

Taking into account differences in personality, my findings suggest that conductor behaviour is largely affected by the underlying philosophy that guides the individual conductor's teaching as well as social conventions. For example, Charlotte gave much less positive feedback to her students than did James. This phenomenon indicated the different philosophical positions that they stood for (see Chapter 6).

The findings also indicate that although the two choirs have different natures and cultural backgrounds, their conductors share some common concepts, especially those current trends which are supported by the majority of music educators around the world. For instance, both Charlotte and James valued multicultural music and implemented it in their programs.

Although some music educators advocate the idea of transforming music education, including rethinking the predominance of Western music (Bartel, 2004; Jorgensen, 2002), it still holds a prominent place around the world. For example, one might assume that Charlotte would select Chinese music more than Western music. However, 46% of Charlotte's selection of music was Western and only 35% was Chinese.

Finally, comparative study seems to be a valuable research approach. Through comparison, people are able to obtain a wider and more holistic point of view of phenomena. From the findings of this project, choral conductors from China and Canada are not only able to see the similarities and differences of Charlotte's and James' rehearsals, but also are able to compare their practices with their own and then develop what is best for their choirs.

Strengths and Weaknesses of this Project

This project is an exploration of university choral rehearsals in China and Canada by means of comparison. As no pertinent studies were found, it became the first research that has been conducted in this particular area. This allows music educators to read some fresh material as well as to look at university choral rehearsals from a very different angle. It also opens up a new area for researchers to investigate.

However, the first thing I learned in my research methodology class was there is no perfect research. Due to the fact that this is a master's project with limitations, I could only look at a limited sample and focus on limited aspects. I am not able to confirm that all the findings presented in this project are typical and authoritative. For example, neither Charlotte nor James began their rehearsals with a warm-up, albeit for different reasons (see Chapter 6). However, this does not necessarily suggest that a warm-up is to be avoided in choral rehearsals. On the contrary, many successful choral conductors implement it regularly.

Recommendations for Future Research

Significant themes remain to be investigated in this particular area. For example, as no previous study can be reviewed, I selected three themes that interested me the most. However, I was not certain that these three themes would be the most fruitful to be investigated. Thus, a quantitative study looking at multiple factors is worth conducting. Then more phenomena would be identified. Second, the current project focused on conductor behaviour. The student side could be explored as well. For example, similar and different learning styles and attitudes of students in the two countries would be interesting to discover. Thus, a comparative ethnographic study could be conducted. Third, future researchers could also conduct an in-depth study comparing the personal experiences of one conductor in China and one conductor in Canada by a biographical approach, telling their life stories to choral conductors in these two countries. There are numerous options to be considered should one wish to conduct a comparative study in choral education in China and Canada.

Coda

One day after I finished observing a rehearsal of Charlotte's, I was standing in front of the building, waiting for a friend to pick me up. A couple of students from Charlotte's choir came over to me and said "hi." Then we started to talk. Of course they were very interested in my life in Canada and my graduate study. One girl asked: "What have you learned from conducting this project?" This is a very good question. I have learned a lot. First, my knowledge of choral education has been deepened and expanded. Second, through the process of conducting this project, I have accumulated a lot of valuable information which will assist me with future practice both as a choir conductor and a researcher. Third and the most important, I have become an independent and creative researcher myself.

I sincerely wish that this project will benefit and assist choral conductors in their future endeavours. There is a long way to go towards a better choral education. As music educators and choral conductors, we need to be more committed to what we have been doing, sharing our ideas and moving forward. To paraphrase the words of Plato, once we get the fruit, it will be sweet.

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APPENDIX A – CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS APPROVAL



University
of Victoria

Human Research Ethics Board
Office of Research Services
University of Victoria
Room A240 University Centre
Tel (250) 472-4545 Fax (250) 721-8960
Email ovprhe@uvic.ca Web www.research.uvic.ca

Human Research Ethics Board Certificate of Approval

<u>Principal Investigator</u> Lina Guo Graduate Student	<u>Department/School</u> EDCD	<u>Supervisor</u> Mary Kennedy	
<u>Co-Investigator(s)</u> :			
<u>Project Title</u> : Drawing a Cross-Cultural Picture: Choral Rehearsals in One University in China and One University in Canada			
<u>Protocol No.</u> 06-093	<u>Approval Date</u> 12-Apr-06	<u>Start Date</u> 12-Apr-06	<u>End Date</u> 11-Apr-09

Certification

This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concludes that, in all respects, the proposed research meets appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Subjects.

