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J. S. BACH IN EVERYDAY LIFE:
THE ‘CHORAL IDENTITY’ OF AN AMATEUR ‘ART MUSIC’
BACH CHOIR AND THE CONCEPT OF ‘CHORAL CAPITAL’

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Submitted by Sigrún Lilja Einarsdóttir to the University of Exeter
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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents research on an amateur composer-oriented Bach choir. Its main purpose is to study the development of musical identities and musical preferences of choir members as they take shape through the collective learning process of rehearsing and performing large-scale choral music. The study analyses how the choral participation and performance creates a certain type of ‘choral capital’ (a combination of social and cultural capital within the choral setting) and how the choristers reconstruct and relate to the composer (J.S. Bach) by creating ‘choral identities’ linked to the composer-orientation of their choir.

This study is based on an interdisciplinary approach, seeking concepts and ideas from different fields of study – primarily sociology and music sociology (music in everyday life and the concepts of social and cultural capital in the amateur choral setting) but also music psychology regarding concepts of musical and vocal identities, history of music (especially Bach scholars, previous biographical writings about J.S. Bach), music and education (choral singing as informal music education) and interdisciplinary studies on music, health and well-being.

The methodological approach of this research consists of a grounded theory based, single case study where the case was the Croydon Bach Choir in London performing J.S. Bach’s *Mass in B Minor*, using participant observation (where I sang with the choir for one semester) and qualitative interviews as main research methods and gathering demographic background data on choir members via paper-based survey. Whereas significant research on music performances has been conducted, so far choral research, where the direct participation of the researcher as a member of the choir is used as one of the main research methods, is still quite rare.

Results indicate that participants develop socio-musical identity both through their choral participation in general, performance experiences and early music consumption in the family household and the emphasis of the importance of choral singing as a fulfilment instead of pursuing a professional career. Through choral singing, participants developed ‘choral capital’ through a) the effects of collective learning on their musical taste and preferences (thus broadening their musical taste and preferences and reconstructing the composer) and b) the well-being factor of collective singing and communal learning through the process of rehearsing and performing the

Mass in B Minor. Furthermore, findings indicated that participants construct Bach as a genius and a devout Lutheran, an image that relates to the romantic image of Bach presented in the late 19th – early 20th century biographical writings on the composer. Thus in general, their choral activities form a valuable addition to their social and cultural capital ('choral capital'), which they use as a source of well-being in everyday life. In addition, participants create a certain 'choral identity' by relating to the composer-orientation of their choir; the promotional label of Bach as a synonym for quality choral singing and the emphasis of challenging repertoire.

Key words: Music sociology, music in everyday life, musical identities, choral studies, choral music, Johann Sebastian Bach, baroque music, identity and performance, amateur musicians, social capital, cultural capital, choral capital, choral identity

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Elsku mamma og pabbi, þessi ritgerð er tileinkuð ykkur – kórauppeldið sem ég hlaut hjá ykkur á kóræfingum í gamla daga (frá því ég man eftir mér) lagði grunninn, ásamt því að hvetja mig áfram í tónlistarnámi og í því að nýta þau tækifæri sem mér buðust til að feta menntabrautina, tækifæri sem þið fenguð ekki. Það var fyrir ykkar erfði og strit sem gerði okkur systkinunum kleift að sækja okkur menntun – það eitt og sér er ómetanlegt og verður seint fullþakkað. Án ykkar hefði þessi ritgerð ekki orðið að veruleika. Takk fyrir endalausan stuðning og hjálp í gegnum tíðina og ekki síst fyrir börnin mín sem eru svo heppin að eiga svona góða ömmu og góðan afa.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the research will be introduced. The background of the research will be demonstrated, aims of research and theoretical background and methods will be described as well as the organization of the thesis.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH

The purpose of this research was to do a socio-musical study of an amateur, composer-oriented Bach choir (The Croydon Bach choir) by examining the experience of rehearsing and performing J.S. Bach's *Mass in B Minor*.¹ Little is known about composer-oriented choirs and this thesis may be the first of its kind to explore the experience of being a Bach Choir singer.

Many interesting studies on choral activities have been conducted (for example Richards & Durrant (2003), Durrant (2011), Zadig (2011), Ashley (2006 and 2011), Bailey and Davidson (2005), Pitts (2005), Balsnes (2009 and 2011) and Finnegan (1989/2007)) and a number of extensive works about Bach's life and compositions has been written (for example Butt (1997), Wolff (2002) and Parry (1909)) but no specific sociological research specifically aimed at Bach choirs. Participant observation is a well-known and frequently used method within various disciplines in social sciences (such as anthropology, ethnomusicology etc.). However, the use of participant observation within the choral setting where the researcher adopts the role of the choral singer also seem to be rare – I have only found one - an on-going PhD research in ethnomusicology at the University of Washington by Kimberly Cannady (forthcoming) who is currently conducting research on Icelandic, Faroese and Greenlandic immigrant choirs in Denmark. Several research projects on choirs have though been conducted with the researcher in the role of the conductor, such as the research of Anshel and Kipper (1988) and Bailey and Davidson (2005), recent study of Tara French at Glasgow Caledonian University (French and MacDonald, 2011), recent research of Anne Haugland Balsnes (2011) and a recent PhD study conducted by Jennie Henley (2010) on

¹ Generally, the *Mass in B Minor* is also called the *B Minor Mass*. Interviewees frequently used that version so I allow it to stand as it is in direct quotes but I generally use the version *Mass in B Minor*.

a musical ensemble where she did participant observation as one of the ensemble players. Regarding the performance of Bach in a choral ensemble, the MA-thesis by Gregory Darrel Cannady (1989) refers to his research conducted on a high-school choir performing a J.S. Bach cantata with a high-school choir from the technical perspective of the conductor, however with no special emphasis on the performers themselves (see also an overview of related research in Table 6 in Appendix 1).

Considering studies on Bach choirs, existing written materials are of historical nature. Basil Keen (2008) has written the history of the first 100 years of the Bach choir in London (1975 – 1975) which is the oldest Bach choir in UK. There have been two different studies written on the history of the Bethlehem Bach choir in Pennsylvania, USA: One by Raymond Walters (1901) covering the period between 1898 and 1900 and the other by Ralph Grayson Schwartz (1998) who chronically documented events in the choir from 1900-1998 (see Chorus America, 1998). More recently, Andrew Parrot published *The Essential Bach Choir* (2008), where he investigates primary resources and archives on the musical activities of J.S. Bach in Leipzig, especially his resources and access to singers and musicians in order to perform his compositions. There are also three articles by Perry Jones, firstly on the upcoming centennial of the Bethlehem Bach Choir (essentially a chronicle of the history of this oldest Bach choir in the world (Jones, 1994a), secondly an overview of the Bach choirs of London (Jones, 1995), and thirdly a chronological overview on Bach choirs in Britain and America (Jones, 1994b). Alison Shiel (1996) has described the history and origin of the Aberdeen Bach choir and Preyer (2005) has surveyed the 100-year history of the Flensburger Bach choir (1906-2006) in Germany. Mark F. Lawlor has produced a fifty-year history of the Phoenix Bach Choir in USA and did historical research on the development of this ensemble choir as it made the transition from amateur to full professional status - with 32 paid singers - in 1994 (Lawlor, 2009). The focus of Lawlor's study was on the historical context of the development of the choir and did not consider single performances of Bach. Many other articles, books and other written material on Bach's choral music and composition were found but will not be discussed here in detail.

On the subject of Bach's devotees, Hennion and Fauquet (2001) did a socio-historical study of the Love for Bach in 19th century France (*Authority as Performance*) and Daniel L. Melamed (2005) did a research on the reception of Bach's Passions (*Hearing Bach's Passions*). None of these works about Bach so far mentioned include a focus on the social experience of amateurs singing Bach.

Observing this quick overview of studies devoted to Bach and Bach choirs, there is a gap where little has been written on composer oriented Bach choirs (existing material of historical nature) and there seems to be no special focus on the experience of amateur singers performing ‘art music.’ This leads to the aims of this research, investigating Bach’s performance, musical identities via Bach (including how they interact with earlier, 19th century images of Bach) and music in everyday life and to combine this investigation with a focus on the concepts of social and cultural capital (or ‘choral capital’).

1.2 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH – A SOCIO-MUSICAL STUDY

The main aim of this PhD research was to study the development of musical identities and musical preferences of choir members in the collective learning process of rehearsing and performing large-scale choral music. The empirical focus of this research clusters around three interrelated themes:

- The development of musical identities, musical and musically mediated social skills and musical preferences of choir members in the collective learning process of rehearsing and performing large-scale choral music
- How choral participation and performance creates ‘choral capital’ (a combination of social and cultural capital within the choral setting)
- The meaning of the concept ‘Bach choir’ and its role in the development of ‘choral identity’ and how members reconstruct the composer through their musical performance of the *Mass in B Minor*

This research was based on a grounded theory approach by collecting and analysing qualitative data for further theory-building along with quantitative background demographics of the sample. Key themes emerged from the data that form the basis of key findings in this research.

In order to examine these aims, the approach was divided into three strands: Setting the stage with historical overview and analysis, review of literature and previous research, and collection of empirical data through case study.

1.3 AN INTERDISCIPLINARY THEORETICAL CONTEXT

As demonstrated in Figure 1, the theoretical context of this thesis is interdisciplinary, characterised through four main pillars: Firstly, this is a socio-musical research project based on theories in **music sociology**, the use of music in everyday life (based on the writings of Tia DeNora (2000)) and some aspects and discussions relating to the boundaries between amateur and professional music performances (based on the writings of Robert Stebbins (1979, 1992, 2007 and 2012) and John Drummond (1990) – see further in chapter 2.1). Furthermore, I use the perspective of choral singing as contribution to social capital (Bourdieu (1986/2008), Putnam (2001), Helliwell and Putnam (2004), Langston and Barrett (2008) – see further in chapter 2.2.5) and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1980; 1984) and to consider how choral participation is an influential factor in forming the musical taste and preferences of the individual (Bourdieu, 1984; Hennion, 2001; Hargreaves, 1986; Kemp, 1996 – see further in chapter 2.2.4).

Secondly, I look at some aspects within the discipline of **music psychology**, especially theories of musical identities (for example Cook (1998), Hargreaves, Miell and MacDonald (2002), Lamont (2002), Pitts (2008, 2009), Clarke, Dibben and Pitts (2010), Borthwick and Davidson (2002), Monks (2003) – see further in chapter 2.2) and take notice of the growing literature on **music and well-being**. Research in the field of music and health has been constantly growing during the last ten years, both in the UK and also in Scandinavia, especially focused on choral singing as a pathway to well-being (as an example, see Clift et al. (2007), Clift & Hancox (2005), Durrant (2005), Langston & Barrett (2008), Bailey & Davidson (2005), Bell (2008) and Palmer (2008)).

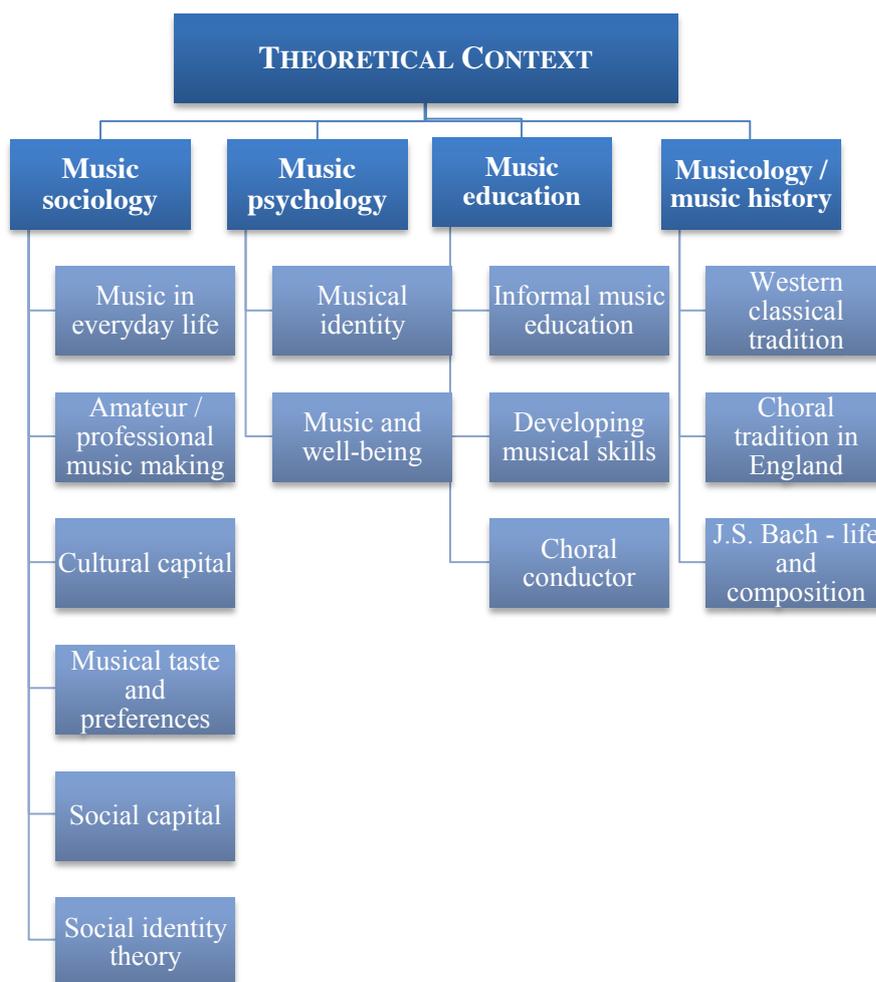


Figure 1: Theoretical context of research (author's presentation)

Thirdly, I also employ certain perspectives within **music education**, especially informal music learning and the formation of musical skills in relation to choral participation (see for example Durrant (2005), Hallam (2005), Folkestad (2006), Hargreaves, Marshall and North (2003), Batt-Rawden and DeNora (2005) and Green (2005) – see further in chapter 2.2.3) and some literature regarding the role of the choral conductor (see Durrant (2005), Richards and Durrant (2003), O'Toole (1994), Pitts (2008) and Einarsdóttir and Sigurjónsson (2010)).

Fourthly, since my focus is on a choral work by Bach I also draw from musicological literature. In particular, I discuss the choral phenomena in a somewhat historical context; I include some literature regarding historical perspectives on the western music tradition, the choral tradition in England (Russell, 1987; Blake, 1997) as it has evolved since the growth of the large oratorio choirs in the Victorian era. I also examine the literature on Bach and his compositions, within the discipline of **musicology and music history** (see Stamou (2002) Turley (2001), Diekhoff, (1991),

Palmer (2008), Anderson et al. (1966), Wolff (2002) and Butt (2010)) I discuss this last topic in further detail in section 2.1. There, I include a brief description of the life and work of Johann Sebastian Bach, with special emphasis on his grand choral works and his alleged effects on the choral tradition and the establishment of special composer-oriented Bach choirs (Bach choral tradition) (see Wolff (2002), Parry (1909), Parrott (2000), Butt (1997), Hennion and Fauquet (2001) et al. – see further chapter 3.4).

1.4 A SOCIO-MUSICAL METHODOLOGY

My initial aim was to study amateur choristers performing ‘art music.’ Prior to this research, I conducted a pilot study in autumn term 2009 where I joined a small community chamber choir in Southwest England for two months in order to define my scope further and test possible research methods. My status as a researcher was to observe from the perspective of the amateur choral singer which I am,² since I have relatively little formal music education and no professional qualifications in singing.

Initially I aimed at doing interviews primarily (with choir members and the conductor) but decided to join the choir and keep a journal during this two-month period which led to the use of participant or self-observation, studying the experience of myself and my co-singers. As my research aims took shape, and in order to pursue them, I decided to focus on a single case study that would meet criteria described in section 4.3 and to employ, a grounded theory approach. Eventually, I chose to focus on The Croydon Bach choir in London, collecting data through use of following methods:

- **Participant observation / self-observation:** I joined the Croydon Bach choir as a choir member in the spring term 2010, rehearsing and performing Bach’s *Mass in B-Minor*, gathering participant observation material via field notes and reflections on the experience.
- **In-depth, semi-structured interviews:** Some of the choir members and the conductor were interviewed.
- **Survey:** A paper-based survey was used in order to gather demographic information and answers to basic questions in the research.

² I have been singing in choirs since I was in primary school – see further about my choral experience described in Appendix 16

The methodology of this research will be described further in chapter 4.

1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This thesis is designed to follow the ‘personal sociology’ of the narratives and perspectives of the members in the Croydon Bach choir regarding their musical backgrounds and influences, the experience of performing grand choral works, and the meaning of the experience of singing in a composer-oriented Bach choir in their everyday lives. The presentation of the data is guided by the themes emerging from the research findings (see Carol Smart, 2009).

In **chapter 2** I discuss the theoretical context of the research. Background discussions regarding choral singing in the socio-music historical context and a short overview of previous related choral research will be discussed in section 2.1 which forms the theoretical background of the research. Section 2.2 is based on the key themes emerging from the data, discussing the role of choral singing in everyday life, choral singers’ musical identities and their musical development through choral singing and the meaning of their musical participation for their social and cultural capital and the development of their musical tastes and preferences.

Chapter 3 sets the stage of the research. I sketch the historical context surrounding the work and reputation of J. S. Bach (see also in Appendix 2), specifically, his grand choral works and the formation of composer-oriented Bach choirs as a result of the Victorian choral movement will be demonstrated in section 3.3.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodology of the research where I describe the process of defining the scope of the thesis, how I, through the pilot study, tested possible research methods and the process of choosing the case for this research. Research methods are described, in terms of how they are used in data collection and the accessibility of data is demonstrated. The analysis of the data (both qualitative and quantitative) is discussed along with the reliability, validity and generalizability of the research. In addition I refer to certain ethical concerns regarding voluntary and informed nature of participation and how the data will be stored. Furthermore, I define and describe myself as a researcher and as a part of the research process in order to acknowledge how my status as a researcher can both be beneficial for the research as well as create certain bias in the results, if not considered properly.

Chapter 5 describes the case study of this research, The Croydon Bach Choir. Its history and structure is outlined, the conductor is introduced and some general background demographics are presented to demonstrate the profile of the choir, as well as a short introduction of the interviewees.

In **chapter 6** I present the first part of the research findings and three steps towards developing ‘choral capital.’ The musical background of the participants is described; their narratives of their musical influences, how they have developed their musical identities in relation to their choral participation and how they responded to the question of whether becoming a professional singer is a dream or not. It also points towards the social aspects of choral participation and it is here I that I describe the aspects of social and cultural capital of choral singing that constitute ‘choral capital,’ referring to the social aspects of choral singing and how their choral participation affects their musical taste and preferences as a certain learning process.

Chapter 7 introduces the case of the Croydon Bach Choir in the learning process of the *Mass in B Minor* and outlines a case of ‘choral capital’ by directing the focus towards Johann Sebastian Bach and how the composer-orientation creates a certain ‘choral identity’ among its members. Thus the chapter examines how choir members experience and construct the composer, their perspectives towards the *Mass in B Minor* during the rehearsal period, the religious / spiritual / emotional context of the work and the context of learning and the role and support in the rehearsal process as a pathway towards ‘choral capital.’ In this part I include the results from the participant observation combined with the narratives and perspectives of the participants of this research.

Finally, in **chapter 8** I discuss key findings in relation to the theoretical background and demonstrate implications and future work related to this research.

2. THEORETICAL CONTEXT

This chapter presents the theoretical context of this research. As I demonstrate in Table 6, choirs (especially amateur choirs) have been a subject of research within several disciplines - musicology, music sociology, music history, music psychology, music education, music philosophy and an extensively growing literature on the aspects of music, health and well-being.

As described in the introduction, this research is cross-disciplinary, seeking theoretical background in various disciplines. In this chapter, I divide the discussion into two main sections: In section 2.1 I define and discuss the concepts of choir, choral singer and choral conductor, discuss choral singing in the context of the history of Western music tradition with a special focus on the choral movement and refer to earlier choral research related to this study.

In section 2.2 I direct the focus towards aspects in music psychology and music sociology with special emphasis on the role of choral singing in everyday life, development of musical identities and musical skills, musical preferences and cultural capital of choral singing and the development of social capital as well-being.

2.1 CHORAL SINGING: BACKGROUND, DEFINITIONS AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

This section consists of theoretical discussions regarding singing and choral music in the context of Western music tradition and some definitions of key concepts in this research. This summary also includes some of the previous research on choral practices but instead of putting this work into a special chapter, it is referred to in other sections of the literature chapter, where it is appropriate. However, this previous research is summarized in Table 6 in Appendix 1.³ This table is not definitive. For a more complete discussion see Geisler (2010) who compiled a bibliography of writings and research in choral singing and publications from the Choir in Focus network (2010 and 2011).

³ References listed in this table are discussed in the literature chapter

2.1.1 A CHOIR – A CHORAL SINGER – A CHORAL CONDUCTOR: SOME DEFINITIONS

Choral singing is probably the most widespread form of art performance, especially in western countries, where it provides an opportunity for ordinary people to participate in creating music without the requirements of formal music education (Walker, 2005).

The concept *choir* is defined as a group of people who sing together where each voice part (soprano, alto, tenor and bass) has one or more members. This definition applies to today's understanding of the concept of choir but it is worth mentioning that in ancient Greece, choir was defined as a group of people that participated in various choruses in the theatre (see also Durrant & Himonides, 1998). Karen Ahlquist (2006) illustrates that a chorus needs to have a) a fixed membership, b) a distinction between preparation and the prospective musical event, c) a clear choice of repertoire, d) a musical leader that is acknowledged, e) members that are not soloists, and finally f) that sounds are produced in the harmony of voices, either with the choir as a whole or divided in various sections. Thus Ahlquist's definition applies to the structure of a typical choir. The size of choir varies, from 1-2 members in each voice (chamber choirs) up to choirs with 400 members or more (see the Mormon Tabernacle Choir in Utah⁴).

Amateur choirs are a platform for people who can sing, who do not have a formal music education but are interested in participating in a music performance. Diekhoff (1991) defined the concept *amateur choir* as a group of skilled individuals with all kinds of educational backgrounds (from secondary/high-school to a higher university degree) who do not earn their living by performing music. No special requirements are made on choir members (other than that people can sing) and that the group has rehearsals and concerts on a regular basis. Many, but not all choirs maintain certain levels of professionalism and are sponsored either by official institutions, private donations or by the contributions of the choir members themselves, for example through fundraising and profits from concert ticket sales (Diekhoff, 1991).

The main difference between an amateur choir and a professional choir is twofold. On the one hand, amateur choir singers do not earn their living by their choral participation and on the other hand, they do not in general have a formal classical music

⁴ See <http://www.mormontabernaclechoir.org/>

education.⁵ However, according to Cindy Bell, there are some (quasi) professional choirs that pay their singers for their work (Bell, 2008), but there are examples of choirs that consider themselves to be on a professional level and do not pay special salaries to their members. According to the recent research of the Chorus America organization, the estimated number of amateur, community choirs in the USA is around 250 thousand – and this number does not include church choirs or professional choirs (Chorus America, 2003).

Choral singers are either amateur singers or, in some cases professional singers (or singers in the process of becoming professionals). These people are usually quite interested in singing (for obvious reasons) with various musical/vocal skills and their main aim is to participate in a choral performance. Robert A. Stebbins (1979) defined three main types of amateur musicians:

- Firstly, there is the pure amateur who has no intention of becoming a professional musician and wants to continue his/her participation in amateur performances and thus having music as leisure first and foremost.
- Secondly, there is the pre-professional amateur whose intention is to become a professional singer and is undergoing a formal music education.
- Thirdly, there is the post-professional amateur: a former professional musician who doesn't have music as a main profession but wants to practice music as a part of his/her leisure (Stebbins, 1979).

This typology indicates that people practice music on different levels and with different orientations. In his later work, Stebbins (1992) defines three types of leisure; amateurism, hobbyist pursuits and career volunteering, indicating that leisure does not only have hedonistic purposes, but also 'can be defined as the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity that is sufficiently substantial and interesting for the participant to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of its special skills and knowledge' (Stebbins, 1992, p. 3). Thus, like in his most recent work (2012) Stebbins claims that leisure activities have positive influences and foster development both in the individual and also in the society – however the debate on leisure has often been limited to consumption (or mass consumption) presented in a negative manner,

⁵ Of course there are in many cases some choral members that are either studying classical singing or have studied classical singing but do not work as professional singers as their main profession.

like Stebbins observes in his book on the relationship between leisure and consumption (Stebbins, 2009) and demonstrated the definition of ‘serious leisure’ as a combination of sub-categories: Casual leisure as a relatively short-lived and pleasurable activity; project-based leisure as a short-term, creative project which is reasonably complicated with a beginning and an end; and serious leisure which constitutes of systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist or volunteer activity in order to acquire special skills, knowledge and experience (Stebbins, 2007).

