

Guidelines for repertoire selection for a beginner secondary school choir: An explanatory case study

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the criteria conductors use to select repertoire for beginner secondary school choirs and is based on a qualitative research design. The research was guided by a social constructivist worldview and is an explanatory case study. Data were collected through interviewing five experienced and established choir conductors who conduct secondary school choirs. Five themes crystallised through the data analyses, which are Education, Vocal ability, Type of choir, Programme choice and Audience preference and development. This study leads to further recommendations about possible research on repertoire that is best suited for beginner secondary school choirs and choir singing as experienced by the choristers and the audiences themselves.

Keywords: criteria, choirs, repertoire, education, singing.

ABSTRAK

Hierdie studie ondersoek die kriteria wat dirigente gebruik om repertoire te kies vir hul beginner hoërskool-kore en is gebaseer op kwalitatiewe navorsing. Die navorsing is gelei deur 'n sosiaal-konstruktivistiese wêreldbeskouing en is 'n verduidelikende gevallestudie. Data is ingesamel deur middel van onderhoude met vyf ervare en gevestigde koordirigente wat hoërskool-kore afrig. Vyf temas het uitgekristalliseer deur die data-ontleding, naamlik Opleiding, Vokale vermoë, Tipe koor, Keuse van program en Voorkeur en ontwikkeling van gehoor. Hierdie studie lei tot verdere moontlike aanbevelings van navorsing oor repertoire wat die beste geskik is vir beginner-hoërskool-kore en koor-sang, soos ervaar deur die koorlede en die gehoor self.

Sleutelwoorde: kriteria, kore, repertoire, opleiding, sang.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

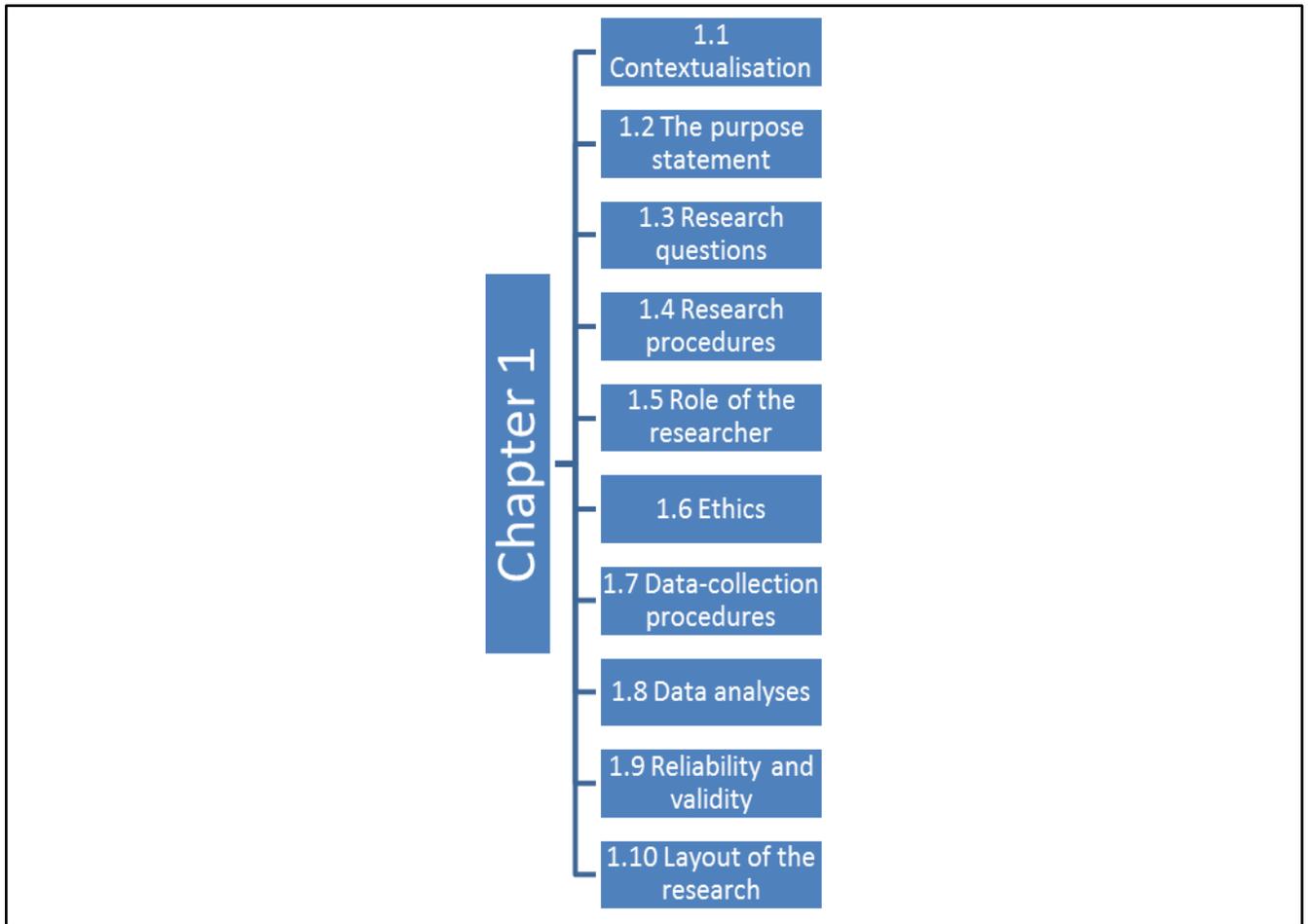


Figure 1 Structure of Chapter 1

1.1 Contextualisation

Choir singing is a prestigious activity in South Africa and in Vereeniging (Gauteng), where the researcher is a choir conductor; headmasters in secondary schools¹ have high expectations of school choirs and their conductors. A school choir that performs successfully is of great value to the prestige of a school. Many novice music teachers are assigned with the task to begin a school choir. These teachers need to know what

¹ For the purpose of this mini-dissertation the phrase *school choir* is used as synonymous with beginner secondary school choir.

measures should be taken in order to ensure the development of their choirs' musicality and the success of their performances. The first step should be to conduct auditions for new choristers.

However, just like auditioning learners for the school choir, selecting suitable repertoire is also of fundamental importance to develop choristers' musicality and to ensure successful performances. The selection of suitable repertoire might pose a challenge. Furthermore, the chosen repertoire should form a balanced program. Aspects that a choir conductor needs to take into consideration in order to form a balanced choral program include the quality of the choir's tone colour, the balance between voices, the choir's intonation and various choral music styles. The novice choir conductor may find it difficult to select suitable repertoire because of lack of experience in choir conducting and repertoire selection.

The experience of choir conductors who have performed successfully in various national competitions or eisteddfods, and who are well-known in their communities due to their participation in communal concerts, can be of great help to novice conductors. They usually have substantial knowledge of repertoire, as well as how to stimulate and develop their choirs' musicality and enjoyment of the musical experience in order to achieve successful performances. The researcher suspects that experienced secondary school choir conductors (as a result of practical experience) have developed guidelines for selecting repertoire for school choirs almost spontaneously.

Although concepts of school choirs and choir conducting have been investigated for research such as teaching methods of experienced choral conductors (Antel, 2010), the benefits of singing in a choir (Baird, 2007), sight-singing practices in the choral rehearsal (Myers, 2008) and preparing for successful choir performances (Rolsten, 2011), criteria for the selection of such a school choir as gained from the expertise of experienced choir conductors in South Africa – more specifically in the Gauteng area – have not yet been determined. Apfelstadt (2000:19–46) carefully lays out certain criteria when choosing repertoire, such as choosing music that will stimulate the musical development of the choristers. She argues that a conductor should take into account the

context of the performances; where and for whom the choir will sing (Apfelstadt, 2000:21). She also states that music should be chosen according to the choristers' musical experience, vocal ranges and tessituras (Apfelstadt, 2000:21). Reames (2001:122–135) addresses secondary school choir conductors and argues that chosen repertoire should be both interesting to the choristers and help develop their singing technique and musicality. She also argues that choosing repertoire that includes different style periods will allow the choristers to enjoy what they sing (Reames, 2001:129). Yoho (2012:1–27) states that conductors should choose repertoire that will help them achieve their goals for the choir. He also argues that the chosen repertoire should challenge the choristers musically, so that they may develop musically (Yoho, 2012:14). He further states that the repertoire should satisfy both educational and entertainment needs (Yoho, 2012:14).

Apfelstadt (2000), Reames (2001) and Yoho (2004) address guidelines for choosing repertoire according to the North American education syllabus (National Standards for Music Education) and, although the guidelines they discuss are relevant to all secondary school choirs, their research is not relevant to the context of South African choral singing with its different ethnic groups, languages and folk music. In South Africa, the most recent research about choirs has been done by Barrett (2007), Boonzaaier (2011), Bouwer (2009) and Van der Sandt (2013). Although their research has addressed issues of choirs within a South African context, the topics do not correlate with this research study.

1.2 The purpose statement

The purpose of this case study will be to describe the repertoire selection guidelines for beginner secondary school choirs as proposed by five experienced choir conductors in the Gauteng area; conductors who have extensive practical experience in selecting appropriate choral repertoire for secondary school choirs according to the choir's needs. At this stage in the research, guidelines for selecting choral repertoire for beginner secondary school choirs may be defined as the various aspects that need to be taken

into consideration when choosing a balanced, entertaining choir concert program that promotes the musical development of the singers.

1.3 Research questions

How can repertoire selection guidelines be discussed?

Sub-questions include:

- What guidelines for the selection of repertoire for beginner Secondary School Choirs can be found in literature about choral singing? (Chapter 2).
- What criteria do successful choir conductors use to select repertoire for a secondary school choir? (Chapter 4)
- How does the literature underscore the data gathered from the conductors? (Chapter 5)

1.4 Research procedures

The researcher adopts a social constructivist (interpretivist) approach and aims to understand the guidelines that conductors use to select choral repertoire through different meanings or more specifically, from the perspectives of experienced choir conductors on this topic. Creswell (2009:8) states that “[t]he goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation being studied”. In this study the researcher will interview a group of experienced secondary school choir conductors to understand their approach to selecting choral repertoire for secondary school choirs (Creswell, 2009:13).

Rule and John (2011:4) define a case study as “a systematic and in-depth investigation of a particular instance in its context in order to generate knowledge”. They also argue that a case study has three important aspects: the “process”, which is the actual investigation of the case, the “unit”, which is the object being studied, and the product, which may be described as the findings of the investigation (Rule & John, 2011:5).

Merriam (2009:43) defines a case study as a bounded system which is extensively described and analysed. The strategy of inquiry for this research is an explanatory case study focused on guidelines for selecting repertoire for a beginner secondary school choir. Rule and John (2011:30) describe an explanatory case study as a study that explains phenomena. The object or bounded system of this study is the process of repertoire selection by secondary school choir conductors in terms of specific criteria who will be interviewed. The guidelines that these experienced choir conductors use to select repertoire for a beginner secondary school choir will be identified, described and analysed.

1.5 Role of researcher

It is important that the researcher interacts with and forms a relationship with participants in order to win their trust. I am familiar with the participants participating in this study through past collaborations and events that we've taken part in or attended together. I have also previously sung in some of the participants choirs that they conduct. Other choirs that I've sung in were either semi-professional or professional choirs. Concerning my profession, I currently conduct various junior and secondary school choirs. All the participants taking part in this study conduct secondary school choirs from different economic backgrounds in the Gauteng area. To protect the anonymity of the conductors, they will be referred to as conductor 1, conductor 2, conductor 3, conductor 4 and conductor 5.

1.6 Ethics

Although, as mentioned, I am familiar with most of the participants, permission to interview them still is needed. Steps taken to obtain permission to interview the participants include a consent form (Creswell, 2013:153) signed by both the participant and myself (see Addendum A: Letter of consent). The consent form will allow me to interview the participant with his/her own permission. Even before the consent forms are given to the participants, I need to obtain permission from the ethics committee (of the North-West University) involved in assessing any risks involved to those who will take part in the study.

1.7 Data-collection procedures

The data for this research rely on open-ended interviews that will be recorded through voice recordings. I will ask permission from five participants to conduct and record the individual interviews. The participants were chosen for this study because of their experience on how to select repertoire for beginner secondary school choirs. For the purpose of this investigation “experience” is interpreted as “having become skilful or knowledgeable from extensive participation” (Collins Shorter English Dictionary, 1993:392).

1.8 Data analyses

Once the data have been gathered through interviews, I will organise the information whilst interpreting the data utilising the ATLAS.ti 7 computer software programme. The categories will be further divided into themes to form wider perspectives on the information collected (Creswell, 2013:186). I will also aim to identify specific patterns that may surface concerning the guidelines these five secondary school choir conductors use to select repertoire for their choirs. These findings will be compared to the findings and information gathered through the literature study and represented in figures (Creswell, 2013:181).

1.9 Reliability and validity

According to Cohen *et al.* (2011:295), the following aspects are of importance for the reliability and validity of case studies: construct validity (describing definitions and terms); internal validity (“agreements between different parts of the data, matching patterns and results”); concurrent validity (by using multiple sources); ecological validity (the context of the case study); reliability through “replicability and internal consistency”. Yin (2009:41) mentions that a chain of evidence should be provided. In the case of this study the “chain” is experienced choir conductors, repertoire selection and beginner high school choirs.

1.10 Layout of the research

In Chapter 1 I briefly discuss the challenges that novice choir conductors face when forming a beginner secondary school choir and indicate what literature exists on this topic (Apfelstadt, 2000; Reames, 2001; Yoho, 2004). The purpose statement is also given in this chapter as well as the main research question with sub-questions, and a short overview of the research procedures, role of the researcher, ethics, data collection procedures, data analyses and the reliability and validity of the study.

In Chapter 2 a broad overview of existing literature of the topic is given, to see what authors have written on the subject of selecting repertoire for a beginner secondary school choir. Chapter 3 addresses my approach to this study, my method of research and how I will gather data to be analysed. In Chapter 4 the gathered data are analysed and presented. A summary is given in Chapter 5 to show the findings and also recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

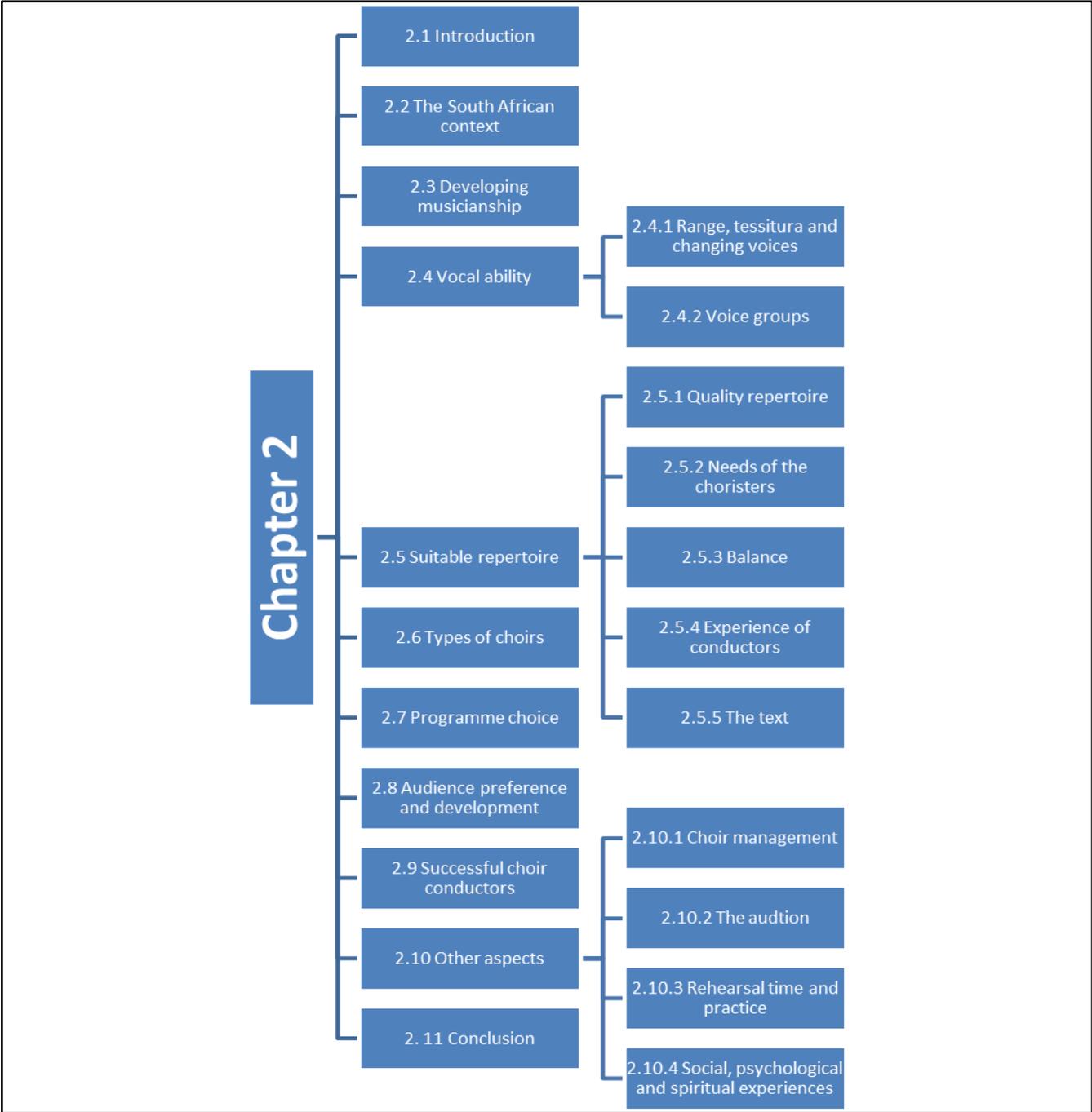


Figure 2 Structure of Chapter 2

2.1 Introduction

Figure 2 illustrates the structure of the main concepts discussed in this chapter. It serves as a summative guide to the various aspects found during the literature review.

From the physics of acoustical sound to ethnomusicological considerations, there are countless avenues for cognitive, kinesthetic, and affective growth through the study and performance of choral repertoire. The selection of repertoire, therefore, is one of the most important decisions for a choral music educator (Dean, 2011:12).

In this chapter I shall not only refer to literature directly related to the topic of this mini-dissertation: “Guidelines for repertoire selection for a beginner secondary school choir: An explanatory case study” but also to literature a novice secondary school choir conductor needs to take note of. I shall also investigate the research of a few conductors to describe the South African context. Educational matters such as developing musicianship and developing vocal ability are key factors in this essay. The types of choirs, suitable repertoire, programme choice, audience preference and development, successful choir conductors and other less related aspects will be the body of this chapter. I have selected these topics for this research because without knowledge thereof, not even the best repertoire for a choir will guarantee success. Dean (2011:2) argues that “there are numerous variables to consider, ranging from ensemble ability and concert programming, to budgetary constraints and student appeal”.

Some important resources that Diddle (2005:95-96) lists which novice choir conductors use to acquire and select repertoire include choral workshops or courses, concerts by other choirs, expert advice by more experienced choir conductors and internet sources. Bolt (1983:110) supports Diddle and adds that “choral reading sessions”, choral music issued by music publishers, advice by other colleagues and music they sang in the university choir, are also some sources that novice choir conductors use to choose repertoire for their secondary school choirs. Some sources, such as internet sources,² however, may require payment for a certain arrangement of a desired piece of music

² Some internet sources include <http://www.jwpepper.com/sheet-music/welcome.jsp>, <http://www.musicroom.com/>, and www.musicnotes.com

and therefore the choir's budget will also play a role in determining what repertoire a conductor's choir will sing (Bolt, 1983:131). Mayhall (1994:9,10) mentions sources such as choral anthologies, repertoire lists, choir recordings and programmes found at choir festivals or collaborations and the *Choral Journal* that is released every month which consists of "repertoire reviews" (Kaschub, 2000:49).

Choir conductors who have successfully contributed to choral singing in South Africa during the past decade are, for example, Michael Barrett, Renette Bower, Neels Boonzaaier, Salome Hendriks, Juanita Lambrecht, Hennie Loock and Johann van der Sandt, to mention a few.

2.2 The South African context

Barrett (2007:13) investigates the importance of social capital in different South African choirs and how trust is developed between members of a community through musical experiences. He (2007:72) argues that one of the most successful ways for social capital to occur successfully is within a choir context. He further argues that part of the value of singing in a South African choir, is the matter of the "networks" that are built between members of a choir, which choristers use to improve their own personal lives (Barrett, 2007:72). He also states that social capital developed within a choir indirectly affects the economy and political circumstance of a country, specifically referring to South Africa and the interaction between its various different cultures through choir singing (Barrett, 2007:72). He suggests that state-funded choral projects may be a way to encourage the co-operation and trust between the many different cultures of South Africa (Barrett, 2007:72). The study further shows that choirs in South Africa help to close the gap between different social classes, as people from all walks of life in South Africa share the same passion for choral singing (Barrett, 2007:73).

Bower (2009:1) discusses cultural diversity in certain South African university choirs, such as the choirs of the University of Pretoria (TUKS) , the University of Johannesburg (UJ) and Stellenbosch University (MATIES), and investigates how (and if) they changed after Apartheid to accommodate cultural diversity. Bower (2009:74-83) bases her findings on three models, namely model A, B and C. Model A, based on TUKS's two

university choirs of 2008, shows that the university chose to adopt two choirs, one representing a general Western (or European) style of singing and the other representing an African style of singing (Bouwer, 2009:74). Model B, based on findings from UJ's choir, shows that because of other institutions with different cultural diversities being integrated with UJ and the influx of African students, the university chose to adopt one choir that represented both European and African styles of choir singing (Bouwer, 2009:77). Model C is based on MATIES's choir that has a strong European style of singing because the choir competes internationally (Bouwer, 2009:80).

Boonzaaier (2011:3, 54) investigates to what extent choir courses meet the musical needs of choir teachers in South Africa and suggests ways in which choir courses may improve to meet these needs. His research found that there are limited resources available to choir teachers and many do not have sufficient musical and vocal knowledge and proper conducting skills to successfully direct a choir (Boonzaaier, 2011:54). He also found that only Stellenbosch University and the North-West University have adequate choir courses that help equip teachers with basic choir-directing skills (Boonzaaier, 2011:54). By researching the success of the ATKV's choir workshops, he found that the cost, the geographical area (how close the venue is where the workshop is being presented) and relevance of the workshop are important to teachers to consider when aiming to improve their choir-directing skills (Boonzaaier, 2011:55).

Boonzaaier (2011:55) further highlights limitations of choir courses presented by the universities previously mentioned. He argues that these courses are programmed for full-time students, rather than teachers who cannot study full-time. Courses are also usually too expensive for these teachers who often have to pay the course fee from their own pockets (Boonzaaier, 2011:55). To address these problems, Boonzaaier suggests that these choir courses should be prolonged through a longer period of time (he specifically suggests between two to four days each year for two years) in which candidates are able to attend (Boonzaaier, 2011:59). He also states that the Department of Education should help sponsor teachers for these courses and the universities involved should attempt to find funding from the private sector (Boonzaaier,

2011:59). He further argues that these courses should offer the candidates the opportunity to study further at a tertiary level (Boonzaaier, 2011:58).

In his research, Van der Sandt (2013:154) attempts to find relevant information to formulate a curriculum for conducting for tertiary institutions in South Africa to teach conducting skills to those who conduct choirs or wish to do so. Van der Sandt (2013:154) sheds light on his findings of what it means to be a successful choir conductor and argues that a successful choir conductor should have more than just good conducting skills or be an established musician. He affirms that a successful choir conductor should also be a “teacher, motivator, communicator, leader”, and should create excitement among his choristers to want to sing in the choir (van der Sandt, 2013:154). Van der Sandt (2013:154-155) also finds that there is a significant difference in the curricula of conducting offered by international tertiary institutions and South African tertiary institutions. He finds that international tertiary institutions have rehearsal choirs that are available for the students to apply their practical conducting skills, however, South African tertiary institutions do not have rehearsal choirs available specifically for the use of choral conducting students, requiring them to find choirs elsewhere that are willing to be part of their practical studies (Van der Sandt, 2013:154). The difference is more that universities abroad already offer students an opportunity to focus on choral conducting in undergraduate programmes, while the focus in South African tertiary institutions is on general musicianship (Van der Sandt, 2013:154–155).

International research (Collins, 1999; Campbell, 2008; Taylor, 2009; Dean, 2011) shows that there are many criteria for choosing repertoire for a choir, ranging from quality standards to the interest of the audience.

2.3 Developing musicianship

The choir conductor is also an educator with various goals to achieve. Developing the musicianship of his choristers through the selection of choir repertoire should be one of the main aims of a conductor. McPherson (2006:93) argues that musicianship (or

“musicality”³) may either be an inborn talent or a skill that is learnt and developed. He also concludes that every musician has a different level of musicianship (McPhersen, 2006:100). A conductor, however, should never be satisfied with a certain level of musicianship achieved in his choir, as this may lead to complacency in the musical development of choristers. McPhersen (2006:71) argues that “musical development is a spiralling, endlessly recursive process”. Campbell (2008:148-149) argues that it is the duty of the conductor to develop both the musicianship and vocal ability (see 2.4) of his choristers. She also argues that the conductor who wishes to be successful should be aware of the weaknesses and strengths of his choristers and should address these aspects to achieve development, aiming for “musical excellence” (Campbell, 2008:161). For this reason, a conductor needs to continually assess his chosen repertoire to see if it stimulates musical development. Dean (2011:1) argues “[s]uccessful choral music education begins with the selection of repertoire that is of artistic and pedagogical merit.” Other significant ways Taylor (2009:35, 36) notices in which conductors choose repertoire was through their extensive experience and knowledge and choosing repertoire to educate the choristers musically.

Reading music is an advantageous skill for choristers and a good characteristic of a developing choir (Crocker, 1999:33). Campbell (2008:149) and Collins (1999:374) both emphasise the importance of choristers being able to read music. Campbell (2008:149) argues that a choir that cannot read music is limited to a small amount of music pieces a year. Campbell (2008:150) does however acknowledge that many choristers are unable to read music, and suggests practicing sight-singing as a solution to the illiteracy of reading music (McPhersen, 2006:156). She offers a few ways to teach choristers to practice sight-singing which includes matching sounds with symbols or musical notations or *solfége* (Campbell, 2008:150; McPhersen, 2006:159). Gaffney *et al.* (2012:7) argues that teaching students to read music through the Kodály *solfége*⁴

³ Musicality is defined by McPhersen (2006:93) as “the current level of musical skills that an individual exhibits”. He also associates musicality with words such as “ability”, “aptitude” and “talent” (McPhersen, 2006:93).

⁴ Kodály *solfége* is part of the Kodály method which according to Bowyer (2010:19), uses “*solfége*, rhythm syllables, hand signs, and conducting gestures” and “singing on letter names”. Bowyer also discusses the aims of the Kodály method which include developing the child’s musicality,

method is an effective way to practice sight-singing. With practice, McPhersen (2006:159) states, choristers will eventually be able to read ahead in the music, making “predictable patterns” with music notation. Olsen (2003:19) asserts that choristers are given music on a regular basis that they’ve never seen before, thus forcing them to practice sight-singing and therefore improving their sight-singing skills.

McPhersen (2006:156) also connects musicianship with the term “music literacy” and explains music literacy as “the ability to function fluently as a musician”. McPhersen (2006:155) describes music literacy as follows:

Literacy ... occurs as a result of children having developed their capacity to make music, reflect on the music in which they are engaged, express their views on music which they play, hear or create, speak about and listen to music in order to form judgments, and read, write, comprehend and interpret staff notation.

In his discussion about developing musicianship, McPhersen (2006:70) highlights the need for the skill of listening to be developed in the rehearsal. Campbell (2008:147-152) associates being able to listen with musicianship together with expressiveness and the understanding of the historical background or style period of the music being sung. McPhersen (2006:95) further clarifies that practicing intonation (singing on the correct pitch) is part of the process of developing musicianship. Besides identifying aspects of musicianship, McPhersen (2006:99) also emphasises the need to apply musical skills and says that, “quality of performance seems to depend on ... the way the musician implements the various skills needed to produce high-quality musical performance”.

Students can sense an individual who appreciates and respects them for who they are. Unlike the performance world, where the artist is in service to the music, in teaching, the music must always serve the needs of the students and help them develop their musical selves (Campbell, 2008:162).