Dr. Richard Keeler
Associate Vice-President, Research

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the procedures. Extensions or minor amendments may be granted upon receipt of a "Research Status" form.

06-093 Guo, Lina

APPENDIX B – CONSENT LETTERS

Conductor Letter of Consent

Dear Participant,

I, Lina Guo, a graduate student of the University of Victoria, enrolled in the Master's program of music education, am conducting a project about university choral rehearsals in China and Canada. This project is a part of the requirement of the Masters degree in music education. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Mary Kennedy. If you have any concerns or questions, please feel free to contact Dr. Mary Kennedy at makenn@uvic.ca or the Ethics Board at ovprhe@uviv.ca.

The purpose of this project is to explore similarities and differences of choral rehearsals at one university in China and one university in Canada, focusing on repertoire selection, rehearsal organization, and behaviours of conductors.

In conducting my project, I will set up 2 interviews with you. The first will be an open-ended interview and it will take approximately thirty minutes. The second will be a semi-structured interview and it will take approximately forty five minutes. In the two interviews, I will ask you some questions about repertoire selection and rehearsal organization. I will be recording the interviews by MP3 player in order to review, transcribe and analyze them for the written report. I will observe 4 full rehearsals of yours as well. I will be videotaping those rehearsals with a focus on your teaching behaviours. I also will collect the copy of your written rehearsal plans if they are available.

In accordance with the University's standards for ethical research, your confidentiality and identity will be protected. My supervisor Dr. Mary Kennedy and I will be the only two people viewing those tapes and photocopies. I will be the only person keeping them. All of my notes, tapes, and photocopies will be used for this project. For the purpose of getting this project published, I will safely keep all the data for 6 years. However, I am expecting your understanding that some people may have clues to identify my participants after reading my report, for example, the

university president, or relatives of my participants, etc. It is beyond my capability to prevent this from happening.

Therefore, I am asking your permission to include your responses in my Master's project written report. Your permission to be involved in this project must be voluntary. Every time before I interview or observe, I will verbally describe the information of this letter to obtain your ongoing consent. At any time, if you are feeling uncomfortable, you may withdraw. Let me assure you that no consequences will arise from your withdrawal. You have the right to decide whether the data will be destroyed or used in my analysis. If you agree that I can still use the data after your withdrawal, I will prepare an additional consent letter for you to sign. This is considered minimal risk research. Your consent is greatly appreciated. If you are interested in reading my report, feel free to let me know and I am more than happy to email it to you.

I am available at your convenience to answer any concerns or question. I may be reached at linaguo@uvic.ca or (250)592-6258. Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this project. Thanks for your time and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

I give my consent to participate in Lina Guo's Master's project for the faculty of education of the University of Victoria.

Print Name

Participant's Signature

Date

A copy of this consent letter may be kept by you.

Student Letter of Consent

Dear Participant,

I, Lina Guo, a graduate student of the University of Victoria, enrolled in the Master's program of music education, am conducting a project about university choral rehearsals in China and Canada. This project is a part of the requirement of the Masters degree in music education. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Mary Kennedy. If you have any concerns or questions, please feel free to contact Dr. Mary Kennedy at makenn@uvic.ca or the Ethics Board at ovprhe@uviv.ca.

The purpose of this project is to explore similarities and differences of choral rehearsals at one university in China and one university in Canada, focusing on repertoire selection, rehearsal organization, and behaviours of conductors.

In conducting my project, I will set up a video camera to record the conductor's behaviours. Your voice and singing might be recorded individually or collectively. Your responses to the conductor might appear in my report as well.

In accordance with the University's standards for ethical research, your confidentiality and identity will be protected. My supervisor Dr. Mary Kennedy and I will be the only two people viewing those tapes. I will be the only person keeping them. All of my notes and tapes will mainly be used for this project. For the purpose of getting this project published, I will safely keep all the data for 6 years. However, I am expecting your understanding that some people may have clues to identify my participants after reading my report, for example, the university president, or relatives of my participants, etc. It is beyond my capability to prevent this from happening.

