


# DISCOVERING VOICES

EXPANDING STUDENTS' MUSICAL AND  
VOCAL IDEALS IN AN URBAN  
COMMUNITY CHILDREN'S CHOIR

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# It's Personal!

“Singing here I feel trapped and oppressed in one voice,” Jewel,<sup>1</sup> age 12, wrote in her first choir reflection. An experienced gospel singer at church, Jewel wrote this shortly after joining a choir in which, for the first time, she was encouraged to engage her head voice. The intensity of her reaction illustrates the significance of the issue this article addresses: frequently, as choir directors seek to broaden students’ vocal and musical palettes, students perceive a mismatch between their teachers’ ideals and their own. It is critical to acknowledge this mismatch and the tension it creates, because the way students sing and the way they respond to choral training are influenced tremendously by the way they *want* to sing. Singers whose musical ideals differ from those of their choral directors

will only engage in choir if they feel welcomed, respected, and empowered. This article offers an approach to choral training that seeks to broaden children’s musical ideals and abilities by training them in healthy, flexible vocal technique within a rehearsal environment that values and nurtures students’ diverse forms of musicality. The goal is to empower young people to discover their voices. Literally this means unleashing the potential of their singing voices. In a larger, figurative, sense, it means leading singers to realize that their voices—their opinions, interests, ideas, and other authentic expressions of themselves—matter. This approach has been developed through our work with a non-auditioned community chorus for children ages 10-14, based at an urban graduate school of education.

Voice training is personal work. Our voices provide our first and most deeply instinctual way of communicating in our environment, and our voices are thoroughly shaped by our conscious and unconscious sense of who we are. How we speak and sing are not only vehicles for our self-expression, they are an embodiment of it. As Mora Andrews writes, “Our identity is projected through our voice.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, we approach voice work as a holistic process involving myriad interrelated psychological, social, and physiological factors. Working together as the music director and the voice specialist of a children’s choir, we address these overlapping factors as we work with our students over time, seeking combinations of approaches that will enable children to discover their voices and share them with pride. Vocal work is integrated with other musical work throughout the process; sometimes we address vocal technique directly, and other times we cultivate kids’ natural musical responses in order to guide our students approach to singing. We seek to create an environment

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in which students feel safe and encouraged to share their voices fully.

For the sake of clarity in this article, we have divided the content into two sections. Section one deals with the technical side of discovering voices, focusing on three specific technical areas—registration, resonance, and breath management—in which vocal habits often need some adjusting in order to realize healthy, flexible vocal technique. We describe how empowering young singers with knowledge about their voices and ownership of the process of vocal training mitigates resistance to change. In the second section, we share rehearsal strategies designed to empower students not only as singers but also as musical leaders and collaborators. These strategies promote esteem and agency, allowing students to discover that as they share their gifts fully, their contributions shape the choir in significant ways. Again, although discussed separately here, in practice, vocal work and other empowerment

strategies are integrated.

## **Discovering Voices I: Vocal Training to Empower Young Singers— Registration, Resonance, and Breath Management**

Our approach to vocal training begins with listening and observing. We work to create an environment in which singers feel comfortable sharing their voices so that we can understand their individual vocal profiles. We observe their habits in speaking and singing, their apparent vocal and musical goals, and the specific strengths they bring to singing and making music. These elements provide the foundation upon which we build as we work with their voices. To begin voice training, we direct students’ attention to the ways they use their individual voices, helping them recognize unconscious choices they are making and options that are available to them. As students develop increased awareness, they begin to identify ways in which they would like their voices to grow. Our students quickly begin to articulate vocal goals, usually first dealing with expanding range and increasing volume (e.g., “I’d like to be able to sing higher without getting so soft”) and gradually incorporating more sophisticated understandings of registration (“I’d like to be able to go into my head voice without the switch being so obvious.”) Having set goals, students become receptive to vocal training carried out in warm-up exercises and through the repertoire. As part of this training, we introduce the concepts of registration, resonance, and use of the breath.