Musicality and musicianship entail various aspects, which should already be part of who the conductor is as a musician, before he can develop his choir’s own. Both musicality

teaching the child how to “read, write, and create music”, using the child’s own cultural folk music for instruction to create cultural awareness (Whitcomb, 2003:37) and exposing the child to well-known compositions (such as Bach, Mozart and Beethoven) so that he learns to appreciate music according to what he knows about music.

and vocal technique can be developed through the repertoire the conductor chooses for his choir (Campbell 2008:147; Dean, 2011:1).

2.4 Vocal ability

Research shows that there are many different opinions of what is most important concerning vocal technique; however, there are certain aspects of vocal technique that are universally used by most choral conductors. Collins (1999:372) argues that one of the most important aims of the conductor is to develop healthy “vocal-choral technique” throughout the choral year. McPherson (2006:325) states that singing is important to develop as a musician of any instrument. Campbell (2008:147) contends that vocal training for choir members occur throughout the rehearsal through the repertoire they sing, but specifically through warm-ups sung at the beginning of the rehearsal. She argues that the warm-ups should develop the choristers’ vocal abilities that are required for the repertoire to be successfully sung (Campbell, 2008:147).

Crocker (1999:33) and Jordan (2005:27) strongly suggest that a choir conductor continually talks about and practices good vocal technique in the rehearsal, in order to maintain healthy singing within the choir. Jordan (2005:26) argues that most conductors will have their own opinion of what is most important concerning vocal technique and have their own way of explaining it; however, he lists aspects such as posture, relaxing the throat (or larynx) and articulators (namely the “jaw, tongue and lips”), breathing, support, resonance and vowel formation (in that order) as some of the main aspects that should be explained and demonstrated to a choir. Gaffney *et al.* (2012:7) identify posture, breathing and “tone” as important aspects to be explained and practiced in the choir. Campbell (2008:146) states that, “it is both a great strength and a weakness that choral programs typically welcome members even if they have very little musical background”. She argues that because choir singing is generally “intuitive and imitative”, a choir only needs a few strong voices in each voice group to guide the other less skilled choir members in their sound (Campbell, 2008:146). These “strong voices” who previously sang in the choir and who are now at tertiary level education, may be called to help and assist less-experienced or new choristers in the choir (Gaffney *et al.*,

2012:7). Collins (1999:345) warns conductors not to form a fully concluded opinion in the audition about singers who have not had adequate musical training, as some students grow faster musically when surrounded by other singers or when good teaching is applied in the rehearsal. McPhersen (2006:325) simply states that “[e]veryone has the potential to learn to sing”. Taylor (2009:41) discovers that conductors usually encourage their choristers to take singing lessons to develop their vocal technique and ranges.

2.4.1 Range, tessitura and changing voices

According to Taylor (2009:25) the ranges⁵ and tessituras⁶ of the singers of a choir are important to take into account when choosing repertoire. Diddle (2005:95) finds that range and tessitura play a large role in the selection process of choral repertoire. Taylor (2009:35) discovers that most conductors place voices into certain voice groups, namely soprano, alto, tenor or bass according to their tessitura (see 2.4.2 Voice groups). He also experiences that when choosing repertoire, conductors are limited to the ranges of the choristers, how many voice groups he has in his choir and how many singers are available in each voice group (Taylor, 2009:36, 39).

Another limitation placed on conductors of secondary school choirs, is the number of girls versus the number of boys - which may result in some of the music being appropriate for most of the girls’ ranges but too high or disproportionately low for the boys in the choir (Taylor, 2009:36, 39). To address this problem, Crocker (1999:33) and Taylor (2009:37) suggest that conductors change notes within the music if the pitch is too high or too low or they rearrange the music altogether to suit the ranges of most of the choristers (Alder, 2012:72-73). Isbell (2005:32) supports Taylor’s claim by stating that conductors often have to arrange music to fit the abilities of the choristers. Taylor (2009:44) asserts that when a conductor selects repertoire for his secondary school choir, he should select music that is appropriate for the changing and developing

⁵ Range (also referred to as vocal range) is defined by Bayerkohler (2002:10) as “the vocal compass of pitches, from the lowest to the highest, that can be uttered (produced) by the vocalist”.

⁶ Titze (2008:59) explains the term tessitura (meaning texture) as a comfortable “distribution of pitches” within a piece of music for a singer.

adolescent female and male voices. Girls also experience physiological changes in the voice, similar to boys however not as prominent (Gackle, 2006:29). These changes manifest through the speaking voice becoming lower, an unstable range, voice cracks and the lack of being able to sing constantly in tune (Gackle, 2006:29). Schiff (1999:424) remarks that the female voice changes continually through adolescence because of hormones such as oestrogen and progesterone that often fluctuate. She also identifies challenges that the young female vocalist may experience when going through her menstrual cycle such as loss of range (higher notes are more strenuous or difficult to sing), lack of vocal stamina and apparent hoarseness and breathiness which cause the voice to become vulnerable to strain (Schiff, 1999:425). Friddle (2005:35, 36) insists that when the male adolescent voice changes, the range becomes smaller, losing higher notes while gaining unsettled lower notes. Dilworth (2012:24) announces that because of the voice change, which occurs due to physiological changes in the laryngeal area, the young male singer may become uncomfortable and lose confidence to sing.

2.4.2 Voice groups

Taylor (2009:33) maintains that the number of singers who are available, the ability of the singers or choir as a whole and how many voice groups a choir are constituted play a large role in the choice of repertoire for a choir. Crocker (1999:34) and Taylor (2009:32) highlight that, depending on how many choristers are available each year and the ranges of their voices, choirs are often organised into SAB (soprano, alto and bass) or SA (soprano and alto, usually only a girls' choir sometimes consisting of treble boys), or SATB (soprano, alto, tenor and bass). However, Collins (1999:357, 358) argues that it is easier to place secondary school choirs in SATB voice grouping, even if there may not be "true" tenors and basses as young boys' voices are still developing at secondary school level.

2.5 Suitable repertoire

How does a conductor find suitable music for his beginner choir? Most novice choir conductors may ask themselves that question after having just graduated with a music

degree, with little or no experience in choosing appropriate repertoire that will both enrich and develop their choirs. Diddle (2005:95) comments that, although novice choir conductors were informed to some extent of how to select repertoire during choral conducting sessions at tertiary level, they lacked practical experience in selecting suitable repertoire for their own choirs. Dean (2011:24) states that “preservice and beginning choral music educators are in need of tools to assist in assessing the aesthetic and pedagogical value of repertoire”. Diddle (2005:3) also mentions that “the beginning teacher is lacking in the knowledge of ‘survival-type’ pieces that are appropriate for use with a wide variety of ability levels”.

2.5.1 Quality repertoire

Dean (2011:24) affirms that many scholars place an emphasis on quality of repertoire and that conductors use quality as one of the most important criteria when choosing repertoire. Dean (2011:52) further states that “outstanding choral repertoire will exhibit consistency in style and quality from the beginning to the end of the work”. Reynolds (2000:31) adds to Dean’s opinion by reasoning that quality repertoire is repertoire that is “of lasting quality ... in aesthetic experiences of breadth and depth”. Taylor (2009:29) argues that “[a]s music educators, it is vital to choose music that is challenging, fun, attainable, and of good quality.” Gaffney *et al.* (2012:7) and Diddle (2005:3) agree that quality is an important factor when choosing repertoire, which should also serve to challenge the choristers. Mayhall (1994:9) advises that finding and choosing quality repertoire is an “ongoing task for conductors”.

A conductor, however, who is only a beginner in the field of conducting, may experience that it is difficult to choose repertoire on the basis of quality if he has little experience in defining what quality repertoire is. Dean (2011:2) states: “[s]electing quality repertoire for use with secondary-level choral ensembles is a difficult and multifaceted undertaking for novice and expert conductors alike.” There is a vague or no definition of the term *quality* when referring to repertoire, as each conductor will have a subjective opinion about what he thinks quality repertoire is (Dean, 2011:24). There is very little research conducted on quality of repertoire as one of the criteria for choosing repertoire. Dean

(2011:7), however, contends that conductors choose repertoire “based on their philosophical viewpoint”.

2.5.2 Needs of the choristers

Collins (1999:359) acknowledges that repertoire should be chosen that accommodates the needs of the choristers. Campbell (2008:152) also highlights the importance of choosing a “balanced” repertoire according to the choristers’ abilities and needs. Isbell (2005, 30) informs conductors that they should be aware that choirs in different geographical areas will have different needs (Forbes, 2001:119). Bolt (1983:123) comments that part of the most important criteria that secondary school choir conductors use to choose repertoire, is based on their belief of what their choir is able to sing. Collins (1999:359) warns that “if it [the repertoire] is too easy, they may feel insulted, and if it is too difficult, they may give up”.

2.5.3 Balance

Campbell (2008:153) recommends choosing repertoire that is balanced between easy and challenging for the choir. Easier repertoire (even music in unison) she believes “[c]an provide many wonderful opportunities for teaching singers about tone, blend, phrasing, and expressive singing”, however she suggests that the choir’s repertoire should include “a balance of difficulty” (Campbell, 2008:153). Campbell (2008:153) further postulates that choosing repertoire that has little or no challenge for most of the choristers may result in boredom and choosing repertoire that is too difficult for the choir may result in lack of progress, which is the opposite outcome to which the conductor initially intended (Mayhall, 1994:12). Collins (1999:361) further cautions conductors to choose repertoire according to the maturity of the singers’ voices and carefully differentiate between music written for adults and music written for secondary school level (Mayhall, 1994:13). Some of the specific ways conductors choose repertoire according to Taylor (2009:35, 36), include selecting repertoire according to a specific theme or selecting from repertoire that was made available or shared through choral workshops.

2.5.4 Experience of conductors

McPhersen (2006:106) discusses the need to choose music that will motivate the singers to take part in the whole musical experience. Depending on the choir and their ability, conductors should sift through many possibilities of repertoire, to find the most suitable music that fits their needs (Forbes, 2001:117). Campbell (2008:153) affirms that the choice of repertoire will depend on the availability of singers a conductor has that year and that novice conductors should choose only a few pieces to assess the ability of his choir before he chooses the repertoire list for the year.

2.5.5 The text

Bolt (1983:136) asserts that secondary school choir conductors place emphasis on music that has text which is both “meaningful and suitable” for the choir. Collins (1999:360) touches on the text of music and encourages the conductor to ask himself, “[d]oes it (the text) wed well with the music?” Collins (1999:370) continues “if a composition is well written, both text and music will communicate the spirit of the piece.” Campbell (2008:154) supports Collins’s argument by stating that repertoire with “quality” text that complements the music should be chosen for a choir. Gaffney *et al.* (2012:7) insist that choosing music with foreign texts assists in challenging the choristers and maintaining their interest.

2.6 Types of choirs

Existing literature identifies different types of adult and school choirs such as adult male choirs (Albinder, 2007), elementary school choirs (Antel, 2010), church and community choirs, with church choirs that often have paid choristers, while most community choirs consist of members singing voluntarily (Baird, 2007). Junior and middle school choirs (Cox, 2002), young boys choirs (Dilworth, 2012) and adult female choirs (Estes, 2013) are also a possibility. Bouwer (2009) (see 2.2) investigates different types of choirs that are unique to the South African context of choir singing. The different types of choirs that she identifies are namely European type and African type of choirs or choirs that choose to adopt both the European and African identity because of the repertoire they

sing (Bouwer, 2009:74, 77, 80). Apfelstadt (2001:32) mentions that the geographical area of the school may determine the type of choir a conductor is working with which might affect the repertoire they sing.

2.7 Programme choice

Taylor (2009:21) recommends that a conductor should balance his selection of repertoire between “older music” and “newly published music”. Bolt (1983:136) observes that experts believe that there should be variety in the repertoire chosen by a conductor for his choir (Forbes, 2001:118). Alder (2012:73) suggests that conductors should choose repertoire that choristers can relate to, while Apfelstadt (2001:31) and Kaschub (2000:49) recommend selecting repertoire that will maintain their interest. Taylor (2009:36) points out that choristers relate better to contemporary music, or music of their day and age. The music that the choristers identify the least with is classical music, which included Renaissance, Classical, Baroque and Art Songs; however, Taylor (2009:20) stipulates that music should not only serve to be enjoyable but also serve to have educational value for the singers, which includes both contemporary and classical music. Alder (2012:55) further argues that the conductor should not be biased in his preference for a certain genre of music, but should welcome various types of music.

Collins (1999:360) recommends having a balance between a cappella and accompanied music in the repertoire list to make the programme more interesting. “[a]cappella”, Collins (1999:375) says, “greatly quickens the students’ ability to ... develop a sense of musical independence”. Some genres of music that Collins (1999:360) recommends for a balanced programme include music from “all style periods ... Folk Music, Spirituals, Broadway and Contemporary Popular Music” (Bolt, 1983:136). Mayhall (1994:12) supports Collins’ recommendation and suggests at least one piece of music should be chosen from all style periods which will allow for variety of repertoire chosen (Crocker, 1999:33). Regardless, however, of the music which is chosen, the repertoire should ultimately expose the choristers to music that will broaden their knowledge and appreciation of all music styles and genres. Bolt (1983:136) agrees

by concluding that the music which is chosen should “raise the standards of musical taste of the performers”.

2.8 Audience preference and development

The audience is another factor taken into account by conductors choosing repertoire for their choirs. Although Apfelstadt (2001:31) feels that the education of the choristers should be regarded more important to the conductor than entertaining audience, Bolt (1983:123) and Kaschub (2000:49) conclude that most secondary school choir conductors also select repertoire according to what they believe interests the audience. Collins (1999:360) articulates that the type of audience the choir will be performing to should also be taken into account when choosing repertoire. Collins (1999:360) mentions further that the geographical area, class (for example: an upper class or working class audience), religion, understanding of the music and the educational background of the majority of the audience are all important aspects that should be taken into consideration when choosing repertoire. Apfelstadt (2001:32) expands on Collin’s argument by saying that a conductor will have to make different repertoire choices depending on different events that the choir will perform at, as some music that may suit one event, may not suit another. Mayhall (1994:12) believes that the audience should be challenged to an extent, which may be achieved through “ethnic, and minority” choral music. Collins (1999:370) professes that the music should be interpreted in a way that the target audience will understand the meaning of the text.

Performance preparation is very important for the success of concerts and is often overlooked or not researched enough by novice conductors. Campbell (2008:148) states that a choir should rehearse with the aim of reaching a goal. Hendrikse (1991:99) stipulates that it is important to know when preparing for performances, how many concerts the choir will perform in the choral year. Thorough performance preparation will ensure successful concerts, loyal choristers and content audiences. Collins (1999:95) argues that “educators [...] should receive their satisfaction from the results of their preparation for choral music performances”.

2.9 Successful choir conductors

In Chapter 4 I will report the findings about the open-ended interviews I had with successful choir conductors for data collection. Therefore, I will mainly discuss the viewpoints of Alder (2012), Campbell (2008), Dean (2011) and Hendrikse (1991), and add the opinion of other authors to their discussion of the topic. Various experts in the field of choir conducting define a successful conductor differently. Some characteristics of a successful choir conductor that most scholars agree on is that he should show leadership and that he should be able to bring the best out of his choir.

Alder (2012:55) describes a successful choir conductor as being a “good teacher”. Some qualities he associates with a successful choir conductor include having extensive knowledge of choral repertoire, good administration capabilities, being adaptable to new situations and being able to “motivate and inspire” the choir. Alder (2012:55) warns that to be a successful choir conductor, he will have to work many more hours overtime than assigned to him by the school, usually without extra remuneration.

Campbell (2008:148-149) argues that it is the duty of the conductor to develop both the vocal ability and musicianship of his choristers. She further states that a conductor should endeavour to communicate effectively with both choristers and parents about the happenings within the choir (Campbell, 2008:161). She also argues that the conductor who wishes to be successful should be aware of the weaknesses and strengths of his choristers and should address these aspects to achieve development, aiming for “musical excellence” (Campbell, 2008:161). She recommends that novice choir conductors should learn from more experienced conductors to develop their own skills. Campbell (2008:161) further discusses the importance of the conductor knowing how the voice works so that the choristers may have a good understanding of how to produce a good sound. She also suggests that the conductor should develop his “keyboard skills” in case of the absence of an accompanist or if he wishes to work with the choir by himself (Campbell, 2008:162).

Collins discusses the success of novice choir conductors and certain traits they need to possess or develop to be successful. Collins (1999:94) argues that:

[i]t is absolutely imperative for young and beginning teachers to set a course toward learning about themselves and then determine how to be true to what they have learned. They must set priorities, choosing to place at the top of the list those things that will make them better-informed, technically proficient choral teachers.

Besides all the knowledge and skills a choir conductor needs to be successful, the conductor's personality also plays a large role in his success (McPhersen, 2006:99). "Having a good sense of humor", Collins (1999:95) argues, "is an important characteristic of master teachers and is a vital ingredient in the music classroom".

Dean (2011:1) describes a successful choir conductor as having extensive experience in his field. "Success of a choral music program is dependent on the ability of the educator to make appropriate repertoire selections" and "repertoire selections are a direct reflection of the conductor's musicianship, aesthetic taste, and pedagogical knowledge" (Dean, 2011:23). Taylor (2009:24) supports Dean by stating that "[s]uccess is achieved by choosing music that is attainable and exciting".

Hendrikse (1991:101) quotes the well-known saying directly from German, translated as: "There are no bad choirs; there are only bad choir conductors" and that depending on the demands placed on the choir, the more qualified and experienced the choir conductor should be to handle those demands. She advises the choir management team when choosing a choir conductor to choose a conductor with good people skills, who can motivate the choir to achieve the best results (Hendrikse, 1991:101). She further advises that the conductor and accompanist should be able to understand one another both musically and logistically (Hendrikse, 1991:101).

2.10 Other aspects

Aspects such as auditions, choir management, rehearsal time and practice also influence the success of the novice conductor will have with his choir after selecting repertoire.

2.10.1 Choir management

Choir management is often under-estimated by those involved in the process of ensuring the success of the choir. Dean (2011:1) argues that the leap from training to practical application in a teaching environment is often too great. That is why knowing how to manage a choir is of utmost importance for it to be successful. Before a choir can function normally, the steps to beginning a new choir should be taken into account.

Hendrikse (1991:98) explains that good organization and effective administration are the key factors for any successful choir and argues that a good structural system should be in place on which the choir can function. She argues that a new choir belonging to an existing organization (for example, a school) usually has a structure and system in place in which they can function; however, this may not always be the case. To formulate a system for a new choir, she suggests a meeting be held by the management team in which certain aspects are discussed, such as a year plan which (which includes rehearsal times and performance dates), where the choir will rehearse, who the conductor and accompanist will be and the goals and aims of the choir (Hendrikse, 1991:98-99). Gaffney *et al.* (2012:6) state that senior choristers should also help set up goals for the choir and these goals should be communicated to the choir at the beginning of the choral year, so that choristers are aware of what they are working towards. Alder (2012:62) identifies a year plan for a choir as a “[t]imeline” which he describes as being “an essential element in the success of the group”. The timeline Alder (2012:62–63) argues, will be of great help to the conductor to organise events on strategic days so that he knows the suitable dates and times to work on repertoire or to develop his choir’s vocal and musical abilities and when rehearsals and performances best suit the schedule of the school.

Hendrikse (1991:99) also mentions the importance of drawing up rules and a constitution for a new choir. She argues that the rules should stipulate the different and shared responsibilities of each member involved in the choir, namely the conductor, accompanist, the management and the choristers themselves (Hendrikse, 1991:99–100). She stipulates that the constitution and rules should assist the choir in operating

efficiently and should also protect the name and what the choir stands for from being compromised (Hendrikse, 1991:100).

Gaffney *et al.* (2012:7) advise that a conductor should have the assistance of other people to help with the responsibilities of the choir. Hendrikse (1991:101) discusses the importance of having a management team and points out that the overall function of the management team serves to manage the musical activities, administration and membership of the choir. She further argues that a choir should at least include the conductor, an accompanist, a chairperson, secretary, organiser and treasurer in their management team (Hendrikse, 1991:100, 103). Gaffney *et al.* (2012:6) state that ideally, the membership team should be “well-trained” in their respective portfolios to achieve success. Hendrikse (1991:100) affirms that the manner in which the members of the management team are chosen will be stipulated in the constitution of the choir. She shows that in a school setting, the choir is not only managed by the managerial team but also usually by other school staff and parents (Hendrikse, 1991:101; Isbell, 2005:33; Gaffney *et al.*, 2012:7). She also states that the administration work of the choir should be equally distributed among the management team, so that not one person is overloaded with the tedious job of administration (Hendrikse, 1991:101; Isbell, 2005:32).

2.10.2 The audition

Alder (2012:63) finds that conductors vary in terms of the amount of time they take to finalise auditions within the school, with some taking only days, others taking weeks and some taking months. For the audition, Alder (2012:64) finds that conductors either allow the students to sing a song of their own choice or have a specific song they would like each student to sing (while some conductors prefer both options). Alder (2012:64) suggests that if the conductor has a preferred piece they would like the student to sing, that it is accompanied by piano to see if the student can sing his own part alone against another instrument. Other aspects that conductors listen for in the audition Alder (2012:64) found are the students’ intonation and ability to sing on pitch. Alder (2012:64) further concludes that some conductors allow students into their choir not only on the

outcome of the audition alone, but by also observing the overall discipline and academic performance the students show. In the audition process, Taylor (2009:34) found that conductors either listen and assess singers individually or in groups (depending on the confidence of the singers) while some conductors even listen to the speaking voice to help place a singer in a certain voice group (see 2.4.2 Voice groups). Collins (1999:344) observes that conductors also have auditions to regulate how many singers are in each voice group and to know what are the “strengths and weaknesses” of each singer. Gaffney *et al.* (2012:6) argue that it is important, through auditions, to choose a large number of choristers (if possible) to achieve a well-balanced sound.

2.10.3 Rehearsal time and practice

The time allocated by secondary schools for choir rehearsals is often minimal, allowing for very little time to develop vocal technique and musicianship within the choir. Bolt (1983:123) finds that conductors also choose repertoire according to how much time is allocated for rehearsals, as the available time for learning music will determine the level of difficulty that will be possible for the choristers to master. Collins (1999:343), however, affirms that “the real problem with time is not having too little of it but understanding how to use it effectively” and “effective use of time results in better performances and more productive classroom teaching”. Often choir conductors have to compete with other extra mural activities such as sport that occur during the same time as choir rehearsals. Besides the allocated time set aside for choir rehearsals, conductors also organise extra choir rehearsals during break periods (or recess) and even during holiday periods (Taylor, 2009:40). According to Gaffney *et al.* (2012:7) choir camps (usually scheduled for a weekend or holiday periods) are another way in which conductors can make use of extra time to teach music to choristers.

Concerning rehearsal practice conductors often rehearse voice groups or voice parts apart in separate rehearsal rooms and once the separate parts are memorised enough or to an extent, all voice groups are rehearsed simultaneously (Taylor, 2009:33). Collins (1999:374) mentions that some conductors often rehearse each part separately

(in one rehearsal space in an allocated time) diligently and then request the students to sing their part back to the conductor.

Gaffney *et al.* (2012:7) find that teaching music on *solfège* (see 2.3), supports the choristers in learning the music presented to them. Collins (1999:374) also states that singing the voice parts to the choristers, not allowing them to rely too often on the piano, allows listening skills and vocal confidence to develop. Collins (1999:375) and Mayhall (1994:13) remark that the conductor should be familiar with all individual voice parts before teaching the music to the choristers' to sift out any difficult areas, otherwise the singers will lack confidence themselves in their own voice part. Collins (1999:375) also advises conductors to first analyse the music before presenting it to the choir, so that the best method of teaching the music to the choristers may be applied.

2.10.4 Social, psychological and spiritual experiences

A researcher cannot do justice to a choir without being aware of the social, psychological and spiritual experience of the choristers. Part of the reason for joining a choir is to sing and share your passion for singing with others. Singing in a choir offers more to the singer than just vocal or musical development. Adderley *et al.* (2003:204) claim that “students are intellectually, psychologically, emotionally, socially and musically nurtured by membership in performing ensembles”. A choir offers a social environment where choristers make close friends (Baird, 2007:31). This social environment also allows choristers to “blow off steam” or to escape other unpleasant environments, causing the choir to become an integral part of their daily lives (Adderley *et al.*, 2003:204). Baird (2007:31) discovers that the social relationships formed in the choir develop past the boundaries of the choir as choristers often meet outside the choir rehearsal to socialise (Adderley *et al.*, 2003:201). Farmer (2009:63) suggests that the social environment in choirs give the choristers a sense of “belonging to a group” (Busch, 2013:88), which Baird (2007:31) finds that to be a successful tool to help socially alienated people. Busch (2013:89) contends that “[c]hoir members are more likely to experience purpose or meaning in association with their singing experience than members of the general population”. Van As (2014:19) advocates Busch’s and

Farmer's meanings by conveying that through choir singing, people of different cultures and ethnic groups are brought together for a common purpose of singing in a choir and that this allows them to feel that they belong to something bigger than themselves. Joseph and Southcott (2014:14) add to Van As's statement by concluding that choir singing facilitates choristers to discover and exchange different cultural identities and integrates each individual in the choir to belong to a whole.

Adderley *et al.* (2003:203) find that because of the mental association that choristers make between the choir and the practice room (because of the enjoyment of singing in a choir), choristers often spend their free time socialising in the rehearsal room where choir practice occurs. Choirs provide an environment where choristers may feel at ease and help them to forget their problems for a short while (Baird, 2007:29). Baird (2007:30) further finds that singing in a choir helps choristers manage through depression and that it is "an effective therapy for stress and ... a natural healer to distress". Gick (2011:198) supports this statement.

Concerning the spiritual benefits of singing in a choir, Farmer (2009:63-64) articulates that "usually, groups of people come together with common purpose and ideas to enhance and reinforce their beliefs". Farmer (2009:55) claims that part of the spiritual experience of singing in a choir, is to carry a message over to the audience when singing. Although Baird (2009:32) explains that the effect that choral singing has on spiritual well-being differs between religious and non-religious choristers, she conveys that religious choristers place much emphasis on the importance that choral singing has on their spirituality. Von Bannisseht (2014:92-93) reasons that many choristers associate singing religious music with praying or meditation. Von Bannisseht (2014:92-93) observes that many choristers believe that singing religious music or in church takes them to a supernatural and spiritual realm, where they "feel closer to God".