An example of such a leisure career based on serious leisure is the narrative of Wayne Booth who in his book *For the love of it: Amateuring and its Rivals* (2000) describes his lifelong study and practice of the cello, starting at age 31, and his spiritual, physical and social benefits of amateuring as well as his struggle with the complexity of the instrument. Learning to play a whole new instrument from the age of 31 is a challenge and Booth describes his journey with his instrument and in a chamber music ensemble in a very lively and almost poetic way.

In relation, singing in choirs may be categorized as a serious leisure whereas it takes an effort and practice to acquire skills and knowledge of the repertoire being rehearsed and is also one way of leisure career choice that people engage in due to various reasons. Firstly, members may join in order to belong to a group; secondly, in order to perform beautiful music; or thirdly, to earn experience in order to jump-start a professional career as a singer. Fourthly, amateur musician may gain motivation by taking on a different role, such as performing in an amateur operatic society – a role that is otherwise inaccessible under other (more normal) circumstances (Pitts, 2005). It may thus be argued that the canon of classical music has somewhat caused choral performances to be aligned with certain ‘technical brilliance,’ (see further William Weber on cultural supremacy, 2008) especially when performing with professional musicians, which creates a certain paradox since the singers are amateurs. It may thus be assumed that choirs have a certain mixed heritage – being a creation of the ordinary amateur singers and influenced by the professional music world as well.

John Drummond (1990) compared amateur and professional musicians’ reasons for musical participation. His results indicated that the amateur musicians enjoy choir participation as much as their professional counterparts, whether it refers to performing or composing. Secondly, Drummond suggested that professional musicians approach music as a matter for high levels of dedication, while the amateur’s view is that music is a part of his/her leisure, an activity that gives pleasure and does not require high levels

of discipline. Thirdly, Drummond suggested that the quality of the professional's music is on a different level than with the amateur's music and fourthly, the amateur acquires a certain emotional relief and enjoyment while performing and rehearsing, whereas composing and/or performing music is, to the professionals, a way of earning a living. And finally, Drummond categorizes the music of the amateur as 'low' and the music of the professional as 'high' (Drummond, 1990, p. 3-4). What Drummond's categorization may be missing are those 'grey areas' in between, that in many cases the dedication of amateurs may be no less than among professionals regarding technical and aesthetic issues in performance (the difference may however crystallize in the level of technical skills), and professional musicians may also enjoy composing and performing music and not only considering it as a profession.

Bunch (1995) claims that everybody can sing, but on the other hand, only a limited number of people can become 'real musicians' (Bunch 1995) and singing lessons have no significance in making it possible to sing for those 'who cannot sing.' There are also many people who have the ability to sing without realising it. The reasons for this 'unawareness' can be various – one reason can be that there is no music tradition in the family or the singer has never been encouraged to sing and thus never got the chance to discover his/her ability to sing (Richards and Durrant, 2003). Clarke, Dibben and Pitts (2010) arguing on the so-called difference of being a guitarist or a conductor, ask what exactly the difference would be between a professional musician with long-term music education from the amateur performer.

Therefore, the idea that certain people 'cannot sing' might be a myth and one of the alleged purposes of amateur choirs would be to open up opportunities to sing. Knight (1999) criticised current arguments regarding the concept that only a narrow elite of people can sing, claiming it to be nothing more than a cultural myth which leads to the misunderstanding of many people who claim that they cannot sing and will never be able to sing. The root cause of 'not being able' to sing, according to Knight, lies in family background in which music was undervalued and in which the individual was identified as lacking talent. The discourse became characterised by cynical assumptions of their own musical disabilities that led to certain regret and denial (Knight, 1999). Therefore many individuals may never discover their musical abilities whereas they somewhat 'internalise' these 'self-assessments' based on the influences of the family's lack of musical identity. In this regard, amateur choirs offer opportunities to reclaim one's identity as 'a singer' and the singers even discover 'hidden' abilities to sing.

However, that may be dependent upon the opportunities to join a choir, whether there are auditions or not – in that way, conductors can influence recruitment and the sound in the choir.

There are a number of scholars who have studied the role of the *choral conductor or choral leader*, for example Durrant (2005 and 2011), Richards and Durrant (2003) and O’Toole (1994). Bell’s critical overview (2008) of recent research in the field will also be taken into account.

Durrant (2005) compared the nature of choral participation and the role of the conductor in Sweden and Finland. He concludes that the legend of the ‘great conductor’ is both controversial and debatable. He assumes that other recent studies have concluded that musical directors can also affect singers and instrumentalists in a negative way and therefore have negative influences on the singers’ and instrumentalists’ performances. On the other hand, Durrant assumes that conductors are required to have a positive impact on the choir members in terms of inspiration, musical- and vocal training, and general encouragement. The role of the conductor seems, according to Durrant, relatively new according to the history of Western musical tradition, whereas the conductor evolved from being merely a person who was ‘just’ responsible for beating the time to being the great musical director interpreting the great oratorios during the romantic period in the early-middle 19th century Europe (Durrant, 2005).

By using a descriptive and interpretive case-study based on interviews with conductors and singers and extensive observations on rehearsals and concerts, Durrant (2005, p. 89-90) defined three interrelated attributes of effective choral conducting:

- *Firstly, some philosophical principles including the knowledge of the choral repertoire and the history of music; knowledge of the human voice and some related issues and problems during rehearsals; visualization of each rehearsal and how they are conducted; the awareness of the aesthetic potential of the music, respect for the composer’s intentions and how to bring the interpretation of the repertoire to the choir members and last but not least – the understanding of the nature of the conductor’s role, ‘to take responsibility for the singers collectively and individually and to act as a facilitator and promoter of appropriate musical learning’ (p. 89).*

- *Secondly is the musical ability and technique*, to have a good feeling for the tone, identify inaccuracies in the singing due to pitch problems, entries, rhythm, language, interpretation and how the conductor handles these issues. The conductor must be aware of the importance of warming up and introduce the main theme of the choral works he/she is rehearsing.
- *Thirdly, the interpersonal skills of the conductor*, his/her ability to create a positive and non-threatening environment and to be able to communicate to the choir members in an effective way, using gestures and body language. The conductor's ability of encouraging people and enhance their self-esteem with an effective feedback on their performance is important and he/she must direct rehearsals in an effective way, stretch the choir members and increase their musical and vocal skills without pressuring them too much (Durrant, 2005, p. 89-90).

In sum, Durrant regards the musical director as, for choir members, one of the main pillars of the choir's activities and success. The singers and conductors that Durrant interviewed emphasized that the conductor's own interest in their profession is essential in order to be able to influence and encourage choir members to enhance the quality of their performance, both in terms of musical skills and interpretation of the choral works. The conductors considered themselves to have the role of a mentor and saw it necessary for them to identify the musical and vocal skills of the choir members, as well as to establish the choir's atmosphere and morality/tradition. Durrant assumes that conductors are obligated to have a good impact on the choir members in terms of inspiration, musical- and vocal training and general encouragement (Durrant, 2005).

O'Toole (1994) takes a different perspective. She is critical of the power relationship between the conductor and choir members. Her analysis is based on her own experience as choral singer and conductor. Taking a 'Foucaultian,' feminist perspective, O'Toole highlights some of those issues that contributed to 'unpleasant' (e.g. boring and not motivating) rehearsals. There are, according to O'Toole, power 'struggles' between conductors and choir members and these are related to the masculine discourse that has, according to O'Toole, dominated the writings and debates about the history of Western musical tradition. O'Toole considers the conductor-oriented, Western choral tradition to be based on masculine values – the conductor is the actor meanwhile the choir members' function as the objective, powerless musical

instruments of the conductor in order to produce the conductor's music. Therefore little attention is given to the choir members themselves.

O'Toole takes one choir, where she is a choir member, as a living example of a conductor-oriented unity where the conductor frequently ignores the member's skills and experience – they are silenced and their comments often thought to be an unwelcome disturbance. The conductor's primary intention is to produce 'quality music' even at the expense of the experience of choir members who are regarded as 'instruments' without voice or will. In O'Toole's perspective, the conductor's arrogance and sarcasm causes the choir members to take the responsibility for errors instead of questioning the conductor's abilities and capabilities to identify and solve the problem – that is, the conductor seems to blame the choir members for incorrect notes and wrong interpretation of the choral works. Although critical, O'Toole also emphasises that she did not seek to somewhat blame this particular conductor for the alleged silence of the choir members but to highlight the patriarchal and hierarchical structure of choirs as a result of the effects of the western male-orientated conductor's tradition which is debatable (O'Toole, 1994, p. 23-33). Even though choir members may be happy and content with their conductor and the choir's operation in general, O'Toole's work highlights the importance of allowing choir members agency to influence their own performance and have their opinions heard and taken into account, matters which, as O'Toole observes, tend to depend on the choral conductor's perspective.

Richards and Durrant (2003) state that there is an increasing tendency among conductors to prefer advanced singers, which saves them the trouble of teaching and training. According to Richards and Durrant, this increasingly professional bias can discourage people from choral participation. The main aim of Richards and Durrant's research was to study the feasibility of training people who, in their own opinion, cannot sing. Their research was conducted over a period of seven months during which a group of people received vocal and musical training in choral singing. Results of the action-research demonstrated that participants gained significant progress in the terms of vocal-musical skills, and tend to endorse the theory that 'everybody can sing,' given the guidance of an advanced teacher or choral director (Richards and Durrant, 2003).

Cindy Bell's analysis of previous research (2008) examines the role and importance of choirs in contemporary society; she considers whether a choir is really a field for amateur singers or if that role is at all changing. Many choral conductors face the inevitable fact that recruiting new members, especially younger members, is getting

harder and the current choir members are getting older in general. In accordance, many choirs have evolved towards becoming quasi-professional choirs. According to Bell, this evolution is drifting away from the choral tradition in the beginning of the 20th century in which the choirs reflected their society and had a direct link to it (Bell, 2008).

The wide research of Chorus America (2003), an organization of community choirs in the USA, showed an increasing tendency among choirs to audition new choir members. Richard and Durrant (2003) agree and assume that many ‘ordinary people’ find it intimidating to audition in front of the musical directors, who in many cases require trained choral singers, instead of recruiting people who need vocal training to become better choral singers. Bell (2008) is also concerned that requirements in auditions are too high and exclude everyone except well-trained singers. The auditions have the disadvantage of discouraging people from participating, especially people with good skills as choir members but who lack self-esteem and think they are not good enough. To sing in front of the musical director seems frightening for many people and could exclude many promising choral singers from participating.

As an example, Bell tells the story of Joan, a 75-year-old woman who has sung in choirs for 65 years. Joan is an experienced choral singer, who has no formal musical education – she was the conductor’s dream: an advanced alto who knows her lines, reads music and is tone-accurate. Joan has also been very active in the choir’s social life, has been a member of the choir committee and has done all kinds of voluntary work for the choir. But she has never participated in an audition. She claimed that she would never participate in an audition, that her voice is not good enough in her opinion and that she lacks the confidence in order to sing alone. Bell uses this example to demonstrate that choral conductors may be missing the opportunity to recruit people like Joan. The evolution of the choral practice in general is therefore, according to Bell, highly dependent on the choral conductors because they have the ultimate influence on how to recruit new members (Bell, 2008) – therefore, the question is whether there is a growing tendency towards semi-professionalization within the choral movement. O’Toole (1994) argues that instead of building up an amateur choir with all kinds of people in order to allow the individual to grow and to learn (when it comes to improving one’s sight-reading and to increase vocal / technical skills), choral conductors may prefer to have singers in their choirs that are ‘ready’ and ‘do not need to learn.’

However, in order to follow up on these perspectives mentioned above, it is important to contextualize choral music and choral singing within the Western music tradition, specifically in the context of amateur / professional performances. The next section will discuss choral singing within the ‘classical music canon’, discuss amateur / professional perspectives in the choral context and apply this discussion to the alleged ‘musical hierarchy’ within the Western music tradition (especially the classical tradition).

2.1.2 CHORAL SINGING WITHIN THE WESTERN MUSIC TRADITION: AMATEUR / PROFESSIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Within the Western choral tradition, the boundaries between professionalism and amateurism may not be crystal clear and the status of choral singing may be categorized as ‘somewhere in-between.’ A good amateur performance can have professional quality whereas a professional performance can even be ‘catastrophic.’ However, as previously referred to, the aim of this study is to investigate the issues surrounding amateur musicians who perform music on a somewhat ‘professional level’ like the *Mass in B Minor*. This study is an example of people who do not have advanced music education and come together to sing in a group and thus, according to Yerichuk (2006), form a kind of a ‘protest’ against the Western music canon and the ‘privileges’ of certain elite performers. In general, amateur choral singers want their voice to be heard, an ordinary people who become ‘visible’ instead of being non-active consumers without a voice (Yerichuk, 2006).

John Dewey (1980/1934) criticised the categorization of the Western music canon of what ‘art music’ is and what it is not and thus challenged the conceptualization and institutionalization of art in general. He emphasized the importance of focusing on how art is presented and the focus should be increasingly directed towards the meaning of aesthetic experience of the individual when it comes to music and/or other art forms. This coincided with William Weber’s debate on the idea of a ‘cultural supremacy’ (2004) and the hierarchical classification of music genres, where classical music is put on a pedestal while popular music is ignored. Thus it may be assumed that choral performances, in order to belong to the upper levels of the hierarchy of genres, must present a certain stage of technical brilliance, even though the choir is on an amateur level.

The roots of these ideas can be traced back to early writings, like in Plato's *Republic* (428-348 BC) and Aristotle's *Politics* (384-322 BC), which indicate the use of music and music education as a pathway of well-being, control and moral example. However, Aristotle makes a clear distinction between the music people should study in general and the music that the more talented individuals should study in order to perform fine music for others. In a way, Aristotle makes a distinction between an amateur and a professional musician⁶ (Stamou, 2002). Reimer (1992) somewhat agrees with Aristotle on the two dimensions of music education, i.e. general education for everybody and specialised music education for those who plan on professional career in music (Reimer, 1992).

In his work *Economy and Society* (1922) Max Weber (1864-1922) discussed the evolution of the Western music tradition linked to the industrial revolution and the emerging influences of capitalism. He assumed that public music performances were linked to the Catholic Church which illustrates that Weber was greatly influenced by his admiration of Bach and other composers, which indicates certain cultural-nationalistic tendencies. In addition, Weber solely focused on the evolution of Western music, especially the music of the European upper class, i.e. medieval elite music. Some critics claim that this narrow perspective might jeopardize the validity of Weber's ideas - that he does not assume a similar evolution of music in other parts of the world (Turley, 2001). Based on these early ideas on the emphasis of music education for professionals and 'others,' the Western music tradition has been criticised for dominating the musical discourse, eliminating musical traditions other than Western (Walker, 2005).

In 1974, Abraham addressed his concerns about the possible end of the great tradition of Western music, that it is simply too expensive to spend large sums of money to keep institutions like opera houses and symphony orchestras alive, operating as monuments or museums preserving the great music of the past (Abraham, 1974). On the other hand, why not preserve music like other 'antiques?' Why should music which people in the Western world need certain 'validity' in order to sing in public be preserved, whereas people within certain tribes in Africa do not hesitate to sing in public (Durrant & Himonides, 1998)? The cause can perhaps be located within certain cultural values of what can and cannot be categorized as art and in that many Western

⁶ However, it must be taken into account that Aristotle's perception was that playing musical instruments was only suitable for slaves since it is time consuming to gain technical skills in order to play musical instruments in a satisfying way

societies want a clear distinction between those who have musical talent and/or education and those who do not – those who are ‘musicians’ and those who are not.

A ‘musician’ is therefore a somewhat problematic concept and hard to define and is greatly dependent on the process of continuing musical participation during adolescence and into adulthood. In Western cultures, being a musician is often directly linked to the ability of playing a musical instrument and thus dependent on the level of formal music education. This somewhat ‘narrow’ definition has faced growing criticism within diverse disciplines (see Cook (1998), DeNora (2000) and Trevarthen (1999/2000) – quoted in O’Neill, 2002). There is however no specific definition of the concept and it has been discussed that this term needs to refer more to the ability to perform. Instead it is used for the purpose of distinguishing between ‘musicians’ and ‘non-musicians’ (O’Neill, 2002) and the classification of amateur / professional might be subject to social status. As an example, findings of Bailey and Davidson (2005) in their comparative research on a middle class choir and a choir for marginalized, homeless men indicated that the members of the middle class choir were more consistent in their attitude towards the few, chosen elite performers than the members of the homeless choir and middle class singers also doubted more the quality of their own vocal abilities.

Nicholas Cook (1998) has discussed the issue of ‘authenticity’ in relation to professional musicians and composers. He suggested that authenticity is linked to a hierarchical system derived from the 19th century European ‘classical’ music (traced to Beethoven) and the historical context of the ‘validity’ of Western classical music standing on top of the musical hierarchy. Cook argues that this is inappropriate for contemporary musical experiences and is critical towards the definitions of the hierarchical value system within music as they are all human constructions, produced by culture and thus vary from time to time and place to place (Cook, 1998).

Moreover, some people are not comfortable with the notion of being identified and categorized as musicians and face external pressure of being one, for example they might dislike the requirement of singing and playing in public, preferring instead to keep their musical activities as a hobby and not wanting to pursue a professional career. This, according to O’Neill (2002), creates a complex and multifaceted conflict ‘made up of a number of stated or implied dichotomous categories: talent versus ‘normal,’ musician versus non-musician, public versus private, ‘good’ versus poor performance,

personal versus social expectations, understanding and acceptance versus ignorance and alienation' (O'Neill, 2002, p. 87).

Taking the step towards being a musician is therefore based on the individual's perception of his/her success in performances and the ability of overcoming negative anxiety and thus developing certain confidence in performance. Soloists are usually more exposed to performance pressure because they are not supported by co-performers. In order to continue to develop musically, Davidson (1997) reports that young music learners were dependent on motivation, support and encouragement of the 'key others' such as peers, family and teachers but especially on being asked by their families to play through pieces for visitors in the home (Davidson, 1997 – quoted in Davidson, 2002). However, according to Davidson, Howe and Sloboda's (1997) work on music learners 18-26 years of age, only half of the sample were pursuing music performance as a profession – the other half had music as a hobby while pursuing other careers. Another key finding indicated that music learners claimed they wished they had more 'killer instinct' in order to succeed in the professional sector as musicians (Davidson, 2002).

According to Davidson (2002) a musician often comes from a family that includes a highly skilled solo performer, not necessarily in music but perhaps in a different field, like sports.⁷ Being a solo performer is not some kind of safe mode that everyone fits in like a hand in a glove. Thus, according to Kemp (1996), instrumentalists are often regarded as more introverted, while solo singers, conductors and pianists tend to be more extroverted (Kemp, 1996). Furthermore, the 'key part of a good performance is for the soloist to 'show off' to the audience. Indeed, it seems that to have a performance personality is to be able to 'show off' in a number of different ways. The main point ... is that the singer needs to 'show off' in a culturally appropriate manner' (Davidson, 2002, p. 111).

It is thus a cultural fact that there are people who cannot sing and cannot fulfil the standard of the 'outgoing star performer' as soloists (Welch, 2001). Choirs break these boundaries and this distinction in a way. Singing in a group can provide people, who do not have the guts to sing alone in public, a chance to participate in a musical performance, without having a formal music education (Richards and Durrant, 2003).

⁷ My brothers and sisters, for instance, are very successful athletes whereas my field of performance is music and arts.

The choral tradition is thus a cultural phenomenon in itself in the Western music tradition. Even so, when it comes to the writing of the history of Western music, there are certain male dominant power factors and struggles that characterize the discourse. Abraham's work (1974) on the history of the Western music tradition hardly refers to choral music but is, on the other hand, more focused on the operatic form. Even in the part about the social function, he does not seem to be able to escape the elite performances, pays little attention to amateur performances and spends most of his focus on the operas. This discourse reflects the mainstream ideas of the tradition as an aesthetical hierarchy that the Western music canon is so often accused of (see Abraham, 1974, p. 90-96).

Another aspect is that according to the research on Western music history, it is evident that women rarely participated in public choral performances until in the 19th century. In Victorian England, the musical skills were a part of the image of a true lady. But music activities remained purely domestic in that period – women were expected to play before marriage but when their skills reached the level of professionalism, there was a hindrance of the social attitude that performing music in public could jeopardize their social status as a lady. They were also expected to sing and the amateur choir finally became their platform to perform, without endangering their status in society (Blake, 1997, p. 33).

O'Toole (1994) claims that the male perspective has been a dominating factor when it comes to writing the history of music, whereas women have been excluded in that history, both as performers and composers. As an example, she claims that both historians and other scholars had done injustice to the compositions of Italian female composers from 1566-1700, which were considered as naive and not fit in comparison to the compositions of men when it came to quality. These scholars, in O'Toole's opinion, ruined the female composer's reputations and their possibility to place themselves within the tradition and musical canon, even though their compositions would be completely comparable to men's compositions. Therefore the works of women had been silenced and their voices not heard (O'Toole, 1994).

The main research on women's participation in musical and choral activities is of a historical nature. Calame, Collins and Orion (1995) studied the history of young women's choruses in Ancient Greece (Choruses of young women in ancient Greece). When published, this was break-through research because the focus was on women's participation in music activities, questioning previous theories of an almost complete

male domination in performing arts in the ancient times. One must bear in mind that the concept of chorus had another meaning in the ancient Greece.

Another good example is the book *Women & Music: A History* (2001) edited by Katherine Pendle – an overview of women’s participation in composition, performance and their role as music tutors from the times of the ancient Greece to modern times. An example of a sociological study in women’s choral participation is the research conducted by Laya Silber (2005), an assistant professor at the Bar-Ilan University in Israel. Her case was a choir of female prisoners in Israel. This study concluded that their participation in forming a choir, reacting to a conductor and belonging to a group of other women in the same situation, working towards the same goal provided them an increased self confidence and self-esteem and had a positive impact on their identity, both regarding to the personal and social factors. The results indicated that participating in choral activities could play a significant role in terms of rehabilitating the female prisoners (Silber, 2005). There will be further discussions regarding women’s musical identities in the following section. These research projects on women’s roles within the choral movement are but one branch of many perspectives of recent research in this field.

The role of choral singing in everyday life will be discussed in the next section, with emphasis on the development of musical and vocal identities, development of musical skills, musical taste and preferences and how choral singing can contribute to social and cultural capital.

2.2 CHORAL SINGING IN EVERYDAY LIFE

In the last two decades, the literature regarding the use of music in everyday life has been constantly growing, especially in the field of music sociology. Previous literature on music in everyday life and the social context of music (DeNora (2000), Pitts (2005), Clarke, Dibben and Pitts (2010), Hennion (2001), Hargreaves and Miell and MacDonald (2002) et al.) identifies key themes in the field, like music and identity, music as technology of the self, music as self-expression, music as aesthetic experience (taste as performance), music and the body, music and well-being, and music as a social / collective force.

The discussion in this section consists of three main perspectives: Firstly I will discuss literature regarding the formation of musical and vocal identity (and related influential factors) since this research partly deals with participants' musical histories and the collective development of musical skills through choral participation. Secondly, the development of musical taste and preferences through choral singing will be argued and demonstrated, and thirdly, the social aspects of collective music making will be demonstrated in relation to social and cultural capital and as a pathway of well-being.

2.2.1 MUSICAL IDENTITY, VOCAL IDENTITY – SOME DEFINITIONS

During the last 10-20 years extensive research in the field of music psychology has been conducted and attempts made to define and demonstrate the concept of musical identity and how the individual develops his/her own musical identity. According to Hargreaves, Miell and MacDonald (2002) different music genres are becoming more and more accessible due to rapid technological developments in the distribution of music. People use music to formulate and express their own individual identities, to regulate everyday moods and behaviours, and thus to present themselves as they prefer. Therefore musical preferences and taste form an important statement of the attitudes and values of the individual, as performers and composers use music to present their views. As Nicholas Cook observed (1998), music is a part of deciding what you want to be, who you want to be and who you are, as you yourself choose to present yourself to others.

