Choir in Focus
International Symposium on the Histories and Practices of Choral Singing
Lund, Sweden, October 19-21, 2016

Venue: Pufendorf Institute (www.pi.lu.se), Biskopsgatan 3, 221 00 Lund

The histories and practices of choral singing are diverse and heterogeneous. Still, there are some recurring topics which are of common interest in a long-term perspective. The International Symposium on the Histories and Practices of Choral Singing aims to highlight these interdisciplinary investigations between music educational and music historical approaches of choral research.

It will follow up the work of the network “Choir in Focus” which was initiated in 2009 by Ursula Geisler and Karin Johansson with the support from Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, The Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences. The symposium will be a platform for presentations and discussions which focus on the history and practices of choral singing since the 18th century until today.

The attendees are representing institutions in Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States of America, and the lectures are open to the public during Lund Choral Festival.

The symposium is hosted by Southern Choral Centre (www.korcentrumsyd.se) and Linnaeus University (www.lnu.se) in collaboration with Musik i Syd (www.musikisyd.se).

Free entrance. Registration requested to

Ursula.Geisler@lnu.se
Dr. Ursula Geisler, Linnaeus University, Conference convenor
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Alexander Arlt |                    |
| 10.00    | A reflective model to support the art of choral conducting  
Joy Hill | Why, and how, should we compose music for adult community choirs?  
Emily Peasgood |                    |
| 10.45    | Coffee | Coffee |                    |
| 11.00    | Choral confidence: the implications of choir configuration, collaboration and communication  
Michael Bonshor | Unfreezing identities: Exploring choral singing in the workplace  
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| 11.45    | ‘Choral Blend’: the use of real time spectrograph data in a choral rehearsal  
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| 13.00    | Introduction | Lunch | Lunch |
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| 14.45    | Coffee | “Singing is the gateway to the world of music!” - Thoughts on the Resurgence of Singing in Germany Today from a Music-Didactic Viewpoint  
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| 19.00    | Concert at Allhelgonakyrkan  
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“Svanholm Singers” | Concert at Allhelgonakyrkan  
“Roomful of Teeth” |
Wednesday, October 19

12.30 Registration
13.00 Introduction
13.15 Singing the Past in the Present at the Latvian Song Festival
   Katherine Pukinskis

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15.45 Choral Singing in the light of republican ideals and of positivist thinking
   Maria José Artiaga
16.30 ‘Girls can sing too ...’ Cultural policy issues and gender perspectives of choral ensembles within Oxford University colleges and halls
   Sigrún Lilja Einarsdóttir
17.30 Dinner
19.00 Concert at Allhelgonakyrkan: “Lund Choral Festival Gala Concert”

Thursday, October 20

9.00 How to educate excellent choral conductors: Nordic Choral Conductor Education
   Anne H. Balsnes, Pia Bygdéus, Dag Jansson, (Carsten Seyer-Hansen)
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Friday, October 21

9.15 Aspects of historical choral research: in search of lost choral archives and collections of the German-speaking region
   Alexander Art
10.00 Why, and how, should we compose music for adult community choirs?
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11.00 Unfreezing identities: Exploring choral singing in the workplace
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11.45 Voices of contemporary choral leaders
   Karin Johansson
12.30 Final discussion
13.00 Lunch
19.00 Concert at Allhelgonakyrkan: “Roomful of Teeth”
Abstracts

Singing the Past in the Present at the Latvian Song Festival
Katherine Pukinskis, University of Chicago, USA