2.11 Conclusion

The aspects discussed in this chapter include the South African context of choir singing, developing musicianship, vocal ability, suitable repertoire, different types of choirs, programme choice, audience preference and development, successful choir conductors

and other aspects that contribute towards repertoire selection. Concerning the South African context of choir singing, four major successful South African choral conductors were identified. Developing musicianship include teaching choristers how to read music and to listen through selecting appropriate repertoire for this purpose. The vocal ability of choristers in a secondary school choir is not advanced, because of limited ranges caused by changing and developing voices, which should be addressed by selecting appropriate repertoire. Literature shows that when selecting suitable repertoire, a conductor should aim to select repertoire that is of good quality and that suits the ability and needs of the choir. Choirs may differ because of their geographical area and the identity they choose to adopt. To create a balanced programme, conductors should select a variety of repertoire that will serve to educate and build the appreciation of their choristers. The interest of the audience and their development is another factor taken into consideration by conductors when selecting repertoire. Some attributes pertaining to a successful choir conductor include being a leader, working hard and having sufficient knowledge in the field of choir conducting. Other aspects that influence the repertoire selection process include auditions, managing a choir efficiently and using rehearsal time most productively. Although not directly associated with repertoire selection, conductors should be aware of the social, psychological and spiritual benefits young singers may experience when singing in a choir.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

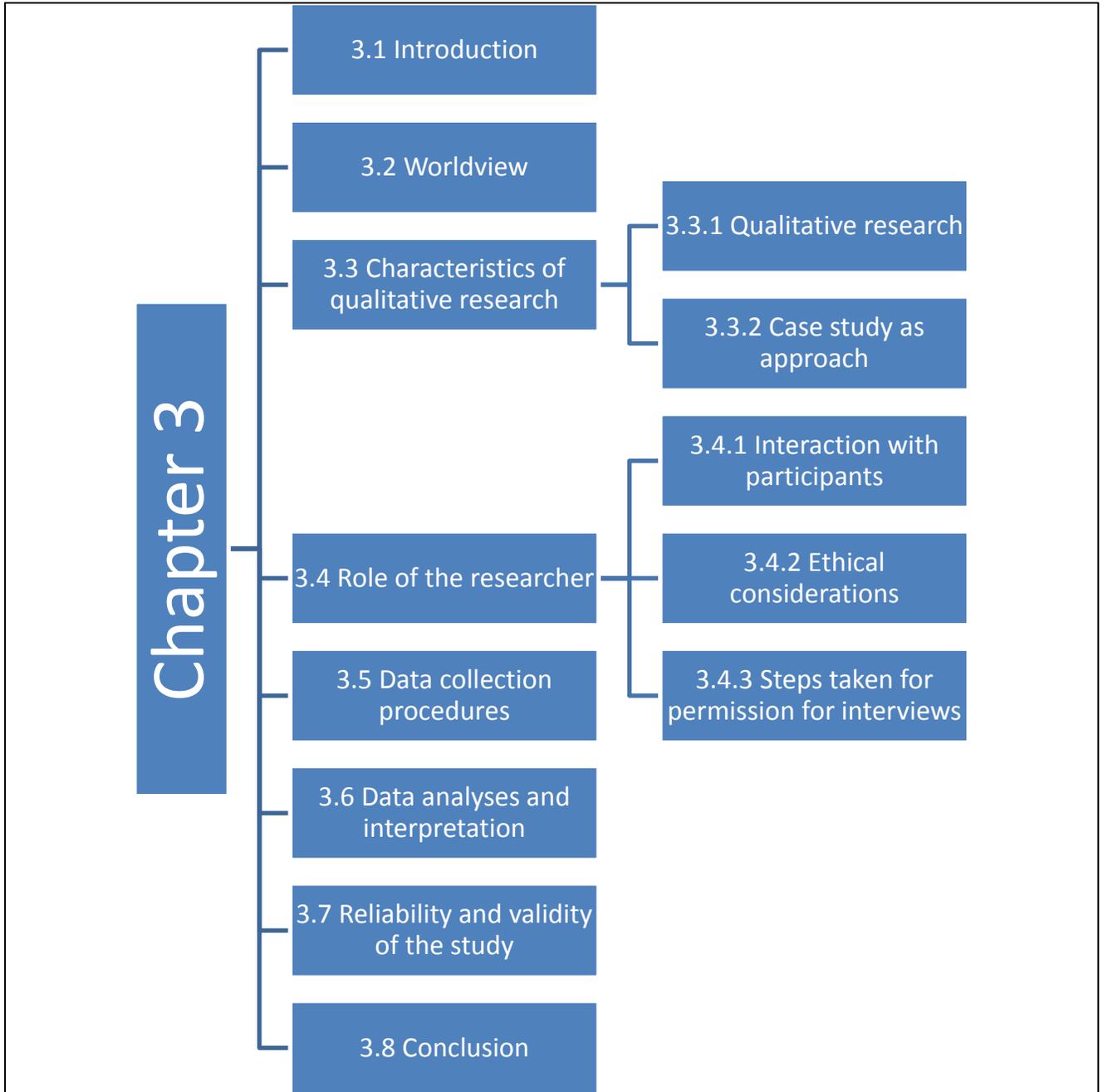


Figure 3 Structure of Chapter 3

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I shall discuss and define the concept *qualitative research* as well as its characteristics. Five approaches of qualitative research are mentioned and I specifically discuss and define the case study and explore three different types of case studies. I further describe the implications of worldview for the study and how it influences my approach to this research. My role as researcher is important in regard to three aspects discussed, namely interaction with participants, ethical considerations and steps taken for permission to conduct interviews. I discuss data collection procedures and elaborate on what type of interviews will be conducted and how I will choose the participants for the study. Data analyses and interpretation are explained with definitions given for codes and themes and how to code. Finally I shall discuss reliability and validity as I explain different methods researchers use for a qualitative study to validate the research.

3.2 Worldview

My approach to this study is from an interpretivist worldview. Merriam (2009:8) asserts that an interpretivist worldview is usually used in qualitative research. She further maintains that interpretive research involves more than one reality of one situation or occurrence and that knowledge is not obtained, but rather “constructed” (Merriam, 2009:8-9, 11). Creswell (2013:24) states that interpretive research is also known as social constructivism which aims to seek different views and meanings of a single phenomenon through long term engagement with participants, which researchers then use to construct their own broader meanings of the same phenomenon. Maree (2007:58) contends that interpretivism involves the exchanging of ideas, opinions and experiences through interaction to find out if they are similar or the same. Merriam (2009:11) also shows that the purpose of interpretive research is to “describe, understand” and “interpret”. By conducting five interviews, I will gather different meanings and perspectives of how to choose repertoire for a beginner secondary school choir.

3.3 Characteristics of qualitative research

3.3.1 Qualitative research

Maree (2007:51) argues that “qualitative research typically studies people or systems by interacting with and observing the participants in their natural environments ... and focusing on their meanings and interpretations”. Merriam (2009:5) mentions that the purpose of qualitative research is to attempt to comprehend the way in which people understand and shape their environments. Rule and John (2011:60) state that, compared to quantitative research, which is mostly used in natural science research and aims to identify “fact, prediction, generalisation and the establishment of universal law-like findings”, qualitative research is used by the social and humanity sciences that focus on abstract characteristics such as thought patterns, behaviour and emotions (Creswell, 2013:97).

Creswell (2013:44) defines qualitative research as beginning “with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals and groups ascribe to a social or human problem.” Creswell (2013:44) further claims that the researcher should use “an emerging qualitative approach” when investigating the problem and should try to collect data in its most natural state (Maree, 2007:51, Rule & John, 2011:60), having logical and initiative arguments from the data analyses with which he should attempt to identify “patterns or themes”. For this qualitative research study, I chose five experienced choral conductors, with whom I have interacted for a number of years in order to obtain their different viewpoints or, as Merriam, (2009:8) refers to it – realities – and to get a better understanding of how they choose repertoire for a beginner secondary school choir.

Creswell (2013:45) also identifies certain characteristics of qualitative research from the process of investigation, to the findings and conclusion. Concerning natural setting, Creswell (2013:45) suggests that the researcher should gather data at the place where the problem is most evident and visible. Merriam (2009:17) states that the researcher will usually have to observe the participants over a long period of time. Creswell (2013:45) also assigns significant responsibility to the researcher (researcher as key

instrument) for the gathering of data himself and indicates that the researcher should avoid using existing forms or ways of gathering data already used by other researchers. I will interview the participants at their work-places and where they feel most comfortable. The work-place of the conductors may include the establishment where their choir rehearses or even their homes, where they choose repertoire for their choirs.

Creswell (2013:45) further states that a researcher should not only use one source of data, but he should employ multiple methods that may include “interviews, observations, and documents”. Creswell (2013:45) compares the process of investigation and identifying themes in qualitative research to the building of a structure or pyramid from its foundation and calls it the “inductive-deductive logic process”. In this process, the data are first organised into various (often many) possible themes, after which these same themes are constantly changed or adapted when compared to gathered data to sift out specific themes that are relevant to all the elements of the topic of research (Creswell, 2013:45).

The participants’ own opinion about the problem, according to Creswell (2013:47), which are the experiences and opinions of the participants taking part in the study, is more important than the researcher’s own opinions and the findings from literature reviews. Creswell (2013:47) argues that when the researcher starts gathering data for qualitative research, the process of investigation and the way in which data are gathered may often change. This changing process of investigation is called emergent design and happens when the researcher attempts to understand the problem from the participants meaning, often causing the researcher to change or adapt his methods in the investigation process in the most efficient way to get their meanings (Creswell, 2013:47. Merriam, 2009:16). The participants for this study are only the choir conductors - I will not interview choristers of the choirs belonging to the conductors.

Another qualitative research characteristic is reflexivity, which means that the researcher shares with the reader his reason for the research, his own experience, his interpretation of the findings and what he has attained through the research (Creswell, 2013:47). The last characteristic of qualitative research that Creswell (2013:47)

discusses is the holistic account. This means to attempt to show the problem from various points of view and from as many angles as possible and then to form an over-all view-point from the findings (Creswell, 2013:47). Merriam (2009:16) also points out that qualitative research is “richly descriptive” as a result of data gathered through interviews, documents, field notes and other technological ways of gathering data. Although Maree (2007:47) disapproves of definitions limiting qualitative research to only a few ways of gathering data, Creswell (2013:69–110) discusses five approaches of qualitative research, namely: narrative research, phenomenological research, grounded theory research, ethnographic research and case study research.

3.3.2 Case study as approach

According to Rule and John (2011:61) a case study focuses on the problem in its most natural condition. Creswell (2013:97) defines a case study as:

a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes.

Rule and John (2011:4) also conceptualise the term case study by defining the term case as “a specific example of something that belongs to a larger category of instances” and the term study as “an investigation into or of something”. Rule and John (2011:4) eventually conclude that a case study is “a systematic and in-depth investigation of a particular instance in its context in order to generate knowledge.”

Rule and John (2011:8) also discuss three types of case studies: the descriptive, the exploratory and the explanatory case study. According to Rule and John (2011:8) a descriptive case study describes the phenomenon in a certain situation or circumstance. An exploratory case study is the investigation of a phenomenon that has not yet been dealt with or explored, which may lead to further study of the phenomenon (Rule & John, 2011:8). Rule and John (2011:8) state that an explanatory case study investigates what occurs in a certain circumstance and why it occurs. For this research I chose an

explanatory case study as my research approach as I describe the five cases in detail but will also be sensitive for common ground aspects (McGloin, 2008:48). My case study is bounded because it considers the current situation within the field of choral conducting in South African secondary schools. All the conductors have experience at different levels; from beginner choirs to more advanced choirs.

3.4 Role of the researcher

As mentioned in Chapter 1, I have sung in various semi-professional and professional choirs and vocal ensembles, which inspired me to choose a topic of investigation that centred on choirs. Some major choirs I've sung in include The Drakensberg Boys Choir, The University of Pretoria Youth Choir, The North-West University Choir or PUK *Koor*, The North-West Conservatoire Choir and the World Youth Choir. I've sung in three a cappella vocal ensembles namely the Drakensberg Boys Choir Barbershop, The Boulevard Harmonists and Sixpence. I currently manage and conduct various junior and secondary school choirs in the Vereeniging, Gauteng area such as the Kliprivier Children's Choir, an all-girls choir and a mixed choir belonging to *Hoërskool Drie Riviere*. I have only recently graduated with an undergraduate degree and therefore I am still a novice music educator and choir conductor. My need to learn about secondary school choirs and how to select repertoire for them sparked the inquiry to investigate the criteria experienced conductors use to select repertoire for their secondary school choirs.

3.4.1 Interaction with participants

According to Maree (2007:41) it is important that the researcher forms a relationship with the participants of the study so that he may understand how participants work and think which, in turn, will help him understand as well as possible the data gathered from the participants. As mentioned, I interacted with the participants for a number of years before the study, learning their choral mannerisms and habits, choral techniques and their philosophies concerning choral repertoire. Interaction with these participants included attending concerts where their secondary school choirs performed, listening to their repertoire choice, attending choral workshops that they presented where choral

repertoire was handled and discussed. I've also sung with some of the participants in a secondary school choir. Through long-term interaction with these participants, I feel confident about interviewing them because I trust that their choral experience will be relevant and significant to the study.

3.4.2 Ethical considerations

To be ethical in one's research stems from our moral responsibility and our conscience according to what our community (or tertiary institution) deems is correct (Rule & John, 2011:111). Rule and John (2011:111) assert that being ethical also contributes to the validity and quality of the study. Concerning ethical considerations, Creswell (2013:55) warns that the researcher should respect the place where the interview will occur and should try to leave the area as untouched as possible in its original state. Creswell (2013:56) also states that it is important that the researcher shows research committees and those assessing the study that the participants interviewed were not placed at risk, that they had a choice to withdraw from the study at any time and that their privacy was not compromised. Furthermore, Creswell (2013:57) states that the participants should be made aware of the purpose of the study. In this study I will use a questionnaire explaining the topic and reason of the study and a consent form, which the participant and I will sign, that will inform the participant that his⁷ privacy will be respected and that he may withdraw at any stage during the interview.

3.4.3 Steps taken to obtain permission for interviews

Creswell (2013:57) states that the researcher should get permission from those who will be involved in the study, before participants are interviewed. Concerning steps taken to get permission for interviewing the participants, I sent an e-mail to each of the five participants asking them for permission to be interviewed, informing them of the study and its purpose, as well as of the amount of time that the interview will take (which should be no longer than half an hour for all the interviews). I also asked the participants via e-mail for a date and time that best suited them, which I respected and to which I

⁷ For the sake of expediency the male pronoun is used as representative of both genders.

adhered. Furthermore, on the day of the interviews, I will attempt to arrive at least fifteen minutes before the interviews are scheduled to begin, to find the actual place or area where the interview will be conducted, to set up all recording devices and to respect the time and effort the participants made to be there. Seven questions that were formulated from the literature study will be asked in the interview. These questions include:

1. What guidelines do you use to choose repertoire for a beginner secondary school choir?
2. Which aspects of vocal technique and musicianship do you consider important to develop through repertoire you've chosen?
3. Is it important that the choristers are able to read music? Explain your answer.
4. What styles or genres of choral music do you choose to cater for the interest of the audience?
5. What is your opinion on the balance of Western and African music in your program?
6. What is your perception of quality repertoire?
7. Which attributes does a choir conductor need to have to be successful?

3.5 Data-collection procedures

Rule and John (2011:62) affirm that the research questions of a study will help the researcher know what data he should gather and how he should gather it (Creswell, 2013:163). Data-collection procedures for this study include the interviews with five participants mentioned before. Rule and John (2011:63) list interviews as one of the main methods of collecting data in researching a case study. I chose open-ended interviews for interviewing the participants and I will use pre-determined questions only for the purposes of guiding the discussion, allowing for the possibility for further questions to be asked from topics that may arise in the interviews (Maree, 2007:87; Rule & John, 2011:65). All interviews will be recorded on both a Nexa Tablet and a Galaxy S5 Phone device.

Concerning the participants chosen for the study, I adopted purposeful sampling as a method of choosing participants (Creswell, 2013:154). According to Rule and John (2011:64), purposeful sampling means to choose participants according to their ability to add to or help develop the research (Creswell, 2013:164). Rule and John (2011:64) further define the term by stating, that “[p]eople are therefore selected because of their relevant knowledge, interest and experience in relation to the case.” As mentioned before, I chose five experienced choir conductors who have extensive knowledge and expertise on the matter of choosing repertoire for a secondary school choir. All participants chosen for this research either currently conduct a secondary school choir or did so until recently.

According to Creswell (2013:236), a researcher should include vignette’s when presenting the data to help the reader understand the environment the interview took place in and to create a realistic description of the researcher’s own experience. Yin (2009:172) declares that the researcher may present a short summary of information of the separate cases through vignettes. Yin (2009:172) further expresses the view that these vignettes are usually documented throughout the data analyses, one in each section of the chapter. Rule and John (2011:65) assign this form of documenting the environment and the researcher’s own experience as storytelling and argue that, “[t]he potential of this method to generate richness and texture makes it quite suitable for case study research”. Part of my data–collection procedure will be to note and document the place and environment that the interviews will occur in and also my experience through vignettes in the data analyses.

3.6 Data analysis and interpretation

Qualitative research calls for data to be prepared by the researcher in order to be analysed, coded and then put into themes after which the information is presented in forms of tables and figures to find if there are parallels or deviations within the information (Creswell, 2013:200). The first step after data have been gathered is to organise it into files. Creswell (2013:182) specifically says “computer files”. The organisation of the data into computer files is necessary in order to group the

information and to attempt to make sense of it (Maree, 2007:104). Maree (2007:103-104) suggests that the participants in the research study be described. This description should help with data preparation (which may include showing how many participants were chosen for the research and why they were chosen), which should help the researcher understand the findings in context with the participants' opinions and realities. When transcribing recorded interviews, Maree (2007:104) remarks that it be done by the researcher himself, as pauses, the use of gestures and facial expressions are also important to notate a full context of the interview, which only the interviewer would have fully comprehended when doing the interview.

Creswell (2013:184) then stipulates that the data should be described, classified and interpreted to create codes. Coding, according to Creswell (2013:184) means to combine different parts of the data to form categories, and then to find similarities from other sources of data to support the code, giving it a "label". Maree (2007:105) states that coding involves taking parts of the data collected that are significant to the research and that may include words, phrases or sentences and then labelling it. Maree (2007:107) also argues that codes will continually develop or change as the researcher starts identifying patterns and similarities within the codes. The idea is to form many codes, Creswell (2013:184) suggests between twenty-five and thirty, and then to re-evaluate or re-consider them to either join them together or remove them to form preferably not more than six or seven themes (Creswell, 2013:184-186).

In defining themes, Creswell (2013:186) states that a theme is the product of codes that share similarity, being joined together to create a "common idea" (Maree, 2007:109). The forming of codes that develop into themes is called content and thematic analyses (Rule and John, 2011:78). The information that I will use for content and thematic analyses is the data captured during the interviews conducted with the participants (Creswell, 2013:186). I will make use of the software programme ATLAS.ti 7 to guide me with the coding process. I will load the five transcribed interviews onto the programme and will then begin the process of carefully singling out codes by highlighting words, phrases or sentences and assigning labels to it. After the coding process is complete, I will then proceed to merge or associate similar codes together

that are shared by all the interviews, to create themes. These themes will be displayed through network views showing the different associations of codes. To help make sense of all the information I will colour code similar codes and the themes they create. The raw data (interviews) is copied on a CD and may be viewed in Addendum B.

Once the data have been coded, the next step in the research process is to interpret the data, to find out what has been learned (Creswell, 2013:187). Creswell (2013:187) defines interpreting the data as “a process that begins with the development of the codes, the formation of themes from codes, and then the organisation of themes into larger units of abstraction to make sense of the data”. Rule and John (2011:89) claim that interpreting the data also involves comparing different sources of data to create a greater comprehension of the information gathered. Maree (2007:111) adds to this by stating that the analysed data should also be compared to existing literature to see how the analysed data supports or adds to it. The final goal, according to Creswell (2013:187), is to add one’s own interpretation to existing literature on the same topic (Maree, 2007:111).

Creswell (2013:187) argues that the last step in analysing data is representation, which he states means showing the findings in a way that enables the reader to see similarities and differences. The use of, for example diagrams, tables or matrixes is a proven way to visually show analysed data (Creswell, 2013:187).

Through forming codes, themes, interpreting and representing the data, I aim to crystallise the study. According to Ellingson (2009:10), crystallisation occurs when a phenomenon is described in detail in an attempt to form a clear and deep understanding thereof. Well-anchored themes (formed through the integration of codes) with clear representations and evidence through quotes also help to crystallise the study (Ellingson, 2009:10). Ellingson (2009:11) further claims that crystallisation is seen through social constructivism (my worldview), as many view points of the phenomenon are collected and through the researcher’s own interpretation of the phenomenon.

3.7 Reliability and validity of the study

Prolonged engagement with the participants is important not only to gain their trust but also for the researcher to sift out data significant to the study (Creswell, 2013:250–251). Another method of validating a study, according to Creswell (2013:251), is “peer debriefing” which means the researcher would ask a trustworthy colleague, fellow student or study leader to probe the researcher’s study, intentions and feelings to help him stay faithful to the intention of the study (Rule & John, 2011:108). Creswell (2013:251) also informs that all the data not associated with any codes or themes in the study should also be noted and shown, which he calls “negative case analysis”, so that a practical and true account of the phenomenon may be presented.

Creswell (2013:251) further argues that it is important that the researcher shares his experience and thoughts of the phenomena, so that the reader may understand his interpretation and reason for his method of research. Describing the participant interviews and the case in detail may help readers to relate to the research and to apply it to their own context (Creswell, 2013:252, 265). Rule and John (2011:108) state that by describing the case, the researcher paints the complete condition of the case as a whole. This research paper will also be moderated by external assessors whom will verify the process and outcome of the study and whether it represents the data accurately (Creswell, 2013:252).

Maree (2007:114) suggests that the researcher should ask another “coder” to code some captured data, and then see how it coincides or differs from the researchers codes. In this way, the researcher will know whether he is coding correctly according to the aims of the study (Maree, 2007:114). Maree (2007:115) also warns against generalising in qualitative research and argues that the researcher should rather aim to find the individualistic interpretations of each participant interviewed. Maree (2007:115) further suggests that the researcher should make the limitations of the study clear so that it may be easier to know how he reached his conclusion (Rule & John, 2011:111).

3.8 Conclusion

Qualitative research involves observing and interacting with people in the environment within which they feel most comfortable, to understand their opinions and perceptions of meanings about a certain phenomenon. Seven characteristics of qualitative research were identified namely natural setting, researcher as key instrument, multiple methods, inductive-deductive process, participant meanings, emergent design, reflexivity, holistic account and describing. My worldview angle was identified as an interpretivist worldview or social constructivism. The qualitative approach for this study was identified as an explanatory case study. Concerning the role of the researcher, three main aspects were discussed that involved interacting with the participants, being ethically considerate and responsible towards participants and obtaining permission to conduct interviews. For data collection procedures, I will conduct semi-structured interviews that should allow for more freedom within the interview for topics that may surface to be discussed. I chose the participants according to their experience and their successful careers as choir conductors and their ability to add to the research. Data analyses calls for the data to be organised. Therefore ATLAS.ti 7 is used for coding and crystallising themes. I will interpret and represent the result in a visual way so that the reader can understand the findings. Methods of validating the research was discussed which includes prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, negative case analyses, researcher interpretation, detailed description, external moderation, external coding, finding individual interpretations and making the limitations of the study clear.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSES

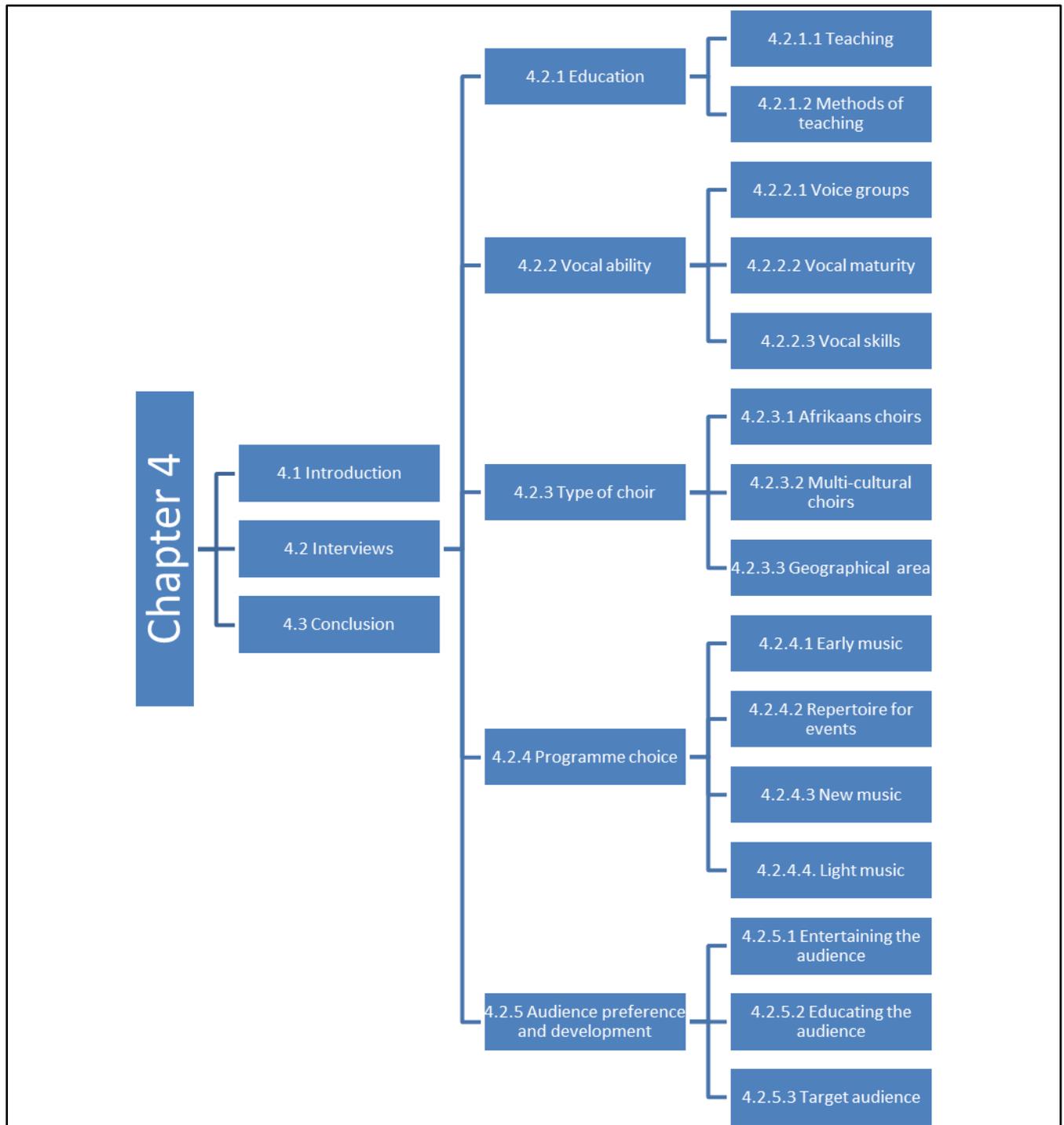


Figure 4 Structure of Chapter 4

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 3 my research methodology was discussed and analysed. As mentioned, my study is a case study approached from a social interpretivist worldview where data are collected through interviewing five experienced conductors. In Chapter 4 the results of the data analyses are presented and discussed, which are the answers to the seven questions I asked each conductor while interviewing them. Themes and sub-themes were formulated and identified from the conductors' answers. By presenting this chapter I am attempting to add to the existing literature on the subject of choosing repertoire for a beginner secondary school choir.

4.2 Interviews

Vignette 1

As I enter the house, I'm surrounded by beautiful neo-classical paintings against white walls in the living room. One painting that immediately captures my attention is that of an eighteenth-century ship struggling through violent waves and a dark storm. Conductor 5 politely asks me to take a seat while she prepares tea and cake. I take a seat on a comfortable Victorian-style sofa and see a book on the smoothly-varnished brown coffee table. The thick book is about the famous painters and sculptures with a cover of Rembrandt. I feel honoured to be in the home of this highly respected conductor in the community. She enters the room again with the refreshments and inquisitively asks me why I chose to interview her? I reassure her that it is because of her extensive experience in the field of choir conducting and because she has so much knowledge about the subject. She humbly tells me that she is not to be made a fuss over. I know her heart; I know the things she does behind the scenes for her choir, whether it is feeding her choristers who do not have food or buying them socks when they could not afford it.

After data had been captured during the five interviews, I transcribed all the interviews and manually sifted through each transcription to seek out codes and categories, writing these codes and categories in margins. I also used the software programme ATLAS.ti 7 to formulate codes and categories. Once the coding process had been completed, I continuously analysed, shifted and re-formulated these codes and categories to form themes and patterns. As a result of the data analyses, five themes were identified with

sub-categories for each theme which, in turn, correlated with the main research question and sub-questions of the study. These themes are the following:

- Education;
- Vocal ability;
- Type of choir;
- Programme choice; and
- Audience preference and development.