Hargreaves, Miell and MacDonald (2002) defined three principal ways of social functions in music:

- The management of interpersonal relationships, signifying how musical preferences can define to which social group the individual does and does not belong. This especially applies to teenagers and some marginalized groups who define themselves and their identity according to a certain sub-cultural lifestyle
- Management of mood which can be a deciding factor of patterns of musical taste and preferences linked to social circumstances and listening situations (whether to use music to create a certain mood, or as a pathway for stress-release or mood control, as a reaction to negative emotions in order to release them and replace with better emotions)

- The management of self-identity which defines how the individual presents him/herself through musical taste, preference and performance – the very core of the concept of musical identity

It may be assumed that most people, even if they do not consider themselves to have a musical ‘identity,’ do have some kind of musical preferences, even people who consider themselves as not musical at all – ‘tone-deaf’ in the worst case scenario. Furthermore, according to Fulford, Ginsborg and Goldbart (2011), people with hearing impairments may have difficulties in defining their musical identity. Musical taste is however related to age, level of musical training and education, as well as aspects of cognitive style and personality, and how different social groups have distinctive patterns of values and musical preferences (Hargreaves, 1986; Kemp, 1996). However, musical preferences develop and certain music genres can have both long-term and short-term effects on musical taste and preferences, which can be linked to social contexts and different situations in every individual’s life. Thus likes and dislikes form a part of musical identities and aspects of musical identities are constantly being reconstructed (Hargreaves, Miell and MacDonald, 2002).

Musical identities can be divided into two main aspects: Identities in music and music in identities. *Identities in music* demonstrate how people define themselves as musicians, how their family or school environment have influenced their identity as performers, how music students develop their musical identity through music lessons and in what way they situate themselves within the culturally defined roles of musicians, composers, performers or teachers (Hargreaves, Miell and MacDonald, 2002).

Music in identities refers to the use of music as a means or resource for developing other aspects of individual identities such as gender identity, national identity and youth identity (Hargreaves, Miell and MacDonald, 2002).

Thus participating in musical activities offers the individual an opportunity to sustain his/her national, cultural and ethnic identities – especially group activities and thus maintaining and sustaining a certain group identity (Clarke et al., 2010, p. 109).

Identities in music attempt to define a certain musical personality – whether certain types of individuals are drawn to certain musical instruments or activities or whether participating in these activities leads to the development of these certain personality traits (Lamont, 2002). Key findings of DeNora (2000) indicate the use of

music as a technology of the self, e.g. how music plays a key role in constructing the self and how musical preferences shape the identity of the individual and thus identifying ‘me’ as a persona – this is what I listen to, how I listen to the music and in which settings can also be referred to the musical performance of the individual. The question is how the musical personality is constructed, whether it is the individual’s personality traits that predict the behaviour across different situations or does the situation effect the development of personality traits.

However, as evident in Lamont (2002), the development of the individual’s musical identity does not necessarily lead to the fact that the individual, despite having spent up to ten years learning to play an instrument during primary and secondary school, defines him/herself as a ‘musician.’

Linking this discussion to choral singers, the term *vocal identity* (Monks, 2003) can be described as ‘the link between the vocal sound and self’ (Monks, 2003, p. 246) in order to explain how choral singers feel and think about their voices when it comes to self-confidence and self-esteem. These vocal identities start to form quite early, especially during adolescence which is a decisive period when it comes to forming a positive / negative vocal identity and that process continues during adulthood and gives the singers a clue of what kind of singers they will become when their voices mature. This is especially noticeable among male adolescences, since their voices break during puberty (Elorriaga, 2011). It is different with females, as their voice development occurs during a long period of time with no rapid changes due to puberty. However, pregnancy and giving birth affects the voice in many cases.⁸

According to Boulet & Oddens (1995) women after 50 experience changes in their singing voices - elderly women often feel like their voices start to decline and the ones who have sung sopranos, relocate themselves and start to sing the alto part (and some do it reluctantly). Being an alto, however, is a pathway for allowing women to participate in a group activity without being in the spotlight but rather being in a supportive and/or a displaying role (see DeNora, 2000, p. 69).

Thus there are *gender issues* when it comes to musical identity. As previously discussed in section 2.1.2., in historical contexts (especially within the Western music tradition), women have been denied musical training and opportunities to perform in public and have been portrayed as passive and humble (only performing in domestic

⁸ I experienced changes in my voice during my first pregnancy – it had a different and deeper colour – the ‘angel voice of the child’ had suddenly matured and become more ‘grown-up’.

settings) (Dibben, 2002) in relation to the masculine discourse and patriarchal tradition that is closely linked to Beethoven (see DeNora, 1995).

According to Dibben (2002), even though opportunities to build up a musical career are equally available to men and women, it is not as evident in practise as one might think. Among music students, girls seem to be more successful in performing but not necessarily in composition. Girls also tend to choose different kinds of instruments according to Abeles and Porter (1978 – quoted in Dibben, 2002) and there seems to be evidence that the parents may in some way encourage their children to choose instruments on the basis of gender stereotypes (Dibben, 2002). Previous research on music and gender identity indicates that the influences of gender-appropriate behaviour is mostly learned through, and influenced by, the gender role models presented in the media, such as representation of men and women in popular music television, radio and journals, and when it comes to music, women were primarily vocalists rather than instrumentalists (Bayton, 1998 – quoted in Dibben, 2002). Ashley's study (2006) of 'boyiness' through the treble voice suggests that boys age 8-14 exhibit a degree of reluctance to take on the high boy-soprano voice (associated with sacred repertoire) because of its 'feminine' connotations. In relation, male characters are presented as more aggressive, courageous and adventurous in popular music videos than the dependent and nurturing female characters (Seidman, 1992; Sommersflanagan R., Sommersflanagan J. and Davis, 1993 – quoted in Dibben, 2002).

Thus, musical participation is involved in the gender identity construction, as Dibben (2002) argues – that identity is 'constructed through the musical activities people participate in, through their musical preferences and through their beliefs about what constitutes gender-appropriate musical behaviour' (Dibben, 2002, p. 130).

2.2.2 CHILDHOOD INFLUENCES ON MUSICAL IDENTITIES

The importance of early musical development among children and adolescents in the school environment plays an important role in the process of developing musical identities. In this part of the literature chapter I will discuss how important it is for children to have opportunities to participate in musical activities in order to develop positive musical identities and maintain continuous musical development into adulthood. One aspect of this research was to investigate the life-long process of developing musical identity as a choral singer and to study what factors (people,

performances, music reception, musical activities in school) are, or have been influential – especially childhood influences. Pitts' study (2008) of adolescent musical participation in extra-curricular musical activities in music schools indicated that active musical participation in teenage years had an impact on future musical activities and that music teachers hold responsibilities in order to shape musical futures.

The development of a child's identity consists of self-understanding, e.g. the definition of oneself as an individual and self-other understanding, e.g. how the child defines him/herself and relates to others (Lewis and Brooks-Gunn, 1979 – quoted in Lamont, 2002). The personal identity plays a key role in the child's development, but as they grow older, the social identity becomes more influential as they become a part of bigger groups like school classes, sports, and teams that affect their social identity, whereas in early childhood their social identity is largely shaped by family, friends and other relatives. Therefore the social comparison becomes more evident (Higgins and Parsons, 1983 – quoted in Lamont, 2002). According to Lamont (2002), children develop specific identities as musicians around the age of 7 (the usual period of developing musical identity in school is usually between the ages of 5 and 14), when they can grasp the idea of differentiated identity, whereas in earlier childhood other features of self-understanding influence their personal identities that do not relate specifically to music. However, as they move through middle childhood, peer-group comparisons become more and more important in children's musical identities. Reaching adolescence, attitudes and feelings towards music become more dominant in shaping their musical identities.

Lamont (2002) argues that the purpose of the national curriculum in UK should be to make children more musical as they grow older and introduce music to a wider range of children. However, since musical activities are more or less extra-curricular, music is presented as a profession rather than an ordinary subject for children to study, such as reading and writing. Policy makers have responded by mentioning a certain extended curriculum, providing extra musical activities for children to develop a 'sense of group identity and togetherness' through music at school (QCA, 1999; see Ibrahim, 1999 – quoted in Lamont, 2002). According to Lamont (2002) this demonstrates a certain hidden curriculum – that these extra-curricular opportunities might not be beneficial for all children and that there is a need for more diverse opportunities for the development of children's musical identities.

Even though there are different kinds of musical experiences for children, these experiences can cause both positive and negative effects on the way that children approach music (see also O'Neill and Boulton (1996), Sloboda and Davidson (1996), O'Neill and Sloboda (1997) and O'Neill (2002)). The conventional way of children defining themselves as musicians is linked to whether they are having music lessons in order to learn how to play an instrument, not necessarily by their participation in extra-curricular music activities. However, as Lamont (2002) refers to, there is a certain 'contradiction between the expectations of children engaged in curriculum school music activities and the definition of a 'musician' in adult life' (Lamont, 2002, p. 45).

Music teachers, for instance, make distinctions between 'musical' and 'non-musical' children based on the assessment of whether or not the child is able to play an instrument (Plummeridge, 1991, p. 82; Durrant and Welch, 1995, p. 12-13 – quoted in Lamont, 2002). The teacher's own likes and dislikes in music may also influence their students' musical preferences. Teachers are therefore very influential in the process of developing musical identity. Thus the curriculum itself does not help every child in developing a positive musical identity. The process of developing musical identity consists not only of curricular and extra-curricular musical activities, but also of socio-economic status of the family, as well as domestic family interest in music (Lamont, 2002). However, parental expertise in music (e.g. instrumental playing or singing) is not vital for a child to succeed in music – what is more important is that the child's environment is open to music and that listening to music is a part of everyday life inside the family home, as well as concert attendance and/or active musical participation of family members (Sloboda & Howe, 1991; Howe, Davidson, Moore & Sloboda, 1995 – quoted in Pitts, 2009, p. 242).

On the other hand, children 14 years and older who do not participate in musical activities do not consider music something worth studying. However, children in that age group who do participate in musical activities are more likely to develop a positive musical identity and in fact, the 'traditional defining activities of 'professional musicians' (Lamont, 2002, p. 46) seem to shape adolescences' musical identities rather than the curriculum (Lamont, 2002) and there is a decline in positive attitudes at the secondary school level" (Ross, 1995; Harland, Kinder, Lord, Stott, Schagen and Haynes, 2000 – quoted in Lamont, 2002). Thus younger children seem to be more willing to define themselves as 'musicians' in a more positive way. Lamont (2002) links this difference to the fact that as children grow up, they tend to use group comparisons

in order to define their own identities and to decide on their own abilities, like musical talents etc. However there seems to be a gender difference in that girls seem to be more likely to have more positive attitudes than boys, thus developing more positive musical identities (Lamont, 2002). According to Clarke et al. (2010) singing ...

... is regarded as more appropriate activity for women because it is a contruent [sic] with associations of the female body with nature (the voice is understood as coming directly from the body and therefore 'natural' as opposed to the 'technological' symbolism of manipulating an instrument). Thus particular kinds of musical activity can be understood as ways of 'disciplining' the body into gender-appropriate patterns of display, physical movement, and interaction (Clarke et al., 2010, p 107-108).

Walker (2005) emphasizes the importance of teaching children how to listen to music – to give them the choice of listening to Bach instead of Britney Spears. They must learn to choose from a more broad variety of music, not just popular music. The problem is, according to Walker (2005), that many young people are not interested in putting effort into learning how to play an instrument, sing and perform music – instead they choose rather to be inactive consumers (Walker, 2005). These aspects reflect a certain perception towards classical music. John Shepherd (1987) stated that the importance of Western classical music reflects male-dominating perceptions from the Renaissance period (Shepherd, 1987). Lucy Green (1988) criticised a certain dominant status of classical music, the legend that the minority in the society that actually listens to classical music, has better musical judgement than the rest of the society that listens to 'lesser' and not as 'respectable' music as classical music. Most music teachers and conductors have a formal music education and therefore their choice of music in schools is more or less classical music. This reflects the perception mentioned above and is, in fact, the 'hidden curriculum' (Green, 1988 - see Martin, 2005).

Given the fact that curricular and extra-curricular musical activities are an influential factor on children's musical identities, the home environment is also important when it comes to children's attitudes towards music at school. On the other hand, socio-economic situations also play a part in whether parents can afford to support their children's music lessons or not. If parents, siblings and other relatives are involved in musical activities, it is more likely that children will develop positive attitudes towards music or engage in musical activities (Lamont, 2002).

Thus the beliefs and attitudes of one family member can influence values, behaviour and attitudes of others, as children's identities are shaped by the interactions between themselves and other family members. Regarding musical identities, family members play an important role in a child's musical development (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002). According to Byng-Hall (1995) script theory can be used to portray how the patterns of relating and functioning within a family emerge out of those that have been established and transmitted down through generations, including family attitudes, expectations, taboos, myths, secrets, legacies and how children are brought up according to a certain value framework throughout their childhood. Therefore, every family member takes on a role for a time to support a certain scripted plot of family expectations, or the 'family script' which can, of course, alter and develop from one generation to another (Byng-Hall, 1995 – quoted in Borthwick & Davidson, 2002).

Borthwick and Davidson (2002) used script theory to analyse a case study of 12 families where both parents and children accounted for their musical development and taste through semi-structured interviews. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, they investigated trans-generational plots, as well as current daily influences and parental expectations. Regarding expectations of the parents, it became evident that the children were confused since they had been encouraged by their parents to engage in musical activities on one hand, but on the other hand parents were discouraging them to choose music as a professional career and to instead consider it a nice hobby. 'This set of demands may be identified as a 'double bind' (see Bateson, 1979 – quoted in Borthwick & Davidson, 2002, p. 66). This musical double bind was expressed in childhood, with classical music being regarded as a challenging intellectual skill, a gateway to good social encounters and, above all, a focal point for family sharing. In adulthood, however, it was only regarded as appropriate to continue to afford this music a status as a pleasurable, social activity. Parents worried that professional music was low in financial reward and professional credibility, and, therefore, making it a career was discouraged. However, in some cases it became evident that parents and/or grandparents were on occasions living their own dream of playing an instrument through their children (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002).

Sloboda, Davidson, Howe and Moore (1996 - see in North and Hargreaves (2008)) consider parental support, including their involvement in music lessons and their own interest in music (whether their own musical activities or activities of their children) as crucial. Their results indicated that high-achieving musicians described

their first music teachers in a positive way whereas low-achieving musicians had a more negative experience of their first music teachers. According to Moore, Burland and Davidson (2003) the most successful adult performers were not those who practiced the most, but those who took part in more concert activities in childhood and who had mothers at home in their early years.

Key findings from Stephanie Pitts (2009) study of adult musical participation indicated that encouragement and recognition is vital for children to participate in musical activities in order to pursue further musical participation in adulthood. Furthermore, having an inspiring instrumental music teacher and a good teacher-pupil relationship was considered important, but without having parental support, having good music teachers was not good enough.

As a result, it is evident that school activities, music teachers, friends and family have a great influence on how children and teenagers develop their musical activities and these factors can have both positive and negative impacts on the continuing musical participation of the individual, whether on a professional or an amateur level. In the following chapter, the role of choral singing as a collective musical development will be discussed.

2.2.3 COLLECTIVE MUSICAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CHORAL SINGING

As referred to in the beginning of chapter 2.2, there are indicators for the development of the choral movement that children can have the opportunity to engage in musical activities, like singing in choirs, in order to be able to continue doing so in their adult life. However, the question is how do music-enthusiastic children maintain their musical interest and identity into their adulthood? According to Clarke et al. (2010, p. 131) the comparison of the development of children's musical skills with the general adult population demonstrates that musical development is dependent upon opportunities to participate in musical activities and having access to good music teaching, if the children are to continue with musical participation in their adult lives. Sloboda and other scholars in the field of music psychology have referred to the 'folk psychology of talent' which indicates that few 'chosen' individuals are more musically talented than others, although not genetically inherited, and argue that 'musical development is a species-defining characteristic, priming all humans to become musicians, just as we are

all predisposed to learn language and movement' (Sloboda, 2005 and Sloboda, Davidson and Howe, 1994 – quoted in Clarke et al., 2010, p. 135-136).

However, adults who participate in musical activities, whether practicing independently or performing with a musical or choral ensemble, frequently refrain from calling themselves 'musicians', especially if they have no formal music education and are thus not professional in the sense of having qualifications to 'validate' that position – even though their performance may be considered of a high standard. Thus 'musical identities appear to be relatively fragile, needing sustenance from regular musical activity and achievement, and from the affirmation that results from this: applause after a concert, the request to perform for a particular occasion, and the promise of future success and recognition' (Clarke et al., 2010, p. 165).

These indicators (according to Clarke et al., 2010) may be implemented in the amateur choral setting, where regular concerts may provide certain confidence boosts. In this context, the conductor is in the role of the teacher and is responsible for the progress of the choir as a whole and, therefore, musical development and the active learning of choir members. Being a part of an ensemble enables the learning process to become more collective. Davidson, Howe and Sloboda (1997) stated that an appropriate practice environment is necessary in order to develop musical performance skills and maintain interest in the learning process. Sloboda (1985) identified three main stages of musical learning skills. The first stage is the 'pure' sight-reading in which the performer is capable of providing a performance by the first sight of the music score. Secondly, there are performances that need a certain amount of rehearsals over a period of time because reading the score at first sight does not provide a satisfactory performance. Thirdly, there is an expert performance where the musician/singer has through extensive rehearsals polished his/her performance and has even memorized the score (now being able to perform without the music scores themselves) (Sloboda, 1985, p. 67).

Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider (2001) said that if a child is bored by reading, it is very likely that he or she will not read much as an adult (2001, p. 123 – quoted in Elorriaga, 2011). Therefore, when it comes to singing and reading music, a certain amount of positive experiences are necessary to ensure continuation of the activity and that this ability becomes beneficial in any musical activity, like choral singing. A bored adolescent singer will probably withdraw from choral music in adulthood – thus teachers need to learn more about creating 'positive selves' in order to create adult singers (Freer, 2009 – quoted in Elorriaga, 2011)

However, singing may differ from the practice of instrumental playing as the latter requires on-going, continuous musical development and practice. Singing, on the other hand (especially on an amateur choral level) is something that people can turn to after not having sung for a significant amount of time – years, even decades. Even though the singing voice can be ‘out of practice,’ joining a choir after a long break is not as problematic for an individual as starting to play the violin after an equally long break. Therefore the need for continuous development seems not as vital when it comes to choral singing and the potential is open for all children, even though some individuals seem more ‘musical’ than others, simply by the fact that they are motivated and encouraged to define themselves as musical and are thus more likely to develop their musical skills than others who are ‘un-musical’ (Clarke et al., 2010, p. 135-136).

According to Hargreaves et al. (2002) practicing music is in most cases a social activity, which can easily be linked to choral singing. Musical development, however, is shaped by educational contexts and institutions. North and Hargreaves (2008) attempt to define the distinction between formal and informal learning processes, referring to Vygotsky’s rejection of Piaget’s emphasis of the child as a ‘miniature adult’ (1966 – see in North and Hargreaves, 2008, p. 315) thus claiming that learning is primarily based on social interaction and child-centred approaches in education. Pitts (2005) argued that students who were participating in non-institutional musical activities showed a greater confidence in their musical abilities than students who only participated in curricular related activities. However, Folkestad (2006) argued that research regarding formal and informal learning situations is too much influenced by the ‘myth’ of formal musical learning in a formal setting, without acknowledging informal learning as a learning style itself (Folkestad, 2006 – quoted in Henley, 2010). According to Hargreaves (1996), it is important to bear in mind the social context of music making. Practise in an informal learning setting is purely practise, but within a formal setting (or learning environment within the Western music tradition) practising is the same as learning (Hargreaves, 1996, p. 50 – quoted in Henley, 2010, p. 122-123). Therefore, a distinction is made between practising and learning, making the learning process more formal instead of acknowledging practising in informal learning settings as a ‘proper’ learning process. The focus on informal learning is explored in Zadig’s on-going PhD project (2011) at Malmö Academy of Music, Lund University in Sweden. It investigates the role of so-called informal music leaders within choral voices, e.g. strong singers who lead their voice parts. Via interviews with Swedish choral conductors and multi-track recordings

during rehearsals, Zadig demonstrates the existence of informal leaders and how such relationships between voice leaders and followers develop through the choral practices (Zadig, 2011).

In a similar vein, Wise, Hartman and Fisher (1992) define choral music performance as a communal phenomenon where choir members seek influence to the group and the conductor in order to succeed. Hargreaves, Marshall and North (2003, see North and Hargreaves, 2008, p. 340) categorize informal pathway in music education as the ‘third, self-directed environment’ which is both informal and elective – thus choral singing might be located in this ‘third environment.’ By referring to Folkestad (2005), Green (2005) and Hargreaves and Marshall (2003), North and Hargreaves (2008) present four main dimensions of musical education.

The first dimension is the *contexts of learning*, demonstrating the differences between musical practices and informal learning (see further Batt-Rawden and DeNora, 2005) at home, formal learning at school and extra musical activities that can be categorized in the ‘third environment,’ like participating in choral activities, music groups, bands and other musical ensembles (mainly on amateur levels).

The second dimension refers to *autonomy and ownership* – whether music education is directed through music teachers or self-directed through ‘informal’ musical learning (Folkestad, 2005) like choral singing, for example.

The third dimension is the *learning style* itself – the nature and quality of the learning process. Lucy Green (2005a) emphasised four approaches of learning style: Firstly, the use of recordings instead of ‘traditional music scores’ for learning purposes. Secondly, the use of group learning rather than individual learning and thus using peer-learning through imitations, observations and discussions (refers to musical learning in choirs especially). This aspect connects with Moore, Burland and Davidson (2003) who discussed the critical importance of the social context of learning in a choral setting, especially for sustaining motivation and for the development of musical skills. The third aspect contrasts traditional top-down, rather than bottom-up, fashions of music education as a planned progression from simple to complex skills and achievement, and the fourth involves integration of listening, performing, improvising and composing activities (Green, 2005a).

The fourth dimension of musical learning refers to the *learning content* itself, the ‘what’ of music learning, whether the focus is on different styles and genres. However, as referred to by North, Hargreaves and O’Neill (2000) ‘serious’ genres like Western

classical music have been a dominating factor in music teaching in school. Therefore, North and Hargreaves (2008, p. 351) claim that the main challenge that school music teachers face is somehow to be able to capitalize on the high levels of motivation and commitment that informal music learning can provide more motivated students within the school environment. However, many secondary school music teachers are a product of the western classical tradition, according to the analysis of Hargreaves, Welch, Purves and Marshall (2003) and may therefore be inexperienced in other music genres (see York's survey of 750 heads of secondary school music (2001)). The musical identities of music teachers and pupils are interdependent (North and Hargreaves, 2008) and this can be linked and referred to in the conductor-choral singer setup as well. The conductor's musical preferences and the effect and weight their preferences have on the repertoire is discussed in the following chapter below.

2.2.4 DEVELOPING MUSICAL TASTE AND CULTURAL CAPITAL THROUGH CHORAL SINGING

Developing musical taste is a lifelong process with many influential factors. According to DeNora (2000, p. 66) music can provoke memories and past experience where certain songs or genres take individuals back in time, reminding them of childhood events or loved ones that have passed away, evoking memories of childhood homes, specific tastes or smells, the texture of a certain dress or garment when the music was played, performed or was on the top of the charts at the time, played in clubs or other venues. These aspects are closely related to musical taste and preferences, which is usually associated with memories and past experiences.

Linking this discussion to a choral performance, what music choir members choose to perform may be influenced by their musical taste⁹ and/or, as previously discussed, the musical preferences of the conductor. There is a general assumption that when it comes to choosing the repertoire, the will of the choir conductor might be a dominant factor. Although in many cases choir members can have their say on which kind of music the choir will rehearse and perform each term, it is necessary for the choir, as well as for the conductor, that the repertoire suits the choir, that choir members like the repertoire, and especially that skilled choral singers approve when it comes to performing a big, demanding choral piece like Bach's passion or some of the works by

⁹ They might choose choirs to sing with according to the choirs' repertoire

Handel. It is surely tempting to assume that classical music is dominant, although many choirs may have a wide range of repertoire.