### **Registration**

*Registration*, or the balance between the head voice (also known as the upper adjustment) and the chest voice (lower adjustment) is a significant issue to address in children’s voice training. Because singing in the chest voice often comes more naturally—perhaps because speaking voices are generally more chest-dominant or because children internalize models of chest voice singing from popular music—developing the head voice requires more deliberate work. This work is essential for several reasons. First, singing in head voice requires more airflow than singing in chest voice, so as children learn to sing in head voice, they develop better use of air, and thus better-coordinated



support. Second, engaging head voice for higher pitches can both prevent and alleviate the strain caused by squeezing to push the chest voice up. Third, the muscle that predominates in producing head voice (the crico-thyroid or CT) is critical for regulating pitch; therefore, developing coordination of the CT by using head voice promotes in-tune singing.

Working on balancing registration, including developing head voice, allows students to realize untapped potential in their voices. Discovering new possibilities in one's voice is exciting—quite a different experience than simply being told to change the way one sings. We do not argue that a head tone is more beautiful or legitimate than a belt sound. Rather, we explain and model how we use the voice differently for different repertoire and styles. We point out that each person's voice is unique, and so a balance of registration that works for one voice may not be healthy or comfortable for another. Over time, as our

students integrate this work, most find that using their head register can feel natural and authentic, and they come to appreciate the wide range of vocal and musical possibilities that become available to them when they develop their *whole* voice.

### Resonance

Related to registration is *resonance*, another technical issue we address directly in our work. Resonance is the process by which sound waves coming from the larynx (vocal folds) are filtered and amplified in the throat and mouth, creating the distinct timbre of the tone produced. We work with resonance in many ways, but particularly salient with respect to this discussion is the fact that sometimes we choose to modulate our habitual ways of forming vowel and consonant sounds in order to impact the resonance. It is common, for example, for choir directors to speak of increasing the vertical space in the mouth, or “heightening

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the vowels,” in order to increase the resonance through a combination of adjustments to the lips, palate, jaw, and the position of the larynx itself. Since the overall sound of an ensemble is impacted by the individual singers’ resonant qualities, many choir directors seek uniformity of vowel production as a means of achieving a homogeneous sound, particularly in the classical tradition.

With respect to resonance as with registration, however, students’ conceptions of their own voices and their musical values may not lead them to seek the kind of resonance that is valued in the classic tradition. They may be accustomed to listening to voices that are amplified by microphone, which do not depend on resonant tone production for audibility or expressivity. Furthermore, modifying vowels and consonants distances singing from natural speaking, and so can impede authentic self-expression. Again, we resolve this dissonance by focusing on bringing students’ awareness to the choices and possibilities they have. Building students’ awareness of the relationship between the way they shape their mouths and throats and the feel and sound of their singing gives them tools for working toward all their vocal goals. When they have a specific problem in a song (“I feel squeezed on the word ‘feel’ on the high note”) and we can suggest an adjustment that enables them to solve it (“Try opening the your jaw; think “ih” instead of “ee”), then they begin to appreciate the value of the vocal technique that we teach.

## **Breath Management**

The third parameter of vocal technique that we address directly is *breath management*. Breath is the source of the power of the voice. In order to harness that power, singers have to coordinate multiple processes, including breathing and, more elusively, generating consistent *breath support*. The concept of breath support is frequently oversimplified to refer only to generating sub-glottic pressure—the pressure of the air column below the vocal folds. While sub-glottic pressure is indeed one facet of breath support, increasing pressure alone (as one does when one yells) does not generate healthy or efficient support. In fact, in a vocal system that is not well coordinated, increasing pressure can cause the larynx to rise and the throat to squeeze, producing tension and strain. This is a common pattern for inexperienced belters.<sup>3</sup>

Effective breath support requires the integration of the

entire vocal system, including resonance and registration. Beyond pressure, support is a function of *airflow*—the passage of air through the vocal folds. The interplay of pressure and airflow varies throughout the range and registers of the voice. Because head voice requires, and so promotes, increased airflow, singing in the head register helps to coordinate airflow and pressure. Once students achieve this coordination, they can apply it to singing in the other registers without straining. Exercises that call for quick, repeated onsets are helpful for coordinating pressure, and occluded mouth exercises, such as lip trills, are helpful for establishing sustained air flow. Both help singers establish flexible breath support that allows them to modulate pressure and airflow as they travel throughout the range of the voice.