Since 1873, millions of Latvians have celebrated national song in the Latvian Song Festival, or dziesmu svētki, held for eight days every five years amidst war, occupation, and times of political unrest. Though German and Soviet occupation from 1940-1991 dulled the vibrant life Latvia, the dziesmu svētki provided a space in which Latvians could reconstruct their traditions through song. Despite the uncertainty of daily life, they came together as a community of singers and performed landmark Latvian works such as “Gaismas pils,” “Dziesmai šodien liela diena,” and “Pūt, vējiņi.” This paper explores how the recurring performance of these and other works at the dziesmu svētki allowed Latvians to maintain their individual national identity during times of occupation, which then led to the rehabilitation of Latvian culture after the fall of the Soviet Union. The paper also dissects the choral practice of the dziesmu svētki as an opportunity for Latvians to come together in a post-occupation era, rehabilitate their country and culture, and to revive and reinforce the traditions that had been previously policed by Soviet politics. The festival is a widely accepted venue in which younger generations can explore and celebrate their heritage, and to honor and acknowledge their nation’s history with not only their peers but across generations. Through the ritual of rehearsing and performing the same repertoire over decades of participation, Latvians have been able to simultaneously commemorate their history and build upon their future at the dziesmu svētki.

Nordic Sounds and the ‘Swedish choral miracle’
Ursula Geisler, Linnaeus University, Sweden

This paper examines the discourses on choral singing in Sweden with respect to constructions of ‘Nordicness’ and sound. It explores choral singing in its reciprocal relationship to other musical innovations in the twentieth century and with respect to Sweden’s reputation as a singing nation since the middle of the century. The broader context for such a study acknowledges the special significance of choral singing throughout the Nordic region, its effect upon local – often disparate – communities and its particular social function, but focuses on Sweden as a detailed case study. Indeed, the linkage between Sweden and choral music has been a very close one ever since the nineteenth century. The male student singers’ movement initiated an internationally positive reception which grew and developed after the Second World War. The epithet of a “Swedish choral miracle” seemed then to include a successful combination of musical modernism and collectiveness, condensed in mixed choral, a cappella singing. Lennart Reimers’ statement that ‘even in a qualitative sense, choral singing has become our country’s internationally recognized musical face during the 20th century’ (Reimers, 1994, 81) points to the fact that choral singing in Sweden does amount to more than a recreational and leisure activity by the broad public.
Kia Hedell’s survey article on the topic in a historical perspective (Hedell, STM-Online 12, 2009) visualizes a specific sound as one of the main attributions for the success of choral singing in Sweden. Still, it is difficult to determine whether such a specific choral sound or a construction of musical “Nordicness” at all have contributed to its international reputation. The choral history in Sweden might have encouraged a grand musical national narrative in the 20th century, but, to date, this has only been attempted to a limited extent. This presentation is integrated in the research network A NEw Music Of Northern Europe (ANEMONE) funded by the Nordic Culture Fund.

The Professionalization of Choir singing in France
Guillaume Lurton, Université de Poitiers, France

The professionalization of choirs has been a major evolution of choral singing in France along the last 30 years. Until the end the 1970’s, only a limited number of choirs were composed of professional singers. However, since the 1980’s, professional choirs became more and more frequent. The specificity of their repertoire and their economic model distinguish this new generation of choirs from their predecessors. This communication focuses on this major evolution of the world of choral singing from a socio-economic perspective.

The communication will first give a global outlook of this professionalization movement. It will then try to understand its logic. Two kinds of factors are to be taken into consideration. First, the internal dynamic of these groups economic model. A close look at the career of new professional choirs helps understand how professionalization of choirs results from a specific kind of collective artistic entrepreneurship. Second, the evolution of the institutional environment. We will show that professionalization of choir singing relies on the involvement of several public and private institutional actors.

Choral Singing in the light of republican ideals and of positivist thinking
Maria José Artiaga, New University of Lisbon, Portugal

The defence of Choral Singing in Portuguese primary schools begins with a moral and civilising objective and, later, with the aim of providing learning support of language. Despite the fact that various intellectuals appealed for its insertion in the school curriculum and proposed a copy of the French model, according to the practice of François-Boquillon Willem, its application was only very sporadic and ephemeral, due to the priority given almost exclusively by the governments of the time to learning how to read, write and count. It was only with the emergence of the republican ideals, beginning in 1880, and the influence that the positivist ideals had on them, that Choral Singing would be put in practice in the school curriculum at the hands of specialists. The ideal that motivated this initiative revealed a preoccupation with the integral education of the child, based on ethical and patriotic principles, at the same time that it very particularly emphasized the hygienic component. The intention of this communication is to discuss the role of Choral Singing as an integral part of the republican ideology that established it in primary education and later in secondary schooling, as well as to analyse in what
way the functions that were attributed to it proclaimed the creation of a new citizen who would contribute to the prophylaxis of society.