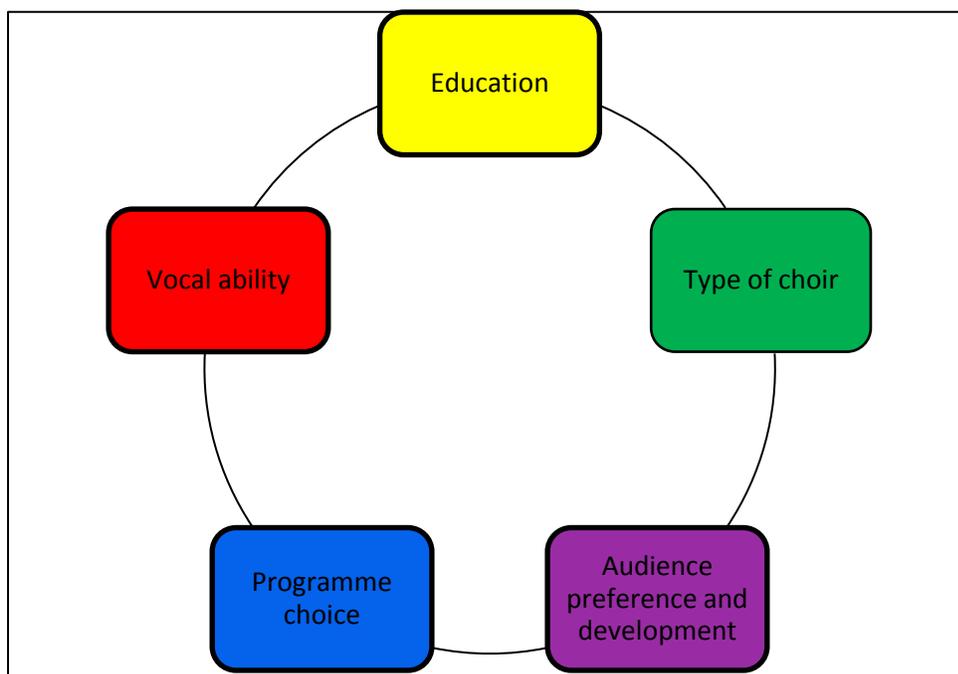


Figure 5 Emerging themes

4.2.1 Education

While analysing the data, it became clear the main goal of all five conductors when choosing repertoire for their secondary school choirs was to educate and develop their choristers' musical and vocal skills. This is made evident in conductor number 1's own words, "My philosophy is to educate people through music". The theme, *Education*, is divided into two sub-themes, namely:

- Teaching; and
- Methods of teaching.

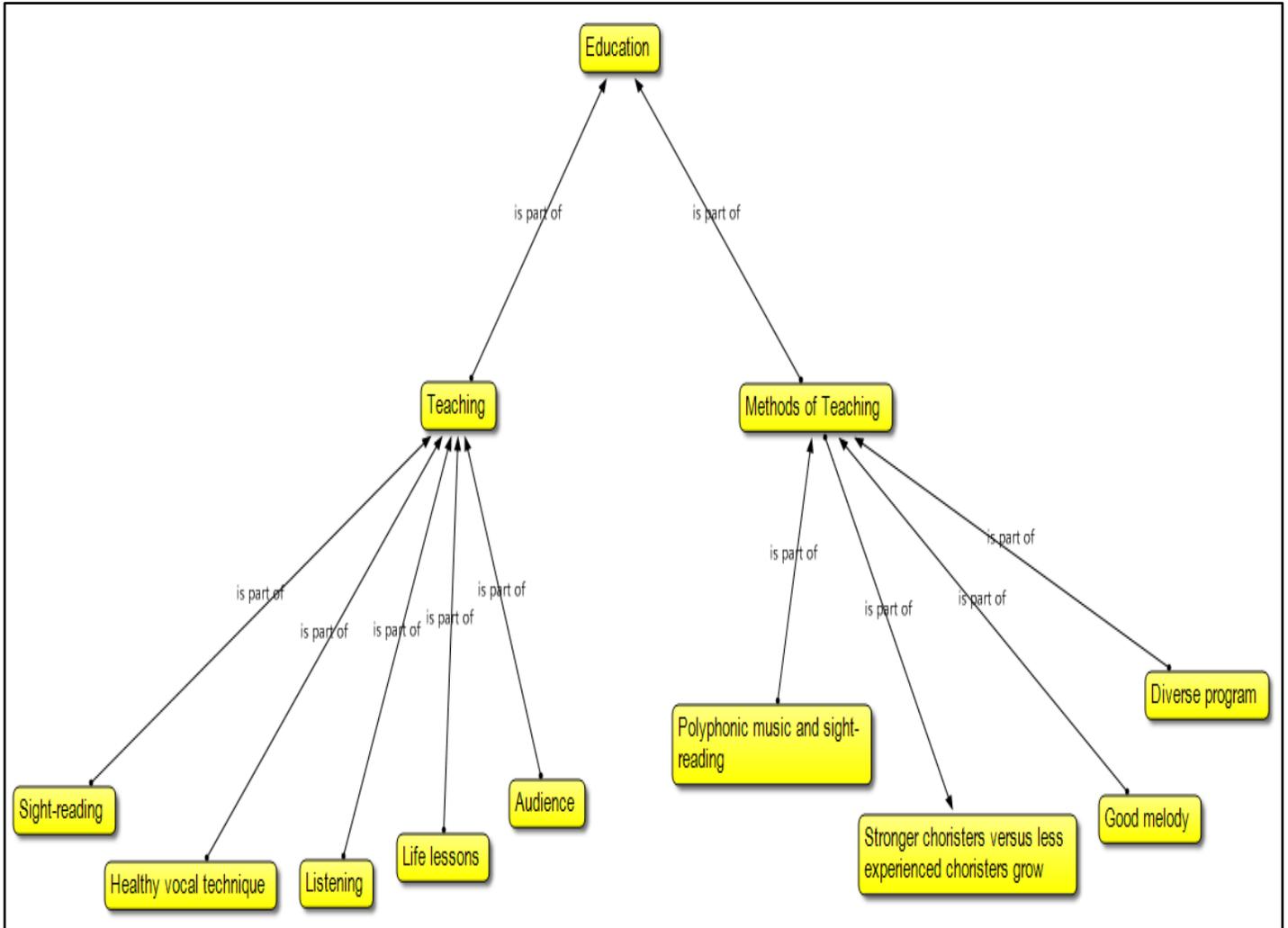


Figure 6 Theme Educating

- **Teaching**

The sub-theme, *Teaching*, is divided into five aspects, namely:

- Sight-reading (also discussed as a desired skill that the conductors strive to develop in 4.2.2.3 Vocal skills);

- Healthy vocal technique;
- Listening;
- Life lessons; and
- Audience (audience preference and development as criteria for selecting repertoire is later discussed in 4.2.5 Audience preference and development).

Concerning the importance of choristers being able to read music, conductor 1 states that “reading music is being able to take music and you can sight read it through without the help of a piano or without note bashing”. Conductor 2 mentions that just by knowing the contours of their lines (or voice parts), whether it “stays there or it moves up and down”, choristers are practicing sight-reading. Conductor 3 believes that if choirs are able to read music (used interchangeably with the term sight-reading), it assists the choristers to learn the music faster, allowing the choir to sing more music. Conductor 3’s argument corresponds with Campbell’s (2008:149)⁸ opinion that if a choir cannot read music, they are limited to only a few pieces each year.

All the conductors believe that it is the conductor’s responsibility to practise and teach healthy vocal technique. Conductor 1 asserts that “the most important aspect is that singing has to be healthy”. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Jordan (2005:27) underscores the opinion that healthy singing is important in choral singing. Three aspects of vocal technique emerged during the interviews namely, breathing (or good breath control), good vowel formation and pronunciation. Conductor 3’s experience is that many young choristers struggle with breath control. He feels that from the very beginning, when warming up the choir or teaching music, conductors should focus on teaching good breathing techniques and vowel formation in order to “reach your ideal sound or a very healthy sound”. Conductor 4 views “breathing techniques” as an important aspect of vocal technique and spends a considerable amount of time on attempting to get the correct vowel placement or “same placement”. Conductor 5 says that breathing, breath control and the way a choir pronounces their words, by placing them in front of the mouth, is very important to her when she works with a choir. Gaffney *et al.* (2012:7) and

⁸ Although the themes will mainly be linked to literature in Chapter 5, I will also refer in this chapter to literature that emphasises the most obvious literature that correlates with some quotes.

Jordan (2005:26) also note that good breathing techniques and correct vowel formation should be practised in the choir. Conductor 2 focuses on “open vowels” and contends that to achieve this, choristers need a “relaxed tongue, good mouth position”. Jordan (2005:26) discusses the importance of a relaxed throat, which is in line with conductor 2’s statement about having a relaxed throat in order to form open vowels.

The most important aspects of musicianship for all the conductors proved to be good intonation (differentiating between correct intonation and singing off pitch) and being able to listen. Conductor 2 claims that “to teach a child musicianship would be to teach them to listen”. Conductor 1, when asked what he felt was the most important aspect of musicianship, answers, “in terms from a musicianship point of view ... intonation.” Conductor 4 feels strongly that good intonation should be practised not only in the music the choir sings, but also when warming up the choir. Besides good intonation, conductor 4 also remarks that blending was an important aspect of musicianship, which is rooted in the ability of the choir to listen. This correlates with Campbell’s (2008:147-152) and McPhersen’s (2006:70) opinion that listening and good intonation are essential aspects of musicianship and should be developed in the choir rehearsal.

Conductors 1 and 3 make it clear that when educating the choristers, they also attempt to teach life lessons through the music they select. To teach life lessons, conductor 3 specifically seeks out music that carries text with a meaningful message. Conductor 1 elaborates on this by stating that choristers should not only “excel ... from a musical knowledge, or musical view point, but also from a spiritual viewpoint. In other words, their beliefs and their sayings”. Conductor 1 also believes in inspiring people through choral music and maintains, “I want to train them holistically, I want to solve their worldly problems through choral music”. Conductor 5 believes that although it is important to practise discipline within the choir, it is also important to form a relationship with the choristers in order to create a caring environment. Conductor 1 adds to this by testifying, “[y]ou become a leader for them. You become ... a role model that they can look up to”.

The need to educate the audience also became apparent through the data analyses, as conductor 1 states, “in the same way not only do you educate the singers, but you’ll educate your audience”. Conductor 1 believes in singing choral music that the audience is not familiar with, in order to create awareness and to “build their appreciation”. Although conductor 2 considers that the audience plays a role in the choosing of repertoire, he feels it takes secondary place to the education of the choristers.

- **Methods of teaching**

The sub-theme, *Methods of teaching*, is divided into four aspects, namely:

- Educating through diverse programme;
- Good melody for educating;
- Stronger choristers help less experienced choristers; and
- Polyphonic music used to teach sight-reading.

Conductors 1, 2 and 3 select a diverse programme to educate their choristers. Conductor 1 announces, “I want to educate them about choral music in general, in a new multi-cultural South Africa, therefore I’m going to choose a diverse programme”. This means that they use a variety of choral music, ranging from different style periods of Western music (Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Twentieth/Twenty-first Century and contemporary music) and African music to traditional folk music. Conductor 4 affirms, “and I think it [referring to African music] can be worked into your programme and still be entertaining and educational”. Mayhall (1994:12) concurs with the beliefs of the interviewed conductors by arguing that a piece from every style period should be included in the programme.

Conductor 1 also confirms that, “ideally we would like to expose our children to all types of music” and “as an educator ... your philosophy should be to introduce them to as many aspects of music as possible”. Conductor 3 declares, “[o]ne of my main purposes in life as a conductor is ... also to educate the kids. So, I try to include as big a variety as possible”. Conductor 1 does, however, acknowledge that a conductor’s programme is often influenced by the geographical area of the choir or the requirements of

competitions to sing prescribed works, and therefore, “it is understandable if you don’t get to Bach and Mozart and rather opt to do the traditional versus the Afrikaans versus the light music”.

Conductor 2 claims that “if you have a good melody then you’ve already won. If you can teach them to sing a good melody that’s where you start”. She believes in choosing a good melody to educate her choristers and associates a good melody with unison singing. She regards singing in unison as a difficult task for her choristers (also associated with vocal maturity. See 4.4.2. Maturity). She proposes that you can teach many aspects of vocal technique and musicianship through just singing one line, such as dynamics, vowel formation and learning to be aware of pitch.

Conductors 1 and 2 use older, more experienced choristers to help educate the young, in-experienced choristers. Conductor 1 admits, “let’s say your choir is from Grade 8 to matric: now you’re gonna have some of those that might have sung in the choir for a couple of years and so they’re more musically astute, others that haven’t”. Conductor 1 also regards the older choristers teaching the younger ones as creating a “great learning environment”, and insists that “you can’t leave anybody behind”. Conductor 2 places stronger voices strategically next to developing or in-experienced voices to help them grow and in this way she believes that she creates “somebody who loves to teach and you create a leader within your choir”.

Conductor 1 strongly suggests using polyphonic music from the Renaissance and Baroque period, such as Palestrina and Bach, to teach choristers how to sight-read music. He argues that polyphonic music “moves by step ladder” up and down making music easier to follow and exposes choristers to different rhythmic patterns. Conductor 3 also claims he uses early music, namely Renaissance and Baroque music, as a tool to educate his choristers, however he is not specific on the aspects he aims to educate them on through this music.

4.2.2 Vocal ability

When selecting repertoire, the conductors take the vocal ability of their choirs into consideration. Conductor 3 states, “first of all, what’s most important to me is ... I see what singers do I have to work with and ... then the second factor ... is their ability”. Below is a diagram showing the theme *Vocal ability*, which is divided further into three sub-themes, according to the vocal abilities the conductors considered significant in their choirs when choosing repertoire, namely:

- Voice groups;
- Vocal maturity; and
- Vocal skills.

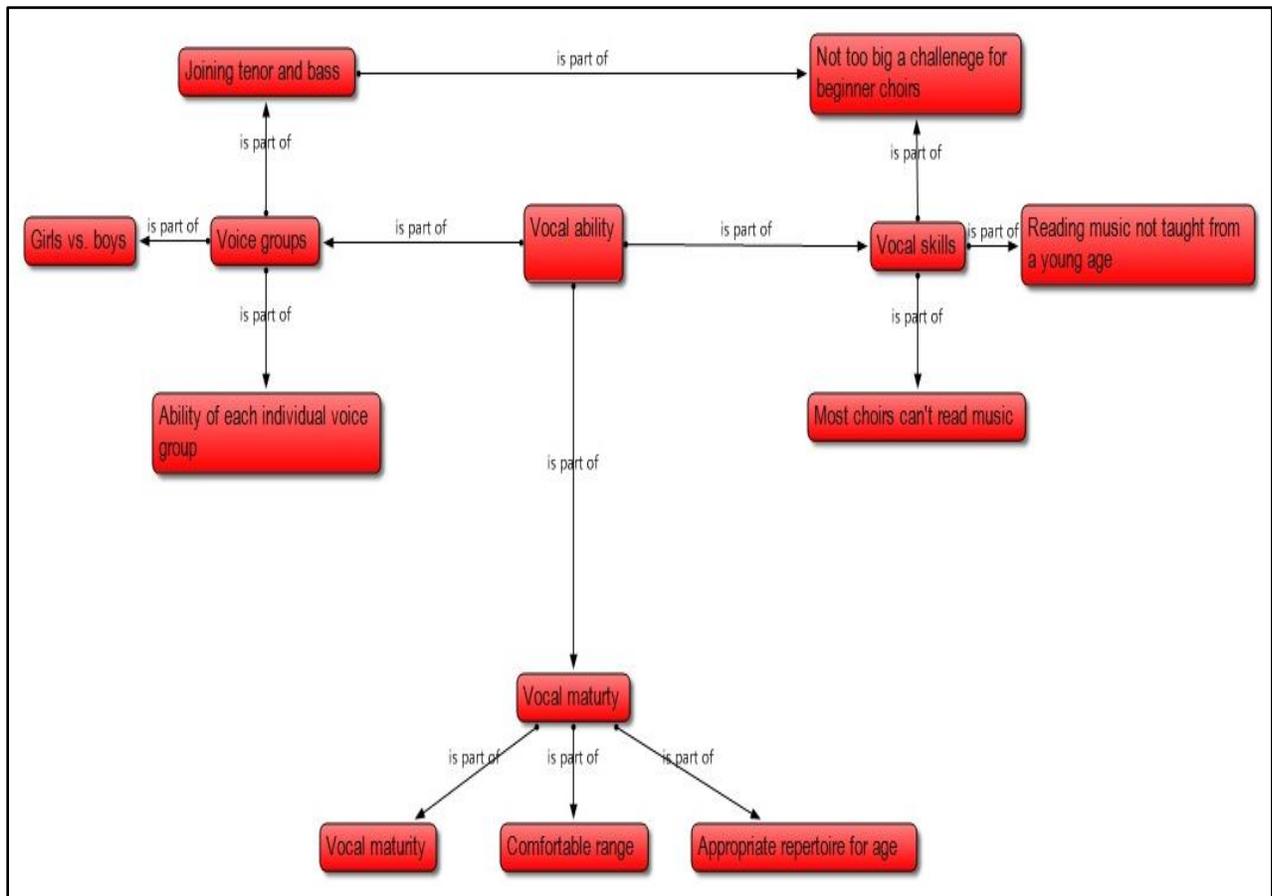


Figure 7 Theme Vocal ability

- **Voice groups**

The sub-theme, *Voice groups*, is divided into three aspects, namely:

- Ability of each individual voice group;
- Girls vs. boys; and
- Joining tenor and bass.

Conductor 3 specifically looks at each individual voice group when choosing repertoire for his choir. He looks at how many choristers he has in each voice group and what their abilities are. He proclaims, “I try and determine each voice group as a whole; their ability, what they can do, their limits, what they cannot do. And then I will choose (repertoire) ... according to that”. Taylor (2009:36, 39) supports conductor 3’s statement and observes that conductors first take the amount of singers they have in each voice group in account, before selecting repertoire for their choirs.

Conductors 1 and 2 agree that when forming a beginner choir, there is usually more interest from girls to join the choir than boys. Conductor 1 comments that “if you’ve got a beginner choir, you’re probably going to have very few boys singing in your choir”. Conductor 2 says, “Usually at high school level the girls are more comfortable with singing, so you’ll have more interest for girls”. Conductor 2 claims that the reason there is usually more interest from girls than boys to join a beginner choir, is because boys’ voices at secondary school level are often still changing and developing. When choosing repertoire, Conductors 1 and 3 look at the balance between girls and boys in their choir, the number of girls and the number of boys that are available. The ratio between the amount of girls and boys in a choir was also found to be an important factor influencing repertoire choice, according to Taylor (2009:39).

Conductors 1, 2 and 5 often join the tenor and bass together to make one voice group, and call it the baritones. This happens when there is a lack of interest from boys in the school to join the choir or if most boys still have developing or breaking voices. Collins (1999:357, 358) warns that conductors need to be aware of male voices in the choir that

are still developing, specifically those who are not entirely “true” tenors or basses. Conductor 1 declares, “choose music that is SAB (soprano, alto and baritone) ... SAB doesn’t mean soprano, alto, bass. It actually means soprano, alto, men, because it’s usually in a very comfortable voice for the young singer”. Conductor 2 adds to this by saying, “you have a lot of music that’s arranged for SAB and then usually that B is baritone, it is not tenor and it’s not bass”. Conductor 5 confirms this by asserting that, “[y]ou can join the two voice parts ... it’s also okay if you can do that”.

- **Vocal maturity**

A choir’s vocal maturity level will influence the conductor’s choice of repertoire. Conductor 2 believes there is a difference in maturity between female and male voices in the choir and reasons, “they’ve (girls) had their voices for a little bit longer ... but with the boys in high school they basically still have their soprano voice when they are fourteen, fifteen and then the voice changes”. The sub-theme, *Voice groups*, is divided into three aspects, namely:

- Vocal maturity;
- Comfortable range; and
- Appropriate repertoire for age.

Conductor 1 does not associate vocal maturity with a singer’s age, but rather with the singer’s vocal experience and the knowledge that person has of the vocal mechanism. Conductor 1 argues that the best way to develop vocal maturity in a choir is to start with music that is sung in unison. As mentioned, conductor 2 believes in singing unison and maintains, “singing [in] unison is the most difficult thing ... you can start teaching them in one single line about phrasing, about voice colour, when to open the vowels”.

Conductors 1 and 5 caution against selecting repertoire that may be too demanding for the male singers in the choir, if their voices are still developing or settling, because they will have a limited range. Conductor 5 suggests allowing the voice to first adapt to its new and natural range and conductor 5 recommends selecting music that is, “just bigger than an octave and within a comfortable range”.

The age of the choristers is taken into consideration by the conductors as well when selecting repertoire. Although she follows trends in choral music (repertoire that is popular for choirs to sing at a specific time), conductor 2 feels that there is specific music that suits a secondary school choir and there is music that does not. When asked what her perception of quality repertoire is, part of her answer is, “I mean to me it’s (referring to a difficult Baroque piece with many runs) quality music but not quality repertoire for the age you’re working with”.

- **Vocal skills**

The sub-theme, *Vocal skills*, is divided into three aspects, namely:

- Most choirs can’t read music;
- Reading music not taught from a young age; and
- Not too big a challenge for beginner choir.

All five conductors unanimously agreed that it is important that their choristers are able to read music, but not necessary. Conductor 1 asserts, “[s]o is it important for them to sight-read? Absolutely, but it’s not a necessity”. All of the five conductors are of the opinion that most choirs in South Africa cannot read music. The conductors’ thoughts on sight-reading correlate with Campbell (2008:150) and McPherson (2006:156) who point out that most choristers cannot read music, and therefore should practise sight-reading to develop this skill.

Although the conductors feel that it is not necessary for secondary school choirs to be able to fully read music, they all agree that most choristers usually learn to follow music. Conductor 2 says, “it’s a language they have to see, that it falls into patterns, that the melody goes up or down even if they don’t understand all the note values yet or can tell you exactly ‘That is B flat, that is F sharp’. For them to start seeing ‘okay my line stays there or it moves up and down’, is already a way of teaching them how to sight read”. McPherson (2006:159) affirms that with practice, choristers will eventually be able to identify patterns within melodic lines, allowing them to follow the music more efficiently.

Conductors 1 and 2 believe that it is important to teach choristers to read music from a young age and shift the responsibility to primary schools or primary school choirs to do so. Conductor 1 believes that “they [primary schools] do this musical appreciation, where you hit a drum or you dance to music playing in the background ... I suppose it has value, but it’s not teaching choirs how to sight read music”. Conductor 2 says that the reason choristers are not taught to read music at a young age in primary school choirs, is because conductors have very little time in allocated rehearsals to facilitate developing this skill. Conductor 1 claims that the biggest reason for choristers at secondary school level not being able to read music, is because conductors do not encourage their choristers to do so and, instead, provide their choristers with rehearsal CDs to learn their vocal parts.

Conductor 2 argues “if you’re building a choir don’t start with too big a challenge”. She recommends that a conductor should rather choose repertoire where choristers will begin to sing in one or two voice parts and then eventually three voice parts once the voices are developed. The male voices should also be taken into consideration if the voices are undeveloped or breaking and as mentioned, conductor 5 feels that repertoire should be chosen that does not demand too much from the male voices if this is the case (the two codes, Join the tenor and bass and Not too big a challenge for beginner choirs are associated with each other, as seen on the diagram). Diddle (2005:95) expresses the view that a conductor should be aware of the challenge the repertoire may present to the choristers.

Vignette 2

I meet him at the entrance of the music building between large modern structures. The beautiful clean campus is quiet today because of recess and there’s hardly a soul in sight. I remember that it has been a year since we’ve seen each other. I know he has been really busy organising an upcoming international tour for his choir. With a broad smile conductor 1 gives me a firm handshake and welcomes me. I feel more relaxed now in his presence because of his warm and welcoming nature. He suggests we conduct the interview at the local coffee shop. The coffee shop is filled with a rich aroma of sweet coffee and he quickly orders us two cups. I know this

interview is going to be a great experience for me and I can't wait to hear the knowledge he has to share. I feel grateful to be here.

4.2.3 Type of choir

When conductors choose repertoire, they take the type of choir they are working with into account. Through the data analyses it became evident that three sub-themes emerged under the theme *Type of choir*, namely:

- multi-cultural choirs;
- Afrikaans choirs; and
- Geographical area.

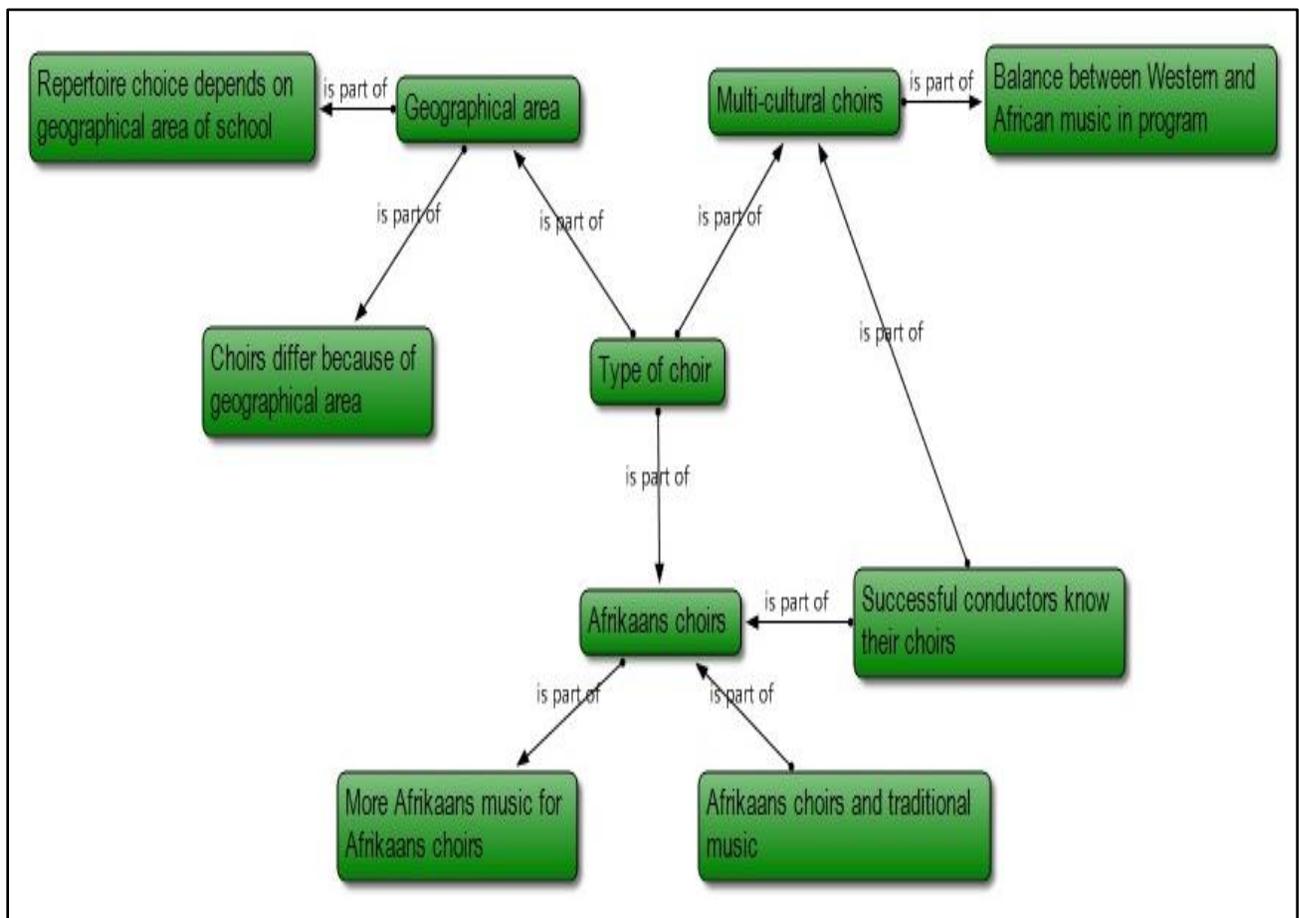


Figure 8 Theme Type of choir

- **Afrikaans choirs**

Conductor 1 points out that, even though South Africa is labelled as a multi-cultural country, there are still schools that are strictly Afrikaans speaking. He also affirms that one may still find choirs who are only white and speak Afrikaans. The sub-theme, *Afrikaans choirs*, is divided into two aspects, namely:

- More Afrikaans music for Afrikaans choirs; and
- Afrikaans choirs and traditional music.

Conductor 1 suggests having a programme that represents all cultures. However he also feels that, if the choir is Afrikaans, they should sing more Afrikaans music than any other genre because of their culture and language. In saying this he also believes that there should be no group in the choir that is not represented through the repertoire chosen, even though it may only be a small minority group. Conductor 5 advocates that African music should be part of the programme, if one enters competitions (more so when entering international competitions). She feels that, in order to succeed in the competition, the choir will have to sing African music.