## **Exploring Possibilities through Vocal Exercises**

Vocalizing at the beginning of rehearsal provides an opportunity for students to become aware of what their voices can do, to consider goals for their vocal development, and to work toward those goals. We use the warm-up to teach principles of voice science and vocal technique, explaining how the vocalises are tailored to address specific technical issues, including registration, resonance, and breath management. This knowledge gives our singers ownership of the process of using vocal exercises to build their voices. For a typical sequence of vocalizes that we use to address these three issues, see the sidebar on the opposite page. Working with children’s voices, we use predominantly descending patterns that encourage integration of the head voice into the mix and the mix into chest voice. Throughout the sequence, we seek ease and flexibility in singing.

## **Discovering Voice II: Cultivating Esteem and Agency— Empowerment Strategies for Rehearsal**

Enabling singers to find their voices and participate fully in choir involves much more than providing them with technical tools to develop their singing voices. It also requires dealing with myriad psychological and social factors that interact to shape how people sing and how they

## A Sequence of Vocal Exercises that Coordinate Registration, Resonance, and Breath Management

**Exercise 1:** Middle voice top-down slide on “oo” ([u]).

**Purpose:** Activate the head voice, connect the head voice to the middle and the chest voice. The use of “oo” promotes relaxation (lowering) of the larynx and the lifting of the soft palate, increasing pharyngeal space.

**Extension:** For additional refinement of positioning, sing the slide on “soo-wee” ([su-wi]). The “s” in “soo-wee” encourages airflow, w promotes rounded lips, and e promotes forward placement of the tongue.

**Range:** D4 to E5. Starting pitches, highest pitches, and ending pitches are shown. Ascend by half steps. Descend by half steps or whole steps.



**Exercise 2:** Middle to high voice staccato pattern. Start on “oo,” open to “ah” in high range ([u] to [a]).

**Purpose:** Staccati encourage balanced onset, minimizing pressure and alleviating strain as ascending to head voice.

**Range:** D4 to A5, or as comfortable. Ascend by half steps, switching from “oo” to “ah” at approximately E5. Descend by half steps or whole steps.



**Exercise 3:** Middle to low voice occluded mouth: lip buzz, rolled r, or raspberry (lip buzz with tongue out).

**Purpose:** Occluded mouth exercises require (and so foster) consistent and sustained airflow and pressure (support). Establishing this balance facilitates flexible transitioning between registers.

**Extension:** Once singers can consistently maintain a buzz or trill, modify the exercise by opening to a vowel while maintaining the established report.

**Range:** A3 to C5. Ascend slightly and then descend by half steps.



**Exercise 4:** Arpeggio low to high to low on “ya” and “yo” [ja] and [jə]. Reverse vowels at top of the range.

**Purpose:** Voices need to be trained to do bottom-up patterns without getting “stuck” in the chest voice. Staccati help to minimize pressure (and so lighten up the chest voice), and the quick movement of the arpeggio encourages lightness through lower range. The “o” vowel at the top promotes head registration.

**Range:** C4 to A5 (if comfortable). Ascend by half steps and descend by half steps or whole steps (not shown).



**Exercise 5:** Improvisation, such as responding to a question.

**Purpose:** Spontaneous singing fosters a natural approach and allows students to observe how emotional expression is manifested through technical and musical adjustments.