As an analytical tool we will use, as a basis, the positivist knowledge that was associated with the culture of schooling and that had, for those who applied it, the ambition of appropriating the space that resides between the organic and the biological components of the student population.

‘Girls can sing too …’ Cultural policy issues and gender perspectives of choral ensembles within Oxford University colleges and halls
Sigrún Lilja Einarsdóttir, Bifröst University, Iceland

This paper presents a part of an on-going study on cultural-policy issues and organisational perspectives of choral ensembles within Oxford University colleges and halls. This part of the study observes the perspectives of 14 music directors and 6 organ scholars towards the somewhat significant changes that have occurred within the Oxford choirs, particularly in terms of increased female participation. Evidently, the long history of cathedral choirs in Oxford (and in England in general) has been the history of a relatively male dominant field until the latter part of the 20th Century. Findings indicate that there is a widely acknowledged hierarchy among the choirs, in which the 3 Choral Foundations (Christ Church, New and Magdalen College), who still maintain the ancient tradition of male voices and boy trebles (with associated preparatory schools from which the trebles are drawn) that spans a period of 1400 years within the English church, are the most renowned in terms of musical quality, history of musicianship and international reputation, even though some of the mixed-voice choirs are known for excellent musicianship. This is linked to different historical contexts and traditions, different access to funding for musical activities, administrative and cultural policy issues and competition in terms of musical talent. Findings indicated also that most interviewees were in favour of gender equality in choral participation but some of them were also conflicted towards the notion of ‘preserving a tradition’ by maintaining the male-voice choirs versus securing opportunities for both boys and girls / men and women to pursue their musical interests on equal terms.

How to educate excellent choral conductors: Nordic Choral Conductor Education
Anne H. Balsnes, Ansgar University College, Kristiansand, Norway (project manager); Pia Bygdéus, Linneaus University, Växjö, Sweden (project coordinator); Dag Jansson, Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences, Norway; (Carsten Seyer-Hansen, The Royal Academy of Music, Århus, Denmark)

There is a growing body of research on choral conducting, especially in terms of rehearsing pedagogy and to some degree gestural technique. There is also a research tradition that deals with the relational aspects of the choral situation. However, choral conductor education (CCE) is still largely practice based, reflecting the experience and insight of the tutoring conductor, applied in a master-apprentice setting. CCE, therefore, to a limited degree addresses
systematically competences beyond the immediate musical-technical needs, for example leadership, communication, mentoring, ensemble development and problem solving. Based on discussions with many conductors, there seems to be little or no emphasis on dealing with these issues in curriculum-based CCE. It is believed that these perspectives are usually tackled in the informal dialogue between the master and the apprentice. In order to make better use of insight from research and develop CCE curricula, we need a more fact-based understanding of the actual situation. Thus, this study has three steps: The first step is to map and analyze the state-of-the-art in CCE in the Nordic countries. Next, we plan to interview teachers at prominent CCE institutions in the Nordic countries. We also want to conduct focus group interviews with former students who have recently graduated from the same institutions and are now pursuing careers as choral conductors.

A reflective model to support the art of choral conducting

Joy Hill, Royal College of Music, United Kingdom

A reflective tradition regarding choral conducting practice does not truly exist. As a choral conductor and teacher involved in choral education, a framework to support the process of conducting choral music would be of great value. Through conducting the choral music of Ralph Vaughan Williams, researching his writing in relation to his philosophical ideas about making music and working directly with the folk music that he collected, three distinctive areas of importance emerge: how all performers can and should be part of the creative process, the importance of knowing the music and the implication that the conductor should guide this learning and, lastly, the significance of the text. These three areas could act as a basis for a reflective model which can be referred to in relation to the selecting and learning of all choral music. Beyond this, practical musical concerns related to Vaughan Williams’s ideal of ‘folk-ness’ can also be seen within the three main parameters of music - melody, harmony and rhythm - which could have immediate choral performance implications.