Weber (2008) describes the design of a concert program as a certain political process wherein compromises must be made among publics, musicians, tastes, and, in a way, social forces, like a choral setting and the choice is made through negotiations and as a way to appeal to both performers and the audience. Even though some of the members of the choir might not seem to like the repertoire at first, participating in a musical performance can alter that opinion and thus influence the members' musical preferences. It is also tempting to assume that the repertoire is an important factor when people choose which choir to join and that choir members seek venues where they can assimilate to the performance. In a way, according to Lonsdale and North (2009), a group develops in-group favouritism where individuals (like choir members) develop a certain sense of common musical preference for the repertoire through choral singing. DeNora's (2000) theory of music as a medium in social relations and music as a social agency¹⁰ indicates that music can be used to present the musical preferences of the group (DeNora, 2000, p. 45). Thus a choir can identify itself due to a public profile by choosing a certain repertoire to perform or to have a more member-driven strategy by presenting itself as a member-oriented choir with special emphasis on the social factor.

According to Bourdieu (1984) cultural consumption is linked to the individual's habitus, i.e. educational level and social status. As an example, Bourdieu claimed that the working class has the need to familiarize and reflect themselves in the art that they consume, such as in literature, music, fine art and theatre. According to Bourdieu, the working class's value of music (in this discussion) is that they tend to listen to music that refers to some kind of a morality or utility and has an ethical ground and manifesto. On the other hand, people with higher education (upper class) enjoy music for its own sake, because a person, who has everything and anything, doesn't need such a reference and reflection as the poor worker. The working class denies every attempt of a structural alienation when it comes to art. Therefore, any abstract, modern contemporary music applies less to the working class, as well as 'high art' classical music performances in general. Bourdieu claimed that the one that categorizes is therefore the categorized and the value of art is thus a socially constructed phenomenon (Bourdieu, 1984). Results from van Eijck's study (2001) on musical taste in a Dutch population are somewhat

¹⁰ By the term 'agency' DeNora (2000, p. 20) is referring to 'feeling, perception, cognition and consciousness, identity, energy, perceived situation and scene, embodied conduct and comportment'.

similar to Bourdieu's theory of cultural consumption but van Eijck's results indicate that members from higher-status groups tend to be more omnivorous in musical preferences than those from lower-status groups – that is, people of higher status like more variety of musical genres (van Eijck, 2001).

However, according to Dibben (2002) music is more or less 'culturally positioned as an expressive and affective medium' and that 'taste is not 'natural' or 'innocent' but central to the way in which people define themselves' (Dibben, 2002, p. 123).

Previous studies indicate gender difference in musical taste. According to my previous study (Einarsdóttir, 2009) on 10 Icelandic choirs, male participants were more conservative and less open to popular music and other sub-culture genres but more keen on classical music than women. In the context of music consumption in the Anglo-Saxon culture, according to Dibben (2002) women go out dancing more than men do but their taste in dance and romantic popular music (as well as that of young girls) is both characterized by the notion and the socially constructed 'goal' of finding a husband and establishing a home. At the same time, Dibben (2002) claims that the mainstream taste of young women or girls is often ridiculed by the media, indicating that the media is somewhat controlled by masculine perspectives as the power and resources to define what 'good music' is or is not is primarily in the hands of men, thus making it difficult for female taste to establish a positive social identity. As an example, rock music is considered 'good music' as it is signified by a male authenticity and domain. However, this demonstration may be over-simplified according to Richards (1998 – quoted in Dibben, 2002); how the genders describe their musical preferences differs in that girls presented their taste more on the 'safe side' while boys were more open to describing their 'real interest' (Frith, 1983; McRobbie, 2000 – quoted in Dibben, 2002).

However, following the discussion on the development of musical taste, this concept of taste is closely linked to and is a part of the individual's development of cultural capital. In a way, being introduced to new repertoire every semester can be categorized as an addition to the choral singer's cultural capital and thus influencing musical taste, as referred to in the previous chapter.

In order to put things into theoretical perspective, consider Bourdieu's identification of three forms of *cultural capital* (1986): The first is the *embodied state*, the long lasting dispositions of the mind and body due to cultural consumptions by reading books (a part of the second state, the objectified state – tangible, cultural

goods), attending concerts, theatres, operas, museums, by cultural upbringing and influences from family, friends, media and surroundings and other venues that lead to increased cultural capital. The second state, *the objectified state*, represents the tangible sources of cultural capital. In this context, choral singing can be seen as a community-based transmission and embodiment of cultural capital in that the singer not only becomes a performer, but also a consumer of music through his/her own performance throughout the rehearsal period.

This is directly linked to the third form of cultural capital, the *institutionalized state* – a form of objectification of cultural capital embodied within an educational institution. In the context of choral singing as an informal music education, singing in a choir can be defined as a mixture of an institutionalized state of cultural capital (the choir as an institution of music education) and as a kind of semi-domestic transmission of cultural capital – and in some cases a hereditary transmission as well, which is in Bourdieu's opinion an example of a well hidden form of cultural capital transmission (Bourdieu, 1986/2008).

The influences of Bourdieu's approach of categorizing cultural consumption have been widespread but his categorization has also been criticised by other scholars. Bennett and Silva (2006) claimed that his approach is over-simplified, that defining people's taste is a more complex procedure. They claim that Bourdieu is blinded by the class-division; e.g. that he does not realise that taste cannot be defined purely by class lines (Bennett and Silva, 2006). Another aspect is that the boundaries of consumption may not be as clear as before, due to the latest technical development in distributing digital music – music that used to be considered to belong to certain elite groups who had resources to attend classical concerts is becoming more and more accessible to a broader target group (Peterson and Ryan, 2004).¹¹

But even though music is becoming more and more accessible, does that affect how different groups consume music and are the patterns of music consumption becoming less linked to economic status than before? In this perspective, Van Eijck (2001) claimed that level of education seemed to be a better predictor of musical taste than occupational status and defined two types of clusters of musical genres that were popular among the highly educated – the former a cluster of classical legitimate genres and the other a combination of genres (jazz, blues) that have gained legitimacy over the

last few decades without having become chic or classy. Thus, referring to Savage and Gayo (2011) the distinction (alleged) between genres is not as clear as before, whereas a group of classical enthusiasts might be associated with a certain institutionalization of ‘light classical’ taste and a certain canonization of some forms of popular music (like Bob Dylan, ‘classical’ rock music from the 60s and 70s). They conclude that

Rather than people changing their musical taste and ranging across more musical genres, we are seeing the reworking of the boundaries of musical genres themselves. What we are seeing today could be a fundamental remaking of the musical canon, in which the historic investment in classical music as the dominant position in the musical field is being reworked [sic]. It is the intensities around contemporary and popular music that are now striking to observe, and towards which the figure of the omnivore gestures. It is these new musical ‘experts’ who demand more critical attention in future research (Savage and Gayo, 2011, p. 353).

Antoine Hennion (2001) criticised Bourdieu’s academic classification of cultural consumption by arguing that musical taste is primarily developed through a certain learning process (singing in a choir can be defined as a learning process), redefined through reception, consumption, and performance, and is first and foremost an emotional product and thus not necessarily defined by the social background of the individual. Musical taste and preferences are thus constantly being redefined, especially when the individual is engaged in musical activities, like choral singing. Hennion discussed methodological issues – he argued that it matters how people are asked about their musical preferences – it is important not only to ask people what kind of music they listen to. As an example, research led by Chorus America (2003) showed that 82% of those who sing in choirs attend cultural venues on a regular basis, especially choir concerts. In total 88% of choir members listened to choir music on the radio and 56% grew up in a household where another family member sang in a choir. In this research, participants were primarily asked *what kind* of music they listened to but not *how* they used music, like Hennion (2001) refers to.

As a result, there are other aspects and perspectives that must be taken into account when discussing musical taste and preferences. Colley’s research (2008) on gender differences in young people’s musical taste indicated and confirmed a greater liking of heavier contemporary music among men and that women were more interested

in chart pop music. In general, men seem to be more conservative in musical preferences than women.

Another aspect is the differences in musical preferences due to age. According to Savage and Gayo (2001) younger people were more innovative in musical preferences than the older ones and this goes across social classes. The study of Harrison and Ryan (2010) on musical taste indicates a certain life-course trajectory of musical taste, beginning with fairly narrow tastes in young adulthood, expanding into middle age, and then narrowing again in later life. However, more education and participation in art-related activities leads to broader taste of music.

In this context, there are three possible explanations: One is that older people tend not to expand their social networks and are thus not necessarily being introduced to new types and genres of music. Secondly, people heading towards retirement may use music more in order to invoke emotions and memories, rather than to promote interaction. Those who have been musically active, participating in musical activities such as music groups, bands or choirs, may be withdrawing from their participation due to declining physical ability. Thirdly, older people may not be familiar with modern technology when it comes to online distribution and may thus not have the tools to access and familiarize themselves with new types of contemporary music in order to sustain and develop further musical interest.

In this part of the chapter, the aspects of musical development, taste and preferences have been discussed. As evident, choral singing is a social phenomenon and I have previously demonstrated some literature regarding choral singing as collective, informal learning. In the next part I will discuss choral activities in the context of social capital and social identity theory and apply these concepts to choral singing as a communal activity.

2.2.5 DEVELOPING SOCIAL CAPITAL AS WELL-BEING THROUGH CHORAL SINGING

Since choral singing is a collective musical activity, participating in choral activities is a direct addition to the individual's social networking and social capital. Bourdieu (1986/2008) defines *social capital* as networks of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition as each group provides every member a certain collectivity-owned capital. This group of people may thus be socially

instituted and guaranteed by a common name, like a family name, a name on a political party or a choir. According to Putnam (2001) these networks have both internal and external values for the people in them and there exist both formal (like a union or a political party) and informal forms of social capital (like a group of people meeting each other at the pub). Contextualizing this with the choral form – the choir is an example of a formal social capital. Along these lines, Balsnes (2012) used an individual case study (the story of Diana) to explore choral singing as a pathway to well-being. Findings illustrated various ways in the development of competency and empowerment, vitality and resources for building social networks as a way of bringing coherence in life. This study provides understanding of how singing can promote well-being and health (Balsnes, 2012).

Turner (1987– quoted in Henley, 2010) identifies three main aspects that refer to group functioning which are identity, social structure and interdependence and these aspects serve as the foundational concepts for *social identity theory*. In this perspective, it is interesting to contextualize choral participation with the concept of *social identity* as every individual is a member of either a large-scale social group such as gender and race or a small-scale group like peer groups where membership is usually earned (Tajfel, 1981 - quoted in Tarrant, North and Hargreaves, 2002). The categorization of a group member thus excludes certain other individuals. Therefore the in-group individual develops a social identity (Tarrant, North and Hargreaves, 2002) where the music brought them together – leading a group of different individuals to bond.

Miell, MacDonald and Hargreaves (2005) present in their research that music is a platform for communication – i.e. people communicate through music, about music through discussions (regarding different kinds of music, learning processes in performance etc.) and that music plays a key role in social contexts and the differences of musical communication within different cultural environments.

According to research conducted by Chorus America (2003), singing in a choir gave people the opportunity to socialize with other people from different social backgrounds – people that they would not normally meet in other circumstances. One choir member claimed that ...

These people whom I love dearly are politically or religiously very different from me ... We wouldn't be together for any other reason except for the

music. That connection with people exposes us to other ideas and approaches that aren't otherwise available (Chorus America, 2003, p. 4).

Results indicated that choir members thought that the choral form bridged social gaps between different groups and social classes where different people could work together towards a common goal – to sing together and perform beautiful music. Therefore, the majority of participants who sing in choirs believe that participating in choir activities has good influence in the societies and is also a part of their social duty – a kind of a contribution to the society. If this assumption is studied in the light of Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* (1984), choirs challenge the dominating view of class difference and widen people's social horizons (Chorus America, 2003).

Putting this into the perspective of the choral setting, the social identity perspective is helpful in order to gain a better understanding of psychological aspects of musical performance. Employees who identify strongly with their employer produce more quality in their work than those who do not identify as strongly with their employer (Pilegge and Holz, 1997 – quoted in Tarrant, North and Hargreaves, 2000). Tarrant et al. (2002) assumes that a similar relationship exists also in musical contexts, e.g. how members of a musical group (like a choir) contribute to the performance quality of the group and how they identify themselves with the musical director and thus their performances are linked to the role of choral singing as a pathway to well-being.

Previous studies suggest that amateur choirs are linked to social, physical and psychological well-being and as a way of fostering social capital through the social force and the collective experience of collective singing (Clift et al. (2007), Clift & Hancox (2005), Durrant (2005), Langston & Barrett (2008), Bailey & Davidson (2005), Bell (2008), Palmer (2008) and Balsnes (2012)). In their study, Durrant and Himonides (1998) emphasize that participating in group singing can affect people's self-confidence, identity, and their perceptions of their social status and how they appear to other people, both when it comes to their musical ability and identity (Durrant and Himonides, 1998). While a number of studies have focused on the general features of choral singing, less work has been devoted to different choral cultures, identities, and traditions and how different types of choirs can provide various routes to well-being.

Helliwell and Putnam (2004) concluded that social capital is supposed to strengthen ties to and within the community and is strongly linked to subjective well-

being through many different forms, like marriage, family, friends and neighbours, workplace, civic engagements and forms of trust and being trustworthy. All these factors relate to happiness and life satisfaction, according to Helliwell and Putnam (2004), both directly and through their impact on health and the subjective well-being was best predicted by the breadth and depth of one's social connections, even more than money or fame.

Langston and Barrett (2008) debated on how little is known about the ways in which social capital is manifested in community music settings and emphasized a new factor – the notion of fellowship and that strong community connection. Individual autonomy and bonds between individuals enhance the successful creation of social capital, creating an environment characterized by mutual cooperation, friendship and goodwill but it must also be taken into account that the interests of the group dominate the interests of the individual. Thus the choir member must adapt to the rules and regulations of the group and the individuals work towards the same goal, i.e. to gain a certain harmony and work together as one person (Triandis, 2001). Therefore it has been assumed that this harmony and collective action that the choir produces could prevent all kinds of social conflicts. According to Anshel and Kipper (1988) singing leads to an increased trust and cooperation between different individuals with different interests. They concluded that singing in a choir could greatly affect sympathy and cooperation and would be useful in all kinds of group therapies (Anshel and Kipper, 1988).

Using music as a method of communication leads to the questions of why and how people communicate through music, how music is presented and therefore communicated through discussions over a common learning process, like in a choral setting (Miell, MacDonald and Hargreaves, 2005 – quoted in Henley, 2010).

A number of previous research projects have demonstrated that individuals who participate in musical activities gain increased well-being and better health. In this aspect DeNora (2000) argues that music can be used in order to control mood or energy level – how music is used as a pathway for self-care in order to de-stress, to deal with negative feelings, to release tension and thus identify and respond to emotional stress. In this context, music is also used for getting into mental concentration, such as using background music while working or meditating (DeNora, 2000, p. 16) and also by using music performance (such as singing in a choir or playing an instrument) in order to seek life fulfilment or artistic / aesthetic satisfaction and opportunities of self-expression:

Singing, making instrumental music, performing as a soloist or self-expression, because they have in common an act of creativity with musical materials, whether pre-recorded, improvised, or played/sung music has for them and to experience them directly through their manipulation of musical sound and practice. In some instances, music acts as a release for otherwise inexpressible emotions or ideas, perhaps as an expression of protest or as the enactment of a form of personal comfort (Clarke, Dibben and Pitts, 2010, p. 117).

These aspects are closely related to and go across the professional discipline of music therapy, as DeNora points out:

Using music as a resource for creating and sustaining ontological security, and for entraining and modulating mood and levels of distress, is by no means unique to the purview of the professional music therapeutic encounter. In the course of daily life, many of us resort to music, often in highly reflexive ways. Building and deploying musical montages is part of a repertory of strategies for coping and for generating pleasure, creating occasion, and affirming self- and group identity (DeNora, 2000, p. 16).

With this perspective, DeNora, has in recent years entered the field of music, health and well-being, an area that has provided a platform for a growing body of literature, especially the cross-disciplinary field of music and health (for example Batt-Rawden, Trythall, & DeNora (2007), DeNora (2007), DeNora (2005)), and research on choral singing and health (Clift et al. (2007), Clift & Hancox (2005), Durrant (2005), Langston & Barrett (2008), Bailey & Davidson (2005), Bell (2008) and Palmer (2008)). In his article, Procter (2011) discussed the usefulness of social capital theory within the discipline of music therapy. Procter suggests that 'it is postulated that, rather than generating social capital in the usual sense, music therapy might be considered to nurture a proto-social capital' (p. 242) and concludes that music therapists might implement this thinking for their practice.

Other examples include the research of Beck, Cesario, Yousefi and Enamoto (2000) on professional singers and Kreutz's (et al. 2004) research on amateur singers which describes the effects of singing on health and well-being, in particular how

singing can have a positive influence on the immune system and provide better health (Beck et al., 2000; Kreutz et al., 2004).

Durrant's study of choral activities in Sweden and Finland (2005) also found that Finnish men, who were not used to expressing their emotions in daily life could use choir singing as a platform for their emotional expressions, and to sing in the native language on concert tours abroad was also essential for both nations – 'to be Swedish is to identify with Swedish music through choral singing' (Durrant, 2005, p. 94).

Clift and Hancox (2001) conducted a study on a university college choral society in the UK that consisted of two rounds of questionnaires. Results indicated that over 40% agreed that singing makes people more positive and better spirited, that singing is a good experience, increases people's happiness and is good for the soul. Young people experienced more spiritual experiences while singing, and, according to Clift and Hancox, women were more likely to benefit from singing than men, i.e. they experienced more relaxation and mental well-being. The research demonstrated that 87% of participants considered choral singing to have positive influences on their social status, especially younger people who believed that their choir participation had a positive impact on their social ties and relations. Other aspects, such as being more positive, having more control over their breathing and better concentration was also mentioned by participants (Clift and Hancox, 2001).

In keeping with these findings, Bailey and Davidson (2005) did research on two kinds of choirs; choirs for homeless men and choirs for middle class people with various musical backgrounds. Their study consisted of semi-structured interviews and focus groups among choir members. The results indicated that there was no correlation between social status and the personal, emotional and social gain of choir singing and performing and there was no difference between the groups when it came to social ties and the importance of belonging to a group.

These research projects cited above are a part of a growing body of literature in the field of music, health and well-being but the emphasis of this chapter has been to cast a light on the value of social and cultural capital as a pathway to well-being in choral activities.

In order to set the stage of this research, the following chapter will introduce the socio-historical background of this research by discussing the historical context of the *Mass in B Minor*, the choral movement in England, and the 'Bach choral tradition.'

3. SETTING THE STAGE OF THE RESEARCH: BACH'S *MASS IN B MINOR*

The choral tradition in the Western world is a part of a historical tradition throughout the centuries in which the main emphasis within the Western music tradition has been on classical music, especially instrumental music (i.e. renaissance, baroque, classic, romantic, medieval etc.), perhaps at the expenses of choral genres. Looking at the tradition in England, the emergence of the amateur choral tradition took place in the 19th century.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce briefly the ‘historical aspect’ of this research, by introducing the composer (J.S. Bach), the work being performed (*Mass in B Minor*) and reviewing the relevant bits of the history of the English choral movement with special emphasis on the Victorian choral tradition and the emergence of composer-oriented Bach choirs.

3.1 JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH AND THE *MASS IN B MINOR*

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) has often been categorized as one of the great composers in the Western musical tradition. His professional life was mostly church-oriented in that he spent most of his time as an organist and cantor in various places, mostly in Leipzig where he eventually died (see further about the life and works of J.S. Bach in Appendix 2). The repertoire chosen for this research was Bach's *Mass in B-Minor*. Table 7 in Appendix 3 contains an overview of his choral works, Masses, Magnificats, Passions and Oratorios and Table 8 in Appendix 4 consists of an overview of Bach's compositions in whole. Most of the choral works were composed and performed in the Leipzig period. As a composer Bach was very productive and busy as the official cantor of Leipzig where he wrote many of his masterpieces. Among other works, he composed 190 cantatas – one every week for five years and conducted four choirs where he categorized the singers due to musical and vocal ability, not to mention having composed other works, both vocal and instrumental. Table 8 indicates the amount of works by Bach that have been reserved (see further Parrott, 2000 and Wolff, 2002).

According to Stauffer (2003), the *Mass in B Minor* is thought of as Bach's musical statement of faith, his own 'requiem.' The *Mass in B Minor* is as a work based on the form of the traditional catholic mass – an interesting setting for the Lutheran composer. The entire mass was not performed as a whole until 1749, only a year before Bach's death, and he himself never conducted this work as a whole. The Mass is claimed to be a kind of a summary of Bach's lifework, the composition spanning from 1714 – 1749, almost his whole career as a composer. This work takes two hours to perform so it is evident that it could not be a part of church liturgy, like the major part of Bach's choral works. He did, however, compose the Kyrie and Gloria in order to use them as a part of the liturgy. Due to the death of Augustus II, King of Poland and Elector of Saxony, all public music making was suspended for the 5 months of mourning. During that time, Bach worked on the composition of the *Missa* (i.e. Kyrie and Gloria) but his main aim was to compose for Augustus III, the predecessor who was catholic (Stauffer, 2003).

This composition, which then consisted of the Kyrie and Gloria, earned Bach the title of a Saxon court Kapellmeister in 1733 which gave him a better position in his dispute with the Leipzig council regarding his duties. Later, Bach added the Credo, Sanctus, Osanna, Benedictus, Agnus Dei and Dona Nobis pacem in the late 1740s – why he expanded the work to a *Missa tota* is not known for sure, probably because the Dresden court was Catholic and at least the *Missa* was meant for an audition. His son, C.P.E. Bach, described the Mass as 'Die grosse catholische Messe.' It has therefore been assumed that this was Bach's own intention and description of the work. But the words describe Lutheran usage rather than Catholic and the division into four sections (Leaver, 1997b, p. 92-116).

According to Osthoff and other scholars, it is believed that Bach may have considered the whole Mass as a work dedicated to the new Hofkirche in Dresden. However, the building of that church was not finished until a year after Bach's death (Stauffer, 2003).

Some scholars categorize the *Mass in B Minor* towards choral settings in the same category as the *Art of fugue*. Christoph Wolff (2002) claims that the *Mass in B Minor* is a summary of Bach's writing for voice where it comes to the variety of styles, compositional devices, range of sonorities and a high level of technical polish (Wolff, 2002, p. 371). The *Mass in B Minor* seems to have fascinated composers like Haydn,

who had a copy of the Mass, and Beethoven, Haydn's pupil, who made two attempts to get the score of the Mass (Butt, 1997; Butt, 2003).

Some scholars have claimed the *Mass in B Minor* as one of the greatest musical works of all times. Although being much praised and admired, Bach's grand choral works have been evaluated as independent musical works in concert setting, which in fact was a latter usage, since they were primarily thought to be as a musical sermons and thus incorporated into Sunday church service (Marshall, 1986).

As the *Mass in B Minor* turned out to be Bach's last vocal composition (Bach's own 'requiem'), for some reasons, his big choral works were not performed in any way for 80 years after his death, until Mendelssohn resurrected the *St Matthew Passion* in Berlin in 1829. In his revival, Mendelssohn refashioned the performance by using the Berlin Singakademie choir (an amateur choral society with nearly 400 members) and the orchestra of the Philharmonischer Verein and a group of operatic soloists. Mendelssohn did other arrangements with the instruments, i.e. replaced the oboes with clarinets and added various crescendos and diminuendos in order to modernise and bring the mass in line with romantic tastes (Stauffer, 1997, p. 206).

But why revive Bach's large-scale choral works so late? If we look at Bach's status in his life, he was not among the most popular composers in his lifetime. According to Abraham (1974, p. 7) the importance of Bach in the German musical tradition was especially apparent in the successive waves of different influential mainstreams in the 19th and 20th centuries, even more than to the tradition in Bach's own lifetime. Abraham assumes that the main reason that Bach had little impact on the musical tradition in his own time was due to his music being, in part, behind the times but also due to the state of music publishing in the first half of the 18th century. On the other hand, publishing in the 19th century increased significantly (Abraham, 1974, p. 7). According to Blume (1950), a genius is usually not often recognised and appreciated by his contemporaries, whereas others who were appreciated and well known by their contemporaries (like Telemann, Buxtehude and others) were merely forgotten among later generations (compared to Bach) and thus 'died' with their own generations (Blume, 1950, p. 9).