- **Multi-cultural choirs**

When asked what the balance between Western and African music should be in the program, the conductors had various answers. Three out of the five conductors, namely conductors 1, 2 and 4, have multi-cultural choirs. The majority of the choristers in the choirs directed by conductors 2 and 5 are Afrikaans speaking. The sub-theme, *Multi-cultural choirs*, is divided into two aspects, namely:

- Balance between Western and African music; and
- Successful conductors know their choirs (which is also linked to the sub-theme 4.2.3.1 Afrikaans choirs).

Conductor 1 proposes that, if the choir is multi-cultural, the balance between Western music and African music in the programme should be equal. Conductor 4 (with a “mostly black” choir) strongly feels that her programme should be fifty per cent Western

music and fifty per cent African music. However, she acknowledges that the ratio between Western and African music should change depending on the preference and profile of the audience and type of performance. She states: “[s]o I decided for this event I will not do so much African, because my audience will be mainly western people. But I have to include the African because I need to show this is who we are”. Conductor 2 (also with a multi-cultural choir) perceives singing traditional African music as a privilege and, although she is not specific on what she thinks the ratio should be between Western and African music, she answers: “I believe in balance in the programme completely”. Conductor 3 (with a choir in which the majority speaks Afrikaans), feels the ratio should be seventy per cent Western music and thirty per cent African music. Both conductors 1 and 5 mentioned that the balance also depends on the ratio between the amount of Afrikaans speaking choristers, English speaking choristers and other African language speaking choristers that are in the choir. Conductor 1 maintains that a multi-cultural choir demands a variety of music in the programme, which should include “Bach and Mozart and Beethoven ... Afrikaans music versus traditional cultures; versus light music or pop music”.

- **Geographical area**

According to conductors 1, 2 and 3, it is important to take into consideration the geographical area of a choir when choosing repertoire. Collins (1999:360) believes that an audience’s geographical area is a significant factor that should be considered when choosing repertoire. The sub-theme, *Geographical area*, is divided into two aspects namely:

- Choirs differ because of geographical area; and
- Repertoire choice depends on geographical area of school.

Conductor 1 declares that choirs will differ according to “where the school is situated” in the country. He insists, that “every choir that you go to ... a Grade 8 choir in Pretoria is going to be totally different to a Grade 8 choir in Cape Town, is going to be totally different to a Grade 8 choir in Pofadder”. Conductor 3 comments that a choir from a

private school in the city may be different to a choir from a rural area. Isbell (2005:30) confirms that the geographical area will determine what type of choir a conductor will be working with.

Conductor 2 argues that a choir will sing repertoire according to the community it finds itself in. Conductor 1 supports conductor 2's opinion by affirming that the geographical area will influence the type of repertoire a choir sings. He says, "If you give the *Karoonag* by Coenie de Villiers, every *platteland-se dorpie* is going to think you're the best choir in the world". Conductor 2 contends, "It's very difficult to travel to let's say the *platteland* and expect them to appreciate Bach". However, conductor 1 does not believe in only singing music that the community knows and appreciates, but feels, as mentioned, that he should also educate his audience.

Shown on the diagram is a link with the heading: Successful conductors know their choir which is connected to the links Afrikaans choirs and multi-cultural choirs. Part of conductor 1's answer to which attributes does a conductor need to have to be successful, is, "you've gotta know the children and know the choir". Conductor 3 takes the idea of knowing one's choir further by attesting, "know what is going on in your choir". Being aware of the fact that your choir may consist of a majority of Afrikaans speaking choristers or a multi-cultural choir, will help in the process of choosing appropriate repertoire for your choir.

Vignette 3

I hear music and laughter as I climb white cylinder stairs inside the School of Music. I am on my way to interview conductor 3. I pause in front of the door. I hear men's and ladies' voices inside. I slowly open the door and as I do the music stops. I enter a small room surrounded by mirrors with a large brown wooden grand piano. There are two ladies and two gentlemen inside and all are staring at me as if I interrupted them. Conductor 3 jumps up from the grand piano and yells my name! He is glad to see me and shakes my hand. He informs me that they are rehearsing a play for a drama festival held every year at the university. After introducing me to the rest of the cast, he sets up a chair for me and asks me to sit so they can perform the play for me. I am glad to be there and I feel honoured to play audience to this talented group of artists.

4.2.4 Programme choice

Besides choosing Afrikaans and traditional African music for their programmes, it became evident through the data analyses that the conductors felt there should be a variety in their choral programmes. Conductor 2 states: “I think in your programme it should be varied enough that you do have something for the avid listener who wants to hear something more”. Conductor 4 believes in having a variety in her programme because she feels that, “you must make sure that you give something for everybody”. Bolt (1983:136) supports this by finding that experts in the field of choir conducting believe that a programme should have a variety of music. Conductor 1 defines a varied programme as being “old music to new music, from music in different languages, music of different speeds, music of major and minor and music of different feelings and emotions”. The theme, *Programme choice*, is divided into four sub-themes, namely:

- Early music;
- Repertoire for events;
- New music; and
- Light music.

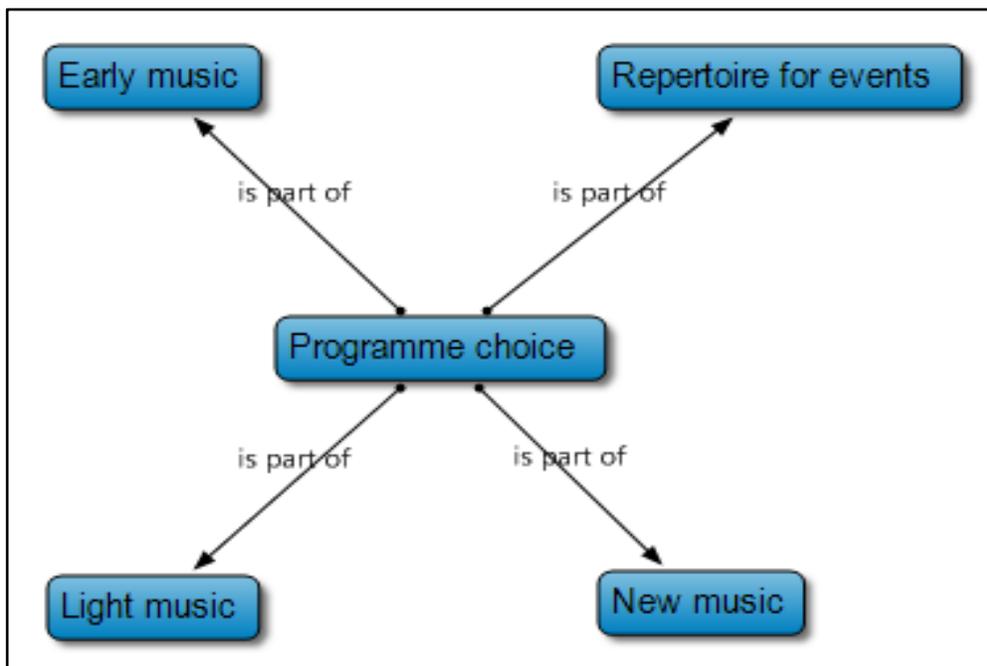


Figure 9 Theme Programme choice

- **Early music**

When discussing variety in their programme, all the conductors experience that it is important to include at least either one Renaissance or Baroque piece in their programmes, making specific references to Palestrina and Bach (conductor 1 also acknowledges Mozart and Beethoven). Conductor 3 professes, “I will always, if possible, include some early music like at least one Renaissance or Baroque piece”. Renaissance and/or Baroque music in a programme has educational value (Taylor, 2009:20). Conductor 1 says, that “Palestrina was the first thing that I learnt to sing and that’s why I learnt how to sight read”. Conductor 4 and 5 do not make specific references to Renaissance or Baroque music, but believe to include “serious” music in their programmes.

- **Repertoire for events**

Conductor 4 mentions the importance of including serious music in her programme to prepare for any event such as “smart concerts or maybe the funerals or the weddings”. Conductor 3 believes it is important to have a balanced programme to prepare for all events at which the choir may perform. He elaborates by saying:

Make sure that you have enough works of each genre ... you can perhaps have works to be performed in an outside venue for instance, or works that are suitable for a solo concert where it’s only my choir, or enough works where we, let’s say, invited to a music festival or a high school choir festival.

Conductor 1 feels strongly against the “regurgitation” of music at events, meaning music that is over–sung for years or sung by more than one choir at one time. He specifically makes reference to choir festivals when discussing this and declares, “[t]here’s nothing worse than going to a choir festival and all the choirs are singing music that has been done”.

- **New music**

Conductor 1 firmly believes that a conductor should always be researching for new music. He argues, “in order to find quality repertoire you have to do research. I mean you have to choose forty pieces before you find ten that are great, you know, or five that are great”. Conductor 3 feels the same and affirms that “a conductor needs to be hungry for learning. That can never stop. You always need to be out there attending concerts, looking for new repertoire”. While not specifically referring to new music, conductor 4 believes in singing original music, rather than arrangements of an original piece.

- **Light music**

All the conductors mention that including light or contemporary music in their programmes is a priority to them. Conductor 3 states that “I will always include one or two pop songs”. Conductor 2 believes that a pop song may be used to educate the choristers. She states that

[i]f you are going to choose a song, for instance like this Pharrell Williams song Happy, I mean it repeats happy, happy, happy, happy. And you can already start teaching them in a simple song like that about ‘Okay let’s do a crescendo’, (she sings happy loud and then soft to demonstrate dynamics) ... going softer, things like that using very simple ideas but teaching them musicianship even in a pop song.

Conductor 1 believes in choosing repertoire that the choristers can relate to, in order to “win them over” (Alder, 2012:73). He says, “[y]ou know, throw in a Katy Perry or a Cold Play ... I mean regardless whether your student is a Zulu or an Afrikaans [speaking chorister] they all listen to Cold Play”. Even though she admits that she does not like country music, conductor 4 remarks that, if sung well, the audience will enjoy it. Conductor 5 usually ends the programme off in concert with a contemporary piece that is pleasant and easy on the ear, referring to a pop song that the choir likes to sing and that the audience likes to listen to.

Conductor 1 cautions that a conductor should not only choose music to which the choristers can relate or enjoy, as this will limit the opportunities to educate them. Taylor

(2009:20) supports conductor 1's point of view by adding that other styles such as Classical music, that serves to have educational value for the singers.

Vignette 4

Conductor 2 welcomes me into her beautiful suburban home. She seems tired and out of breath. She tells me that she has just come from comforting her neighbour whose house was broken into an hour ago. She is grateful that her neighbour is okay and unharmed. She invites me into her home and as we enter she explains that she has just renovated her house and asks me to please excuse anything that might be out of place. I am surrounded by newly painted white walls and shiny light brown tiles on the floor. The house has a sort of freshness to it. She offers me cold apple juice and I gladly accept as I have just spent an hour and a half in the hot stuffy car, driving from Vereeniging. She tells me that, after the interview, she will have to leave for one of her choir rehearsals. I quickly set my recording devices in place on a large, newly varnished brown dining room table, so as not to waste her time. As I do this, I think about the time I sang in her choir whilst still in school. I have so much respect for conductor 2 and am grateful that she is taking the time to be interviewed.

4.2.5 Audience preference and development

The audience is also taken into consideration by the five conductors when choosing repertoire for their choirs. The theme *Audience preference and development*, is divided into three sub-themes, namely:

- Entertaining audiences;
- Educating audiences; and
- Target audiences.

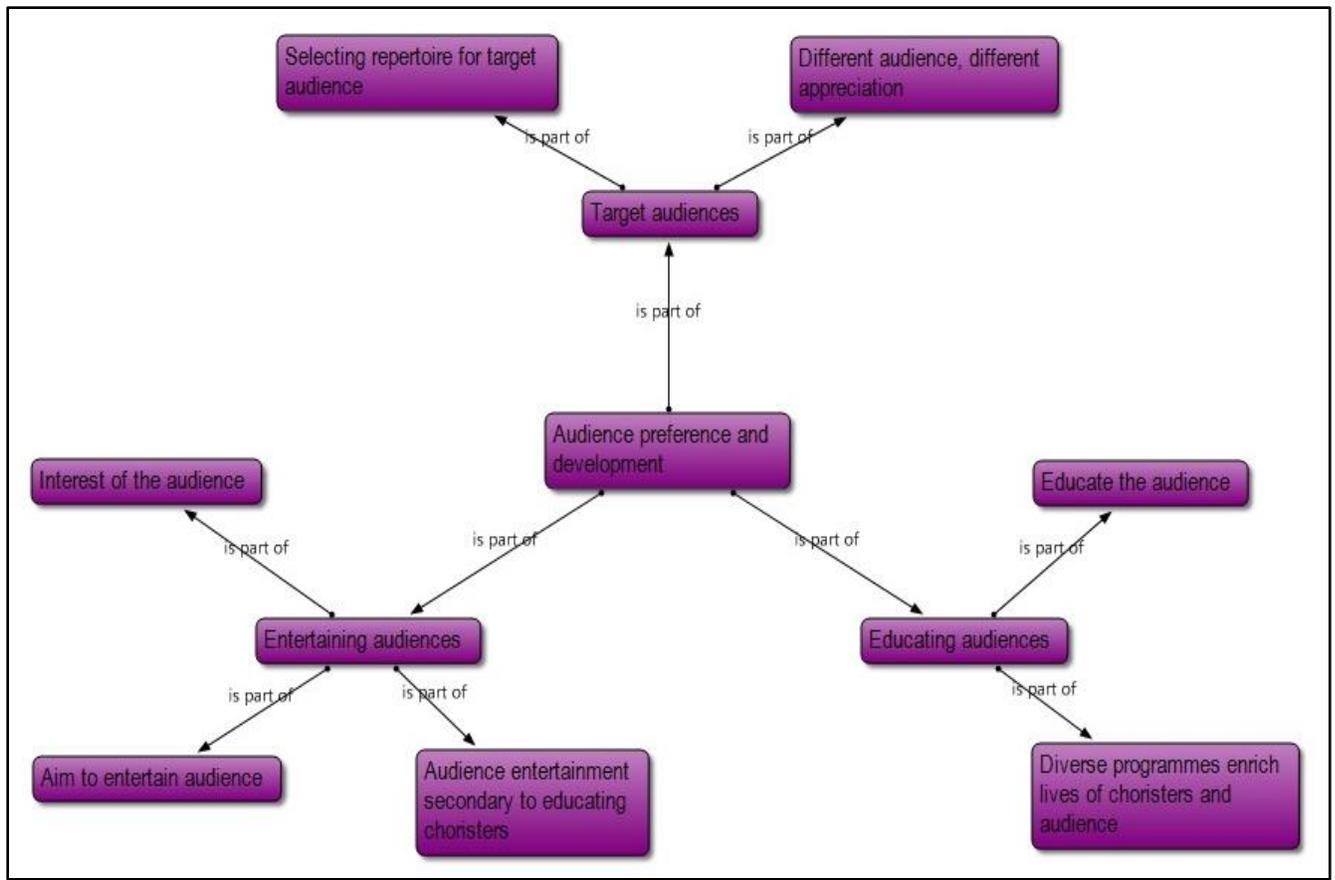


Figure 10 Theme Audience preference and development

- **Entertaining audiences**

Although not emphasised as the main aspect taken into account when choosing repertoire, conductors still feel that the entertainment value of the music chosen is important. Answering the question as to what guidelines he uses to choose repertoire for a beginner secondary school choir, conductor 1 lists questions that a conductor should ask himself, one being, “Is your aim simply to entertain parents or audience members?” The sub-theme, *Entertaining the audiences*, is divided into three aspects, namely:

- Interest of the audience;
- Aim to entertain audience; and
- Audience entertainment secondary to educating choristers.

Discussing the importance of choosing different genres in a choral programme to keep the interest of the audience, conductor 1 announces, that “it’s important for your audience, because otherwise it gets exceptionally boring to sit and listen to the same style of musical styles, same genre of music”. As mentioned earlier, conductor 2 believes that selecting music to entertain the audience is less of a priority to choosing music that will educate his choristers. He elaborates that:

[i]t’s about the education of the people in the choir, especially the young kids ... teaching them not only artistically, artistic things and musical things but also life lessons. So, to be quite honest I put that first and then I will look at, okay is this programme suitable for the audience? Are they not going to get bored? Will they be entertained?

- **Educating audiences**

The sub-theme, *Educating audiences*, is divided into two aspects, namely:

- Educating the audience; and
- Diverse programmes enrich lives of choristers and audience.

As mentioned before, conductor 1 places a lot of emphasis on educating the audience. He believes that a conductor should choose music that not only serves to entertain, but that also helps to stimulate the growth of the audiences’ musical appreciation. He affirms: “[t]hrow in something entirely different that they don’t know and build their appreciation, educate the audience as much as you educate the singers”. He also declares: “I’m going to choose a diverse programme ... one that is capable of enriching ... the audience”. Mayhall (1994:12) supports this opinion by stating that the audience should be challenged. Conductor 4 believes that, if a choir sings a piece well - regardless if the audience understands it or is able to appreciate it - the audience will still enjoy what is being sung. She states: “[s]o even if you do a really Avant Garde Twentieth [Century] piece for a relative uneducated audience, if you do it well they will love it”.

- **4.2.5.3 Target audience**

Another question conductor 1 feels is important to ask when choosing repertoire, is “who’s the audience that you’re going to be singing for?” The sub-theme *Target audience*, is divided into two aspects, namely:

- Selecting repertoire for target audience; and
- Different audience, different appreciation.

Conductor 2 says that a conductor should not choose repertoire on the basis of only accommodating the interest and pleasure of the audience. However, she does acknowledge that the audience will take interest in a piece according to their “taste”, which as discussed, may be influenced by their geographical area.

Conductor 1 agrees with conductor 2 by saying: “I mean if you sing for an audience in Pretoria or an audience in the ‘platteland’ you are going to choose totally different music, because there will be a different kind of appreciation”. Collins (1999:360) supports this point of view. Conductor 4 is evidently aware of the identity of her multi-cultural choir and chooses repertoire that highlights and compliments this identity. However she does feel, as mentioned earlier, that a conductor should also choose music that will suit the event and the audience attending. She, points out that “my audience will be mainly western people...so I would try to impress with difficult western pieces”.

Vignette 5

The area is remote and dusty with a few tin houses to break the monotony of mud and elephant grass. We enter a dull-pale hall with walls that are shedding and in desperate need of fresh paint. The room has a few broken desks and planks that could be mistaken for chairs. The floor is cold concrete, chipped and sharp at some edges. The windows are musky and difficult to see through. There is a green chalk board in front of the room that has so many scratch marks; it is difficult to see where one could write anything on it. I notice that there is no piano or any other form of instrument to play music on, save a pitch pipe she holds in her hand. This is where she rehearses with her choir. This is where she teaches them music. She has a multi-cultural choir with choristers that belong to many different cultures and

ethnic groups, most of whom have not received music, singing or choral training before. Here everyone is equal, regardless of your economic background. Here students get a chance to express themselves through the music they sing and to develop as musicians, even if it is without the help of a piano.

I have observed that choirs from rural areas do exceptionally well in choir competitions organised by the Department of Education, such as SASCE⁹ and Segarona.¹⁰ These competitions allow choirs from rural areas to sing music that they are most comfortable with singing, which is often traditional African music. The choirs' performances are often enhanced by the choristers wearing colourful traditional clothing that represent their identity.

4.3 Conclusion

From the data analyses, five themes were identified, namely Education, Vocal ability, Type of choir, Programme choice and Audience preference and entertainment. These themes highlight the major criteria that the five conductors participating in the study use to choose repertoire. The analyses further showed that each theme can be sub-divided into sub-themes and aspects as illustrated in Figure 4 at the beginning of this chapter. The participating conductors in this study all commented on each of the themes and their subdivisions. An interpretation of their comments, combined with the data gathered during the literature review, will be presented in the next chapter as the findings of this study.

⁹ SASCE is the abbreviation for South African Schools Choral Eisteddfod.

¹⁰ The name Segarona is a Tshwane term meaning, "mixing our cultures".

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

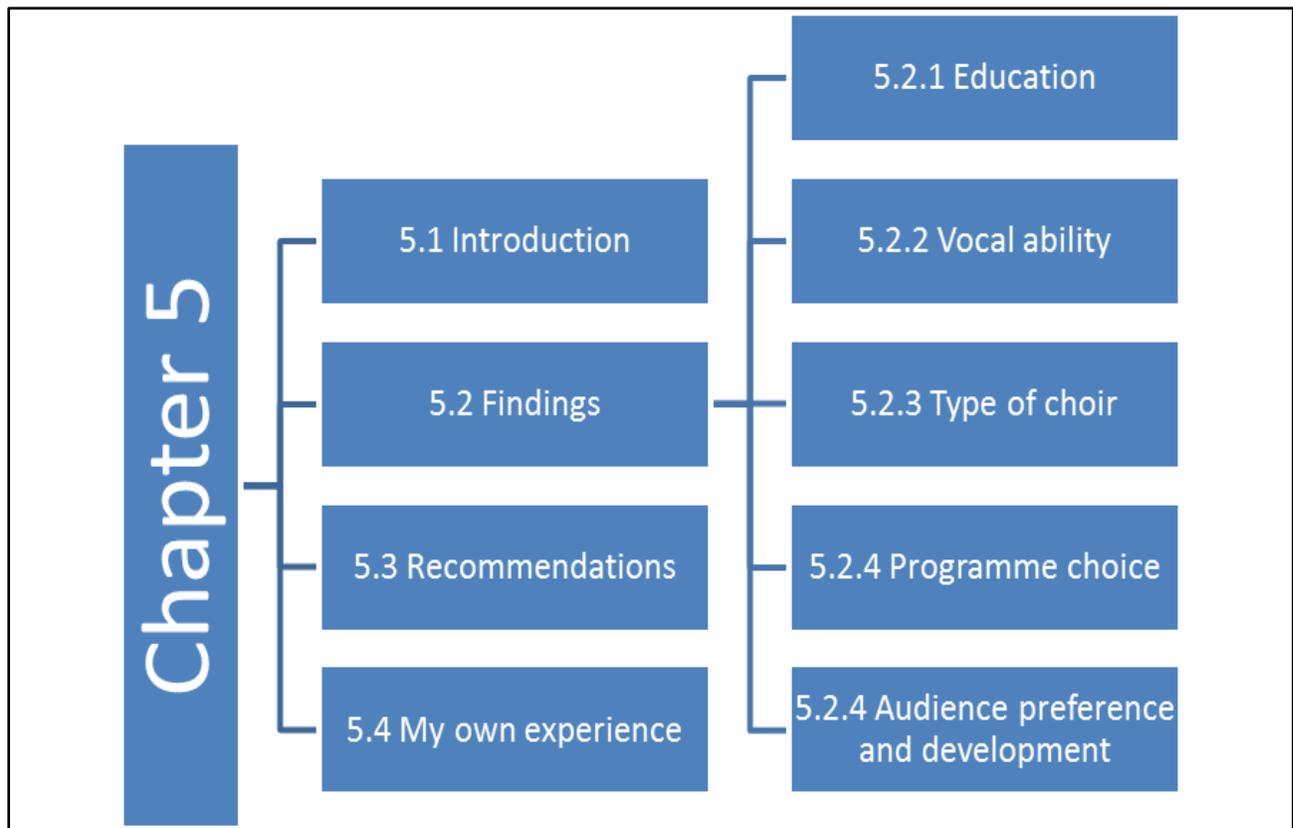


Figure 11 Structure of Chapter 5

5.1 Introduction

This research was about the criteria five experienced choir conductors use to choose repertoire for a beginner secondary school choir. In Chapter 1 I discussed the context of the study, the focus and the research question. In Chapter 2 existing literature on the topic of choosing repertoire for a beginner secondary school choir was examined. My worldview, method of research and ways of gathering data were discussed in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4 the data were analysed, presented and discussed. In Chapter 5 I will discuss the findings of Chapter 4 and provide recommendations for further study.

5.2 Findings

How can repertoire selection guidelines be explained?

The above-mentioned question is the main research question that guided this study. From the data analyses I come to the conclusion that the themes that crystallised (Ellingson, 2009:10, 11) from the data gathered through interviews are an answer to this question. In a secondary school the novice choir conductor should keep in mind the importance of Education, Vocal ability, Type of Choir, Programme choice and Audience preference and development.

5.2.1 Education

The theme Education emerged as being the most emphasised theme as the main goal of all five conductors when selecting repertoire, is to educate their choristers. The conductors select music to educate their choristers musically and develop healthy vocal techniques (Campbell, 2008:147; Dean, 2011:1). The most important aspects of vocal technique that the conductors aim to develop in their rehearsals are sound breathing technique and correct vowel placement (Jordan, 2005:26). Listening and singing in tune emerged to be the most important aspects of musicianship for the conductors (McPhersen, 2006:70). A notable method that conductors use to educate their choristers is by selecting a diverse programme in the attempt to expose them to a variety of music (Mayhall, 1994:12). Melodies that carry ample educational characteristics as well as polyphonic music are used by the conductors to educate the choristers.

The ranges of young teenage girls and boys are limited because of changes in the voice that occur during puberty, which influences their ability to sing repertoire that may be too high or too low (Friddle, 2005:35, 36; Schiff, 1999:425). Therefore, they may sing out of tune in the attempt to reach unobtainable notes (Gackle, 2006:29). To address the issue of changing and developing voices in the choir, and indirectly also the issue of chorister singing out of tune, conductors may select or arrange repertoire that is comfortable for the range of the singers (Alder, 2012:72-73; Crocker, 1999:33).

5.2.2 Vocal ability

The five conductors select repertoire according to the abilities of their choirs and the abilities of each individual voice group (Taylor, 2009:33). The conductors are often faced with the problem of having many girls in the choir and few boys, as the boys voices are still developing (Friddle, 2005:35, 36; Taylor, 2009:39, 44). To address this problem, the conductors join the tenor and bass voice group together with the result of having three voice groups namely Soprano, Alto and Baritone and they then select repertoire accordingly (Crocker, 1999:34; Taylor, 2009:35). The vocal experience of each individual chorister is another factor influencing the choir's ability as a whole which consequently affects repertoire choice. The five conductors admit that their choirs aren't fully able to read music; however they strive to teach basic music reading skills through the repertoire they select in order for their choristers to be able to follow melodic contours and know what important musical signs mean (McPhersen, 2006:159). To improve the choristers' sight-singing skills, a conductor may select easier repertoire which his choristers are able to sight-sing. Once the music is mastered, the choristers might then be encouraged to sing more advanced music, thus improving their sight-singing skills (Olsen, 2003:19).

5.2.3 Type of choir

Through the data analyses it emerged that the type of choir a conductor is working with is an important factor influencing repertoire selection (Apfelstadt, 2001:32). Two types of choirs were mentioned by the conductors, namely Afrikaans choirs and multi-cultural choirs (Bouwer, 2009:74, 77). The conductors attempt to represent all cultures in their choirs as best they can by selecting music to form a balanced programme between Western and traditional African music (Bouwer, 2009:77); however, they feel the ratio may change depending on the type of audience the choir will be performing to and how many Afrikaans speaking choristers versus English (or other languages) speaking choristers there are in the choir. The conductors believe that the geographical area determines the type of choir a conductor will be working with and also the type of

audience the choir will be performing to which further influences repertoire choice (Collins, 1999:360; Isbell, 2005:30).

5.2.4 Programme choice

The conductors believe that they should have a variety in their programmes to accommodate all types of audiences (Collins, 1999:360), and as mentioned, to expose their choristers to a variety of music (Bolt, 1983:136; Crocker, 1999:33). Conductors include early music such as Renaissance and Baroque music in their programmes because of the educational value it offers (Taylor, 2009:20). Choirs sing for many events, ranging from weddings and concerts to festivals and the conductors select repertoire in the attempt to accommodate all events (Apfelstadt, 2001:32). The conductors often search for new music to bring to the table of existing choral literature. Light or contemporary music is included into their programmes to maintain the interest of the choristers (Apfelstadt, 2001:31; Kaschub, 2000:49) and to present something that the audience will enjoy.

5.2.5 Audience preference and development

It emerged that when the conductors select repertoire, the educational value of the music for the choristers is considered a priority above the entertainment value it holds for the audience (Apfelstadt, 2001:31). In saying this, conductors still aim to select repertoire that will interest or educate their audience (Bolt, 1983:123; Mayhall, 1994:12; Kaschub, 2000:49). To select music to interest or educate the audience, conductors believe that the conductor should look at his target audience, because every type audience, based on their geographical area, will have different preferences in music (Collins, 1999:360).