**Range:** As comfortable and suited to the improvisation.



# DISCOVERING VOICES

engage in rehearsals and performances. The empowerment strategies we offer below address these factors by cultivating esteem and agency. According to psychologist Stephen Curtis, on a neurological level, learning (or even imagining) new patterns of behavior requires calm and positive self-esteem.<sup>4</sup> Curtis believes that in a learning environment, calm is generated when students feel personally valued. We call this valuing *esteem*: reciprocal esteem when people value each other and self-esteem when one values oneself. Unlike “mutual respect,” an abstract principle akin to politeness, esteem requires really getting to know people. For our esteem to be relevant to our students, we have to let them show us what they have got, and they need to see us value the qualities that they value in themselves. In addition to generating calm and openness in our learning environment, our esteem for our students’ abilities provides a model; students learn to value their voices as they see us valuing them. This is an essential starting point for our work together. As we establish rapport based on authentic esteem, our students appreciate elements of musicianship and other qualities that we model that were not previously salient to them. Those newly appreciated qualities become sources of reciprocal esteem and self-esteem.

Related to cultivating esteem, and in fact an important means of doing so, is giving students agency—the capacity to act autonomously to shape the choir in significant ways. Studies in agency show that belief in one’s ability to influence the events that affect one’s life is the foundation of motivation and performance accomplishments.<sup>5</sup> These studies remind us that in order for our singers to be fully engaged, they need to know that their contributions actually matter. As our students learn to recognize the impact of their voices on the sound of the ensemble and on the collaborative work that happens in every rehearsal and performance, they discover a reason to dig deeply into what they have to share and to develop their voices in order to do so.

The following five empowerment strategies nurture esteem and agency by inviting young singers to claim their voices and share them:

**1. Repertoire by Request: The White Board (and the Challenges of Pop Repertoire)** We have a white board on which students are invited to write their sugges-



Figure 1: The White Board

tions for repertoire and other requests for rehearsal. By allowing students to write on the board and then honoring their suggestions, we let them know that their tastes and their music matter to us and shape what we do. The white board is a place for them to take risks in sharing their tastes, and it is a safe place for them to experiment with pushing limits; they sometimes suggest songs that they know are inappropriate, and they see that we can set and discuss boundaries while maintaining a sense of humor.

We honor repertoire requests in different ways. Sometimes choir members gather around the piano and sing requested songs just for fun, giving us the opportunity to observe the skills and challenges that are revealed as the students sing out. Sometimes we incorporate the requested songs into our season’s repertoire and perform them in our concerts, often as a medley featuring small groups. When working with pop songs, as with all songs, we look for ways that the repertoire can support students’ vocal development. Students often bring their chosen songs to their small group sessions with our voice specialist, and these songs provide entry points for treating specific vocal issues.

Some of the pop songs students request raise vocal challenges. Common problems include: a range that is too high or low for young voices; vocal lines that are not conducive to legato singing; and the song being a model of highly chest-dominant registration. Strategies for making these songs work include selecting songs performed



by artists who are good models for young voices (such as Michael Jackson, who frequently sang in head voice); transposing keys so that vocal lines fall more naturally into the appropriate childrens' ranges and allow for healthy registration; singing vocal lines on an "oo" to hook in the head register and on a hum to encourage a healthy mix of head and chest registers and to promote legato singing; and identifying "flipping" between registers as a viable option for managing registration in songs with a wide range.

**2. Solos** In traditional choir settings, members are assigned solos when the director considers them ready. We prefer to have our singers choose solos when *they* feel ready, and to this end we provide frequent opportunities for them to take solos in rehearsal. For many, the songs by request offer a comfortable place to start; during casual time around the piano, many students volunteer to sing alone. These solo moments are pivotal; we consistently observe that singing out alone on familiar repertoire and receiving positive feedback from peers (usually hoots and applause) provides a point of entry to full membership in the group and investment in our work together.