Table 1: The structure of the *Mass in B Minor*

I MISSA (KYRIE, GLORIA)			
1	Kyrie eleison	5 part chorus	Soprano I, II, Alto, Tenor, Bass
2	Christe eleison	Duet	Soprano I, II
3	Kyrie eleison	4 part chorus	Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass
4	Gloria in excelsis	5 part chorus	Soprano I, II, Alto, Tenor, Bass
5	Et in terra pax	5 part chorus	Soprano I, II, Alto, Tenor, Bass
6	Laudamus te	Solo	Soprano I
7	Gratias agimus tibi	4 part chorus	Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass
8	Domine Deus	Duet	Soprano I, Tenor
9	Qui tollis peccata mundi	4 part chorus	Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass
10	Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris	Solo	Alto
11	Quoniam tu solus sanctus	Solo	Bass
12	Cum Sancto Spiritu	5 part chorus	Soprano I, II, Alto, Tenor, Bass
II SYMBOLUM NICENUM (CREDO)			
13	Credo in unum Deum	5 part chorus	Soprano I, II, Alto, Tenor, Bass
14	Patrem omnipotentem	4 part chorus	Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass
15	Et in unum Dominum	Duet	Soprano I, Alto
16	Et incarnatus est	5 part chorus	Soprano I, II, Alto, Tenor, Bass
17	Crucifixus	4 part chorus	Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass
18	Et resurrexit	5 part chorus	Soprano I, II, Alto, Tenor, Bass
19	Et in Spiritum Sanctum	Solo	Bass
20	Confietor	5 part chorus	Soprano I, II, Alto, Tenor, Bass
21	Et expect	5 part chorus	Soprano I, II, Alto, Tenor, Bass
III SANCTUS			
22	Sanctus	6 part chorus	Soprano I, II, Alto I, II, Tenor, Bass
IV HOSANNA, BENEDICTUS, AGNUS DEI, DONA NOBIS PACEM			
23	Hosanna	8 part chorus	Soprano I, II, Alto I, II, Tenor I, II, Bass I, II
24	Benedictus qui venit	Solo	Tenor
25	Hosanna	8 part chorus	Soprano I, II, Alto I, II, Tenor I, II, Bass I, II
26	Agnus Dei	Solo	Alto
27	Dona nobis pacem	4 part chorus	Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass

3.2 THE CONSTRUCTION OF BACH'S GENIUS

Hennion and Fauquet (2001) claim that, when it comes to reconstructing the genius and grandeur of Bach, the history has been written backwards too much, demonstrating a certain critique of the 19th century romantic reconstruction of Bach's genius, essentially transforming him into a contemporary composer. They ask critical questions regarding Bach and what he represents and what we look for through him. They argue that we, as listeners, create Bach and therefore construct a certain genius – that is, we as listeners produce the authority of great geniuses. Hennion and Fauquet criticise 19th century romantic constructions of Bach, even though they note that they also must be careful not to be too judgemental towards the 19th century audience (Hennion and Fauquet, 2001). In this perspective, I will be implementing these lessons by Hennion and Fauquet by not writing about a typical retrospective reconstructed Bach but rather by looking at how choir members do so as a part of their 'choral capital' (see further discussions in chapter 6).

However, reading early biographies, the construction of the genius Johann Sebastian Bach may be a product of the 19th century romanticism. Romantic musicians constructed Bach as a kindred spirit, an isolated genius who worked hard for a largely unappreciative audience. This idea of the self-sufficient artist was reflected in Nicolaus Forkel's seminal biography from 1802 in which he described Bach as a man who worked for himself, as does every true genius, fulfilled his own wishes and satisfied his own taste, choosing his subject due to his own opinions (Stauffer, 1997, p. 206)

According to Boyd (1997, p. 9-10) the popular view of the 'great composer' consisted of the solitary, creative artist, struggling for self-expression in an inconsistent world. Blume (1950, p. 10-12) identified two facts of the posthumous image of a great genius: Firstly that each generation reshapes and revises the image according to their views and needs and secondly that if a person is once identified as a genius, he/she never ceases to be one, despite of all the processes of change. This argument forms a strange contradiction of Blume's earlier assumptions towards Telemann and other composers' 'deaths.' Blume goes on in magnifying Bach's historical greatness and quotes J. Adolf Scheibe's words, written in 1737 in section six of his paper *Critischer Musicus* praising the greatness of Bach's works as an 'admiration of whole nations' (p. 12). Blume assumes that Bach was not concerned about the reception and impression made by his music and argues with previous writings; for example, the Prussian Court

Kapellmeister Reichardt, who in 1782 so shockingly assumed that if Bach would have had the same ‘high sense of truth and the deep feeling for expression that inspired Handel, he would have become a far greater man than Handel’ and keeps on with saying that Bach was only a bit more highly skilled on a technical basis and more efficient as a composer. Blume continues by presenting a very romantic profile of Bach as the prophet of an old musical philosophy, not impressing his contemporaries but being devoted to his music and service as a kapellmeister (see Blume, 1950, p. 9-10). A good example of the deliberate ignorance was the writing of Gottsched, who worked side by side with Bach in Leipzig, yet Gottsched does not mention Bach even once in his writing of *In Praise of Germania* (Blume, 1950, p. 21).

Johann Mattheson (1681-1764), referred to Bach as the famous organist of Weimar. According to a legendary story, the keyboard virtuoso Louis Marchand (1669-1732) did not attend a harpsichord contest in Dresden 1717 (and compete with Bach) because he was so impressed by Bach’s reputation and therefore withdrew his participation (Parry, 1909, p. 548).

In 1909, C. Hubert H. Parry, a professor at Oxford, published Bach’s story in 1909 under the title *Johann Sebastian Bach – The Story of the Development of a Great Personality*. This book somewhat crystallizes the historical romanticism of Bach as a virtuous composer whereas his only encouragement was to write music to glorify God and dedicate his service to God as a true Lutheran composer. For example, Parry compares Bach and Handel, describing Handel as a composer who was systematic in his artistic methods that served the purpose of a large audience and was therefore a more public composer. Bach, on the other hand, had a more subtle, concentrated and personal purpose and his music is, according to Parry, more intimate. Bach had a limited, public circle whereas Handel had a greater reputation in his lifetime and had therefore more opportunities to present his works to the public. Parry claims that Bach’s life output is ‘so enormous that even the rare enthusiasts who chance to combine sincere intentions with an exceptional allowance of leisure may well be driven to despair of ever mastering a subject so vast’ (p. 548). In the very end of his book, Parry concludes the following:

The unremitting labour of a long lifetime seems to have brought little reward to the labourer himself, but the content of having achieved, the satisfaction of the need of the artistic impulse which would not be gainsaid. For such a

nature the joy of doing and accomplishing was reward enough. Had it been otherwise, the world would not have the opportunity of rejoicing in the revelation of a personality so noble and so inspiring as that of Johann Sebastian Bach (Parry, 1909, p. 572).

These last words include certain symbolic statements whereas Parry reconstructs the ‘great’ personality of Bach. This portrait is loaded with romantic ideas about the noble Lutheran, the family man who composed music for music’s sake to praise the Lord – not for ambitious reasons, or demanding a large public like Parry indirectly claims upon the famous Handel, who lived and worked among the aristocratic canon in London. According to Crowest (1902, p. 34) Bach was supposed to be amiable to the extreme and therefore the complete opposite of Liszt, the Romantic archetype being secularly wicked and subversively catholic.

This is a different aspect from the more ‘realistic’ portrait of the composer Bach who earned his living with his compositions in order to provide for a big family, a man who was ambitious yet not always happy with his employers, made mistakes, even got into a fight – was human with all the bitterness, tragedies and mishaps that includes being a man of flesh and blood. This romantic idea that Parry represents of the humble, spiritual individual fitted somewhat the ideology of the Victorian music tradition in England (see further in section 3.3).

The revival of Bach’s great chorales in the 19th century, after 80 years of silence, turned out to be a certain ‘historicism’ of the romantic image of Bach who was admired by composers like Mendelssohn, Schuman and even Chopin, who, like many later composers, sought inspiration from Bach’s music and therefore seeking inspiration from the past (Abraham, 1974, p. 111).

Evidently, just as Handel, Mendelssohn and Bach (to a certain extent) were admired in England, the Germans admired Shakespeare and his works – a kind of an Anglo-German struggle (Hughes and Stradling, 2001, p. 149). According to Hughes and Stradling (2001) the revival by Mendelssohn brought Bach to ‘the highest niche on the High Altar of Music’s Temple’ (p. 149). Even though the people noted his revival, Bach never seemed to get out of the shadow of Handel. Bach’s part in music history writing between 1880 and 1960 had a ‘pole position’ in which many English musicians expressed their great need for Bach’s music. Two interesting examples describe this urge: Ivor Gurnay claimed that he needed music (i.e. Bach) very badly and in spite of

his solid patriotism and having fought on the Western front, inspired by patriotism, his emphasis in music selection was more on Bach than, for example, Elgar. This example illustrates that it was necessary for Bach to be assimilated into English culture. His music was believed to contain real English virtues and the English tradition's tended to define and claim 'our Bach' (Hughes and Stradling, 2001, p. 148).

3.3 THE VICTORIAN CHORAL TRADITION AND BACH'S ORATORIOS

Before discussing the emergence of the increasing interest in Bach in England and the emergence of special Bach choirs, it is necessary to cast a light on the nature and growth of the choral movement in 19th century England and why the German composers, like Bach and Handel, became as popular as they did. The purpose of this section is also to cast a light on the historical background of the formation of choirs (their heritage in the Victorian choral movement) and the somewhat religious context of choral singing as a 'respectable' type of leisure. In this perspective, I look specifically into the writings of Russell (1987) on popular music in Victorian England and Blake (1997) about music and culture in 20th century Britain.

Roughly estimated, there are believed to be between 2-3000 choirs in England alone.¹² In the beginning of 19th century, a radical change occurred – many choirs and choral societies were established and the choirs themselves grew bigger, up to 200 members or more in some of the elite choirs. Choral societies attained their eventual size due to support of large communities (Russell, 1987, p. 11).

According to Russell's study (1987), popularity of music in the Victorian times suited the religious emphasis of the society, which caused a huge gain for the choral movement. The cantatas and oratorios provided 'respectable' recreation and entertainment for the local community as well as an aid to religious observance for the people, based on the religious context of the repertoire. The role of the music was to keep young men and women among good influences, reforming their character and spreading Christianity (Russell, 1987, p. 13). Handel's *Messiah* became a special favourite in that matter and, according to Russell (1987, p. 13), the religious role of the

¹² See databases like British Choirs on the Net, <http://www.choirs.org.uk/home.htm> and Making Music, <http://www.makingmusic.org.uk/MM/home.aspx> and National Association of Choirs, <http://www.nationalassociationofchoirs.org.uk/>.

choral repertoire played a special role in the history of the 19th century English music. The Victorian religious atmosphere in England thus accepted this music in order to civilise and humanise the public with the ‘sacred art.’ The oratorio grew more and more popular as an amateur performance in British society, which was truly a place for amateurs to perform great music (McVeigh, 1993). Choral singers could therefore join in on performances of the great choral works by Handel and other composers and participate in an artistic, but at the same time respectful, performance without compromising their social status (Blake, 1997, p. 36).

The main intention of founding a choir was thus to bring music into the working classes in order to cultivate their taste and withdraw them from lower kinds of leisure – to establish a bond between different classes and the choral concerts became quite accessible for lower-middle classes due to cheap rates. The basic route to the big oratorio choirs was through participation in a church or a chapel choir, where choral singers refined their techniques, an important training ground before the choirmaster or senior member suggested a transition to a local society. Another option was to join a sol-fa society, in order to gain essential training. It also varies whether choirs were open to anybody who wanted to sing or if they were interested in more talented singers. Movements of amateur music and music festivals (like Blackpool and Morecambe) were established and thanks to these festivals, the choirs were brought into existence, even in rural areas, in order to bring the music to the people. The tradition was strongest in the north, in the regions of Lancashire, West Yorkshire and Derbyshire, which derived from three main factors: a high population (providing a market for talented musicians), division of the population into smaller communities and the presence of many philanthropic employers (Russell, 1987, p. 55).

From 1830-1840, the choral societies were more established, had a name, a formal committee that decided on attendance rules, for example instituting a system of fines for lateness, absence, intoxication, interruption or obscenity. The most important factor was that these societies gave regular public performances, especially in specific community rituals such as the Sunday-school anniversary. Many societies hired professional singers despite this usually being very difficult to finance (Russell, 1987, p. 213). Even so, professional musicians were specifically interested in amateur music, especially since producing a choral concert was relatively efficient in economic terms, since the contribution of the choir singers was voluntary. William Weber (1976) claims that informal music making became, in many cases, governed by professionals and thus

were transformed into formalised events, although in the early era of the choir societies, paid conductors were not as common to begin with (Weber, 1976).

The choral concert, where the sacred music was performed, was a particularly feasible option of entertainment for the middle class looking for a respectable venue – their interest formed a market and provided more financial security for the choral societies since the towns increased in size in that period. In 1940, an ordinary choral society had an average number of members under 100 and the repertoire generally consisted of works by Haydn, Handel and later Mendelssohn. The number of professional conductors also increased as time passed. In the late 19th century, the number of members grew from just under 100 to 450 with the existence of the oratorio choirs. The most common number of members was around 250-300 in the north – it is believed that the Victorians had a sort of a soft spot for big choirs and the greater number of members seemed to signify success.¹³ What was also important in this aspect was the increase in women's participation in choral activities. In the late 19th century they soon numerically dominated most choral societies and obviously affected the musical structure of the choirs. The competition increased in the late 19th century, especially among women and the musical activities grew by number in the very musical England in the end of the 19th century. Class lines became more or less blurry when it came to choir participation. There was a considerable sharing of repertoire between classes and women gained a rare opportunity to obtain a status almost equal to men (Russell, 1987, p. 249).

The big oratorio choirs reached their height in this period but in the 20th century their size began to decrease. There are many interconnected reasons: both world wars, the increased variety in all kinds of leisure, TV, Radio, cinemas. This evolution affected the choral societies, which now in the beginning of the 21st century suffer from a shortage of young, qualified singers, especially male singers. The choral movement has also been affected by the lack (or loss) of religious influences in the English society, resulting in smaller choirs than before (Russell, 1987, p. 253).

There is one aspect quite interesting in this regard. Even though England (and the whole of Great Britain) led the establishment of a tradition of amateur choral societies, there was also a growing importance of national identity through music – no

¹³ The Victorians had an obsession with 'monster choirs', numbers symbolising success. These were usually associated with religious or charitable 'choir' at the 1852 Halifax Sunday-school jubilee. *Leeds Intelligencer*, 5, June 1852.

British composers have reached the same status in the European music canon as the German composers mentioned above until late in the 19th century. Some scholars have blamed this evolution on the sceptic and almost hostile perception of Victorian England towards composers and musicians along with the middle-class dislike of the entertainment profession, causing suppression of the native talent. To many other European nations, according to Blake (1997), Britain thus became ‘the land without music’ (Blake, 1997, p. 36-37).

3.4 BACH CHOIRS IN UK

When thinking about a Bach choral ‘tradition,’ the first thing that may come to mind is a grand choir with 100-200 members, performing the great choral works in a big concert hall or a church/cathedral with a big orchestra. Both early and recent research indicates that this was not the case in Bach’s time. According to the study of Andrew Parrott (2000, p. 3-4) Bach’s intention was to have a maximum of 3-4 singers in each voice (soprano, alto, tenor and bass), sometimes even only 4 singers in a ‘whole’ choir, singing both the solos and chorales. Primary resources of Bach manuscripts, especially the *Entwurf*, a document written by Bach to the Leipzig City council where he was asking for more resources, demonstrate that it was essential for him to have a choir of 16 advanced singers. His *Entwurf* proves that his resources were limited when it came to musicians and choral singers (Siegele, 1997). Parrott criticises previous interpretations of this document, claiming that Bach only used 4 advanced ‘elite’ singers to perform his cantatas and greater choral works but wanted to have at least 16 singers (or 12, as Parrott claims was Bach’s real intention) available all year round¹⁴. Therefore Bach does not seem to have written choral works like the *Mass in B Minor* for big, amateur choirs, perhaps simply because that kind of choir probably did not exist at all at the time (Parrott, 2000, p. 3-4).

As previously mentioned, the big choral works of Bach (i.e. his masses, passions, oratorios and magnificats) were rarely or not performed at all for 80 years after his death, when the 20 year old Felix Mendelssohn directed the *St Matthew Passion* in Berlin in 1829. In order to reach a similar status as Handel (even though no special Handel choirs exist in the UK), special composer-oriented Bach choirs were

¹⁴ Like a football team: Even though there are 11 players on the field at a time, the team consists of at least 22 qualified players.

founded, with the sole purpose of performing Bach's grand choral works. With the foundation of the London Bach choir in 1874 (previously the Bach Society, founded in London in April with 24 singers), in Kensington's cradle of the Renaissance movement, Bach was reconstructed and defined as the Anglo-Saxon genius who was a sober, effective composer, domestic and respectable, a peace-loving protestant – pretty much the ordinary man people could connect with and relate to, who happened to have the ability of expressing the divine through his music (Hughes and Stradling, 2001, p. 26).

Sterndale Bennett, the musical director of the Bach choir in London, increased the choir to three hundred members in 1855-57, following a poor critique of the first performance. It is interesting to note that the critique stressed that in order to show Bach's creative powers, the choir should perform the *Mass in B Minor*, which in that time had not yet been performed in England. Arthur Duke Coleridge (solicitor and musician) and Otto Goldschmidt (pupil at the Leipzig Conservatory where he studied with Mendelssohn and familiarized himself with the works of Bach) formed a choir in order to perform the *Mass in B Minor* (Keen, 2008, p. 13-14). Rehearsals began in the autumn 1875 where 65 amateurs attended the first rehearsal on the 19th of November, described as a 'promising beginning' (Goldschmidt, private diaries, 1875 – see Keen, 2008, p. 14).

Goldschmidt, like Mendelssohn, altered the original arrangements of Bach regarding a small choir and orchestra. The aim was to recruit 150 choir members and he eventually engaged a choir of 158 and a full size orchestra. Mendelssohn and other musical directors of this time 'ignored' the 'authentic' performance style of Bach on occasion, in order to adapt the arrangements to a more modern style of instrumental playing. The first move towards authenticity was made by John Stainer, the organist of St Paul's Cathedral where the *St Matthew Passion* was performed on the 8th of April 1873, in that he used boy choristers for soprano- and alto parts, an arrangement he believed was Bach's original arrangement. However, the performance was in English. The works of Bach became quite successful in Europe (especially Germany and England) in the later part of 19th century (Keen, 2008, p. 14), even though Bach's works may never have reached the same popularity as the works of Handel and Mendelssohn. Somehow the chorales in the greater works of Bach had become the subject of big amateur choirs which were the opposite of the small choirs present in Bach's own time (see further Parrott, 2000, p. 143).

Thus Bach's revival through Mendelssohn was considered timely and was welcomed in late Victorian society, especially in London. Bach was admired by the English composers, such as Cyril Scott (1879-1970) who in his biography of Bach (1969) professed to believe in the greatest of all musical genius and Bach was believed to be at least a 'good German' who lived and worked solely for his art and did not directly belong to the real German threat to the British Empire but was above the issue of nationality. Turner (1928) claimed that Bach was universal, like Shakespeare in the world of theatre. Beethoven, on the other hand, was considered to be influenced by the modern spirit of Germany but also highly praised Bach as one of few composers that Beethoven himself was willing to recognise as a 'master' (DeNora, 1995, p. 183-184). As is evident, Beethoven was integrated into the canon tradition in Vienna, which celebrated contemporary composers. The English canon on the other hand opposed contemporary music with all its vulgar and decadent nature, especially in the eighteenth century (DeNora, 1995, p. 4). At the same time, the English musicians were thought of as 'despised, alienated journeymen' (Blake, 1997, p. 34) which has had unfortunate effects in the way English musicians perceive their task and the ways in which they have themselves been perceived ever since (Blake, 1997, p. 34-35). Music in Victorian England was merely a domestic tradition until the amateur music societies came into being (Hughes and Stradling, 2001, p. 149).

In the 19th century there was a growing interest in the work of 18th century composers, including J.S. Bach. This revival of Bach, Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven began to create a 'great tradition' redefining the musical canon; Mendelssohn revived the music of Bach, the oratorio form was used by Bach in his compositions and popularised by Handel. There was a certain 'Germanisation' in this tradition with a historicised repertoire (Blake, 1997, p. 33) creating the 'Englishness' of Handel. The sacred music, with Handel in the forefront, formed a core for the musical culture of the people. Handel's *Messiah* became a cultural icon when performed in Dublin in 1742 (although the story says that the composer himself was not very fond of this work of his) and in 1750 its popularity in London grew and from there it spread out to the regions in the north in the 1760s (Russell, 1987, p. 154-155). The part of Mendelssohn's revival and enthusiasm can be recognized as an important pillar to introduce Art Music into England's cultural mainstreams (Hughes and Stradling, 2001, p. 26).

The remaining question is thus: Are the foundations of Bach choirs in the UK and elsewhere a systematic production of professionals to produce a new taste for Bach

by introducing his music through the establishment of these choirs? Table 9 in Appendix 5 contains a list of all Bach choirs in the UK that have a website, or 41 choirs. It is necessary to assume that some Bach choirs do not have a website and the number could be higher.

As previously discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis the goal is to study the meaning of the concept of a 'Bach choir' and how members reconstruct the composer through their musical performance of the *B Minor Mass*. In the following chapter, the methodology of this research will be discussed and the participants of the research will be introduced.

4. METHODS

In this chapter, I discuss the design of the research, how the scope of the thesis was developed and the impact that conducting the pilot study had on the process of setting up the research. The process of data analysis will be summarised and I will describe ethical issues as well as reflect upon my own role and status within the research.

4.1 INTRODUCTION: THE APPROACH OF THE RESEARCH

Several studies have focused on the social functions, benefits and the experience of choral singing in general (Faulkner & Davidson (2006), Bailey & Davidson (2005), Clift & Hancox (2001), Monks (2003), Durrant (2005), Durrant & Himonides (1998), Chorus America (2003), Palmer (2008), Richards & Durrant (2003), Eades & O'Connor (2008) and Putnam (1993)). There are also several studies that have addressed the concept of a 'community choir' (Bell (2008), Conway & Hodgman (2008), Langston & Barrett (2008), Southcott & Joseph (2010)) as well as research aiming at studying the impact of choral singing on health and well-being (for example Clift et al. (2007) and Kreutz et al. (2004)).

So far, no research (that I know of) has addressed the question of how amateur choral singers experience and possibly benefit specifically from involvement in a performance of a large-scale choral work. For example, how does performing a 'great' work affect choir members' musical identities and everyday lives? The design of the PhD study sought to address these questions through a single-case study, using primarily qualitative methods in the form of semi-structured, in-depth interviews and participant observation, along with a quantitative, paper-based survey in order to collect background information about the population of the case, namely, the members of the Croydon Bach choir.

In the beginning of the research design, the aim was to study the meaning of amateur choral singers performing 'art music.' Previously I conducted quantitative research on 10 Icelandic choirs as a part of my MA-thesis in Cultural Management at Bifröst University, Iceland (Einarsdóttir, 2009). At that time, I discovered that research on amateur choirs is a relatively new field and as I read further on, there were questions that arose, for example the boundaries between the amateur and the professional singer. Being an experienced choral singer myself, I was very well aware of the benefits of

choral singing and how fulfilling it is to be a part of a social phenomenon like a choir (whether it's small, medium or large, amateur, quasi-professional or professional). I was also aware that a choir must face similar issues and problems as any other social group or institution, such as bullying, ignorance and exclusion, and a dominating boss (the conductor) etc. What also caught my attention were the possibilities for amateur choirs to participate in music performances of high standard, where the amateur choral singers stand on the same stage as professional singers and orchestral musicians. These are the issues that I wanted to address and thus I turned my focus toward amateur choirs participating in a 'high-class' musical performance.