I suggest that the philosophical basis and practical principles drawn from the practice and theory of Vaughan Williams can provide a model or way of working for choral conductors that offer layers of possibility. I will demonstrate how this model supported a recent London premiere performance of a new Passion by composer Gabriel Jackson.

Choral confidence: the implications of choir configuration, collaboration and communication.

Michael Bonshor, University of Sheffield, United Kingdom

This paper reports the findings and implications of a qualitative study, in which the research aims were: to explore the lived experience of choral singers; to identify the main influences on their perceptions of their voices and performance ability; to highlight some of the factors affecting their confidence as singers. Three focus group interviews, involving a total of eighteen choral singers, were carried out, followed by sixteen individual interviews. The participants were involved in a range of different types of choral singing, and had experience of performing with
a number of different conductors. The interviews each provided approximately two hours of recorded verbal data (over 40 hours in total), and were analysed and interpreted using techniques based on IPA (interpretative phenomenological analysis). The superordinate themes included the interaction between choir configuration (position and layout of the choir, inter-singer spacing, and individual position within the choir), choral acoustics and confidence levels; the influence of conductors and fellow singers; and a number of issues related to choral direction, musical leadership and group dynamics. Verbal feedback and non-verbal communication between singers, and in the singer-conductor dyad, were found to have a particular influence on choral confidence. The findings of this research therefore have implications for choral leadership and group facilitation, and a number of confidence-building strategies have been extrapolated from the data. The outcome is a set of practical recommendations for conductors and teachers with an interest in maximising confidence in choral ensembles.

‘Choral Blend’: the use of real time spectrograph data in a choral rehearsal
James Slimings, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

The idea of ‘choral blend’ is one that is addressed in much literature, and a term with which each individual choral director and singer has a unique relationship. Choral directors are concerned with the whole group sound, the noun ‘blended’. Some singing teachers believe that in order to achieve this ‘blend’, choral directors subjugate their student’s voices in order to create a whole choir sound. Choral singers are concerned with the issue of ‘blending’, the verb and technique through which the choir makes a blended sound. It is usual for the literature to deal with either one or the other of these phenomenon. Through observation of current choral leaders in the UK and their work on ‘blend’ in a rehearsal, this paper addresses what the ‘blend’ phenomenon means acoustically. After discussion with the observed choral directors about ‘blended’ tone and the rehearsal and vocal techniques used to achieve this, this paper looks at spectrographic data pertaining to these ‘blend events’ in order to go some way to acoustically defining the phenomenon of ‘blend’. Linking ‘blend events’ to both conducting gesture and rehearsal language goes some way as to working towards a model of using this information in a rehearsal context. Continuing on from the work of John Nix, this paper discusses the real world application of the definition provided for ‘choral blend’ the noun, and leads on to the issues surrounding individual choral singer’s contribution to the choral sound as a technique of ‘blending’.

‘Glitter’ or ‘Bright’? Types and Functions of Verbal Imagery in Choral Rehearsals
Mary Black, Liverpool Hope University, United Kingdom

This presentation is based on my recently completed PhD research into the use of verbal imagery in choral rehearsals. It sought to establish the types of imagery used and whether and how they were understood by singers. The research established what role imagery plays in choral directing pedagogy and what
implications this has for choral directors’ practice. The investigation was completed over five years and adopted a multi-method approach, using videoed observations, questionnaires and interviews; twenty-one directors and over 300 choir members across 15 choirs contributed to the research.

A series of choral rehearsals was examined focusing on the occurrences of verbal imagery and how they affected the sung responses. The results were analysed and a series of findings produced. The functions of verbal imagery were established and the research resulted in the creation of a typology of verbal imagery as used in choral rehearsals.

This presentation will examine the resulting typology and some of the functions of verbal imagery, so that the implications for choral directors can be considered.