As we prepare for performances, the casual process of featuring soloists in rehearsal naturally leads to choices about solos for concerts. Given many opportunities to try out different solos, the students develop a sense of what works best in their own voices and which solos suit which singers. A student's experience of singing solos, and the ways he or she grows by doing so is widely diverse: for some, being brave enough to sing alone is its own personal success; others set goals of meeting specific vocal challenges in their solos; still others raise the bar by adding choreography (or, in one case, acrobatics!) This highly intrinsically motivated process of designing, preparing, and performing solos leads to tremendous growth—growth that would be precluded by having the director simply select the most accomplished singers to sing predetermined parts.

**3. Questionnaires and Interviews** We regularly ask our singers to describe how they feel about chorus and about their voices in questionnaires and interviews. This serves two purposes: first, it provides feedback for us, raising issues we may not perceive in rehearsal; second, it helps students develop metacognitive awareness of their

processes of vocal and musical development, awareness that enables them to take ownership of those processes.

We return to Jewel's reflections to illustrate this work and the importance of the feedback it can provide. In her questionnaire in the first month of choir, Jewel wrote the statement quoted at the beginning of this article, "I feel trapped and oppressed singing in one voice." She continued:

"I just think that instead of encouraging all of us to sing in a high voice, we should sing out. The voice may be pretty, but it's not choir and it's not strong. It's singing in your chest, throat, and head instead of your diaphragm and stomach and singing strong with meaning."

The fact that Jewel articulated her feelings so well allowed us to see how strongly she was reacting to a specific aspect of vocal training and where the sources of her discomfort lay. To Jewel, singing in head voice was antithesis to "singing out," something she valued highly and described in both technical terms (using the abdominal muscles, "strong") and related musical/emotional terms ("singing with meaning.") Her feedback allowed us to see that with her current vocal skills and understandings, it was not possible for her to sing in a supported or emotionally committed way when incorporating head voice.

In a follow-up conversation, Jewel explained more about singing out:

"You sing from every part of your body when you sing out. You let it out. You know how Whitney Houston used to sing? It's good to sing [in head voice] in certain songs, and it's good to sing like that to preserve your voice, and you have to sing like that—it's a necessity, but when you get to some certain songs you have to sing out or else there's just no point in the song; it sounds weak."

Beyond revealing the dissonance between her vocal and musical values and her experience in choir, Jewel's descriptions of singing out also helped us recognize the common ground among her values and ours. As choral musicians, we too want our singers to sing out, to sing with connection to the breath, with emotional connec-



tion, and “with meaning.” We would like to enable them to sing “from every part of their bodies” and to feel that sometimes they have to “sing out or there’s just no point in the song.” With these shared goals in mind, we were reminded to seek ways for our singers to make strong emotional connections to the songs, connections they could sustain even as they experimented with singing in different ways. The next strategy, collaboratively exploring texts, is a strategy that works toward that end.

**4. Making Texts Their Own** As musicians who usually perform music written by others, our choir singers face a fundamental challenge for performing artists: how does one make someone else’s music one’s own so that the act of performing it is authentic and expressive? In traditional choral settings, the act of interpretation resides within the conductor; singers are seen as the instrument through which the conductor realizes his or her artistic vision. We reject this assignment of roles for two reasons: first, we seek to empower our singers as musicians and musical leaders. Second, we believe that engaged singing requires singers to be emotionally and personally invested in the music. This engagement can come about through what Maxine Green refers to as “discovering ourselves” in works of art.<sup>6</sup> In our work with texts we help our students find the ways in which the lyrics reverberate with their own experience, so they can deliver the songs in a personal way. Following is an illustration of this process, with excerpts of a conversation about “Beautiful,” the song written by Linda Perry and recorded by Christina Aguilera.

After singing the song, already familiar to many of our singers, we began exploring the text to “Beautiful” by writing the individual lines on the board and asking the kids what they meant. The song begins, “*Every day is so wonderful. And suddenly it’s hard to breathe.*” Why, we asked, would it suddenly be hard to breathe? The singers offered the following:

“She feels bad about herself; her heart hurts.”

“You know how when you try to hold crying in, your throat closes and it’s hard to breathe?”

“My mom used to say, ‘Stop crying or I’ll give

you something to cry about.”