Thus when it comes to define the scope of my PhD research these were the issues and questions that I wished to consider. But how should I choose a choir as a case? For example, did the repertoire matter, or the composer; and what about the conductor?

Addressing these issues led to the conclusion to do a pilot study which I conducted in the autumn term 2009, in order to define the scope of the research. While considering the possible case, I received an e-mail announcing that a choir in Southwest-England was looking for soprano voices for their Christmas Concert. The repertoire consisted of renaissance Christmas Motets and the 2nd part of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*. I had sung the *Christmas Oratorio* thirteen years earlier and knew the work relatively well and thought that this connection would bode well since it also facilitated the study of performing a large-scale choral work of 'art music.' The aim of the pilot study was to observe the amateur choral singers' understandings and experience of performing music like Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* and some issues of the nature of choral performance and differences in aesthetic value of various amateur/professional performances. The purpose of the pilot study was both to define the project further and narrow the scope – and to test possible research methods.

The pilot study consisted of participant observation where I participated in the choir's activities for one semester by joining the choir and singing with them - thus gathering autobiographical data via field notes and conducting in-depth interviews with choir members and the conductor. While doing the research, I did some background reading on the English choral tradition, especially in the Victorian era, as I discuss in chapter 3.3. It became evident that performing the oratorios became a form of a popular, yet recreational form. Handel's *Messiah* and other choral works by Handel appear to be popular and while looking at lists of English choirs, it was noticeable that, besides the

famous Monteverdi Choir in London (conducted by Sir John Eliot Gardiner) and the Mozart singers, composer-oriented choirs were mostly and almost entirely dedicated to Johann Sebastian Bach (and no Handel choirs, despite his alleged popularity as a composer). This fact caught my attention and I started wondering about these Bach choirs, whether their status would be somewhat different than other mixed-voice, non-composer oriented choirs and choral societies regarding quality of singing, repertoire and background and perspectives of the choral singers.

Conducting a pilot study became an important part of the learning process, whereas it gave me ideas for possible themes, especially regarding the interviews since I am a foreigner and the English choral tradition was also somewhat new to me. Therefore it was an essential lesson on piloting a participant observation based study, for example how to act and react in that situation by communicating with fellow choir members and to define what perspectives to look at. What is worth mentioning is that the repertoire for the Christmas concert was partly familiar to me whereas in my main PhD study, I was learning the programme from scratch. The results of the pilot study will be presented in my forthcoming publication regarding communal bonding and well-being in an amateur choral setting.

Therefore, the results of the pilot study, with some background data collection on Bach choirs in the UK, led to the result that one choir, The Croydon Bach choir in London was chosen as a case (described further later in this chapter). The scope was narrowed to the question of ‘why Bach choirs’ linking the subject to the concept of taste as social performance (Hennion, 2001) and how different constructions of Bach are linked to identity constructions, especially to those who were his fans and performed his music. Here I took inspiration from Hennion and Fauquet’s study (2001) which asks critical questions regarding Bach and what he represents and what we look for through him, that we, as listeners create Bach and therefore construct a certain genius – that is, we as listeners produce the authority of great geniuses. The idea was to take Hennion and Fauquet’s scope and use it in order to portray Bach choir singers’ perceptions towards Bach himself and how singing in a Bach choir affects their musical identity. So far, similar studies that have been conducted regarding the performance of Bach in a modern choral setting are quite rare. I have only found one study on the performance of Bach’s cantata in a high school choral setting which primarily refers to technical issues in conducting a Bach cantata with a technical focus on issues in conducting (see

Cannady, G.D., 1989). However there are studies present that refer to the image of Bach (Hennion and Fauquet, 2001) and the historical research by Andrew Parrott (2008).

Thus in order to approach this scope, I used a mixed method approach in which the data collection consisted of participant observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews and a survey. Burrell & Morgan (1979) have observed that researchers too often tended to favour one or two methods in order to gather data, either a quantitative approach using surveys or a case study, in some cases single case study (Larsson, 1993). Using multi-method approach within this case study gives the advantages of accessing different facets and features of the phenomenon, giving the insight into the subject from different angles and perspectives and thus increasing the odds of gaining more and deep understanding on the subject itself.

In the participant observation, I joined the Croydon Bach choir for the spring semester 2010 (from January until end of March), rehearsed and sang Bach's *Mass in B Minor* with the choir and gathered autobiographical data via field notes. The field notes consisted of my own experience singing with the choir, i.e. the choir rehearsals, conductor, repertoire and the spirit in the choir among members and my own perceptions and reactions to the setting (making me also a subject in the research). A special framework (see Appendix 10) was used for writing the field notes which were written after rehearsals based on notes taken during the rehearsal and some reflections on the memory afterwards.

Additionally, some members of the Croydon Bach choir participated in in-depth, semi-structured interviews. In a rehearsal, I asked for ten volunteers and then chose randomly five more (from the list of choir members) by approaching them at a rehearsal and/or e-mailing them – three of them agreed on being interviewed. The interviews took place in February and March 2010 according to an agreement between the researcher and the respondents. Interviews with choir members mainly covered their experience in singing with the choir, how they began their participation and how participating in the choir affected their daily lives and identities, the music that is sung in the choir and their vision of the composer and the tradition along with some background information. The current conductor was also interviewed.

A survey was used in order to gather demographic information and answers to basic questions in the research. The paper-based survey was distributed among members in the Croydon Bach choir during a tea-break in one of the rehearsals in which participants responded and gave the survey back to researcher when the break was over.

The process of the research described above will be discussed further in the following sections.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN: THE PILOT STUDY

At the beginning of this study, the original research plan focused on amateur choirs and why amateur choral singers have the ‘authority’ to perform ‘art music’ in serious settings or venues. This scope also considered certain problems of definitions. What kind of amateur choirs should be studied and how should they be selected? Should it be a single or multiple case studies and how should the cases be chosen? Is the choice of repertoire a valid variable? Where should the choirs be located? And last but not least, the scope of the thesis needed further definition.

In order to define and design the scope of the research, a pilot study was conducted on an amateur choir in the autumn term 2009. The aim of the pilot was to follow an exploratory sample through the primary research process, and to test the research methods while gathering new research perspectives.

4.2.1 THE PILOT CHOIR

The choir chosen for the pilot study was a community chamber choir in Southwest England. This choir consisted of 30 members at the time. No formal auditions were conducted for new members and the choir represented themselves as an amateur choir. The choir was founded in late 1980s and it started as a singing workshop. The participants in the workshop were a group of people who decided to continue singing together after the end of the workshop. The age range was from 40 – 75 years old (based on information from the choir’s committee).

The choir defines itself as a small, friendly and versatile four-part chamber choir with a wide-ranging repertoire. They also describe themselves as a group of friends who like to sing together and their objectives are to be ‘a fun choir’ that improve their vocal skills, expand their musical knowledge and achieve a high standard of ensemble singing.

My initial approach was complicated by the fact that the choir was at the time going through a transitional period. They had recently lost their former director who, for professional reasons, relocated, and they were conducting a search for a new director at

the time I joined them. There had been frequent changes of musical directors in the last five years. In addition, some members had left the choir (among them many leading voices and strong singers) which was undermining the choir, both financially and musically. Therefore approaching people had to be done with care, especially while asking about some issues of the choir and its operation.

Their repertoire ranged from classical and contemporary composers to spirituals, folk songs and popular songs from 1920-30s. Their Christmas concert repertoire consisted of some challenging renaissance Christmas motets, carols and the 2nd part of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*¹⁵. The choir's rehearsals were conducted once a week and the Christmas concert took place in the 2nd week of December.

Before starting the formal research, I visited two rehearsals and the request for participation in the pilot study had to be discussed within the choir committee before commencing the research. According to the request of the ethics committee, one member of the choir committee briefly explained the study and its aims to the choir and asked choir members for their consent. This was done at a beginning of the first formal choral rehearsal. The duration of this study was 5 weeks, or from 12th of November until 14th of December 2009.

4.2.2 METHODS OF THE PILOT STUDY

The pilot study consisted of collection of two types of qualitative data: A collection of participant observation material via field notes and reflections on the experience and in-depth, semi-structured interviews.

The field notes consisted of the researcher's experience singing with the choir, i.e. the choir rehearsals, conductor, repertoire and the spirit in the choir among members. A special framework (see in Appendix 6) was used as a model for writing the field notes which were written after every rehearsal, usually the same night or the day after. No notes were taken during the rehearsal, only afterwards due to memory. No choir member was mentioned by name in the field notes, confidentiality was kept and no information shared with others.

The interviews (five in total) took place from 12th November – 14th of December according to an agreement between the respondents and myself. Choir members were asked to volunteer as interviewees in an e-mail that was sent to the choir's e-mail list.

¹⁵ I had the honour of performing the soprano recitative in the 2nd part of the *Christmas Oratorio*

Participation was purely voluntary although the researcher asked for at least one founding member and one male. Due to the fact that not all choir members are online, a small flyer was distributed in one rehearsal with the same information written in the e-mail (see in Appendix 7). Interviews with choir members mainly covered their experience in singing with the choir, how they began their participation, the music that is sung in the choir along with some background information.

The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed for further analysis and were analysed with thematic coding analysis, in order to identify key themes, simply by using different colours and comments. Respondents were informed about the project and prior to the interview they received an information and consent form that they read and signed, which included information regarding this project (see in Appendix 8). Their participation was purely voluntary and they were able to withdraw from the interview at any time and were not obligated to answer any questions they found uncomfortable.

4.2.3 CHOICE OF METHODS FOR ON-GOING RESEARCH

One of the aims of the pilot study was also to test possible methods and how they would function as a means of collecting data. Looking at the purpose of the pilot study it seemed rational to use observation and qualitative interviews while studying the choristers' experience in choral singing, using grounded theory based approach.

However, in this decision process, the result was that I would participate by singing with the choir for two months, keeping a journal that led to the participant observation approach. The reason for this choice was really a bit of a coincidence – the idea was to get to know the singers in order to have better access to them as interviewers. However, as the field notes developed, the focus turned more and more towards using participant observation along with in-depth interviews and a survey.

In this decision process I browsed previous research (see Table 6 in Appendix 1) that was related or somewhat similar to my study; research on choral singing in amateur choirs – not only to see what kind of methods had been used but also to map the research background to see what kind of research has already been conducted. Due to that summary, qualitative interviews and survey questionnaires seem to have been frequently used. However, conducting interviews in the pilot study also gave me an opportunity to firstly practice the technique and also to gain insight into what kind of

questions and themes I should focus on while conducting the interviews in my main PhD-study.

On the other hand, according to my knowledge, the use of participant observation (although common in other disciplines such as ethnographic research, anthropology, ethnomusicology etc.) in evaluating choral participation is a novelty as an approach. Beside myself, I know of one research project in progress, by Kimberly Cannady (forthcoming; an ethnomusicology study on North Atlantic choirs in Copenhagen) where the researcher joined the choirs and did a participant study. In four previous research studies (Faulkner & Davidson (2006), Langston & Barrett (2008), Silber (2005) and Balsnes (2009)) the conductor of the choir was one of the researchers and there is forthcoming research from Tara French (French & MacDonald, 2011) at Glasgow Caledonian University where French also took the role of the conductor. Describing the experience from the ‘inside’ gives the researcher another perspective and situates the researcher within the project.

As a result, each of these participant studies somewhat highlight the choral experience ‘from the inside,’ whether it is from the conductor’s point of view or from the viewpoint of the choral singer. This perspective is valuable as this perspective gives a more rich data when the researcher is a part of the group and the participants may not look at the researcher as an ‘outsider’, e.g. someone who is not a part of the group and is observing from distance (which can be a bit intimidating at times). This kind of data gives a more in-depth perspective that cannot be gained by ‘only’ using survey.

My previous experience as a choral singer enabled me to put all the aspects I observed in a wider context but at the same time I had to be careful in my assumptions and conclusions. The fact that I was a foreigner made it possible for me to address and identify some aspects that may have been ‘strange’ but might have been somewhat ‘hidden’ or ‘invisible’ to a local researcher.

4.3 CHOOSING THE CASE: THE CROYDON BACH CHOIR

While doing the pilot study and reading about the history of the choral tradition in Europe (especially in England) the focus took a turn more towards the music of J.S. Bach, especially his oratorios, masses and passions, as previously mentioned. While searching for a possible choir as a main case study that would rehearse and perform

some of the big choral works by Bach, I noticed on websites like British choirs on the Net (www.choirs.org.uk) that there were 41 Bach choirs in the UK, with 36 Bach choirs in England (see Table 1). As evident in the historical chapter, Bach was little known in his lifetime and was almost forgotten for 80 years, until Mendelssohn's revival and the emergence of big oratorio choirs in 19th century England. Early biographies also indicate a certain romantic aspect of Bach's genius (as a devout Lutheran, a faithful family man, husband and father, a servant of the church who only wrote music in order to praise God) as previously discussed along with the Victorian perspective of the meaning of choral singing as a 'respectful leisure' for young people to participate in without jeopardizing their social status and the honour of their families. Performing religious oratorios was acknowledged to be a civilized way and ethically improving, especially for young people (Russell, 1987 – see further in section 3.2 and 3.3). Therefore I became curious to know whether these romantic ideas were still in existence and how these constructions of Bach affect the chorister's own identity and self-construction.

Thus my interest took a turn towards the great choral works of Bach and the particular aspect of amateur choristers singing the works of Bach in amateur Bach choirs – an aspect that has not yet been studied. The idea of narrowing the aspect towards Bach and his music framed the study with more focus, and, based on this historical context, I decided that my case would be a Bach choir. Table 2 presents Bach choirs in the UK and their locations can be seen in a list of Bach choirs in Table 9 in Appendix 5).

Table 2: Number of UK Bach choirs

Location within UK	Number of Bach choirs
England	36
Wales	3
Scotland	2
Northern Ireland	0

The oldest Bach choir in the UK is The Bach choir in London, founded in 1875 and the youngest is the Exeter Bach Society, founded in 1995. The Bach choir in London is also the biggest with 220 members but the smallest one is the Chesterfield Bach choir with

20 members listed. The average number of choir members in each choir is 73 members.¹⁶ All the conductors of the Bach choirs are men according to information given on each choir's website.

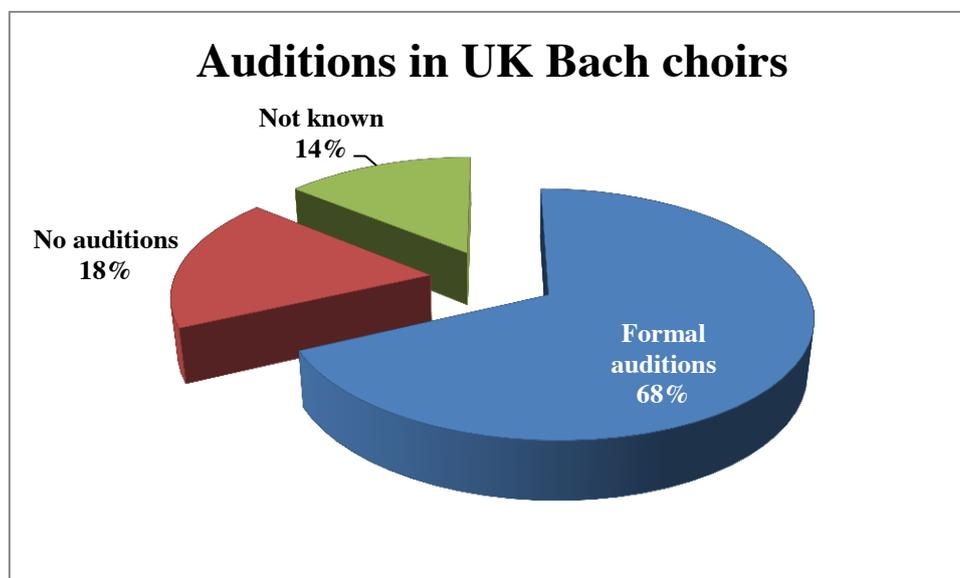


Figure 2: Auditions in UK Bach choirs

68% of Bach choirs in UK choose new members through formal auditions (see Figure 2) but 17 choirs (18%) categorized themselves as amateur choirs on the choir's websites (whereas the rest categorized themselves as being professional / quasi-professional). On the other hand, the auditions were different in nature, from simple audition with the conductor doing a simple vocal ability check (whether people can sing in general or not) to more challenging auditions where sight-reading and vocal ability is systematically checked.¹⁷ It is also worth noting that in order to join some of these choirs that had auditions, in the cases of 6 choirs,¹⁸ prospective members needed to complete a formal application and three choirs re-audition their members every 3-4 years.¹⁹

One reason for the auditions in many Bach choirs can be linked to the choice of repertoire. In the spring term 2010, there were 32 choirs of 40, or 80% of the Bach choirs that were performing big choral works and 16 of 40 (or 40%) were performing a big choral work by Bach. The most popular Bach works in spring term 2010 were both *St John Passion* (performed by 6 Bach choirs) and *St Matthew Passion* (performed also

¹⁶ 27 choirs published the number of participants on their website

¹⁷ See the website of the Bach choir in London; <http://www.thebachchoir.org.uk/>

¹⁸ Gwent Bach choir, Northampton Bach choir, St Albans Bach choir, Bristol Bach choir, Exeter Bach Society and The Bach choir, London

¹⁹ Cheltenham Bach choir, The Bach choir and Bath Bach choir

by 6 choirs). Other popular works were *Vespers* by Monteverdi, Beethoven's *Mass in C*, Handel's *Solomon* and Verdi's *Requiem*. According to this summary, the choral committees conclude that in order to be able to participate in a performance with a piece of the category shown above, choir members may need to have good sight-reading and vocal ability in order to be able to keep up and learn fast.

4.3.1 CHOOSING VENUE FOR DATA COLLECTION

Bearing in mind the characteristics just described, in order to choose a choir I created a special criteria and a checklist:

- A relatively big Bach choir (60-80 members)
- An amateur Bach choir where no formal auditions for new members are conducted
- A Bach choir rehearsing and performing Bach's *Mass in B Minor*

The reason I chose a choir that doesn't have formal auditions was that I wanted to have a sample that may include a 'pure' amateur choir with 'ordinary' people who have various backgrounds, education and experience. According to Cindy Bell (2008) auditions may discourage many people, who in fact are both skilled and experienced choral singers, from participating due to a lack of self-confidence and thus I wanted to exclude that variable by choosing this kind of choir.

I also wanted to study a choir that was rehearsing and working on challenging repertoire by J.S. Bach. I chose the *Mass in B Minor* mainly due to its historical context as the crowning achievement of the composer²⁰ and also the challenge of the work itself for the choral singers, containing many challenging chorales. Here I mention my aim to study the experience of performing a large-scale choral work and how this experience is related to people's musical identity and everyday life.

²⁰ Johann Sebastian Bach composed the Mass over a long period of time and completed it only one year before his death – his crowning achievement that consists of many different styles. The Mass is in fact a kind of a grand finale and could be easily positioned at the very heart of the Western music canon. Not only did Bach self-borrow the Catholic mass form but he used this work as a kind of a 'portfolio' of all the types of composition he could do and had done in his lifetime (see further Wolff, 2000, p. 438-442).

4.3.2 CARRYING OUT THE RESEARCH: GROUNDED THEORY BASED CASE STUDY

As previously discussed, no comparable research on amateur composer-oriented Bach choirs is known to have been conducted. Although that in itself is perhaps not valid as an argument for the choice of this research perspective, it is also evident that the use of participant observation has not much been taken into account as a research method in choral studies. It is difficult to speculate why that method has so far not been properly explored. As previously mentioned, I have only come across the work of Kimberly Cannady (forthcoming) which is a PhD project in progress within the discipline of ethnomusicology (see further discussions in section 1.1). Perhaps it is because qualitative choral studies do not have a long history or tradition in historical perspective. It could be that the questions that have until now been asked have not required this kind of method. Being a part of the research is also problematic in a way, but it gives the researcher another perspective and angle – thus being a part of the group may bring new aspects to the study instead of observing from afar and perhaps making the access to participants easier than otherwise. Therefore, in order to follow this little known path I used a grounded theory research approach, using a single, mixed method case study as a research method.

Grounded theory approach consists of systematic collection and analysis of qualitative data in order to construct theories ‘grounded’ in the data themselves. Thus the analysis of the data generates the concepts constructed. Instead of defining and writing a massive literature review, the researcher starts by going out in the field to collect data (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

I started the data collection by studying the scene and attending to what I heard and saw, although using an open framework with open questions and perspectives. Even though it is a part of a grounded theory study to start analysing the data quite early in the process (Charmaz, 2006), due to my position as a part of the study, I decided to distance myself from the data and keep it in the drawer for at least half a year before starting the analysis process. I became a part of the group, a member of the choir, which is why I needed to put the data away for a period of time. My own experience as a choral singer was also a part of this study – this way I could analyse the data with a bit more objectivity. However, it must be taken into account that even though allowing a certain amount of time pass, full objectivity is not a realistic goal and somehow in this

research not really necessary either. In this way I modified the grounded theory approach by letting a period of time pass before I started to reflect on the data this research consists of, instead of getting into analysis on different stages of the fieldwork itself. In my opinion, that did not affect the conceptualisation of the themes grounded theory is generally known for and I considered it important to distance myself from the data in order to get more objectivity, since I myself was a part of the research.

Using qualitative methods as my primary data collection techniques does of course run various risks. There is, for example, a possibility that my perceptions and personal opinions could manipulate the process in collecting and analysing the data and the sample of interviewees is not randomized in any way, since it is based on voluntary participation (Kerlinger, 1986, p. 348 – see Gable, 1994). Gathering quantitative data through the survey questionnaire was thus a tool to get an overview of the population being studied (the choir as a whole) in order to be able to reflect the data from different perspectives

Secondly, as I decided to do a single case study, it seemed sensible to use more than one method. By using the participant observation method, I could gather data about the experience of singing a ‘canonical’ work from the amateur’s perspective. I could also observe a musical/social event in real time with the informal associations as they occurred naturally among choristers as well as looking at myself and my development as a part of the performance group – a kind of a self-observation.

Combining this method with qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys resulted in a wide range of data where the interviews gave me important information about the chorister’s experience and the survey provided background demographics that set the qualitative findings of the interviews and autobiographical data into a wider context.

4.4 CASE STUDY

I have discussed earlier how I chose the case for this research. Yin (2003) describes case study as a group of methods which emphasize qualitative analysis and data are collected from one or more organisations or groups through methods like participant observation and in-depth interviews. In this research, data collection was based on a single-case instead of a comparative case (although doing comparative case study came into discussion), in order to go deeper into the data. According to Yin (2003) single case

study is appropriate if the objective of the topic of the research is previously an un-researched subject, which seems to be the ‘case’ in this research.

The goal was to investigate one particular choir chosen according to certain preferences (see further in section 4.2.3) and gather a wide range of data, mainly qualitative and some quantitative background information in order to get results from different perspectives and thus increase the possibility of getting more reliable results. However, the case study has the downside of lacking a certain controllability and generalizability which makes it difficult to assume that I would get similar results if I were to repeat the research on another case (Lee, 1989). Thus doing a case study on a certain Bach choir means that I can only conclude about that certain choir. However, it opens up many good questions and ideas for further investigations with other Bach choirs and/or amateur choirs in general.

4.4.1 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

The method of participant observation is closely related to ethnographic studies where there is an emphasis on studying the nature of a particular social group or phenomena by working with unstructured data, investigating one or a few cases, but usually one case in detail (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994). In this research, I joined the choir where I took the role of soprano choral singer and participated in the choir’s activities. This way of gathering data can sometimes be uncontrollable and unpredictable. As an example, the original goal was to observe my fellow choral singers and their experience of rehearsing and performing the *Mass in B Minor*. However, since I was learning the music for the first time, I gradually started to observe myself and my experiences. This is an example of how a study similar to this one may even lead to new grounds and results, in addition of me engaging in the social and artistic activities of the social group (see Hoyle, Harris & Judd, 2002).

There are several dimensions when it comes to participant observation: whether the researcher is known as one by all those being studied, by some or by none; how much participants know about the observer and the research and what kinds of activities the observer is engaged in (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994).

In this study, all participants were aware of the fact that I was a researcher and they knew about my background and the aims of the research. Thus I became a participant for a limited period in the lives of the choir members of the Croydon Bach

choir by singing with the choir for one semester. I selected the choir out of 36 Bach choirs in England (see section 4.3).