"Singing is the gateway to the world of music!" - Thoughts on the Resurgence of Singing in Germany Today from a Music-Didactic Viewpoint.

Helmke Jan Keden, University of Cologne, Germany

Germany has once again become the land of singing - in particular in choirs. Over the past decades the resurgence of singing has taken on a symphony of new forms: flash-mob choirs, casting-show choirs, choirs of the homeless, virtual choirs, choirs of refugees, political demonstrations and many more. In my lecture I aim to illuminate this phenomenon from a historical and music-didactic viewpoint.

Towards a choral leadership competence model

Dag Jansson, Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences, Norway

The conductor, as a distinct interpretive and expressive role, grew out of the aesthetic ideals of romanticism and has been a well-established artistic and pedagogic practice for more than a century. Following the evolution of the practice, conducting as a discipline taught in music academies emerged and eventually also became part of a wider music teaching domain - choral conducting in particular. Choral conducting curricula are largely practice based, as is most performative music studies. Choral conducting as a research domain has only evolved over the last decades. While the conductor in some respects is like any other musician, in terms of basic competences, the conductor needs to understand, embody and communicate musical ideas to make it meaningful for everyone in the ensemble. Hence, the conductor role involves skills and competences beyond musicianship, or more precisely, the application of music skills requires extensive relational and situational mastery. The choral conducting curriculum therefore potentially extends beyond what is normally captured by a practice view or a master-apprentice orientation only. There is no widely accepted way to construct a choral conducting curriculum. This would depend on an underlying competence model, for which there is no unified view either. The scope of this article is through a review of relevant literature to sketch a competence model for choral conducting. The proposed model consists of three layers; situational/relational mastery, musical/technical mastery and existential foundation. Each competence layer consists of distinct competence elements that are described in more detail.
Singing with machines - The Loop-Copy-Mutate Project of the Genetic Choir

Thomas Johannsen, Netherlands

What is the smallest unit of music? How can a system make musical choices in an environment of random live sounds? Can we define the variables that are essential to music making without limiting the music that can emerge?

For eight years now, these questions are being explored in Amsterdam, not by a group of computer scientists, but by an unusual ensemble of live musicians: The Genetic Choir. This vocal ensemble approaches composition from the idea that vocal music can be reduced to digits in a dynamic process of large numbers of agents (i.e. singers) making composition choices together, uninhibited by style or genre. Currently, with the Loop-Copy-Mutate project that will run until 2017, they are introducing their work to the realm of computational sound analysis and evolutionary composition to see how their approach can inspire creative music systems.

This workshop will introduce participants to both the multi-agent composing practice of the Genetic Choir and the software strategies we employ to emulate the Genetic Choir approach in the context of an interactive smartphone app. Participants will experience a live demonstration of the software, and will have the chance to personally interact with Genetic Choir singers in a hybrid instant composition set-up using the computer and smartphone interface that will be used for the “Loop-Copy-Mutate” project.

Aspects of historical choral research: in search of lost choral archives and collections of the German-speaking region

Alexander Arlt, Documentation and Research Centre on Choral Singing, Germany

The first research institution in Germany that was exclusively dedicated to amateur choral singing was the Deutsche Sängermuseum (DSM) in Nuremberg, opened in October 1925. This “documentation and research center” soon had an exceptional collection, whose importance for interdisciplinary choral research can only be guessed at. When the museum was destroyed in 1945, its inventory – including historical banners, valuable archival materials and autographs – was thought lost. Unexpectedly in 1962 a bundle of about 3,000 objects was found in the safe of a Berlin bank. This partial stock however is probably not more than 10 percent of the original collection and the search for the major part of the inventory continues to this day. Other than the Deutsche Sängermuseum, extensive music-collections pertaining to aspects of choral singing were built up by further institutions before World War II, chief among them the Archiv der Deutschen Musikorganisation founded by Leo Kestenberg and managed by Franz and Ellen Beidler. The managing couple’s task was “to record everything related to music and pertaining to music-organization”. The Jahrbuch der Deutschen Musikorganisation, published in 1931, contained a comprehensive documentation of musical life in Germany and is setting standards until the present day. However Kestenberg and the Beidlers were forced to leave Germany in 1933 and there is still no trace of the Archiv der Deutschen Musikorganisation. In the Jahrbuch der
Deutschen Musikorganisation there is also a reference to a Frankfurter Sängerbibliothek that, according to its description, was quite similar to the collections of the Deutsche Sängermuseum. The fate and location of such important archives and collections is a fundamental task of historical choral research.