5.3 Recommendations

When a conductor has a secondary school choir, it is important that he and the choir are fully supported. Although the Department of Education does encourage choir singing in secondary schools by offering various choir competitions such as SASCE and Segarona, the administration and organisation behind these competitions is poor and

inefficient with the result of many secondary school choirs withdrawing from the competitions or not entering the competitions at all. The department is aware of the benefits of having choirs in secondary schools; however, little or no extra training or financial aid is given for conductors to improve their skills (Boonzaaier, 2011:59). The NWU Short Learning Programme (SLP) in choral conducting (NWUCA) presented by the North-West University, is an introductory course on choral conducting designed to equip novice choir conductors with the skills they need to successfully conduct and direct their choirs. Many novice choir conductors, however, lack the necessary funding to enrol for this course and are not supported in this regard by government institutions or their own schools (often also because of lack of funding from their side). More advanced courses are also presented by the University of Stellenbosch. The world renowned choral conductor and lecturer from Norway, Kåre Hanke, presented courses in the past five years at both the North–West University and the University of Stellenbosch.

Headmasters of secondary schools expect their choirs to excel which can be achieved by providing adequate time for rehearsals, not interfering with other extra-curricular activities occurring at the same time. It can also be achieved by providing for the minimal needs of the choir, such as a venue and a piano to rehearsals. The choir can be further supported by the help of colleagues in school who may assist with discipline, administration and other aspects involving the choir. It is very important that the choir be supported by the headmaster, colleagues and even governing board members attending events that the choir performs at, which will boost the choir's morale.

While assessing the literature review, gaps emerged that could lead to suggestions for further study regarding choosing repertoire for choirs. Although suggestions are given for methods and sources to obtain repertoire (Diddle, 2005; Mayhall, 1994), little has been researched about which specific arrangements or composers are best suited for beginner secondary school choirs. There is little mention of what the audience's listening experience involves when listening to a beginner secondary school choir which makes it a topic worthy of investigation. The choir experience of the choristers themselves (for example, how they feel when they sing) and their reasons for joining

secondary school choirs is inadequately shown in existing research, which may be a suggestion for further research.

5.4 My own experience

Repertoire selection choices for my beginner secondary school choir were mainly influenced by requirements of the various eisteddfods that we participated in. My choir has forty-five members and is the school choir of *Hoërskool Drie Riviere*, situated in Three Rivers, Vereeniging, South Africa. The eisteddfods that the choir participated in were, for example, the SASCE competition, Segarona and The Vereeniging Arts Festival. I initially based my repertoire choice around the requirements of the Vereeniging Arts Festival, which offered the opportunity for choirs to enter various categories such as gospel, musical, sacred and African traditional and own choice, allowing me to choose a variety of music for my choral programme. Rehearsal time limitations only allow the choir to learn five songs a year, which suited the categories I aimed to participate in for the Vereeniging Arts Festival. I chose an American spiritual for the gospel category, an extract from the musical *Lion King* for the musical category, an Afrikaans hymn from collected Afrikaans traditional and heritage music from the FAK for the sacred category and a Broadway song for the category own choice (which was also the prescribed work of the SASCE competition). Segarona only required us to sing a programme of three songs of our own choice and SASCE, as mentioned, only required the choir to sing one prescribed work.

For community concerts, which often occur in churches, I would select music that suits the denomination and practices of the church. This means that I would, select mostly sacred music or music that offers a message that is closely related to the Christian faith and teachings. As mentioned, limited time is provided to learn difficult pieces or extravagant works, so I attempt to select music that my choir will be able to sing at eisteddfods and in church settings, which are usually not more than five songs for a beginner secondary school choir. This includes four-part hymns or psalms taken from the FAK (as the choir is often required to sing Afrikaans music for Afrikaans audiences), American spirituals (I prefer selecting up-beat American spirituals to integrate a variety

in mood in my programme), a contemporary piece that may be a pop song and to which the choristers can relate to and at least two African traditional songs¹¹ (that also carry a Christian message) to bring cultural diversity in the programme. I will also try to educate the choristers by choosing a Classical piece with foreign text, which the church congregation also usually appreciates. Below is a table of repertoire that I suggest for a beginner secondary school choir.

Table 1 Repertoire suggestions for beginner secondary school choirs

Name of Piece	Composer or arranger	Genre
Circle of Life (from The Lion King)	arr. Mark Brymer	Musical
Deep River	arr. Elizabeth Campbell	American spiritual
Dream	arr. Jay Althouse	Contemporary Jazz
Happy	arr. Mark Brymer	Contemporary
Joshua Fit de Battle of Jericho	arr. Howard Helvey	American spiritual
Magaliesburgse Aandlied (FAK)	Gabriël G. Cillié	Afrikaans hymn
Panis Angelicus	arr. Patrick M. Liebergen	Classical
Psalm 16	Awie van Wyk	Afrikaans psalm
Siyahamba (We are marching)	arr. Jose Miguel Galán	African traditional
Ukuthula (Peace)	arr. André van der Merwe	African traditional

¹¹ African traditional songs are often taught aurally by the conductor or a member of the choir.

RESOURCE LIST

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Addendum A: Letter of consent



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LETTER OF CONSENT

Title:

I hereby give my permission for _____ to interview me. He may use the interview for his research. I understand that all efforts to protect privacy, anonymity and confidentiality will be adhered to by the researcher. I reserve the right to withdraw at any stage.

_____ Name interviewee

_____ Address of interviewee

(Signature interviewee)

----- Name of Student -----Student number

----- Date

Signature student

----- Signature study leader

Addendum B: Raw data

Refer to CD for raw data used in Atlas.ti 7.

Interview with conductor number 1

Researcher: R*

Participant: P*

R: Today I am going to interview conductor number 1* (real name not included in the transcript to protect the participant's privacy)...the topic of my dissertation: Guidelines for repertoire selection for a beginner secondary school choir: an explanatory case study. Alright, thank you for having an interview with me today Michael.

P: Pleasure.

R: I'm going to start with the questions straight away...the first question: what guidelines do you use to choose repertoire for a beginner secondary school choir? Another question that goes with that is: what factors do you take into account when choosing repertoire for the choir?

P: Okay, so these are really important questions and there are very long answers. Uh...repertoire selection as you know is the most important aspect of a successful choir and it requires a great amount of knowledge from you as the conductor. Uh...now one conductor cannot choose music for another choir because it's all about the instrument that you're choosing for. So before choosing any kind of repertoire, you gotta know your instrument. Okay, you gotta know the capabilities, you gotta know your philosophy, your vision, where do you want to take the choir too...what is your aim with the choir? Is your aim simply...uhm...to entertain parents or audience members, is your aim just to have a happy environment where people come and do *kumba ya* "liedjies"...or do you have an educational value behind the choir, do you want the choir to compete either nationally or internationally? So I mean, there are many, many questions regarding the guidelines of uhm...of choosing repertoire. Now if you...you ask to for a beginner secondary school choir, I've had a lot of beginner secondary school choirs. Uhm...and the most important aspects for me when choosing repertoire, is to choose music that is going to educate the singers both holistically as people and...and build them technically. So you gotta be

able to choose music that's...that's going to challenge them to a certain degree...uhm, that they actually excel both from a...a musical knowledge, or musical view point, but also from a spiritual viewpoint. In other words, their beliefs and their...and their sayings and all that. Uhm...and uhm...so...so ja, so there's lots of aspects for uhm...for choirs and all that. The most important...another important aspect is, is you gotta choose music that...uhm...that is going to...you know, that is gonna train them vocally...healthy and that. Uhm...so if you...if you look at your choir the first aspect that you look at is your balance, the amount of singers that you have, uhm...the differentiation between girls and boys, their age, their vocal maturity (now vocal maturity has got nothing to do with how old the singer is but actually how experienced the voice is, I mean you can have a very old person that's never sung before...uhm...and therefore has no vocal training. There's no muscle...muscular...uhm...strength in the vocal cords and there's no knowledge of how the...how the instrument works). So if you're going to start with...really at the beginning I mean, you literally have to start unison singing. That's really pretty much what you've gotta do. So that would be for me the starting point.

Which factors do you take into account? I mean, many! Do you have a multi-cultural choir? Are you going to choose English or Afrikaans music? Are you going to choose traditional music? Uhm...who's the audience that you're going to be singing for? Uhm...are you going to...I mean if you sing for an audience in Pretoria or an audience in the "platteland" you are going to choose total different music, because there will be a different kind of appreciation. Remember, wherever the music...or wherever...uhm...you go in South Africa, you have different cultures of music. In the same way you might not perform certain kinds of music in Europe, in the Cathedrals, in Churches, you have to understand where you're going. And this all starts for me, from your philosophy. What is your philosophy regarding? What do you as a conductor want to achieve? And the wonderful thing about philosophy is, is if you got a philosophy, you've got a...you've got a direction. You know exactly where you're going. My philosophy is to educate. I want to educate them about choral music in general, in a new multi-cultural South Africa, therefore I'm going to choose a diverse program. One that's going to challenge them but also make sure that they succeed at the end of the

day, and one that is capable of enriching not only their lives but the audience that they listen to.

R: Great...great! You've touched on a lot of other questions I was going to ask you. Maybe we should still carry on asking those questions, maybe we can delve a bit deeper into that. Uhm...the second question: which aspects of vocal technique and musicianship do you consider important to develop through repertoire you've chosen?

P: Okay so there are many aspects that...that are important. The most important aspect is that singing has to be healthy. It has to be healthy, vocal technique has to be healthy and the best way that you can screw up any voice...(laughing)...I suppose I can't say that. You can bleep that out. The best way you can really damage your voice is to choose music that is not appropriate for the choir. So you need to have knowledge...again of your instrument to see what their vocal ranges are, where the tessitura lies, where you're going to place the voice. I mean so many conductors say that you're a soprano because you can sing high, and it's got nothing to do with how high or low you can sing, it's gotta do with where the timbre of the voice is or where the tessitura lies. Where is the...where is the strength or the natural singing voice. Uhm...so when we talk about vocal technique and musicianship...I mean vocal technique and musicianship are two totally different things. Vocal technique is the actual ability of the singer whereas the musicianship are things like intonation, phrasing and all those kind of things. I suppose the most important aspect for me, if we had to do it broadly, would be...uhm...intonation, uhm...in terms from a musicianship point of view and obviously good choral sound. Those are the two very, very important broadly speaking. I mean there's lots of things that you could talk about but we...we all aim to create a homogeneous sound from our singers that's based on the five vowels and of course we want them to sing in tune as much as possible. The wonderful thing, and this is something I truly believe, is if the choir is singing healthy...they are singing with healthy vocal technique, then their intonation is going to be sound. Uhm...good blended sound also results in...in good intonation. So I mean, they all kind of lead on one another, they're not taught in isolation. So you gotta teach all the things, good vocal technique and musicianship all together. I mean you can't leave out one or the other. I see a lot of

people warming up or doing vocal techniques with choirs, where they do exercises that go all the way up, very high singing and that but it's an ugly sound or the intonation is bad. But then they think they are warming up the voice. Nothing should be taught in isolation and this is...this is truly important. Uhm...so vocal aspect techniques as I said, I mean good comfortable singing and beginner choirs...what's very important for beginner choirs is that...that don't extend them past their ranges. Keep them within a comfortable vocal range and if you've got a beginner choir, you're probably going to have very few boys singing in your choir. Uhm...therefore, you would choose music that is SAB, for example, SAB doesn't mean soprano, alto, bass, it actually means soprano, alto, men, because it's usually in a very comfortable voice for the...for the young singer. And that's where you're going to struggle the most because their voices are the ones you have to watch out the most for. You're going to have unbroken tenors and you're gonna have...uhm...voices in the baritones or basses that can't go very high or very low. So I mean, you're going to have to choose very wisely with music that's just bigger than an octave and within a comfortable range. And that kind of music is very important and also very difficult to find.

R: To find, exactly! Great. Thank you...uhm...the third question: uhm...is it important that the choristers are able to read music? Er...please explain your answer.

P: Okay now read music...is a...uhm...loaded question. What does that mean? If we have to compare South African choirs that can read music to European choirs that can read music, I mean there's just...just no comparison. In...in...if we really look at it, I don't think there is a single choir in South Africa that can read music, and I truly mean that. I mean we, both you and I come from the Drakensberg Boys' Choir, we were taught how to kind of read music and that, but at the end of the day that was the beginning steps. Choirs in general cannot read music in this country. Reading music is being able to take music and you can sight read it through without the help of a piano or without note bashing. Now most...I mean, really the high majority of choirs including the top choirs in the country, if you look at your university choirs: Stellenbosch University, Camerata, my Chamber Singers, Akkustika, none of them can read music. They have music sense, so in other words they know if a music note goes up or goes down. So yes

there is a degree of being able to what we call “follow” music. But, that’s why I say sight reading is a loaded question. Okay, it’s a...I mean it’s a really important question. And the truth is choirs cannot sight read music because they’re not taught it from young. They’re...primary schools where you have music in schools and that, they should be teaching kids to read music but they don’t. They do this “musical appreciation” where you hit a drum or you dance to music playing in the background and they call that music appreciation. I suppose it has value, but...it’s not teaching choirs how to sight read music. And conductors are big at flaw here...because we don’t encourage sight reading in any kind of way. So to ask is it important that the choristers are able to read music, of course it is, but you’re not going to get that. So we have to deal with the situation as it is. None of my choirs can sight read music to a large extent. I mean, you’ll have one or two that will have a very good extent, but its note bashing from beginning to end. And we are all guilty, because what we do is we make rehearsal cds and uhm...they learn the music by ear...uh...in order for us to try achieve the highest level of...of musical musicianship or musical appreciation. But that doesn’t solve the problem of our students not being able to fish for life. You know, we’re feeding them for a day, we’re not teaching them how to fish. So we’re not feeding them for life pretty much. So is it important for them to sight read? Absolutely, but it’s not a necessity for choosing singers in your choir. You as a conductor should take the initiative to teach them how to sight read with the beginning lessons and that’s easy to do. It’s time consuming yes, and somebody’s going to have to take the initiative where they actually say, you know what, I’m going to start from the basics and that. Of course the problem is that you bore your singers and then...they don’t sing for you anymore.

R: That’s very interesting. Uhm...okay let go onto the next question, number four: what styles or genres of choral music do you choose to cater for the interest of the audience? How many different styles or genres do you choose and what is your reason for this?

P: Once again, very important question and also again a very loaded question. This is all based on your philosophy. Every conductor has...or should have a philosophy. I think more often conductors don’t have philosophies and therefore they don’t know. What we...what we ultimately must remember is that every decision you make in life,

whether it's career bound or personal bound or whatever, is based on your beliefs, your philosophy. My philosophy is to educate people through music. I use choral music as a tool to educate and to inspire people. I want to train them holistically, I want to solve their worldly problems through choral music. That's pretty much what I do. Uhm...and there's a place and a time for all types of music. Again...if it...depending on which choir you talk about, uhm...you're going to have different kinds of music or whatever the case might be. My chamber choir, The Chamber Singers would choose totally different music compared to the Camerata or compared to a school choir. If you look at the beginners school choir and that, uhm...those that have not been..uhm...exposed to music greatly, then as an educator you would...your philosophy should be to introduce them to as many aspects of music as possible. Now in the past, again this a loaded question, because in the past we used to say that means they must do a Baroque piece, a Classical piece, a Romantic piece, a Modern, a Twenty First Century and that, but as we all know we have limitations and restrictions to...to the amount of music we can teach a choir within a year, especially certain schools don't allow for too much cultural music to be taught or too much cultural time and therefore you're limited. Some schools force their choirs to compete in competitions where you have set works uhm...and set criteria and then you spend most of the time doing that which takes away from you as a conductor in the sense that you can follow your own philosophies. In saying this, ideally we would like to expose our children to all types of music. I mean, if we want to teach them how to sight read, music from the renaissance and baroque music is probably the best music to help...music in polyphonic style and to teach them how to sight read. Why? Because it moves by step ladder, it teaches them about rhythms and all of that and I mean, and as members of the Drakensberg that was the first thing that we learnt, was how to...to learn Bach... to sing Bach or Palestrina. And Palestrina was the first thing that I learnt to sing and that's why I learnt how to sight read. We have this notion that singing homophonic music, especially music that jumps is easier to read. It's rubbish, it's not! Polyphonic music is, but in this country we don't do it. In the defence of that, again we have to look at...audience and we have to look at the singers. Now if you get to a choir in the "platteland" and you go there and introduce Bach to them, you won't be left with a choir because it's far outside their spectrum of understanding. So...but it

doesn't mean that you don't do Bach, you've got to win them with the way that you do things. Give them what they want. If you want a child to eat his vegetables, you've got to...you gotta bribe him with candy. That's exactly what you have to do. You've got to give them something that they can relate to and then you've got to sell to them something else. They've got to respect you as a person and conductor before you can sell out the rest. And in the same way not only do you educate the singers, but you'll educate your audience. If you give the *Karoonag* by Coenie de Villiers, every "platteland se dorpie" is going to think you're the best choir in the world and the same time throw in something entirely different that they don't know and build their appreciation, educate the audience as much as you educate the singers. So...uh, the styles of choral music and that...uhm, it's important to choose a variety. Again, we have the other side of the...of the scale, where we've got such a multi-cultural choir that not only do we have to teach Bach and Mozart and Beethoven or this but you've gotta also...treat Afrikaans or teach Afrikaans music versus traditional cultures versus light music or pop music as we call it, to be able to inspire. So you've got quit a wide variety of music that you have to select from so it is understandable if you don't get to Bach and Mozart and rather opt to do the traditional versus the Afrikaans versus the light music on the "plattelands" and that. But in no way may you compromise the integrity of the voices and the vocal techniques of the music that you teach because even if you teach Coenie de Villiers you can either find or arrange a good arrangement for your choir that will be musically...uh...lovely to listen to as well as technically good for their voices which will build them musically and of course...in vocal technique.

R: Very true. Okay, uh...the next question number five, fifth question: what is your opinion on the balance of Western and African music in your program?

P: The balance, okay so again...(laughing) again a very loaded question. Uh...so are we talking about a...uh... beginner school choir or choirs in general?

R: Specifically beginner.

P: Okay so...again it depends where the school is situated. In South Africa we like to call ourselves multi-cultural, but you still get a lot of Afrikaans schools versus a lot of non-Afrikaans schools or whatever the case might be. I mean, in a perfect example is when I taught at (school omitted from transcription to protect the privacy of participant), I mean my (school omitted from transcription to protect the privacy of participant) choir was one hundred percent white...and Afrikaans. So I mean, that's probably scale...is going to be slightly different uhm...than if you had for example multi-cultural choir like I had with boys' choir (school omitted from transcription to protect the privacy of participant) where you know sixty percent of the choir is traditional languages and forty percent are either English or Afrikaans. So again it all depends on the choir set up and that but from a beginning choir once again I'd look at the ratio choir and if you...lets you have a multi-cultural choir uhm...you have a mixed choir uhm...then the...the balance would probably be equal in the sense of...uh...uh...Afrikaans versus traditional music, uhm...so I would...if I had to look in perspective if you have two traditional African songs I'd have two Afrikaans songs. Then the rest of the program that I would have would be worldly music. So pop music that they all can relate to, or Bach which none of them can relate to. So in other words, you...everybody has the same...is on the same playing field (*Michael smiles as he says this and the researcher chuckles with him*). You know, throw in a Katy Perry or a Cold Play or what...or that they all listen to. I mean regardless whether your student is a zulu or an Afrikaans they all listen to Cold Play. They all listen to...uhm...the...the...those kinds of music. And a lot...most of the music kids that you have, none of them listen to Bach, none of them listen to Mozart. So put them all in the same playing field because then they all are at the same level and I think that's really important when it comes to vocal technique. You gotta get everyone to the same musicianship level with vocal technique. You can't leave anybody behind so you gotta choose music that's going to...let them all grow at the same...at the rate or at least gonna have some that's going to pull the others with them. And this is highly important so it's a good technique, because remember you've gotta...you cater for a whole group of people...uh...a very wide age group, from Matrics down to Grade 8, if it's a secondary school choir. Let's say your choir is from Grade 8 to Matric: now you're gonna have some of those that might have sung in the choir for a couple of years and

so they're more musically astute, others that haven't. You've got different age groups so therefore you've got to be able to talk to a level where you're mature enough with the Matrics but young enough for the...it's a...it's a huge responsibility! I mean, if you're a teacher in the class room you'll teach the same age, you deal with the same level people, you have the same, you know standard of understanding. But in a choir set up you've got a wide spectrum and that's what makes it, first of all a great learning environment because the younger ones can learn from the older ones uh...but also a challenging environment for you as a conductor because you'll have to be able to cater for all different types of personalities, all different maturity levels uhm...throughout...throughout the choir scene. So I would say a balanced program between traditional and Afrikaans program. If you...are more inclined to have an Afrikaans school, then I would probably add one or two more Afrikaans "what's it's names", but keep in mind there should be no...no minority group in a choir...at all! Choirs should be equal across the board. So keep it as...as equal as you possibly can. Then, throw in music that they can all relate to or that no one can relate to and that's where the educational experience will take place.

R: Alright...uhm, then uh...question number six: what is your definition of quality repertoire? And another question that goes with that: what is quality repertoire to you?

P: Okay so...quality repertoire again...all these questions are based on your philosophy and I think it would be really good for you to...to delve in on philosophy because everybody has a different philosophy. Uhm...for me quality repertoire is repertoire...that's new...and different. I don't...I don't like...I mean South African Choirs got a huge problem. A huge, huge problem where there's too few people that are uhm...regurgitating music. You know somebody sings shozoloza and then everybody sings shozoloza. Or somebody does an Eric Whitacre and then everybody does Eric Whitacre. And I...I don't think it's just a South African problem, I think it's a problem over the world. Uhm...people are lazy, you know and somebody does the work and then everybody kind of follows on on that. So I mean I would bring for example...a...a very good example, Jonathan Dove to the country and then everybody starts performing music by Jonathan Dove...because and...and I don't think it's a bad thing necessarily,

but it becomes a problem when you go to a high school choir festival and the music that you hear is...is (*at that stage it seemed my phone device stopped recording and I motioned to Michael to stop so that I could check the device*)...just see if it's continued recording.

R: Okay...I think it's still going. It's still busy.

P: So uhm...uh...what were we talking about? Quality repertoire. So I think the most important thing here is...(*Michael then remembers what we were specifically talking about*) uhm...the regurgitation of music. It...there's nothing worse than going to a choir festival and all the choirs are singing music that has been done. Uhm...you know...nobody's looking for new music...there's such great music out there. Uhm...so therefore quality music is music that's new and interesting and contextualised. There's nothing better, than for example, uhm...uh...a group comes out with a hit...uh...you know a really good hit...uh...like a pop song if you're talking about a secondary school choir, arrange that for your choir. That's how you're going to win them over. I mean Titanic, My Heart Will Go On was so...two thou...well ninety, ninety seven. You know kids don't want to sing that anymore. And usually as conductors we think "Oh this pop song is nice" but we forget to relate to the...to the students. So quality repertoire is music that the singers can relate to. Now they cannot relate to all music obviously because that's...otherwise there'd be no educational value. And quality repertoire is music that you as the conductor love. If you love the music and truly think that there's value in it, then the...the...the...you'll easily be able to inspire...inspire the children. Again this is where you have a problem with these choir competitions because they choose music for you. And you might not like the music and therefore the educational value goes straight out the window. Uhm...so I think quality repertoire for me is a variety of repertoire. It's...if you look at it as a whole, it's repertoire that crosses a whole uhm...uhm...stylistic genres. From old music to new music, from music in different languages, music of different speeds, music of major and minor and music of different feelings and emotions. And not only is this important for your singers educational value but it's important for your audience, because otherwise it gets exceptionally boring to uh...sit and listen to the same style of musical styles...same genre of music. And in

order to find quality repertoire you have to do research. I mean you have to choose forty pieces before you find ten that are great, you know, or five that are great and of those ten that great ten...half of them might be in the same kind of categories, so you can't all do them in the same year. And that's what a lot of conductors do, they like all these pieces, put them together and then you get this lucky kind of packet. So quality music is music that...that educates and inspires and that is good for the choir and that the choir will end up loving at the end of the day.

R: Alright thank you, the last question: which attributes does a Choir Conductor need to be successful and...or what makes a successful Choir Conductor?

P: Okay (Michael laughs)...so again, a fully loaded question. I mean all these questions I've just skimmed on the top for you I mean, you...you could delve in and as...as the lecturer in choral conducting here, this is a question that I ask myself every day. What do I want my students to know? In other words, what is important for choral conductors to be able to know? And the most important thing that I can tell you is that a choral conductor is an educator. Choir conductors are teachers, we're not musicians. And you see this is where people get...get the mistake. They think that we're...we're performing artists. We happen to perform on stage, but that is the smallest part of our job. The biggest part of our job is everything that happens behind the stage. We're educators and teachers. Therefore the most important attribute of a...of a conductor is an educator. You have to teach, you have to be able to teach them about everything that you...you want to teach them. The philosophies...uh...behind your...your choices uhm...the...the vocal technique. I mean, if I had a nickel for every conductor that I met that knows nothing about the voice, I mean why, how do you teach singing or a choir conductor if you have uh...uh...no teaching...uh...or no uhm...no vocal uhm...technique. Uhm...in saying also...all of this, teaching is more than just about being a good conductor, knowing how to swing your arms or knowing what music to teach and that, you've got to be able to work with people. You're a people's person. Okay, and in order to be a...a great conductor, especially at school you've got to understand children. You've got to understand kids and every choir that you go to, a Grade 8 choir in Pretoria is going to be totally different to a Grade 8 choir in Cape Town, is going to be

totally different to a Grade 8 choir in Poff Adder (a small South African town). So you have to understand where the children are coming from and the way that you do that is you become...you become a leader for them. You become a...a something...a role model that they can look up to. When your...your belief systems and that have to be something that tie into an educational value. You've got to be morally sound, you've got to uhm...you've got to...you've gotta think, you've gotta...gotta...you've gotta teach them on their level. Uhm...so you've gotta know the children and the know the choir. So probably the most...the two most important aspects is you've got to be a people's person, or in this case a children's person because you're teaching children at that age, and of course you've got to...in other words a good human being uhm...and secondly or firstly you've got to be an educator. Those are the two most important aspects by far and of course all the other things come on, you've gotta know...have a good ear, you've gotta be able to conduct, you gotta...but I mean, it's starts at the beginning. And I mean, and...and the reason why I say this, is especially for the beginner choir: any person, any person can make a beginner choir sound good if they are a good human being and a good uhm...uh...educator. Because they will be able to inspire those children to sound like anything. I mean, if you've got nothing it's easy to make them sound like something. The other aspects like knowing about the voice and knowing technical...conducting techniques and intonation and the difference between a hemiola and all these kinds of things are totally technical aspects but those aspects will take you to a level from good to great! And at this level, all you want is for a choir to...to get to that stage where they love singing. That's your first aspect, they've got to be passionate about choir singing, you've got to sell choir singing to them and how you sell that to them is up to you. As long as when they walk out those rehearsals they feel "Man, I...I really feel like being here" and they're gonna feel like being there because they feel welcome, they feel like they're in an environment where they feel safe and happy and they get to express themselves freely and openly, all because the environment is constructed by the choir leader who they respect. And I think that's the most important aspects.

R: Great, thank you. Uhm...that's the interview. Uh...just for the record, which uhm...which secondary school choirs did you conduct or do you still conduct?

(To protect the participant's privacy, his answer was not included in this transcript)

R: Great, thank you so much!

Interview with conductor number 2

Researcher: R*

Participant: P*

R: Today I am going ugh.. to interview conductor number 2* (real name not included in the transcript to protect the participant's privacy). And uhm.... the topic for my dissertation is guidelines for repertoire selection for a beginner secondary school choir and explanatory case study.

Umm.... question number one: if we could start. what guidelines do you use to choose repertoire for a beginner secondary school choir?