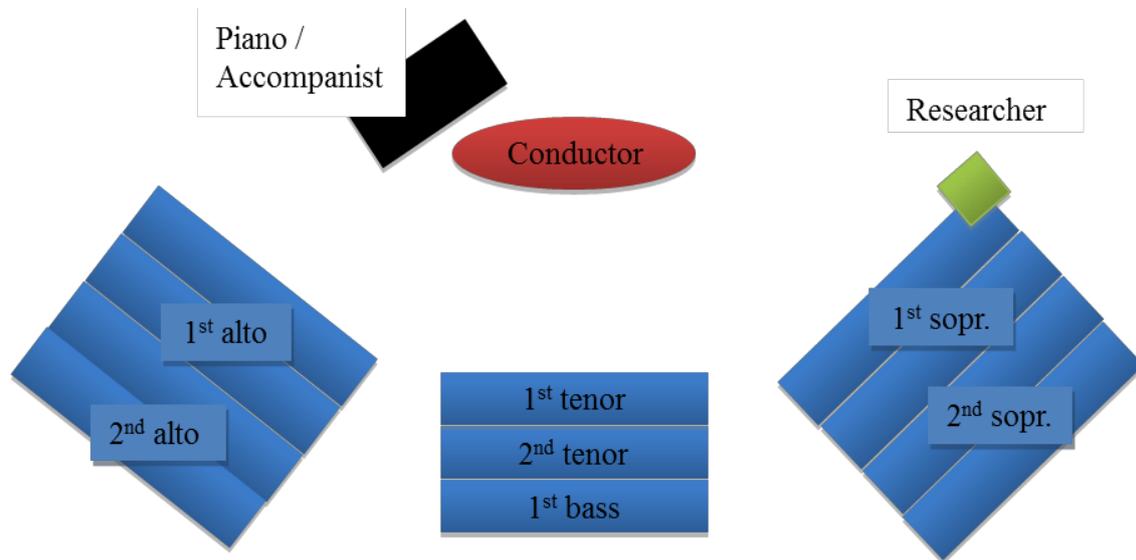


Figure 3: Rehearsal setup – The Croydon Bach choir

During the fieldwork period and the rehearsals, I sang the first soprano part, sitting in the front row on the right side, near the middle with the second sopranos behind me. On my left hand side were the tenors, the basses sat behind them and then came the first altos on the left side and the second altos behind them. That position gave me a good perspective on the conductor's work but after few rehearsals I decided to move to the far right at the end of the bench which gave me a better view over the choir as a whole (see Figure 3). The rehearsal schedule for the spring term 2010 is demonstrated in

Table 3:

Table 3: Rehearsal schedule for the performance of the Mass in B Minor*(Croydon Bach Choir, Spring 2010)*

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE - MASS IN B MINOR (SPRING 2010)	
January	
13	Kyrie (No. 1) and Qui tollis
20	Gloria and Dona nobis pacem
27	Et resurrexit and Et incarnates est
February	
3	Kyrie (No. 3) and Gratias agimus
10	Cum sancto spiritu and Credo
24	Credo (2 nd part) and Et expect
March	
3	Sanctus and Osanna
10	Crucifixus and other as required
17	As required
24	As required
27	Concert

The observation could be divided into three main categories. The first category was observing the choral singers in terms of

- Their musical skills and confidence
- How they experienced the music both technically aesthetically
- Their social and collective experience singing in a group
- The interaction between the members themselves and the conductor
- The effects of their choral participation on their mental well-being (atmosphere)

The second category was observing the choral conductor in terms of

- His musical and technical skills
- His ability to communicate with the choir members and the interaction between him and the choir
- His ability to teach and guide when it comes to the music and the interpretation of the music
- His ability to maintain discipline and control
- How he solved problems and reacted to unforeseen situations

The third category was the observation of myself as a participant and my experiences in terms of

- My own musical skills and confidence
- How I experienced the music both technically and aesthetically
- My social and collective experience of singing in a group
- My bonding and interaction with other choir members and the musical director
- The influence of the choral participation on my mental well-being
- My own perception of the music in terms of musical preferences

In order to collect data, I wrote field notes for every rehearsal and the concert, guided by a thematic framework (see in Appendix 10) (Hoyle et al., 2002).

During rehearsals and tea breaks I took notes on a piece of paper, but I tried to keep a low profile while taking notes in order not to affect the behaviour of those who sat next to me. I kept the rule of writing notes in my own native language, Icelandic, since many of the notes contained some information especially regarding the conductor which I did not want others to see and thus keeping full confidentiality. The field notes were fully written within 24 hours of the rehearsal, usually I used the time on my way home to complete them, with some minor additions and editing the day after. I asked for permission to videotape the rehearsals but never really got a reply to that request (after having sent two e-mails) and decided to leave it at that.

The participant observation gave me insight both into myself and the experience of my fellow choir members which informed the rest of the data, giving me the opportunity to reflect on the narratives of the interviewees based on my experience as a participant in this research.

4.4.2 IN-DEPTH, SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

In-depth interview is a form of a research interview that is focused on the meanings that some life experiences have for certain individuals that are being interviewed (Warren & Karner, 2005). In this case, interviews were used to gather the experience of the members of the Croydon Bach choir regarding their participation in the choir and their

image of Bach. Thus I obtained descriptions of the life world of the choir members during a conversation based on a semi-structured list of questions (Kvale, 1996).

The questions in the interviews consisted of issues that are of a special interest to the interviewees, such as the reasons for singing in a choir. The interviews conducted for this research were face-to-face interviews with one respondent at a time. The questions (see in Appendix 11) consisted of eight types of questions:

- *General background questions* regarding information such as name, age, profession, music profession or training
- *Information regarding experience in choral singing*, i.e. what kind of choirs people have sung with, what music they performed and why people quit in these choirs
- *Questions regarding music inspiration and the effects of music in respondents' everyday lives*, i.e. the music tradition in respondent's family and upbringing, why the respondent began to sing and singing in a choir and their favourite repertoire
- *Questions regarding confidence of the respondents regarding their musical skills and their view on a good performance and good singing*
- *Questions regarding the Croydon Bach choir*, how participants got involved with the choir and why, their first impression, the choir compared to other choirs, why they joined a Bach choir and the music they have been singing in the choir
- *Questions regarding the Mass in B Minor*, i.e. why the choir is singing that work, if participants have sung it before, their favourite parts and participant's perspective on the work technically
- *Questions regarding Johann Sebastian Bach*, when and where people learned first about Bach and his music, what kind of a composer and person respondents think Bach was in general, what the idea of Bach does for people in general and how respondents compare Bach to other composers like Handel and Beethoven
- *Questions regarding the role of a musical director*, i.e. the conductors respondents have worked with, the influence and importance of the conductor towards choir members and the activities of the choir and how they described the 'perfect' conductor

These interviews, or the question frame, had been developed through the pilot study interviews. Little addition or changes were made – the only addition were the questions regarding Johann Sebastian Bach and the *Mass in B Minor*. Each theme aimed to uncover information on the respondent's pathways in choral singing (Finnegan, 1989/2007), the connection to their musical identities and how their amateur musicking functions (Small, 1998). During the interviews, some of the questions were followed up by further questions according to how the discussions flowed.

Every respondent received an information consent form which contained information about the research, its aims and a declaration of consent in order to authorize the researcher to quote the respondent. It also contained a clause where the information would not be shared with others, all quotes would be anonymous and thus all identifying details altered or removed (see in Appendix 12). All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed with Express Scribe and analysed (coding analysis) with NVivo analysis software (version 7).

4.4.3 PAPER BASED SURVEY

In order to collect a general knowledge about the choir members of the Croydon Bach choir, I used a paper based survey questionnaire (Gable, 1994; Schwartz, Groves and Schuman, 1998) to gather demographic information about the population. The survey also gathered information about issues that overlapped with the interview questions (see in Appendix 13). Members answered the survey during a rehearsal tea break and returned it to me at the end of the rehearsal.

There were two reasons why I decided to do a paper based survey: Firstly, this way I could collect results immediately on the spot which insures a better response rate than if the survey is sent by e-mail or in a general mail (Kaplowitz, Hadlock and Levine, 2004). Non-response can create error and bias in the statistic results and therefore little information is available about the non-respondents, with no possibilities to conclude and speculate about the nature of the non-responsive bias. Secondly, respondents had the opportunity to see what the survey was about in full before beginning to respond (Schwarz et a. 1998).

The population of the paper based survey were the members of the Croydon Bach choir where all the members were asked to respond, so the sample was more like a

census, i.e. when the data is collected from the whole population (Scwartz et al., 1998). There were 60 registered members of the choir and 51 participated (N=51) in the survey, which means an 85% response rate. The consent of choir members for participating in the survey was sought one week in advance. The survey was processed in a rehearsal on 17th of March 2010 where members of the Croydon Bach choir responded to the survey with pen and/or pencil. It took participants approximately 10-20 minutes to finish the survey. It must be taken into account that there is always a possibility of bias in participants' answers (Schwartz, 1999).

The survey consisted of 33 questions (see in Appendix 13), both open-ended (where people could express their opinions) and closed questions (both single- and/or multiple choice questions). In the standard single choice question, a Likert-scale was used, simple yes-no choice or participants could choose as many options as applicable. There were certain questions that had the option for respondents to add their own comments.

The questions of the survey fall into four main categories. Firstly, there were background questions in order to gather demographic information about the respondents. These questions referred to age, gender, marital status, education, music education and experience in choral singing. Secondly, there were questions regarding behaviour. In order to answer a behavioural question, the respondent needs to recall or reconstruct the relevant instances based on this behaviour derived from memory (Scwartz et al., 1989). These behavioural questions addressed the social behaviour of participants when it comes to the social life of their choir. Thirdly, there were questions regarding the participant's evaluation on certain abilities, i.e. sight-reading ability and confidence in singing in front of others. Fourthly, there were many questions regarding attitude – this kind of questions has the nature of turning the focus of the respondents to some issues that they would otherwise not consider, such as their perspectives towards singing in a choir, some social and personal aspects regarding choice of repertoire, musical taste, certain perspectives towards J.S. Bach and his music, with special emphasis on the *Mass in B Minor*. At the end of the survey, participants could write comments about Johann Sebastian Bach, the choir's repertoire, the conductor, the choir's social activities and community and the meaning of participating in group-singing.

While designing the survey, I had to bear in mind in constructing the questions to avoid being too leading and interpret the answers with certain care since human

judgement is always context dependent and the reflection of the participants may be quite subjective (Schwartz et al., 1998). Survey results fulfil the aims of the research up to a certain point but the survey form has its limitations as well, especially if the questions are closed and only present certain choices, which in many cases prevents respondents from addressing their personal opinions and therefore the depth of the research becomes scarce. To prevent this, I had sections with open questions so participants could express their own opinions if the questions themselves did not provide sufficient response choices. There is also always the possibility that some of the participants may have been less literate or even with dyslexia and could have found it hard to respond to the survey and their views might therefore have not been delivered in a self-administrated survey (Schwartz et al., 1998).

4.5 DATA ACCESS

There were no special problems or obstacles due to accessing the data in this research, especially since the information gathered is not specifically personal and/or harmful in nature. In January 2010 I contacted the choir's secretary by e-mail asking for their participation in this study (see letter in Appendix 14). The choir's secretary responded the same day and I was invited to visit them at the next choir practice and that the musical director (Tim Horton) would make the final decision.

In the first rehearsal, I introduced myself to the choir and the musical director and they agreed to participate in this study on that same rehearsal. The Ethics committee at University of Exeter requested that I ask one of the committee members or the musical director to introduce me and my research and ask the choir for consent. This was done by the conductor at my first formal rehearsal. I did not have to undergo a formal audition and I immediately became a member of the choir.

Every week from 13th January until March 27th I travelled from Torquay to London. Each trip took about 5 and a half hours one way with the National Express coach to the Victoria Coach station, and then another half an hour from Victoria to East Croydon, where the rehearsals were held in St Matthew's Church on Chichester Road every Thursday evening from 8 pm to 10 pm and after that I took the night coach to Torquay, returning at 5 am in the morning.

In the beginning when I asked for the participation of the Croydon Bach choir I received approval from the musical director and the choir's secretary to advertise for

respondents for interviews. At a rehearsal I stood up and addressed my request for interviewees and asked choir members that I needed 10 interviewees and that those who were interested could talk to me in the interval and share contact details. In this rehearsal I got 10 interviewees, 5 men and 5 women. During the next weeks I arranged to meet them on a Thursday evenings right before rehearsal and during the last week of the study (which I spent entirely in London) I finished all the interviews (see interview plan in

Table 4). The length of the interviews ranged from 30 minutes to one hour.

Table 4: List of interviewees and interview schedule

List of interviews - PhD study 2010				
Respondents	Voice		Date	Time
Respondent 1	Tenor	Volunteered	24th Feb	6:50pm
Respondent 2	Soprano	Volunteered	3rd March	7pm
Respondent 3	Soprano	Volunteered	10th March	5:20pm
Respondent 4	Tenor	Volunteered	10th March	7pm
Respondent 5	Tenor	Volunteered	17th March	5:50pm
Respondent 6	Tenor	Volunteered	17th March	7pm
Respondent 7	Soprano	By request	24th March	6pm
Respondent 8	Alto	Volunteered	24th March	7pm
Conductor Tim Horton	N/A	By request	25th March	10am
Respondent 9	Bass	Volunteered	25th March	11:30am
Respondent 10	Tenor	By request	26th March	11am
Respondent 11	Soprano	By request	26th March	12:15am
Respondent 12	Alto	Volunteered	26th March	2:30pm
Respondent 13	Soprano	Volunteered	26th March	4pm

All interviews (except with the conductor Tim Horton) were anonymous. Whereas all the 10 respondents volunteered to participate, I randomly chose five other interviewees from the members list - I contacted them and 3 people agreed to meet me. However, the two others (an alto and a bass) did not have the opportunity to meet me during the last week of my fieldwork. I also conducted an interview with the musical director and in the end had 14 interviews in total. The respondents' profiles will be described further in chapter 5, however it is notable that interviewees who volunteered were mostly tenors and sopranos, whereas one bass and two altos volunteered as well. This might indicate

certain personality / identity traits in which tenors and sopranos might be more outgoing – however, this needs further testing, referring to vocal identity within a group.

The meeting places for the interviews were usually at a café or a restaurant or in the church where the rehearsals were conducted. In one case I was offered to come to the respondent's house and in another case I met one respondent at his/her workplace. The time and place was usually decided in cooperation with the respondent and I usually tried to meet them in places where it was convenient for the respondents.

Regarding the paper-based survey, choir members responded during a rehearsal tea break and delivered the survey back to the researcher at the end of the rehearsal.

4.6 DATA ANALYSIS

There was a significant amount of data collected in this research as both qualitative and quantitative data were collected, and in my analysis I compared and cross-analysed these different types of data. In this chapter, I describe the data analysis, which can be divided into two categories:

- **Analysis of the qualitative data:** Analysing interview transcriptions, field notes and open questions from the survey with coding analysis
- **Survey – quantitative data:** Analysing quantitative data (numeric results) with descriptive statistics and crosstabs

4.6.1 ANALYSIS OF THE QUALITATIVE DATA

In order to analyse the qualitative data, I used grounded theory coding as the main method of analysis. Coding can be defined as identifying segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data. The initial coding is the first step towards analytical interpretations. The codes presented my choices, separations and sorting of the data itself. The coding was thus the structural tool of the final results and enabled me to build and shape the analytical frame (Charmaz, 2006, p. 43).

Before starting the analysis I transcribed all the interviews with Express Scribe software, and all the interviews were recorded with a digital recorder. In order to

organise the coding process, I used two main phases of grounded theory coding: **An initial coding** was the first phase in which I reviewed each interview and accompanying field notes to identify certain themes and codes that derived from the text itself. This was the first step towards choosing and categorizing the main themes (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967 – see Charmaz, 2006). Thus before starting the coding analysis, I read through the transcripts, identifying possible themes which I wrote down, categorized and grouped by using Excel. Based on this preliminary analysis I could therefore identify the initial codes and themes. It is also worth mentioning that I started to analyse the interview data, before turning to my field notes, in order to not let my own perspective as presented in the field notes to be leading in identifying key themes.

The second phase was **axial coding** (Strauss, 1987) where I categorized the coding into main categories and sub-categories. Strauss (1987, p. 64) views axial coding as building ‘a dense texture of relationships around the ‘axis’ of a category’ in order to sort, synthesize and organize the data after open coding, linking categories and sub-categories and how they are related (Charmaz, 2006). In fact, I used this process to define the main categories that determined the focus of the results.

I integrated these methods by using Nvivo 7 qualitative analysis software in order to organise and categorize the data by using Ude Kelle’s (Charmaz, 2006, p. 296; Kelle, 2000) strategy of computer-based qualitative analysis (7 of 9 steps):

- *Step 1: Formatting textual data*
- *Step 2: Defining a code scheme [first phase – initial coding]*
- *Step 3: Coding data with the predefined code scheme*
- *Step 4: Linking memos to the codes (not to the text segments) while coding*
- *Step 5: Comparing text segments to which the same codes have been attached*
- *Step 6: Developing subcategories from this comparison [second phase – axis coding]*
- *Step 7: Recode the data with these subcategories*

Using NVivo 7 in the first two rounds was very useful, especially with this amount of data, especially in terms of organizing the themes. I did two rounds of analysis through

NVivo and defined sub-categories, and I did the final phase of analysis through the ‘old fashioned way’ of printing out every category, cutting coded quotes out with scissors and did the final phase by organizing the data manually. This ‘old fashioned kind of way’ was an excellent final phase and proved that some of the old ways are not out-of-date. Thus, handling the materials this way made it easier for me to identify patterns in the narratives and therefore it affected my thinking of the data, connecting different things together in order to identify the red thread throughout the themes more clearly. The use of NVivo 7 for the first phases was very helpful in considering the amount of interview data and organizing the text in an efficient way.

4.6.2 ANALYSIS OF THE QUANTITATIVE DATA

The analysis of the quantitative data from the survey can be divided into two categories:

Firstly I used descriptive statistics in order to present the ‘raw data’, i.e. the direct results and answers from the numeric questions. These results were presented in a collection of graphics such as bars and / or pies with all the statistical information.

Secondly, I cross-referenced the results by using cross-tables in order to identify some kind of connection between variables, especially regarding the demographic variables. Connecting various types of analysis in this way could lead to more valid research and the emergence of new, unexpected angles that may not have appeared through in-depth interviews (Hoyle, Harris and Judd, 2002; Whisker, 2001).

The results of the paper-based survey were manually typed into the SPSS analysis software. There were a total of 103 variables and results were checked regularly to minimize the risk of errors in typing.

In short, by using two kinds of qualitative data (interviews, field notes) along with the quantitative data gave the research more depth. Thus having a broad range of data made it possible to get a clearer picture of the group of participants and the different forms of data informed each other, giving me as a researcher the opportunity to cross-analyse the data and reflect on the findings in general.

4.7 VALIDITY, RELIABILITY AND GENERALIZABILITY OF THE RESEARCH

In order to address the validity, reliability and generalizability of this research, it is essential to define these concepts and put their definitions into the perspective of this research.

There are mainly three types of validity that apply to this research; internal validity, external validity and ecological validity.

Hoyle et al. (2002) define internal validity as a means of deciding whether conclusions can be drawn from the research about the sample, i.e. the participants of the research. Since the whole sample (the Croydon Bach Choir as a whole) participated in this research, it can be assumed that this study holds a significant internal validity.

External validity, on the other hand, refers to the possibility of generalizing and concluding about the whole population instead of just the sample (Hoyle et al., 2002). Thus the external validity of this particular research is limited, since the sample was chosen due to special criteria (see further section 4.3.1) and was not a probability sample.

The third dimension refers to ecological validity which demonstrates whether the research is in fact representative for what happens in everyday life in the setting of the research, e.g. whether results are presenting the real life setting, not a fictional one (Reis & Judd, 2000, p. 12). Regarding this research, the use of participant observation may enhance the ecological validity of the research, however the participant observation is more or less based on the researcher's experience since rehearsals were not videotaped and thus no 'objective' perspective given on the real life situation and the interviews provided personal insight of a part of the sample. Thus, a 'pure' ecological validity is difficult to achieve, however the different types of data collected on different levels in this research may improve the ecological validity to a point in order to be descriptive for the real life experience of rehearsing and performing the *Mass in B Minor* and participating in choral activities.

The reliability of the research (which refers to the re-testability of the research, i.e. if the research can be repeated by another observer with same or similar results (Hammersley, 1992a – quoted in Silverman, 2001, p. 225)) which is generally dependent upon repeatability is not possible in the case of this research and difficult to

achieve in qualitative research but is more relevant in quantitative research. However, reliability is highly dependent and linked to the validity of the research. In the case of this research, where it is based on case study, repeatability may not be a realistic option and it remains difficult to generalize and conclude about another Bach choir from these results alone, since the sample is not a probability sample, as previously referred to (Silverman, 2001).

On the other hand, this research, at the very least, gives insight and ideas for further research and is also descriptive for the reality of the research, the rehearsal period of the *Mass in B Minor* based on the participant observation and in-depth interviews with the participants of this research.

4.8 RESEARCH ETHICS AND PRIVACY

Every method raises some ethical concerns. Doing participant observation meant that I was participating in people's lives, which inevitably meant some kind of invasion of privacy and this is an important issue to consider. This applies also to the interviews. Even though this research did not address some vulnerable or more difficult aspects of human lives (like abuse, violence, health issues or other harmful and personal information) there is always a possibility that I would get some sensitive information (Hoyle et al., 2002). All the information needed to be handled with care, either through altering or simply not using it at all.

Since my project had promised anonymity, I had to secure that no names would be mentioned in the field notes and in the interview transcriptions all names and personal details were altered or removed.

4.8.1 THE VOLUNTARY AND INFORMED NATURE OF PARTICIPATION

All participants were informed about the research and my status as a researcher. I asked one member of the choir committee to briefly explain the study and its aims to the choir and to ask for the choir's consent – at the end it came to the conductor to introduce me and my research at my first rehearsal as both a researcher and member of the Croydon Bach choir.

I sought consent at different stages in the research; i.e. in the beginning of the participant observation, before every interview and before conducting the survey. Interviewees received an information/consent form (see in Appendix 12), which needed to be signed by the interviewer and the interviewee. Time and location on all interviews was based on agreement between the respondent and researcher. Participation of all participants was purely voluntary and every participant was able to withdraw from the research (i.e. the interviews, the observation and the survey) at any time and not obligated to answer any questions they found uncomfortable.

By the request of the Ethics committee I created a form (see in Appendix 15) that needed to be signed by the conductor in order to confirm that the Croydon Bach choir is an adult choir, that no minors sing in the choir and therefore all participants are adults.

4.8.2 DATA PROTECTION AND STORAGE

The interviews were recorded and transcribed for further analysis. The interviews and field notes were kept confidential and information from them was not to be shared with others. All identifying details from interviews and autobiographical data were altered or removed. Each recording/transcription was identified by a pseudonym and the data stored on a password-protected computer, as well as all results and documents in this research. The data were therefore kept indefinitely, in an anonymous form, in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

All identifying details from the autobiographical data were altered and removed. No choir member was mentioned by name in the field notes, confidentiality was kept and no information shared with others.

Regarding the survey, since members of the Croydon Bach choir responded to the paper-based survey, all the original documents were destroyed when the analysis was fully finished so the handwritings of the respondents could not be identified.

4.9 THE RESEARCHER'S STATUS WITHIN THE RESEARCH

When it comes to choosing a research topic or subject, the field of interest of the researcher is often a deciding factor in that process. Thus, as a final topic in this

methods chapter, I now want to introduce myself and my background in relation to this research.

In my childhood in the province of Myrdalur, Iceland, a country with a rich choral tradition, my parents, grandmothers and music teachers were influential in my musical development. From the age of 4-5, I followed my parents to choral rehearsals in our small parish church and rehearsals were on many occasions held in our living room (especially during the coldest winter days). My grandmother had a very good singing voice and was a keen amateur organ player. She encouraged me to study music, which I did in primary and secondary school, playing the piano and taking some lessons in classical singing, but I have not finished a degree in music of any kind. I have a significant experience in choral singing in Iceland, both with small community choirs and church choirs up to quasi-professional chamber choirs that consisted of professional musicians and classical singers. I have a wide range of experience and knowledge of choral activities, both as a singer and also as a previous temporary conductor for two years with a small church choir in the South of Iceland. I am also a devoted fan of Johann Sebastian Bach and his choral works (see further regarding the researcher's musical background in Appendix 16).