Therefore, I am asking your permission to include your responses in my Master's project written report. Your permission to be involved in this project must be voluntary. Every time before I observe, I will verbally describe the information of this letter to obtain your ongoing consent. At any time, if you are feeling uncomfortable, you may withdraw. Let me assure you that no consequences will arise from your withdrawal. However, it is logically impossible for me to remove individual participant data so that I am expecting your consideration that your data

might be still used in my analysis after your withdrawal. This is considered minimal risk research. Your consent is greatly appreciated. If you are interested in reading my report, feel free to let me know and I am more than happy to email it to you.

I am available at your convenience to answer any concerns or question. I may be reached at linaguo@uvic.ca or (250)592-6258. Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this project. Thanks for your time and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

I give my consent to participate in Lina Guo's Master's project for the faculty of education of the University of Victoria.

Print Name

Participant's Signature

Date

A copy of this consent letter may be kept by you.

Authority Letter of Consent

To whom it will concern,

I, Lina Guo, a graduate student of the University of Victoria, enrolled in the Master's program of music education, am conducting a project about university choral rehearsals in China and Canada. This project is a part of the requirement of the Masters degree in music education. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Mary Kennedy. If you have any concerns or questions, please feel free to contact Dr. Mary Kennedy at makenn@uvic.ca or the Ethics Board at ovprhe@uviv.ca.

The purpose of this project is to explore similarities and differences of choral rehearsals at one university in China and one university in Canada, focusing on repertoire selection, rehearsal organization, and behaviours of conductors.

A conductor of your department and students in the choir will be participating in my project for 4 rehearsals. Their responses will be either MP3 recorded or videotaped. The copy of the conductor's written rehearsal plans will be collected as well.

I will be sure to protect my participants' confidentialities and identities. My supervisor Dr. Mary Kennedy and I will be the only two people viewing those tapes. I will be the only person keeping them. All of my notes and tapes will be used for this project. For the purpose of getting this project published, I will safely keep all the data for 6 years.

Therefore, I am asking you to permit the conductor and the students to participate in my project. A list of the participants' names is attached with this letter. This is considered minimal risk research. Your consent is greatly appreciated.

I am available at your convenience to answer any concerns or question. I may be reached at linaguo@uvic.ca or (250)592-6258. Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of agreement with my project. Thanks for your time and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

I give my consent for Lina Guo to conduct her Master's project in this department.

Print Name

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent letter may be kept by you.

APPEDIX C-INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

First Interview Protocol (open-ended)

Date:		Time:	
Place:		Interviewee:	
Question:	Alternate question:	Prompt:	
1. How long have you been conducting this choir?			
2. Please describe a typical class.	What do you normally do in your class?	Please tell me more about * .	
3. Can you share some stories of conducting this choir?	Anything memorable happened in your class?	How did it happen? Can you tell me more about * ?	

Second Interview Protocol (Semi-structured)

Date:		Time:	
Place:		Interviewee:	
Question:	Alternate Question:	Prompt:	
1. How do you select repertoire for your choir?	What do you consider when you select repertoire for your choir?	Why is * appropriate for the choir?	
2. How do you plan and organize the rehearsals?	What are your strategies in planning your rehearsal?	Please describe * in detail.	
3. Do you think your choristers are comfortable with your rehearsal plan?	In your opinion, how do your choristers like your rehearsal? Do you think they like the music you select?	Tell me more about * .	

4. Please provide a description of your role in conducting this choir.	What is your role in this choir? A teacher? A helper? A friend? You can identify multiple roles.	Which one is the most important?
5. Are you aware of your teaching style? Are you satisfied with your teaching?	What do you think is your teaching style? Is there anything with which you feel unsatisfied?	Tell me more about * .
6. Please describe some typical expressions or gestures that you like to use in the class.	What languages and gestures you often use in your rehearsal?	Can you show me * ?

APPENDIX D – OBSERVATION PROTOCOLS

Date:	Time:
Place:	Participants:

Diagram of physical arrangement:

Brief description of the rehearsal (repertoire, performance, emotions, etc.):

Components	The conductor's behaviours	Students' responses	Field notes
Warm-ups			
Learning new music			
Polishing music			
Off-task minutes			
Wrap-up			
Others			

APPENDIX E – STORING THE DATA