P: Ok choosing repertoire has to do with what you have to work with. Uhm...If I do my auditions for my choir, say it is the first year for instance of the school, I have to see...I have to look what I have. Usually at high school level the girls are more comfortable with singing. So you'll have more uhm... interest for girls because they've had their voices for a little bit longer. In other words they've had their voices since they were young. I mean the voice goes through changes but with the boys in high school they basically still have their soprano voice when they are fourteen, fifteen and then the voice changes. So in high school you will mostly have boys that do sing, or are interested in music or they want to develop their voice or the change in their voice wasn't so big. Ok so what do you do if you get to a high school and you only have soprano and alto and a few male voices. This is where repertoire comes in. I think if you're building a choir don't start with too big a challenge. You can still do good repertoire even if you start with one or two voices and you build from there to three voices. You have a lot of music that's arranged for SAB and then usually that b is baritone it is not tenor and it's not base. Uhm...from there if you can see that you have enough boys to fully complete SATB then you start with a piece the children would like to learn to sing, in four part harmony. Something where the base is featured a little bit and has a nice line and the tenor has a solo. I think uhm... style of repertoire for high school level is its educational value. You have to do something that interests the children without sacrificing the educational value. So for instance, a good pop song, there is nothing wrong with it if it teaches the fundamentals of education, about listening, about harmony, about part singing all of that. But if you want to ... Well it depends in which community you are as well, if you have to sing more Afrikaans music or you have to sing more African traditional music uhm.... that is going to influence your repertoire as well. Okay.

R: Thank you

P: That was the first question

R: Great Second question: which aspects of vocal technique and musicianship do you consider important to develop through repertoire you've chosen?

P: Well I always say if you have a good melody then you've already won. If you can teach them to sing a good melody that's where you start. Because singing unison is the most difficult thing. For them to hear the range in the voice, uhm...that is going to determine your vocal ability as well. Because you can start teaching them in one single line about phrasing, about voice colour, when to open the vowels. I think in choral singing most of it is based on the same technique of open vowels. Open vowels means relaxed tongue good mouth position. Uhm... so you don't really have to change your singing style when you teach uhm...what was the question? vocal (I remind her vocal technique) ja vocal technique. I don't believe a teenage.... a teenager has to be aware of operatic technique or belting or Belcanto technique. Because you are going to lose them. Unless you are in such a level that you can explain those techniques to them. But in the beginning I think you as a conductor have to be aware of those techniques and at the end of the day teach open vowel singing and from there explain the anatomy of the voice, and then when you need certain sounds within the music then you can apply a little bit of operatic singing if you want to make them aware of things that they need to do.

The second part of your question uhm... musicianship. Well musicianship I mean to teach a child musicianship would be to teach them to listen. That is the first thing. If they can listen and you can even give them you know little assignments of saying go find a song with a good melody or go find a song with a massive interval range the next week to say ok to say that is the highest note and the lowest note so that you make them aware of pitch. Uhm...I mean there are different things that you can apply in a very playful educational way that teaches them about musicianship. And if you have to develop it through (I help her with the word repertoire) through the repertoire that is going to be up to you. Because if you are going to choose a song for instance like this Pharrell Williams song Happy (she sing: because I'm happy). I mean it repeats happy, happy, happy, happy. And you can already start teaching them in a in a in a simple song like that about "Okay let's do a crescendo", (she sings happy loud and then soft to demonstrate dynamics)...going softer, things like that using very simple ideas but teaching them musicianship even in a pop song.

R: Yes, amazing! Wow, interesting. Ok thank you, uh...third question: is it important that the choristers are able to read music? Explain your answer. Please explain your answer.

P: In a perfect world of course we all want our choristers to read music (both myself and the participant laugh at the statement). But the most important thing is that they have to be familiar with music. I mean in primary school you get a lot of the times that the...the teachers or the conductors they only give the words on a sheet of paper. I understand that because maybe at that level they feel...or they don't have enough time in their rehearsals to teach the young children how to read music. But I

think it is very important. And I do it even with the boys that have never seen a piece of music in their life for instance or the girls. Uhm... to give them the sheet music and explain to them where their part is. And so that they don't feel that musical notation or music notation is something just for the elite or the uhm...you know the trained, that it's something... it's a language they have to see that it falls into patterns that the melody goes up or down even if they don't understand the all note values yet or can tell you exactly "That is b flat, that is f sharp", for them to start seeing ok my line stays there or it moves up and down is already away of teaching them how to sight read. Ja and just to say I think every year they get better and you have one or two maybe strong musicians in your choir or somebody that can read music but maybe doesn't have the best voice is to involve that person and sit that...put that person next to the strongest voice and say you guys are a team. And you going to help each other. You are going to show that person. Then you create somebody who loves to teach and you create a leader within your choir. And you're developing ears.

R: Ok next question number four: what styles or genres of choral music do you choose to cater for the interest of the audience?

P: Ja the thing is if you look at the different styles of music. We live in a very cosmopolitan society in South Africa. It's very difficult to travel to let's say the platteland and expect them to appreciate Bach for instance. They might love it, but they might be bored as well. Then when you're living in the city for instance like Johannesburg or Pretoria and you choose Bach as well, it might be that your parents aren't interested in that music. So it is a question of taste. I think at the end of the day you shouldn't sacrifice repertoire to please people. I don't believe that. But I think in your program it should be varied enough that you do have something for the avid listener who wants to hear something more...maybe more choral related. Uhm... but you should also have something for somebody whose child is only in the choir and they listen to what's on the radio and they want to see the child excel. So I...I sincerely believe at that level of secondary school if it is a good melody you've already won.

R: Question number five: What is your opinion on the balance of western and African music in your program?

P: Uhm...I think you should have both first of all. Then western music is...it's quite broad. Because it could be western music through different styles, classical, romantic, modern music. Uhm...and African music is more specific. So you're actually putting a few genres under western and one genre under African music. Umm...so for me, I believe in balance in the program completely. Uhm...so that is actually a difficult question for me to answer. Because Western music say I have a choir that has ten year's experience behind them umm.... And they can sing Eric Whitacre, they can sing Bach, that is already completely different from each other. I do believe that being a conductor in South Africa we have the wonderful privilege of singing African music. It is not something that is maybe as foreign as Palestrina to

us. And I think it can be worked into your program and still be entertaining and educational. People think of African music as something sub- standard because it is an oral tradition. But you get different levels of African music.

R: Okay, Uhm...question number six: what is your definition of quality repertoire?

P: Quality repertoire. Okay. Sometimes I choose a lot of music or I order a lot of music on line without having really listened to some of it. Sometimes when I do have time I use google ag...youtube or something to listen to the melodies or I love to look at leading conductors in their field. I love to look at their concert programs. Internet is a wonderful thing. If you do your research correctly you could see which streams are leading. For...at one stage about two years ago (inaudible sound)...Scandinavian composers was very popular to listen to. So to answer your question, I think if you look at quality repertoire, usually if you look at an arranger or a composer that has been picked up by quite a lot of good choirs, I would say that's a very basic definition of quality repertoire. But I would start there to see what is the trend in choral music. Sometimes you find a gem, sometimes you find a young composer who has written something com... beautiful, but it is the only piece they have ever written. But if you look through it, and if you study the score you see "Okay it's a good melody and a catchy harmony". To me that is quality repertoire as well. I wouldn't say quality repertoire is a definite choral style. I'd say quality repertoire is what works for the voice. And again applying it to secondary school, I mean you can't choose something Russian that is completely low. Because for me that is not even quality for high schools you know or a kind of a Baroque work with runs for sopranos and things. I mean to me its quality music but not quality repertoire for age you're working with.

R: Uhm...last question: what makes a successful choir conductor?

P: I would say an informed musician. I mean choir conducting is very complex in the sense of you're not just a musician, you are a father or mother figure to that child you're working with. You're a phycologist, you have to be an entertainer you know. There are a few different roles that really make a successful choir conductor. And then if you take all of those things you have to try and be a well-rounded person. The reason for that is you can be eccentric and in your own world, but if you work with secondary school children you have to have certain qualities I think in your personality that everybody will find something that they like. Because at secondary school level it is all about uhm...developing personality and developing their skills. So if they can't find a way to communicate with you it is going to push it even one step back for you (I ask her if communication is important.) Ja, Communication is extremeley important. In Afrikaans se ons aanklank. Hulle moet by jou kan aanklank vind. Jy kan nie jousef so ver van hulle distansieer, dat jy's die conductor en jou woord is wet nie. Daar is sekere tye... There is certain times when you have to be. And that is another role, You have to be an autocrat at some times you know. But certain times you have to be a friend as well. And it is really tough to decide and you

learn from your mistakes, when do you give and when do you take. I don't think you ever stop learning. And I don't think that you ever stop growing. And everytime you do something you say "Why didn't I try like that, I shouldn't have said that" or "I actually did that quite well you know".

R: Okay, is there anything else you would like to add?

P: Why do you have this I am going to ask you a question. Why have you chosen specifically secondary school age, is it because it is so popular in South Africa?

R: I think Uhm... not... I think for me why I chose it is was because after university I got into a high school ... there was a job that opened for me for a high school choir at (school's name not included in this transcription to protect the privacy of the institution) wanted me to start a choir. And Uhm... I got there thinking "Well I have a lot of choir experience singing in choirs and studied music, it shouldn't be too difficult". I went in there and I realized that it is really difficult because I have to start the choir, so I have to teach people who want to sing but can't necessary sing. I had to teach them how to sing. And I was stuck with as you mentioned now just with SAB and the guys you couldn't put into two parts, they were hardly singing one part so I had to choose a repertoire that had SAB and that was quite challenging for me I must say. What do you choose, what level do you choose. Is this too difficult and how much time are you willing to spend on this piece, because you only have a certain amount of time. So you have to decide, "Okay I am going to stick to this piece and keep on running it through and see how it works until the Eisteddfods come or do I decide now okay let's rather leave this piece, and take something else". Then you arrange something else for the choir maybe as well you know that's a bit easier. So ja that was quite challenging a.... but I also felt that it was a good growing experience for me. But that's why...this is where this comes from. Was specifically because of that experience.

P: Let me give you an example if I work with my youth choir and I know that we are going to compete, I start with the competition music with them because I know what I have and I know that the voices are already at a certain level. But if I for instance I know they have to sing at the ATKV for example with the boys choir, I don't start with the competition music in the beginning. First of all it is at a level where they might lose interest and they might learn certain bad habits that I am going to have to work double as hard to fix it in the end. For instance, international voice colour. So I start with an easier program with the boys and we set a goal, we say "Okay at the end of March we must be ready to perform" and then we have like this café concerts. Whether they sing two or three voices maybe four voices, it must have a nice song, it must have a catchy and they must be interested so that they develop their voices. Then we say "Okay in March now we start". This is one of the competition pieces and I start slowly introducing it, adding it and so on. So I try to work with a plan as well because in those first few weeks it's crucial to keep their interest and to make them want to work at something and be better.

R: Uh...Just for the record uhm... which secondary school choirs do you conduct and that you're busy with and which other choirs even if they are not secondary school choirs do you conduct?

(To protect the participant's privacy, her answer was not included in this transcript)

R: Great, okay...great , daarsy...dankie!

P: Dankie.

Interview with conductor number 3

Researcher: R*

Participant: P*

R: So uhm...(real name not included in the transcript to protect the participant's privacy), thank you for joining me today, um. For the record, I'm interviewing ...(real name not included in the transcript to protect the participant's privacy) today and the topic of my thesis is "Guidelines for repertoire selection for a beginner secondary school choir: an explanatory case study".

The first question and the main question is what I'm going to ask you is connected to the heading that I just read and it's "what guidelines do you use to choose repertoire for a beginner secondary school choir and which factors do you take into account when choosing a repertoire for your choir". So, the question is basically the same. If you need the question here it is as well.

P: Okay, that's actually quite uhm...a lengthy answer. Uh... there are various factors I take into consideration. Uh...first of all, what's most important to me is I...I look at all the singers that I have. Uhm...that's...that's my first criteria. I see what singers do I have to work with and then I will uhm...choose a repertoire according to that. And then the second factor (uhm...I'm trying to prioritise this now in order), the second factor is their ability. Uhm...I've...after I've determined what...how many singers of each voice group do I have? And do I have enough male voices, female voices? I uhm...try and determine each voice group as a whole; their ability...what they can do, their limits...what they cannot do. And then I will choose uhm...criteria according to that.

Uh...another factor uhm...which I also use is, or take into consideration is, uhm...maybe they have a...a lack in a certain department or in a certain skills. So, for instance uhm...let's say, this specific year I find it that my choir struggles with singing staccato pieces or legato pieces. Then I will try and go and look specifically for a piece or a work that incorporates a lot of staccato singing or legato singing or uhm...let's say,

uh...to challenge them for instance also a different language from their mother tongue. So I will take that also into consideration.

Uhm...and then also, uhm...to have a balanced programme, so to look at the year ahead to see what performance or upcoming performances we might have, to uhm...try and balance the programme, to make sure that you have enough works of each genre and that you can perhaps have works to be performed in an outside venue for instance, uh...or for uhm...let's say uh...works that are suitable for a solo concert where it's only my choir, or enough works where we...let's say, invited to a music festival or a high school choir festival that uhm...it's suitable for that as well because you need to take time limits also into consideration ie. How much time do you have to study a repertoire? So I think that's basically it...uhm...those three/ four factors.

R: Okay, thank you, uh...I think you...you touched some of the other questions I was going to ask you as well but we'll also ask those questions. The second question is: which aspects of vocal technique and musicianship would you consider important to develop the repertoire you've chosen.

P: Okay uhm...well, I think with young singers because we're talking specifically with secondary high school...high school?

R: Ja, high school, high school...

P: Beginner ja beginner...it's secondary so it's beginner choirs, I...I think it's very very important to start from the onset uhm...to touch on aspects like; posture, breathing and a lot of breathing exercises. Breathing, uhm...a lot of young singers struggle with breathe control and...and breathing correctly. So uhm...I think that's very important. If I have to highlight two aspects; breathing would be the first one and secondly vocal uh...uh...vowel production, uhm...pronouncing the vowels correctly you know, streamlining them, get them in the correct place. So, if it's a beginner choir, I would focus, I would say...a two hour rehearsal...I would focus literally an hour to an hour and a half. Even though it's not always in during warm up but when I'm busy uhm...teaching them a piece or they're busy learning a piece, we will focus on breathing and vowel

production. Because I think without that, ja, nothing good can come. You can't...you can't reach your ideal sound or a very healthy sound.

R: Okay uhm...great uhm...let's carry on uh...number three. Is it important that the choristers are able to read music? Uh...explain your answer.

P: I think, at that age, it's not really necessary.

R: Which age are we talking about?

P: Secondary high school. So it will be let's say from age thirteen/fourteen at some schools up until eighteen/nineteen. Thirteen/fourteen say eighteen/nineteen...nineteen. Uhm...but it will definitely help speed up the process in learning music. And I think they will obviously also have a better understanding of the music if they can read really basic music you know just, you know, whole note, half-note minims and maybe understand what a rest is, you know. So uhm...because I think a lot of singers in my choir, my secondary school choir, can't read music...but uhm I do get the feeling if those that can read music they're obviously going to learn music faster and I think everything just makes more sense to them. They can place their voice group or their line uhm...within the other groups and...and it just comes more natural to them if they can...if they have the ability to read basic...basic notes.

R: Yes, yes. Do you think uhm...uhm...whether they can read music or not would that affect the amount of pieces that you can do with them?

P: Oh definitely! Definitely uhm...if the more people in your choir can read music the...obviously the more quicker you can study more repertoire and that will just lead to more repertoire. To get more repertoire in your...in your programme or let's say in your, ja, programme.

R: Okay great. Okay...fourth question: what styles or genres of choral music do you choose to cater for the interests of the audience and uhm...uhm...another question that goes with it is how many different styles or genres do you choose and what is your reasoning for this?

P: I believe as a choral conductor, one of my main purposes in life as a conductor is not only to entertain people or entertain the audience, it's also to educate the kids. So, I try to include as big a variety as possible in the programme so I will always if possible uhm...include some early music like at least one Renaissance or Baroque piece uhm...if the choir is capable of singing it. Because most of the music that time uhm...is written for acapella or even motets or whatever but the accompanied pieces are too difficult for them. So uhm...

R: (Inaudible response)

P: Exactly! Uhm...so what I do is I go and try to look for some arrangements that are maybe a bit easier and use accompaniments like piano for instance. So uhm...I will always include something like that, so let's say heavy classical music and then I will move slowly away to lighter music. Uhm...I will always include one or two pop songs. I will also you know include, you know, traditional African music.

Uhm...so, for me, to be quite honest it is actually not about the audience at all. It's about the education of the people in the choir, especially the young kids. Uhm...teaching them not only artistically...artistic things and musical things but also life lessons. So, to be quite honest uhm...I put that first and then I will look at, okay uhm...is this programme suitable for the audience? Are they not going to get bored? Will they be entertained? Uhm...but that's secondary. I always try and see can I...what can I teach the kids. You know what's, how can I educate them as...as far as possible with...with the music, so...

R: Okay, you've touched on uh...my next question uh...number five. What is your opinion on the balance of Western and African music in your programme?

P: I think that's very important. It's difficult it...it...it depends and it differs from choir to choir. Uhm...I think it's actually a very difficult question. Uhm...I think some conductors will actually lean towards the bigger half of the programme being traditional music. And the smaller half would be you know, Classical Western music. I feel it should be the other way around. Uhm...I think it should be 60/40% maybe even 70/30%. 70% Western Classical music (or light music) and 30% traditional music. Uhm...It really depends on what...what situation you are in. Uhm...if it's a...if it's a private school, you

will treat it differently. If it's...it's in a school that's in a you know, settlement somewhere...

R: A rural area.

P: A rural area you will...might obviously you know, include more traditional music. So I think you should first look at what the situation is at the school that you are at. So...

R: Great, Okay. Uhm...number six. What is your definition of quality repertoire and/or what is quality repertoire to you?

P: Well the first thing that I look in a piece or when I get new music is actually not the music, it's the text. If the text is not something profound or speaks to me immediately I don't even look at the music. Because I think that's the only reason why there is vocal or choir music. I mean, otherwise it could have been a piano piece, sonata or a cello sonata piece or whatever the case may be. There is a reason why there are words and the music must support the words. So first of all I look at the text. The quality repertoire for me is the text really has a deeper meaning, or a meaning or a message. And then, uhm...it's very important to...like I say...it always goes back to education. Educating the kids. So, uhm...you know teaching, them different techniques. Uhm...challenging them with...let's say difficult intervals or uhm...singing staccato, singing legato, singing softly, singing you know piano, singing forte, to try and vary the repertoire that you teach them a bit of everything. So, that's quality repertoire; if the piece has uh...you know profound text and an educational value. If it doesn't have an educational value, I wouldn't consider programming that piece.

R: Good, interesting. Okay, thanks. Last question: which attributes does a choir conductor need to be successful and uh...what makes a successful choir conductor? Those two questions go hand in hand.

P: I think, well first of all this is actually going into another very broad discussion. But obviously uhm...a choir conductor is a...a leader. So, he needs to possess very good leadership skills. He needs to be able to uhm...psych, I almost wanna say you know the

people in his choir, and he must try to excite them and uhm...and...and get them to buy into the product. That's very important. Uh...what's the question again?

R: Uhm...what attributes does a choir conductor need to be successful? And the question that goes with it, what makes...what makes a successful choir conductor.

P: So, leadership is my first answer. The second answer: you are working with people. So, you need to try and...and...uhm...maybe do a course in you know, psychology or something. But it's really...really a lot about managing people so, good leadership. Good leadership skills; being a good leader, uhm...managing people, know what is going on in your choir. And then also, a conductor needs to be hungry for learning. That can never stop. You always need to be out there attending concerts, looking for new repertoire, constantly trying to you know see what's...what's going on out there you know with regards to development of...of the choral arts. So, uhm...that makes a successful conductor I think.

R: Good! Ok, just for the record which choirs do you conduct at this time?

(To protect the participant's privacy, his answer was not included in this transcript)

R: Great! Thank you...thank you Gerrit.

P: It's *been* a pleasure.

Interview with conductor number 4

Researcher R*

Participant P*

R: Guidelines for Repertoire selection for beginner secondary school choir and explanatory case study and uh...I'm going to be interviewing conductor number 4* (real name not included in the transcript to protect the participant's privacy) today.

And uhm...first let's start with the first question. Uhm.... First question: what guidelines do you use to choose repertoire for a beginners secondary school choir.

P: I think the well- being of your choir depends almost no not... not only on that but like eighty percent of the success you will have depends on what you choose. Because I always think that it is a... a... everybody knows what to choose but it's not true. I think it's important to make a selection uhm... before you start with the choir, so that will enable you to have something ready for whatever occasion might arise. To give you an example, I had a school choir and we were working on a sacred piece, and the head master died suddenly, and there was no time to prepare a song so if I didn't plan for any sort of event I wouldn't have something ready. So I believe you have to have a very varied program that includes.... I always... I always head my repertoire the following way serious sacred, that is just my own way of doing it, Serious sacred that is for the really smart concerts or maybe the funerals or the weddings. Then light sacred then I do secular music there must be something secular. I do folk music which is not only African but all folk music because I think it is a wonderful tool to do folk music everybody loves it. And then I do fun music. So if you have enough sacred music of both heavy and lighter you can sing in churches, you can sing for Eisteddfods, in concerts for the funeral that arises. The Secular piece or two is mostly for competitions when you have to impress and prove that you know good repertoire. The fun pieces are there to...to hold the kids captive. To let them enjoy it maybe with moves. And the folk music I think is the genre of choral music that we don't use enough. Because remember folk music comes from the people. If it's not good it will not survive the time. So if we get it, it means it's worthwhile listening to. And everybody loves folk music. You don't have to teach them this is a Russian folk music it's all about this. They will love it when they hear it even uhm...any American, European. I did a Norwegian, I am doing Norwegian folk music this with my choir. Everybody loves it. So...I have headings, and I must find music to go into those headings to give me a balanced program. Does that answer your question?

R: Yes it does. Thank you.

R: Okay, the second question: which aspects of vocal technique and musicianship do you consider important to develop through repertoire you have chosen?

P: Uhm....actually that is a very uhm... big question and it involves a lot of things. Vocal technique? I work on vocal technique every..., every rehearsal. Because I firmly believe that you can't teach the technique by teaching the repertoire. You have to teach the technique with the technical work and once they know what you want they will they will...they will implement that in the repertoire in the music. So it's for me blending is exceptionally important. I work a lot on phrasing. I work a lot on the same placement. The vowel placement that should not be all over the place. Uhm...breathing techniques. If you mention technical things, off cause intonation, which is I am not sure if it falls under technical but intonation is just as important in your vocal exercises as it is in your repertoire. And I find that if I...if I can manage to crack the intonation, to let them hear a pure octave a pure fifth, a good chord a do-re-me-fa-so-la-ti-do coming down without going flat then they will not do it in the repertoire, or they will be better when I encounter that. And what I do is when I have a piece that have a technical problem I always go back to the exercises and say "Aha this is where you use this for what we been doing". And I relate it to the exercises. So blend is important, intonation, uhm...breathing, I can't think of anything else now but all the things that I need in the music must be there when I do the technical exercises.

R: Thank you. Third question: is it important that the choristers are able to read music? Please explain your answer.

P: I think it's important but I don't think it's imperative. If there's a difference. Because if I have to uhm... just take choristers who can read music, I won't have a choir. And if I spend all my time teaching to read I won't ever have time to make music. So I have to do a combination. I teach my singers (and now I am talking about the university choir and...and...and it may be different if you have a school choir), I always teach the song with the music. I...maybe with folk music it can be different, but if I teach them a formal song, I give them the music. They might not have a faint clue what is going on there, but after four or five years they do. They know this a long note, this is a dotted note goes up and down and with UJ what I do is in the first half of the year I have a uhm... a verpligte... compulsory sight reading class of half an hour once a week where I give them the movements of reading and I teach them five note patterns, arpeggio patterns, arhythmic patterns. Uhm...and it empowers them hugely. When in the beginning where I give them a new piece they totally flabbergasted, they don't know what is the top or the bottom of the page. After six month, you can give them a new piece and they will find their part and they will not be scared of it. I think that's the biggest enemy, is the fear of reading.

R: Thank you. Okay, fourth question: what styles or genres of choral music do you choose to cater for the interest of the audience?

P: Okay you must always remember that the audience are not necessarily fools. So you can't just think of them as laid people because so many times after a concert I saw "Oh, so and so was in the concert". Uhm...for instance I played the organ once

in church and I was looking around and then I saw Prof. Temmingh walking out and I thought "Oh my goodness he was here". So never underestimate your audience. So you must make sure that give something for everybody. But I have another belief, that whatever you do, if you do it well people will like it. So even if you do a really Avangard Twentieth (Century) piece for a relative uneducated audience, if you do it well they will love it. Even if you do country music that I don't particularly like, if you do it well people will love it. So if you do anything well people will love it. But of course you have to bear in mind who your audience are. For instance when we did Kuesta (university choir festival in South Africa) last year. Kuesta is a western originated festival. And my choir is mostly black and we do fifty percent western and fifty percent African music. So I decided for this event I will not do so much African, because my audience will be mainly western people. But I have to include the African because I need to show this is who we are. But I have to be sensitive to my audience. So I would, I would try to impress with difficult western pieces. So and when you sing outside for Mandela day I am definitely not going to sing my Latin Church music pieces. I am going to do the tradition African music.

R: Yes, okay thank you. The fifth question: What is your opinion on the balance of western and African music in your program which you've basically touched on?

P: Ja...ja, I think it might be different for everybody. But in my case I...I do repertoire wise have fifty percent fifty. But I work much harder with my western music Ideals because I have to train my choristers who are black. They can't sing western music well if I don't give them the tools, so I would say two thirds of my energy goes into western music. Because they have a road to go. But they get it. There is no doubt about it.

R: Would you say that you employ,...apply western uhm...western techniques to the African music as well?

P: No, No I think it would be unfair if I want the African people to sing the African music the way I want western music to be sung. Because, uhm... I have a lot of people who differ with me, amongst others my husband which makes it sometimes quite difficult, because he says to me you teach them such good ideals and then they sing African music they just throw it out of the window. But my philosophy is it is their music and this is the way it should be sung. If we change it we...we have no right to change it because we are not the sole information. They also should be allowed to do it the way they want it. And if you change it, it loses its charm. And it becomes un...un...uh...oneerlik? (I help her with the English word unethical) Uhm...dishonest. It's dishonest.

R: Okay. Sorry were you finished with that.

P: Ja...ja.

R: Number six: what is your definition of Quality Repertoire?

P: Uh...It is very wide and it depends, if you show me the piece I will tell you if it is junk or if it's not. Uhm...first of all I think arrangements could...could be not such a good quality. Uhm...It's always good to sing a...an original piece. But that doesn't mean that all arrangements are bad quality. Uhm...what is not good for choir music if one voice carries the tune and the others are just supporting by singing do or oe, that is a bad arrangement. All the parts must be really interesting and people must actually fight and say my part is the nicest. For instance Laurence's music, you know the tenors always say our part is the best, the altos say no our part is the best. That is good choral writing. Good music. Uhm...following good composition a...principals must also apply in music and in choir music. So it's actually a very wide question and difficult to answer in a general sense. Uhm...I know sometimes the kids don't like the more quality pieces. The...for instance I taught my (name of school not included in this transcript to protect the privacy of the participant) a piece by Elgar, As torrens in summer, and they hated it. And then I said why are you looking so dreadful? And then they said "But we don't like this song". I said "How could you not like this song its fantastic". I then the more you work with it the more they fell in love. I think that is one of uh...what is the features of good music. Is the more you work with it the more you love it. With bad music the more you work with it the more you hate it. I think that will actually sum up the situation.

R: Ok thank you. Uhm...last question number seven: what makes a successful choir conductor?

P: Excellent question. I think uhm...knowledge, kindness, passion and uhm...the ability to work with people and inspire them. Because if you have one of those things not you can be whoever you, are as clever you are, but you have to really be kind to your singers. They must keep on loving you and the music forever. But if you don't have knowledge you stuck anyway.

R: When you say knowledge, do you mean knowledge in repertoire or experience and knowledge...

P: Oh ok its two things. The knowledge is the music knowledge. If for instance study music you must be able to read the music and help yourself on the piano, that sort of knowledge. Then the experience comes. I mean more than ... I started thirty... in 1981 with my first choir. Uhm...I did a lot of good things then, but I've learned so much more now. And I know quicker when something is not going to work. I won't spend too much time on something. I...I've paid my school fees now and I also know what to do when. And the students don't always agree with me. But I don't care because I've...I've learned my lessons and...and if they trust me they will let me go and decide. So, somebody like Richard Cock for instance I'm always amazed at his amazing ability, his musicality, but also his ability to...to think very rationally about things. Everything he does is organized, everything is well planned. And a lot of people are not like that. You get fantastic conductors, we won't mention who they are, but who are so scatter brained, they... they come late for their own concerts and

they forget their clothes and that sort of thing which can be a big hindrance when you want to have a successful career.