**Why, and how, should we compose music for adult community choirs?**  
*Emily Peasgood, Canterbury Christ Church University, United Kingdom*

In the United Kingdom the community choir movement has accelerated in recent years, popularised by TV series such as The Choir That Rocks and documentaries featuring Gareth Malone. Whilst there is a growing body of research and evidence around singing and its effects on health and wellbeing (Clift et al. 2010; Croom, 2015; Gick, 2010; Lally, 2009), and guidelines regarding the selection of repertoire for children and school choirs (Chorus America, 2003; 2009; Varvarigou, 2009), there is little research to date on repertoire utilised, what constitutes as ‘suitable’ repertoire, or on the creation of new music within the context of adult community choirs. This paper is part of my ongoing PhD research into the repertoire selection practices of community choir leaders (n=70) in the United Kingdom, and draws on my practice as an active composer for community choirs. Data were collected through an online survey and key themes that emerged from the analysis are: inclusivity; ‘feel-good’ factor; and opportunities for providing a ‘challenge’ to further musical development.

With the success of community choirs, focus on the benefits of group singing, and an increase in participatory public arts commissions to create choral works that widen engagement in group singing, it could be suggested that a new approach is developed towards repertoire creation for adult community choirs with focus on repertoire that fulfils the values and principles of the adult community choir, to assist choir leaders, composers, and song arrangers in the creation of repertoire.

**Unfreezing identities: Exploring choral singing in the workplace**  
*Anne Haugland Balsnes, Ansgar University College, Norway; Dag Jansson, Oslo and Akerhus University College of Applied Sciences, Norway*

The topic of this paper is the emerging trend of singing at work. The discussion is exemplified by results from case studies of singing interventions carried out at three different workplace. For two of these the data were captured in connection with the singing interventions, for the third, data were captured five years after, in order to study the long term effect. The research comprised group interviews, participant observation and questionnaires. Our phenomenological and hermeneutic approach focused mainly on the employees’ experience of singing at work. The analysis was inspired by thematic coding. The discussion is illuminated mainly by Etienne Wenger’s community of practice theory. The following research questions were developed: How do the members of a workplace community experience choral singing? What implications do the participants see for themselves as individuals and for the organization? We identified four axes of impact: enjoyment, comfort zone, communality, and identity and roles. A workplace choir can thus challenge perceptions about how colleagues view each other and trans-
form individual identities. Consequently, we argue that the choir may also change
the workplace as a practice community. For the group that was studied five years
after the singing intervention, there were clear signs of impact of lasting nature, as
the experience continued to affect the professional life of the participants.

Voices of contemporary choral leaders
Karin Johansson, Malmö Faculty of Fine and Performing Arts, Sweden

The book *A cappella* is one of the results of a research project with the aim of
investigating and mapping out contemporary choral leaders’ views on their
musical practice. Twenty five prominent directors give their answers to questions
concerning musical value, education and the future, for example: Why is choral
singing and choral leadership important? What does development mean in the
context of choral singing, and what is important in the education of new choral
directors? What are practitioners’ ideas and visions for the future of choral life? In
the presentation, this is discussed in relation to the four key areas that are
described in the material: (i) the interaction between the choir, the choral leader
and the audience; (ii) choir and health; (iii) the choir as an instrument for artistic
expression; and (iv) tacit dimensions of practice-based and professional
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Venues in Lund

- Pufendorf Institute
- Biskopshuset
- Allhelgonakyrkan
- Hotel Lundia
- Cathedral