Continuing with the next line, “*Now and then I get insecure from all the pain, feel so ashamed,*” the children generated more images:

“She is getting bullied, and she is ashamed that she can’t take it and cries in front of people.”

“She believes the bad things people say about her.”

“People are laughing at her.”

“She sees the bullies when she looks in the mirror.”

Finally, for the conclusion of the first verse, “*You are beautiful no matter what they say. Words can’t bring you down. Don’t let them bring you down today,*” one student said these words could have been for a gay college student who had recently committed suicide after having been outed.

Through these kinds of conversations, we teach our singers to look to their personal experiences and feelings to find the keys to interpretive singing, and to share their ideas. They then see that they can safely share stories from their own lives, that those stories matter to the group, and that the personal emotional connections that they make to a text are significant in the collaborative process of creating a shared meaning for the song. Our students learn that musical interpretation is not merely about following prescribed dynamics, articulation markings, and tempo changes, but rather about collectively expressing authentic, personal connections, which influence those musical elements in natural ways.

**5. Training Listeners and Leaders** We seek to train our singers to be active listeners and problem solvers, rather than to rely solely on the conductor to make and communicate musical decisions. One highly effective way to promote listening and critical thinking among singers is to give them opportunities to lead portions of rehearsals. When students are up in front of their peers directing, skills of close observation and critical thinking suddenly

have tremendous value *to them*. We invite students in pairs to choose specific sections of the repertoire to lead in rehearsal. We help them prepare to lead by videotaping the choir singing those sections and providing equipment and time for the pairs of student leaders to listen to the recordings repeatedly, discuss their observations, and plan their rehearsal strategies. Next they lead a portion of rehearsal, and afterward we continually refer back to their leadership as we work on and perform those pieces.

Directly engaging in musical problem solving in the process of preparing and leading rehearsals hones students' listening and critical-thinking skills, and we find that our students' ability and inclination to identify and solve musical problems transfers beyond those designated moments. Our emerging musical leaders offer suggestions with increasing frequency throughout the rehearsal process, and we honor their contributions by providing time for them to try out each other's ideas. Students

increasingly take on a variety of leadership roles, both musical and, by natural extension, extra-musical. This work exemplifies qualities of what is often called *constructivist* teaching: students identify problems and work toward solutions through multiple entry points, calling on diverse abilities; students construct understandings through direct, hands-on experience and discovery; and teachers assume a facilitating role rather than always leading.<sup>7</sup> The goal of constructivist teaching is to foster not only deeper learning but to engender an empowered disposition toward learning.

### Jewel's Final Reflections

We return in conclusion to Jewel, whose reflections at the end of her first semester in choir illustrate how her developing understandings of and appreciation for vocal technique was supported by consistently high esteem and

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agency in her experience of choir, allowing her to grow as a singer and musician.

*How are you feeling about chorus?*

“It was a good experience. I think it actually did help me. Like at first I was kind of close minded, but after I opened up, I liked it a lot more.”

*What do you think you were closed to?*

“That we used our head voice all the time and that we didn’t sing using everything.”

*And do you still feel that way?*

“No, because we got a survey and we were allowed to say exactly what we thought could improve, and I wrote what I wanted to improve on, and we got a chance to not just use our head voice all the time. Like in ‘Firework’ we actually sang out.”

*“Singing with everything”- when I asked you last time, you thought that could only be in chest voice. Do you still feel that way?*

“Not only, actually...it doesn’t only come from your chest, it comes from everything. You use all of you to sing basically, and it conveys a message, in contrast to when you’re just like singing to sing.”

*How do you get the message across?*

“Like when we went over what the songs actually meant and we kind of understood because we could relate it to our own life experiences so that when we sang, we weren’t just singing, but we were singing like we had been there, and the words actually meant something.”