R: Thank you. Is there anything else you would like to add? Questions or anything else you like to add.

P: I think it takes a long time for a choir to get used to a conductor. And choirs form a very intimate relationship with their...with their conductors. Uhm.... That's why we have sometimes people being a Richter Grimbeeck fan or a Awie van Wyk fan. And then they can hardly....they find it difficult to work with another person, because they want that specific personality traits to be also in the person who might not have it. And I...I find that is one of the...for me the greatest challenge. If you work with a new choir, for instance I'm working with the (name of school not included in this transcript to protect the privacy of the participant) they find it difficult to trust to my way of doing, because they used to somebody else's. And it takes a while for any conductor to uh...to win the trust of the singers and to uhm... because if your singers don't trust you, they must follow you blindly. And if they don't you will always have to fight them and there is no room for fighting. I am not talking physically , uh...musical fighting. They have to just go with you and do whatever you want. And once they do that you can take them places.

R: Thank you. Just for the record uhm...which choirs uhm... which High school choirs did you conduct and are you currently conducting as well as which university choirs are you conducting. What is your position at the university?

(To protect the participant's privacy, her answer was not included in this transcript)

R: Some times in high school choir, my experience is you need to teach them how to sing first before you can really, that is when you starting the choir.

P: Ja you right. Ja and sometimes for instance the The students from (name of school not given for the privacy of the conductor and the school) the girls, they come from pretty good primary school choirs, so they have a lot to learn, but it has a down side as well because they sometimes question what I want. And for me it's very strange that they question me. Uhm...the girls who know nothing. So I always give them an answer, but I am slightly taken aback where the students never question me. They just...maybe because they know they don't know. They come from uh... different walks of life and they completely ignorant and they love everything they learn and they think it is the best thing that happen to them. So It is a different energy completely.

R: Thank You

P: Pleasure. Daar het jy hom.

Interview with conductor number 5

Researcher: R*

Participant: P*

R: Today I am going to interview uhm...conductor number 5* (real name not included in the transcript to protect the participant's privacy)...uhm...and the topic of my thesis is: Guidelines for repertoire selection for a beginner secondary school choir: an explanatory case study. Okay the interview questions: the first question is, what guidelines do you use to choose repertoire for a beginner secondary school choir?

P: (There is a long pause as conductor number five thinks). When I'm in the position of choosing repertoire for a beginner secondary school choir, the first thing that I dec....think of is that which songs are popular, but on the other hand it should be quite within the rec...

R: (I interrupt to say that conductor number five is welcome to talk in Afrikaans, as her first language is Afrikaans) Ja, tannie is welkom om Afrikaans te praat ook hoor.

P: Reg...goed, okay. It should be interesting and it should be easy enough for them to sing it without too much difficulty. And it also helps when it's a bit on the modern side. (Conductor number five then tells me that he/she has finished answering the question).

R: Okay great baie dankie. Uhm...the second question (I then attempt to put the recording device closer to the participant): okay, which aspects of vocal technique and musicianship do you consider important to develop through repertoire you've chosen?

P: (long pause before participant answers. Because of the long pause conductor number 5 asks me quietly if we should re-record. I respond by saying it's okay we can still carry on) Met ander woorde sou ek daar kon se, dat n mens moet hulle...vir n Afrikaans se kind uit die Vaal Drie Hoek (The Vaal Triangle) wat...daar is nie vreeslik baie Laërskool kore nie...uhm...in die omgewing. Die standard is nie sommer hoog nie. Met ander woorde, jy gaan hulle moet eerste moet leer vir baie van daai kinders om in

stemme, verskillende stemme: tenoor, sopraan. Met ander woorde jy moet dit taamlik eenvoudig doen aan die begin, so dat hulle dit kan reg kry.

R: Yes...yes so uh...tannie se hulle basies leer hoe om te sing ook en in verskillende stemme. Sou dit op uhm...skies, Laërskool vlak wees?

P: (The participant has a sort of shocked look on her face) Nee, jy kan nie glo nie...Hoërskool vlak ook.

R: Hoërskool vlak ook?

P: Laërskool...Laërskool ook. En onthou as ek nou vir jou...met die koor wat ek nou daar het...weet jy hoeveel kinders het nog nooit in n koor gesing nie. Dis absoluut vir hulle nuut. Terwyl jy in Pretoria se skole kom gaan jy baie kinders kry wat al reeds goed bekend is om in stemme te sing. (Inaudible text).

R: So tannie se eindelijk uh...die belangrike ding is om (I clear my throat) om eindelijk op n Laërskool vlak te begin so dat as hulle by n Hoërskool kom, het hulle al klaar daai ondervinding van wat sang is en om hoe te sing en musicianship?

P: Dis reg...dit...dit hang baie af van die kinders wat jy op geneem het in die koor, van hoeveel ervaring hulle al reeds het. Maar...maar ek begin maar altyd baie dat hulle net weer gewoond raak. Ook seuns wie se stemme nou muteer het ne, of wat besig is om nou te muteer, moet baie keer met hulle nuwe stemme en nuwe lae stut eers aanpas. Wat is die volgende vraag? (Participant then asks me what is the next question, because she feels she is talking too much for this question; however I ask her to please carry on).

R: Nee asseblief gaan aan...gaan aan. Ja? So hulle moet eers aanpas?

P: Hulle moet weer aanpas met hulle nuwe stemme, so jy kan nie veel...veeluisende bass en tenoor partye doen nie. Dis my ondervinding regtig. So, it's not that pretty simple. You can join the two voice parts...it's also okay if you can do that. Dit hang baie af van maar...hoe kan ek se...(I interrupt her by saying it depends on what you

have)...ondhou jy het seker baie swart kinders. It is seker vir hulle baie makliker, dink ek.

R: Dink...dink jy die kultuur speel n rol?

P: Ja dit maak n verskil.

R: Soos dis in jou kultuur om van jongs af te sing...in die kerk dalk en?

P: Ja en te harmonise...ja en te harmonise...but now...die manier van harmonise...is dalk ook n problem...jy weet seker self. (Inaudible)

R: Okay...great! Goed...okay, vraag drie...uhm...question three: is it important that the choristers are able to read music? Uh...explain your answer.

P: (The participants pauses to think, I then repeat the question in Afrikaans) Ja nee, It's not necessary...no, it's not necessary. It helps a great deal and it would be wonderful if it were possible but it's not possible in our situation in the Vaal Triangle. So...it is possible to do without their knowledge of uh...(inaudible).

R: Mag ek vra, hoe sou tannie musiek aan...aanleer dan, soos...soos by die oor of uhm sou jy dit deur speel n paar keer end an uhm...uhm...maak dat hulle dit prober ondhou? Of uh...wat is tannie se manier van musiek aanleer?

P: (Participant pauses to think) Hulle het die bladmusiek voor hulle.

R: Tannie gee die bladmusiek vir hulle?

P: Hulle gee die bladmusiek...defnitief. Hulle't die bladmusiek voor hulle...ons...speel die stem partye. Dit hang af hoe talentvol die groupie is wat jy gekies het, ne. As dit ouens is wat rerig baie musiekal is, maar in die harde relaiteit hier in die Vaal Drie Hoek, is daar kinders wat nooit koor gesing het in hul lewe nie, wat nie dink hulle kan sing nie, hulle maats het hulle saam gesleep. Maar jy is so afhanklik van die getalle, dat jy dan nou maar n bietjie dril werk doen. Jy weet, jy...jy vat hierdie stem en jy se, "julle sien

ouens daar's die bas party, daar sing julle basse, sien julle? Daai noot gaan op daai noot gaan af, nou klink dit so." So begin jy dan maar met n beginner groep ne? En dan die tenore, "Okay, hier is julle stem party, kry julle dit reg?" Die alte en soprano gaan gewoonlik makliker aan. Ja, onthou dis baie die geval, van...in n sekondere Hoërskool dat die seuns se stemme nog muteer. Jy kry dan ook n...probleme met Graad agt en neges wat nog regtig sensitief is en jy moet mooi werk met n stem. Jy mag nie n stem seer maak nie. Ah...regtig weet julle daar is n oukie nou wat in ons skool is ne, en laat ek vir jou se...hy sing in die streek koor. Daai kind het al sy stem seer gemaak. Ja...hulle sing te lang ure ook. Maar wat dis nou nie die vraag nie.

R: Nee nee, asseblief tannie gaan aan ja, ja...dis deel van die vraag.

P: Ja hulle stem...hulle oefen vir te lang ure. Jy moet met baie sorg om gaan met n mens se stem. So goed, dit is dan een ding. (I interup her to elaborate on what she said about rehearsal time) Ja.

R: Askies tannie, dis ook n goeie vraag: so hoe...hoe lank dink tannie moet uh...n rehearsal wees? Of n oefening wees?

P: Dit is vir my moeilik om te se presies hoe lank, dit hang af hoe intensief jy met n betrokke stem party werk. As hulle tegniek so gevorder het dat hulle hul klanke voor in die mond plaas en nie in die keel nie en die klank is mooi voor in die mond en jy't jou asem beheer onder...bes...goed jy weet hoe om jou asem te doen en jy plaas jou woorde voor in jou mond soos wat jy ook geleer het met jou sang onderrig, jy kry dat dan kan jy langer oefen. Maar voor jy dit nog nie reg het nie...en n kind is geneig om nog...veral van die muteerde stemme wat besig is om te muteer, agter in sy keel te sing, hy kan sy stem beskadig. Regtig hoor, ek voel baie baie ernstig daarvoor. So aan die begin van die jaar, veral aan die begin van die jaar as jy baie werk aan stem produksie en plaas klank vorm en so aan, moet jy versigtig wees. Oefen n rukkie, breek n bietjie en ja...en prober ook selfs met hulle praat oor hulle, as hulle met jou gesprek voer dat jy altyd in die gewoonte kom, veral julle wat baie klas gee, so dat jy met die

nodige asem beheer...asem haaling is vir my n baie baie groot ding in die koor...en die pro..when you...uitspraak...voor met jou lippe. (Inaudible).

R: Artikulasie...fantasties! Baie dankie tannie, okay...(the participant says softly that what she just said does not fit in with the question, however I assured her that it does fit in with question 2). Okay, question four: what styles or genres of choral music do you choose to cater for the interests of the audience? (I then repeat the question in Afrikaans) Uh...nog n vraag...gaan...kies tannie eindelijk musiek...uh...uh...partykeer...uh..."okay hierdie sal goed pas by die hoor, die gehoor daarvan hou", of kies tannie meestal musiek wat...uhm...wat gaan oor die...

P: Nee...Ja jy moet seker...jy moet natuurlik altwee in ag neem. Jy soek partykeer iets wat die gehoor opgewonde sal maak. Vir my gaan, in die eerste plek, die kinders moet ook leer dat goeie musiek op die lang duur...op die lang duur sal hulle op die ou einde in die jaar vir jou se, "Kom ons sing weer *Gloria Festiva*", wat nou meer gegaan het aan die begin is boring dan groeie dit op die kinders. En op die ou end as die kinders n ding met oorgawe sing, is die gehoor ook...hou die gehoor daarvan. Maar nog altyd sou ons maar...as jy in jou program n geweide musiek insluit of iets ernstig, verskillende style, verskillende genres. Maar as jy dan kan afsluit met n gewilde liedjie op die oor...ja terwyl...soos...uh...moet ek jou se dat uhm...Prof. Petru Gräbe (conductor of University of Pretoria Choir from 1979-1998), het byvoorbeeld gese "Jy laat nie n koor musiek sing wat nie vir n koor gekompineer is nie". Hy was op daardie uiterste ne? Hy't gese jy vat nie sommer enige musiek nie. Musiek moet oorspronklik vir n koor. En daar's nogal baie sin daarin want op die ou end slaag dit die beste en...maar om n pop liedjie baie goed te verwerk en...en...dit geniet die kinders en die gehoor. En die kinders is dan weer bly as die gehoor entoesiasties is so ja n mens doen dit tog ook ja.

R: Tannie uhm...askies, kan jy net gou se, watter Prof. was dit?

P: Petru Gräbe (I repeat the name after her to attempt to remember it). Hy was altyd die...die...party mense sal se Grebe maar ek het saam met hom groot geword so en ek het al baie opgesom nou oor wat hy al gese het en het kursese bygewoon oor wat hy

gegee het ne? Hy het op die kol gese, “Jy sing musiek wat vir n koor geskryf is”. Op die ou end moet ek jou se...dis op die ou end uit musiekale oogpunt is dit die...die mees bevreedigende vir my ook gewees. Jy kry sulke lekker musiek ons het byvoorbeeld...hulle’t *Gloria Festiva*...wat geskryf is...is vir koor...en ons hou...op die ou end baie daarvan. Ons het ook al pop liedjies gesing en wat wat...wat goed verwerk is, maar volgens hom is dit nie aanvaarbaar nie.

R: Askies tannie, net vir die record, by watter universiteit...weet tannie...uh...

P: Hy was Tukkies (University of Pretoria)...hy was Tukkies. Ja ondhou hy’s nou...hy’s nou nog selfs n jaar of wat drie ouer as ek. Waar’t ek nou weer gehoor wat hy...hy’s nou n beoordelaar gewees by die ATKV.

R: O, was hy een van hulle? O...

P: Ja ek het dit nou gehoor. So hy is nog...dareem nogsteeds. Ons kom al n lang pad (both I and the participant chuckle to that statement). Hy’t ook ons al beoordeel. Ja, ondhou ek het ook altyd die HTS (Die Hoër Tegniiese Skool) koor gehad, met die seuns koor.

R: O, fantasties! Was dit hierso...hierdie HTS tannie? (I’m referring to the Technical High School in Vereenging).

P: Kyk hy’s nou Gimnasium. Ja nee, dis waar ek koor gelei het.

R: Dit moes seker moeilik gewees het? Is dit n tegniiese skool of?

P: Yes...

R: Want ek het al ook koor gegee by n tegniiese skool en ek het dit gevind...wow!

P: Dis nie grappies nie...dis nie...(I interrupt the participant).

R: Maar jy moet seker daai koor tradisie in kry en as dit eers daar in is dan...

P: Man jy kan n hoe goeie koor tradisie he maar as die hoof nie saam met jou is nie...

R: (From my own experience I laugh at the statement) Dis my ander vraag...

P: Daardie hoof...daardie hoof se seuns het in die koor gesing. En ek het nie gedink ek kan koor afrig nie...skies dis nou nie deel van die vraag nie.

R: Nee asseblief ek verstaan...(I reassure the participant that she may continue even though what she is talking about is not necessarily linked to the question).

P: Ek het nie gedink ek is nou ook...ek nie...regtig ek het in hier as groter meisie in die koor gesing maar ek is nie...(Inaudible) ek was nie in die PUK Koor nie, ek was in die Alabama.

R: O, fantasties! (We laugh together).

P: Maar in elkgeval...maar in elkgevaal...maar in elgevaal, toe se hy vir my (Inaudible) "Jy sal...jy sal!" En ek was net deelyds by die skool...ja. Maar sy twee seuns het daar gesing. En as die hoof jou dra. Ons het seunskoor kompetisies deelgeneem ne? Daar was daai tyd...ne...in Afrika was daar koor kompetisies vir seunskore, meisieskore, gemengde kore. So ons het by die seunskore...ons het ver gekom as ek so...in alle verskeidenheid maar gese. Ons Afrikaans...(I interrupt her to ask a question).

R: Die hoof speel n groot rol?

R: Ja...en dit met n tegniese skool.

R: Jis, dis amazing huh?

P: En jy weet dit...ons is partykeer...is daar na daai skool as die Tekvita.

R: O okay. (Inaudible text follows).

P: What's the definition of...(the participant quickly goes to the next question, as if to apologise for talking off of the topic).

R: Ja volgende vraag: uhm...what is your opinion uh...of the balance of Western and African music in your programme? So uhm...

P: Nee daar...uh kyk...in ons tyd as jy wil oorsee gaan en jy wil n koor kompetisie wen, sing African music.

R: O, so jy moet?

P: I think so...for success but not because out of principle. But...but I think it's a...ja it helps, my grandchildren sang...uh...in a choir from Potch (Potchefstroom)...ja daar's n...maar ek dink nie...maar ek weet nie wie's die dirigent nie, maar hulle...hulle het nou n koor begin daar...en hulle is toe nou oorsee.

R: Wie's dit...wie's dit nou tannie?

P: Ek sal nou nou vir jou uitvind...

R: In Potch?

P: Ja in Potch. Dit moet van die ouens wees wat...

R: Wat in die PUK Koor gesing het?

P: Nie nood...ja...kan wees...

R: (I name a few names who I think could be directing a newly formed choir in Potchefstroom which is not included in this transcription to protect their privacy).

P: Nee hierdie is n jeug koor want my kinders is nog in Graad ag ten nege. Ek sal nie nou onthou nie...maar in elkgeval, goed ja...hulle het oorsee gegaan en...en waarvoor hulle wen altyd, wat ek nou agter gekom het as...as hulle die African...so dit is as jy wil sukses he moet jy dit doen. En natuurlik dit hang af ook in Suid-Afrika as jy genoeg swart kinders in die koor het ne? En van "daai" kultuur...doen dit. Ja nee definitief.

R: Okay...uhm...(the participant starts to read the next question on the form, which she asked to see before the interview and which I showed her. I interrupt her by asking the question) ja number six: what is your definition of quality repertoire? Wat is quality repertoire vir...uh...

P: Vir my? Okay ek verstaan dit...Uhm...queslity repertoire. Vir my...soos ek weer gese het onder die invloed van Petru Gräbe sing musiek...as jy dit enigstens kan, en as dit haalbaar met die talent van jou koor. Sing musiek wat vir koor gekompineer is. En...of baie goeie verwerking is van ander mense. Dit voel ek, dan voel ek ook, moenie vir populeriteit inboet op quality. Dis n vreeslike groot misluking veral in die Vaal Drie Hoek om sommer net n pop liedjie te sing en..en...(I interrupt her to make a point clear).

R: Don't sacrifice quality for...

P: No...no...for popularity. No, no I won't do it! En op die ou end, regtig het ek gevind soos ek nou nou gese het, dat hulle is aan die begin miskien n bietjie deursinnig oor n lied, maar op die ou end...quality wins. On sing bevoorbeeld nou die Halleluja ne? Van Mozart, die koor verwerking (Inaudible text). Hulle koop dit! Daai kinders, daai tieners...jy weet ne, jy't die voorsprong...(the participant compliments me).

R: Nee, nee asseblief.

P: Jy het die voorsprong, jy's jonk. Kinders, Laërskool kinders sowel as Hoërskool kinders...my klein kinders (Inaudible text): "Tannie dis n lekker jong oukie wat ons het". So julle het n geweldige voorsprong boe ns ouer mense .Ons kan so maklik deur gaan vir "Sy's seker oud of oudtyds" of so aan ne? Maar tog...maar tog, op die ou end sien jy dat hulle tog nou...hulle sing die Halleluja.

R: Ja en hulle geniet dit.

P: (Inaudible text) Want hulle doen! Al omdat hy bietjie vining is, dan se ons vir hulle "Mozart!". Jy weet? "Mozart was hierdie wonder kind en hy't hierdie goeie melodie geskryf." Now how it goes. So dit...dit kan tog werk.

R: Fantastic!

P: Ja okay wat's die laaste een (Referring to the last question)?.

R: Okay...uhm...(the participant reads the last question and we laugh together) what makes a successful choir conductor? En ek moet se tannie het nog al baie sukses behaal. So ek dink tannie kan nogal goed...kan nogal praat oor hierdie vrae so...

P: (There is a long pause before the participant answers) Just love the children. Yes I'm very fond of the kids and I'm not...ek is nie in die eerste plek so verskriklik musical of...of...ek het byvoorbeeld nie perfect pitch nie ne? Maar...maar ek is lief vir musiek. Ek is baie life vir musiek en ek is life vir die kinders. En...en ek dink dis eindelijk die ding dat jy...jy moet eerste plek...die kinders moet van jou hou. Jy hoef nie nou goeders te gaan doen om nou popular te wees nie, jy moet partykeer baie kwaai wees (we laugh together at that statement), streng wees en consequent wees en so aan maar uh...ja...ek dink dis eindelijk maar die ding. Dis daai gevoel van ons gee om vir mekaar. (Inaudible text follows).

R: Soos relationship.

P: Yes that's right. Ja...maar jy moet nie kinders onderskat ook nie. En daar kan wonderwerke gebeur weet jy, daar was a laaitjie in die TEK (a small or young boy). Dis nou og die TEK skool ne? (Inaudible sound follows, the participant starts to whisper)...hy kom vir n oudisie...(Inaudible sound that follows)...Graad elf sing hy in die kunsfees. (I remember that the participant said that the boy did not sing well for the audition in Grade eight, however he matured in his voice and technique with help of the participant and eventually sang in an Eisteddfod in Grade eleven).

R: Fantasties!

P: Dit kan gebuer!

R: Dis hoe goed tannie is!

P: Nee...nee dit het niks met my te doen nie...nee niks met my te doen nie. Hy het nie eers in die koor gesing nie. Hy kon nie. Hy sou te...hy sou dit...ons het kompetisies gesing. Ondhou...in daai tyd was daar baie kompetisies. En ons het daai tyd, met die genade van die Here, goed gedoen. Maar my begeleier...die begeleier speel ook n groot rol. Veral vir my koor...is nie so musikal da tons maklik a capella sing nie.

R: Wel...dis...uh...dis min dat ek n Hoërskool koor al gehoor het wat goed a capella sing. Dalk daar in Hoërskole van Pretoria, maar...

P: Maar hierso nie...

R: Ek het al ook met my koor a capella...Magaliesburg se aandlied vir hulle geleer.

P: Het jy dit toe reg gekry?

R: Ja...wel a capella nee...maar saam met begeleiding is dit...is dit okay. Tannie moet dalk uhm...uh...n werkwinkel met ons doen in Oktober.

P: Ja is jy laf? Nee ek sal dit nooit doen nie...ek is nie daai klas nie. Dit is...nee ek is glad nie. Wat ons wel a capella gesing het...ken jy vir Alna van der...Alna Smit?

R: Ek ken van haar...

P: Jy weet van haar...nou sy was saam my kinders in Drie Riviere. Maar Alna...is maar baie baie goed ne? En sy het eenkeer kom beoordeel hier. En toet't ons nog...toe't ons vir die eerste keer a capella gesing...(Inaudible sound, may be one of Alna's arrangements that the participant chose to sing that day) ek het nie geweet Alna gaan beoordeel nie, anders sou ek dit nie gedoen het nie (we both laugh at the statement). Toe sing ons een ding, sy het een noot gehoor van die basse wat nie presies op pitch was nie, maar die ander het sy vir ons voorlopend gegee. So dis nog enigste keer wat ek al...(I interrupt her by saying "Alna Smit ja")...ja...Alna Smit ja.

R: Okay so tannie se basies...to be a successful choir conductor you need to love the kids.

P: O ja...Yes I think so that's the most important but you have...you do need to have musical knowledge and musical feeling. Jy moet baie musical wees natuurlik. (The participant then whispers again, however I remember her saying that a good accompanist is also very important to have, concerning a conductor's success).

R: n Goeie begeleier is ook belangrik ja.

P: I'm very blessed with...(the person who accompanies the participant's choir is omitted from the transcription to protect her privacy)...at the moment.

R: Ja she's good, she's a wonderful person.

P: Ja..and...and...en ons twee voel mekaar baie goed. Ek luister vir haar...

R: Dis ook goed...

P: En sy...en sy...is self baie musikaal. Jy weet so, nee dis die eerste keer wat ek nou saam met haar werk. It's a very good...great priveledge. Is dit nou klaar? (Referring to the interview).

R: Uh...amper...uh tannie (name is omitted in transcription to protect privacy of participant) is daar enige iets anders wat jy wil bylaas?

P: Dink dis maar n deur mekaar storie hierdie.

R: Ah...nee tannie het soveel kennis vir my gegee.

P: Is dit?

R: Dit was wonderlik, wonderlik, wonderlik. En ook vir die record tannie uhm...(the participant seems she wants to say something) as tannie klaar is, wil jy nog ietsie se?

(The participant was also asked which choir's she adjudicates, however for her privacy they are not disclosed in this transcription).

P: Laat ek net so bietjie dink.

R: Ek wil die (the recording device) nader aan tannie sit, ek hoop hy't nou lekker record. (There is still a long pause as the participant thinks). Enige van die vrae, is daar...

P: O ja ek probeer...ek probeer om nie teveel te praat nie, maar meer te doen.

R: Okay ek hoor.

P: Jy weet moenie lang toesprake maak nie (I signal my agreement to what she is saying), hoe julle julle moet gedra en moenie nou so sing, probeer dit kort knip. En begin stiptelik en begin dinamies. Jy weet en doen verskillende goed en wissel dan baie af wat jy besig is om te doen so dat hulle nie verveeld raak nie.

R: Ja...ja.

P: Ja...en wees maar bietjie streng oor moenie tussen in praat nie en as hulle opstap, end an gaan sit (we both laugh at that statement). Want daar gaan baie tyd daar in verlore. End an dink ek uh...dat om julle situasie by die gewone departementele skole op die oombelik wat soveel verander het, dat daar is vir my n geweldige kloof tussen ryk en arm. Dat n mens sensitief daarvoor wees. Daar's meer as net die kleur grens. Daar is ook n ekonomiese apartheid op hierdie oombelik wat baie moeilik kan wees. Om, veral...of miskien nie hier so by julle nie...dat die...ondhou ons is hier by die dorp. Die arm mense loop uit die dorp uit koor toe. Dis vir my die grootste hartseer op die oombelik van die koor. Jy weet, daar is mense wat...

R: (Inaudible sound).

P: En die talent het die Here vir almal gegee...(Inaudible sound)...vir party selfs meer.

R: Maar by die koor is almal...

P: Daar is ons gelyk. Ja...maar dit bond nog nie heeltemal so nie hoor.

R: Is dit?

P: Nee...nee...nee. Ek het nou die dag ook gehoor wat iemand se by hulle skool. (Inaudible sound. I do however remember the participant talking from her experience that the different race groups, post-apartheid, do not fully mix in a choir)...die afrikaans spreukend en die engels spreukend...hulle (referring to the choir as a whole) is nog nie so een as wat n mens dink nie. Terwyl kore saam...en...die kore wat byvoorbeeld, waar ek nou weet van die streek koor en waar my kinders nou oorsee gegaan het, is dit in minder mates. Maar daar is..daar...daar, ek weet nie, praat ek onder korreksie, maar daar is uh...ekonomies nie soveel apartheid jy weet so groot...so n...

R: Ek wil net se tannie met my koor is dit moeilik om te se, maar daar is...daar is Afrika kinders wat nogal baie ryk...ryk is en...daar is wit kinders wat minder ryk is...so...

P: Ja dis nie die selfde, maar jy sien die probleem is daai skool is in die dorp. Maar weet jy...dalk moet jy afsit...

R: Nee dis deel van die hele proses.

P: Die eerste keer in my hele lang loopbaan en dis lank hoor, dis meer as dertig jaar, dat iemand my in die aand bel en se, "Tannie daar's nog groot problem by ons huis, ons het vir twee dae nie kos gehad nie," (at this point the participant becomes emotional).

R: Ag n nee. Jis ek hoor.

P: Ja...verstaan julle. Een van my ander koor kinders het n babatjie. (Inaudible sound) Nee, nee...dit breek my hart. Maar dis hoekom ek dit nog doen. Anders moet ek maar ophou. Jy weet?

R: n Koor weet jy...dis n...

P: En nog n groot ding van koor, as jy nie die personeel en die hoof agter jou het nie (Inaudible sound. I remember the participant saying it is difficult to have and manage a choir if the rest of the staff members of the school do not show support).

R: Ons sal nou nou daaroor praat (we laugh together).

(I then asked the participant for the record to name the choirs she has or is conducting, however for her privacy it is not included in this transcript. The participant also shows me choir photos of the choirs she has conducted throughout the years and we discuss the competitions she took part in with those choirs).