*Do you feel like the way you’re singing now is the way you want to sing?*

“Yeah, I mean, it’s like you have to sing in the head voice. It’s not a negotiable thing because not everyone’s voice can go high when they’re not singing in their head voice. So when you’re singing, you make the transition to the head voice when you get to a point where your voice won’t hold on anymore... So yeah, I had a problem at the beginning because I wasn’t used to that kind of singing because it hurt my head, and my throat hurt too, but I did it more and more, and I got used to it, and it was fine for me.” [Interview May, 2012]<sup>8</sup>

With remarkable clarity for a student her age, Jewel

describes her initial resistance to our vocal training, her developing understanding of registration, her need to express her opinion and do things her way some of the time in order to overcome her resistance, and the importance of making personal connections to the texts in order to express herself authentically when singing with new technique. In this semester of choir, Jewel was able to work consistently toward achieving her musical ideal of fully engaged, personally committed singing by expanding her range of vocal and musical possibilities. For Jewel, “using all of you to sing” came to mean incorporating parts of her voice and her self that she hadn’t previously known were available.

### Conclusion:

#### **Empowering Young Singers—a Path and a Goal**

Offering an alternative to prescriptive and often exclusive approaches to choral pedagogy, we have described work that aims to empower children to discover their voices in choir. Acknowledging both the need to honor the unique gifts our students bring to choir and our desire to broaden their vocal and musical palettes, we have proposed ways to give them ownership of their vocal and musical growth. Our approach requires taking the time to get to know what students can and want to do as musicians, building rapport and trust so that students feel safe sharing their voices freely, and building their confidence by demonstrating esteem for their voices and their ideas. It calls on us to share our expertise with respect to healthy, flexible vocal technique, giving students ways to identify their vocal habits and to set and work toward their expanding goals. Most importantly, it acknowledges that in order to enable our singers to develop their voices, we need to teach them that their voices matter, by creating a space in which this is indeed the case.

Empowering singers to discover their voices is a potent means of achieving choral excellence. We believe that our approach, which fosters students’ deep engagement and gives them tools to build their vocal technique, leads our choirs to create excellent, highly compelling performances. Moreover, we see our singers developing skills of musicianship and musical leadership that will enable them to create and enact their own artistic visions through

what will hopefully be lifelong engagements with singing and with music. On a larger scale, the significance of this work extends beyond its impact on students’ musical lives. As they develop agency in choir, they learn to attend to their impulses to observe, feel, think, analyze, and speak out. We hope they carry this disposition with them as they leave the choral classroom and enter the rest of their world. We want our students to know that their voices matter immensely, and that their ideas and their actions can shape not only their own lives but also the interconnected web of which all of humanity is a part. 🗨

### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Pseudonym.
- <sup>2</sup> Mory Andrews, *Voice Therapy for Children: the Elementary School Years* (New York: Longman, 1986), 3-4.
- <sup>3</sup> It is worth noting that it is not uncommon for experienced singers to overpressurize their voices. This becomes evident as singers lose flexibility modulating between registers, have trouble controlling the initiation of sound, and develop a more limited range. For such singers, reconceptualizing support is often critical for revealing the best singing voice. This issue is discussed in: Jeanne Goff-Fynn & Linda Carroll, “Collaboration and Conquest: MTD as Viewed by Voice Teacher (Singing Voice Specialist) and Speech-Language Pathologist,” *Journal of Voice* 27, no. 3 (May 2013): 391.e9-391.e14.
- <sup>4</sup> Stephen Curtis, *Performance Psychology for Educators* (Bloomington, IN: Tischener Publishing, 2008).
- <sup>5</sup> Albert Bandura, “Self efficacy” in *The Corsini Encyclopedia of Psychology* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed. 1524-1536. Hoboken, Jew Jersey: John Wiley & Sons).
- <sup>6</sup> Maxine Greene, “Notes on Aesthetic Education,” in *Variations on a Blue Guitar* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001), 22.
- <sup>7</sup> Nicole Becker, “Constructing Constructivism in a Choral Classroom,” Ed.D dissertation (Teachers College Columbia University, 2011).
- <sup>8</sup> Interview with the author, May 2012.