The reason for this briefing is that my interest in the subject could cause the researcher effects, or the Hawthorne effect, which means that I, as a researcher, my personal characteristics, behaviour and interest, could influence my choice of perspective and responses, both when it comes to the participant observation and the interviews (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982 – see Monahan and Fisher, 2010). Benjamin Paul (1953, p. 441) noted that 'participation implies emotional involvement; observation requires detachment. It is a strain to try to sympathize with others and at the same time strive for scientific objectivity' (see Tedlock, 1991).

It could also affect the structure of the survey, the questions asked in the interviews and influence in general the reliability of the research in two ways. Firstly, when it comes to choice of aspects, my interest could be a decisive factor and the ability to draw reasonable and objective conclusions from the results could be jeopardized. Secondly, my presence as a researcher can also affect how people respond – especially during the interviews and also during the survey conducting process, which can be both an advantage and disadvantage. On the one hand, my presence could serve as a means of help to the participants where I can clarify anything unclear, for example, when it comes to the survey. Additionally my presence might guarantee that the 'right' people

are participating. On the other hand, my presence could be leading and there is a danger that my guidance could lead to a certain bias in the responses. However, the fact that I am a foreigner and therefore not a part of the English choral tradition itself, is a counterbalance. My knowledge and experience could also be beneficial for the research because I can deliver important insight into the project, especially during the interviews and the design of the research and also when it comes to communicating with participants and other stakeholders.

5. PARTICIPANTS IN THE RESEARCH: THE CROYDON BACH CHOIR

In this chapter, I describe the choir and the environment of the choir, the Borough of Croydon, and give a short profile of the musical director, especially his background. The main aim of this chapter is to describe the choir in general and the choir members by presenting demographic information and other background information regarding education, music education and choral experience. The interviewees will also be introduced briefly before entering the data analysis chapter.

5.1 THE CROYDON BACH CHOIR – HISTORY AND STRUCTURE

The Croydon Bach choir is located in East Croydon, the biggest borough in South London, with a population of 340000.²¹ Croydon, located 15.3 kilometres south of Charing Cross, was originally an ancient town first inhabited by the Saxons. Croydon means ‘crooked valley’ or ‘saffron valley,’ later belonging to the Archbishop of Canterbury as mentioned in the *Domesday Book* in 1086 with 365 inhabitants. It expanded in the medieval times as a market town and centre for charcoal productions, leather tanning and brewing.

In the beginning of the 19th century, Croydon was connected to the Surrey Iron Rail and became an important industrial area in the 20th century, primarily known for metal working, car manufacture and its airport, later known for its retail and service economy. In 1965, Croydon was amalgamated into Greater London.²²

The Croydon Bach choir has around 60 members on a regular basis and was founded in 1960 by Derek Holman to sing the Bach Passions at Easter and also to support the musical activities of Croydon Parish Church. The first concert of the choir was on 1st March 1960; the choir is celebrating its Golden Jubilee in 2010.

According to the chairman’s report (Donald Rose) in the annual general meeting in 2010, during these 50 years the choir has had only 6 musical directors. The first director and founder of the choir was Derek Holman, who conducted the choir until he left to take a post in Canada. Holman’s predecessor was Roy Massey who conducted the

²¹ See NHS statistics – estimated population in 2008 <http://www.ic.nhs.uk/>

²² See www.thisiscroydon.co.uk

choir for a short period until he was appointed at Hereford Cathedral. It was his deputy, Michael Fleming (who died in 2010) who left his role at Croydon Parish Church and continued to conduct the choir (thus breaking the connection with the church) through his work at the Royal School of Church Music. The choir first rehearsed at Addington Palace in Croydon and after that at the current rehearsal location, St Matthew's Church in Croydon. When Michael Fleming left the choir, Adrian Adams took over for a few years and was followed by Peter Nardone, a professional countertenor who could sing all voices. Peter Nardone was, according to Donald Rose, persuaded to take over the choir and then later was appointed as the music director of Chelmsford Cathedral. The current Music Director of the Croydon Bach choir is Tim Horton who previously served as the choir's accompanist (The Croydon Bach Choir Annual General Meeting Report, 2010). Not much is known or has been written about the history of this choir.

On the choir's website, the members define the choir as one of the leading amateur choirs in London. The choir is listed on a choir website called *Making Music*, a promotional site for choirs in UK. On the site, the entry requirements for the Croydon Bach choir are 'none except enthusiasm' and 'willingness to work hard and having sung before is a bonus, but not essential.'²³

The Croydon Bach choir holds at least three concerts every year; one concert is accompanied by soloists and an orchestra. Examples of the choir's repertoire include Bach's *Mass in B Minor*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Handel's *Samson* and *Messiah*, and Mozart's *Requiem*. According to the chairman, the quality of the concerts relies on its leader and accompanist, who this year was William Munks, a math teacher by profession, but also a very gifted piano player. The chairman, Donald Rose, also emphasized that without the important role of the committee, the choir could not function.

The Croydon Bach choir is a registered charity and thus by law it is obligated to have a committee. The role of the committee is to organize all of the choir's activities: organizing concerts (venue, ticket sales, promotion, hiring soloists and orchestras), running and updating finances (choral submissions, raffles and other kind of fundraising), recruiting new members and choosing the repertoire. According to one of the interviewees (Mary) the conductor usually suggests appropriate repertoire, which is then discussed within the committee, and usually the committee agrees with the conductor. On occasion they have done a survey questionnaire where they asked the

²³ see <http://www.makingmusiclondon.com/group.php?Croydon%20Bach%20Choir>

choir what works they would like to sing. The choice of the repertoire is also dependent on the budget available at any given time. The committee members of the Croydon Bach choir during the research were:

- Tim Horton – Music Director
- Donald Rose – Chairman
- Marion Padgham – Secretary and Membership Secretary
- Tony Kirk – Treasurer
- Stephanie Post – Librarian
- Pam Hamilton – Publicity
- Marina Ivanova – Publicity
- Helen Draper – Tickets
- Christine Willmington – Publications Editor

(The Croydon Bach Choir Annual General Meeting Report, 2010).

Rehearsals of the Croydon Bach choir took place in St Matthew’s Church on Chichester Road in East Croydon every Thursday night between 8 pm - 10 pm. The performance of the *Mass in B Minor* was the peak of their Golden Jubilee celebration. The concert took place in St Mildred’s Church in Croydon on 27th of March. Peter Steptoe, a music reviewer at *This is Croydon Today* wrote about this concert:

This mass by J S Bach is described as monumental and at two hours long required stamina of a high order - and Croydon Bach Choir had it in abundance. There were many moments of significance after the Choir opened with the Kyrie eleison to give a meaningful Gloria in Excelsis ... The Choir's Hosanna in excelsis was excellent and to finish with Dona nobis pacem (grant us thy peace) seemed suitable just before Holy Week. Conductor Tim Horton wielded a gentle baton but had firm control of the Choir and Orchestra under its leader Rebecca Watts

(see <http://www.croydonbachchoir.org/Critics%20Page%2014.html>).

5.2 THE MUSICAL DIRECTOR OF THE CROYDON BACH CHOIR

The current musical Director of the Croydon Bach choir, Tim Horton, has conducted the choir since 2001. He had his musical education at Sevenoaks School where he was

given a music scholarship and then at Jesus College, Cambridge as an organ scholar. Gaining ARCO and FRCO diplomas, he received top marks and prizes for both degrees. After graduating, he served as an assistant Master of Music at Sheffield Cathedral and Director of Music at the School of St Mary and St Anne, Abbots Bromley. He then moved to London, taking up a busy professional career.²⁴

Tim claimed in an interview in this research that he always wanted to be a musician and his ambition as a youngster was to be an organist in a Cathedral. His parents were both professional musicians – his mother was a violinist and his father was a horn player. He did not grow up with his father but there was a lot of music in his upbringing – his brother was an oboist and he spent time accompanying his mother and brother. Evidently there was a lot of music in the house – almost entirely classical music, mostly Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn and Schubert. Tim’s musical taste is quite wide but his favourite composer is Johann Sebastian Bach, claiming that Bach’s music ‘in terms of quality it’s pretty much impossible to beat’ and that the *Mass in B Minor* is as hard as it gets for amateur choirs.

Along with conducting the Croydon Bach choir, Tim works as Director of Chapel music in the Chapel of the Guards in London where he coordinated and conducted the music for the service of thanksgiving for Diana, Princess of Wales on 31st August 2007, which received worldwide press attention and millions of international TV audience members.²⁵ The choir at the Guard’s chapel broadcasts on a regularly basis on BBC Radio 3 and has twice made records for EMI with the Band of the Grenadier Guards. Tim also teaches part-time at a school in London, works as an examiner in music for Trinity Guildhall, and is an active accompanist and soloist. Recent examples of his solo performances are Bach’s immense *Passacaglia* and *Fugue in C minor* as the music for Roland Petit’s seminal ballet *Le jeune homme et la mort*, danced at *Sadler’s Wells* by Igor Zelensky and Darcey Bussell as part of her farewell season.²⁶ Along with these regular activities he gives occasional concerts as an accompanist or other one-off events.

²⁴ See the choir’s website: www.croydonbachchoir.org

²⁵ See the choir’s website: www.croydonbachchoir.org

²⁶ See the choir’s website: www.croydonbachchoir.org

5.3 CROYDON BACH CHOIR: GENERAL BACKGROUND DEMOGRAPHICS

In order to collect demographics and other background information, members of the Croydon Bach choir were asked during a tea-break to fill out a paper-based survey. A number of questions concerned general background information (age, gender, nationality, marital status, and education).

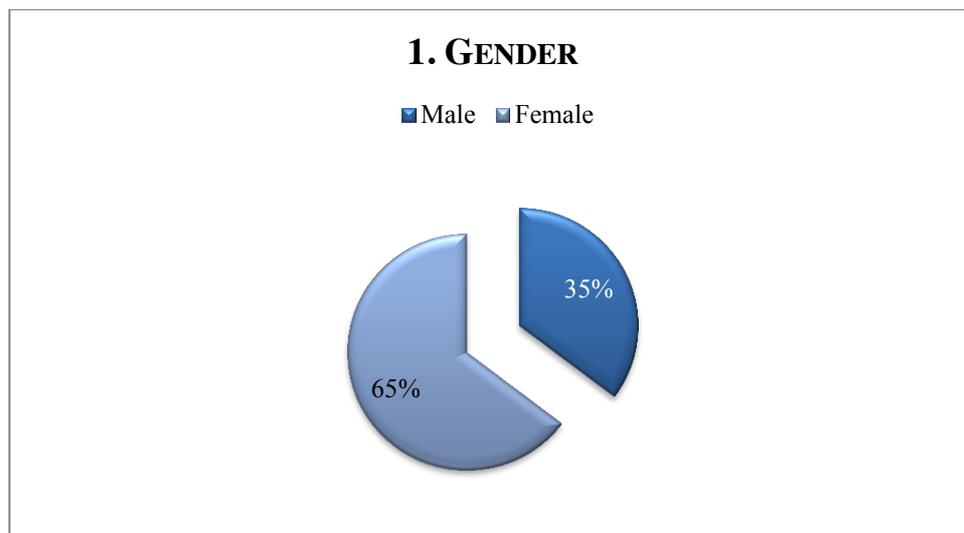


Figure 4: Gender division (Q1)

Out of 60 listed members, 51 participated in the survey: 33 women (65%) and 18 men (35%, see Figure 4), resulting in an 85% response rate. It must be taken into consideration that there were a number of new members and others participating

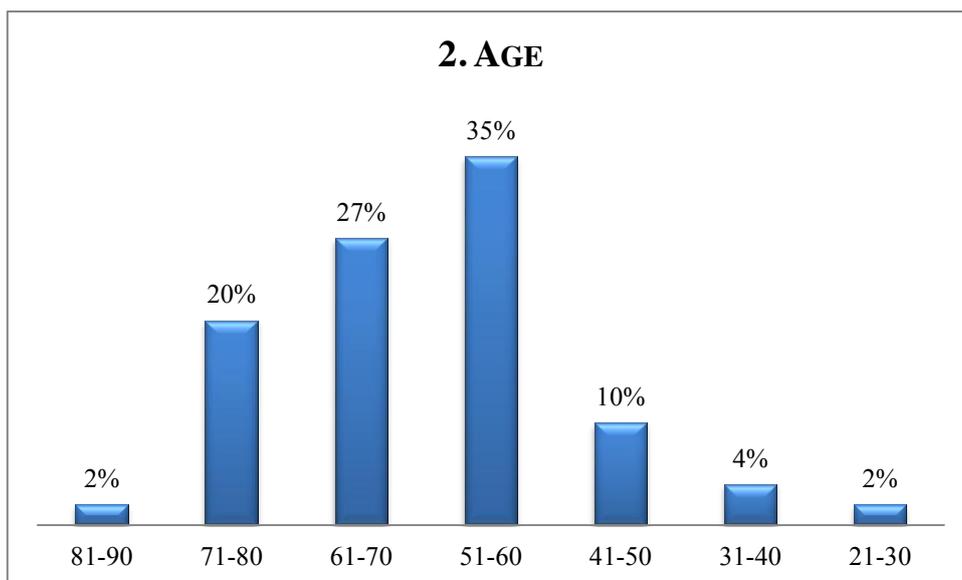


Figure 5: Age division (Q2)

The age profile can be seen in Figure 5. It is interesting to note that 84% of choir members are over 50 years old. The average age of the choir members is 62 years. The women are relatively younger, when looking at the age division from a gender perspective (see Figure 6) where the average age of women is 60 years but men’s average age is 64 years. This difference is however not considerably significant and it must be considered that female participants are 65% of total respondents.

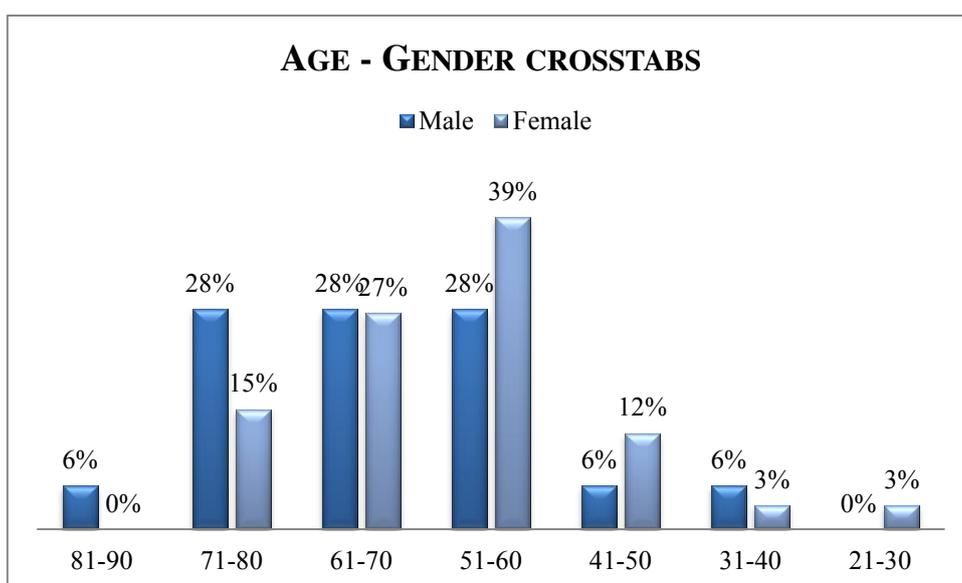


Figure 6: Age – Gender Crosstabs

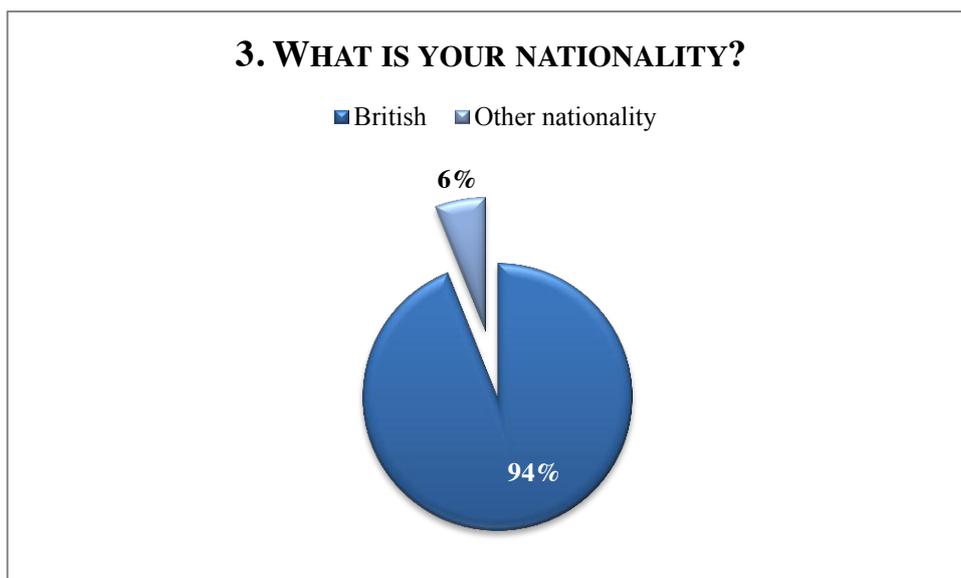


Figure 7: What is your nationality? (Q3)

Figure 7 presents that 94% of participants were British. Three people commented on different nationality: One was a French national, one German, and one an Indian national. Figure 8 demonstrates that almost 70% of respondents are married or living with someone. There were no significant differences due to age and gender when it came to marital status due to crosstabs.

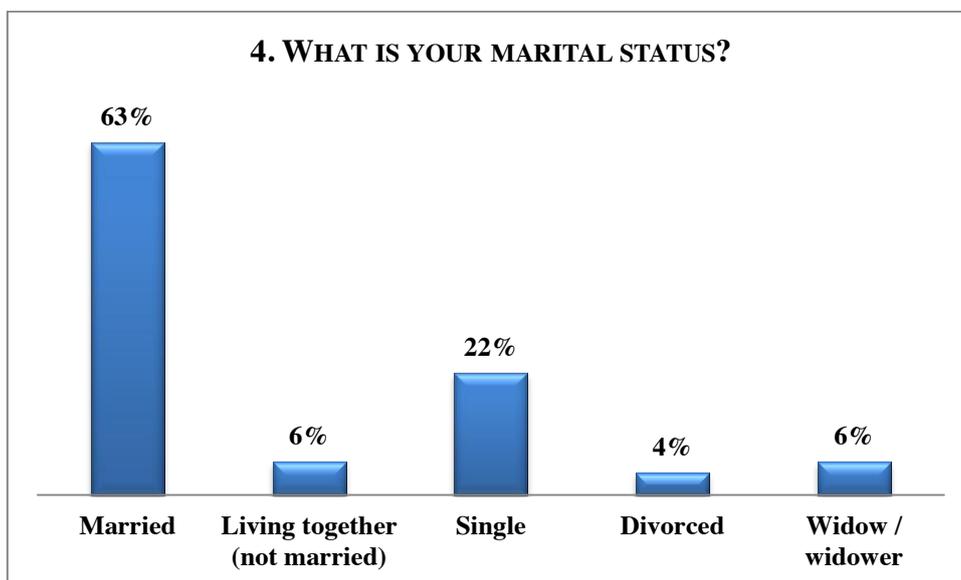


Figure 8: What is your marital status (Q4)

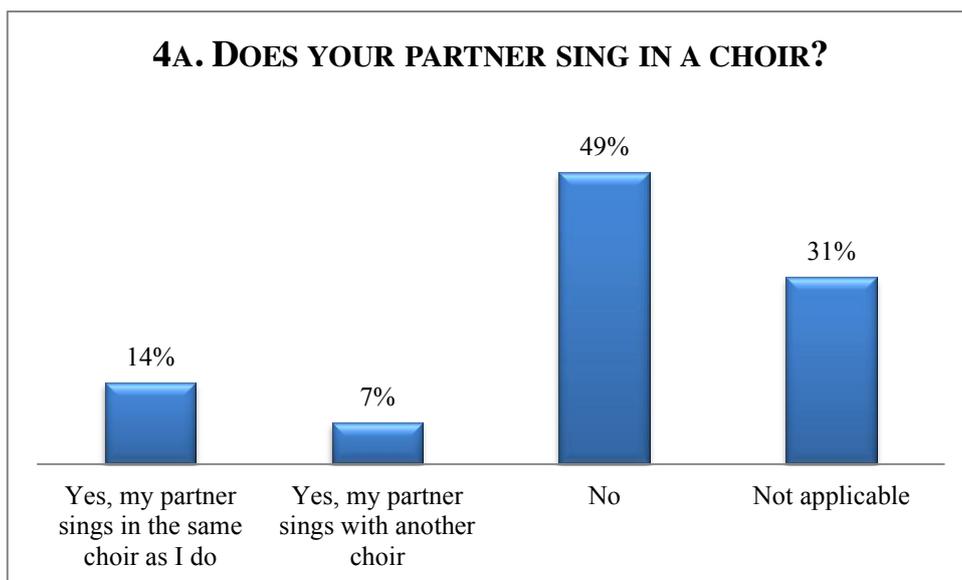


Figure 9: Does your partner sing in a choir (Q4a)

According to Figure 9, only 21% of respondents have partners who sing in a choir.

Figure 10 presents the fact that 67% have an undergraduate degree or more. Two people indicated job related qualifications: Associate of Library association and retired nurse. Three people mentioned other education: GCE, GNVQ A-level and GRSM ARCH piano teaching.

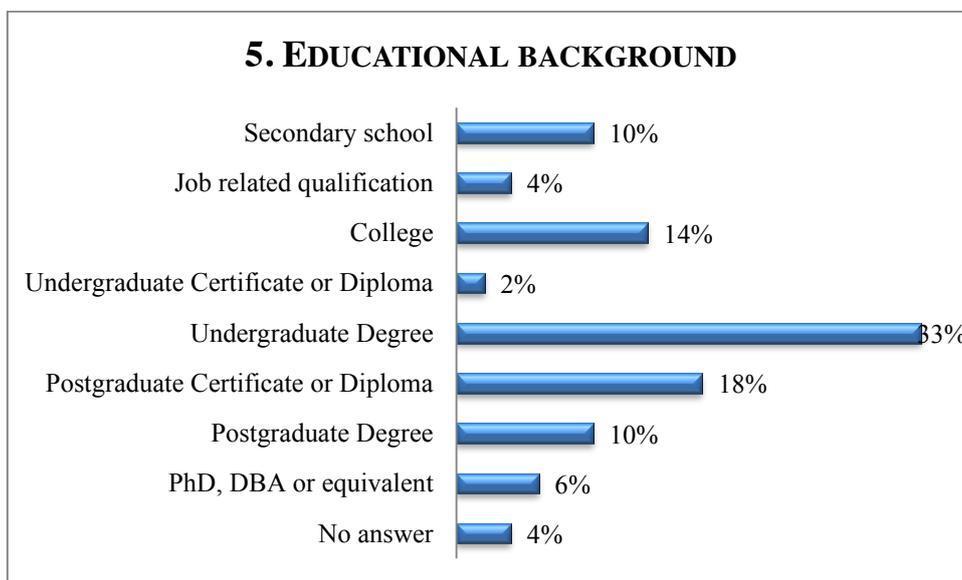


Figure 10: Educational background (Q5)

5.4 THE INTERVIEWEES

In this section I introduce the choir members who were interviewed using pseudonyms. Due to the need to preserve the anonymity of the participants, detailed and traceable information will be limited and their age, education and profession not presented. The conductor was also interviewed and is introduced in section 5.2.

1. **James** is a tenor – he has an unusual background compared to other interviewees in that he does not come from a musical family and attended church on his own as a child. He taught himself to play the piano and organ and had lessons in his teenage years. He did not start to sing in a choir until in his early adulthood and has been singing with Bach choirs ever since, performing all the large-scale choral works by Bach and other composers within the Western classical music tradition. James has been singing with the Croydon Bach choir for 20 years.
2. **Mary** is a soprano. She comes from a musical family as her father was interested in music, her mother played the piano and her brother was a professional musician. She was encouraged to play instruments and sing, and she learned to play the piano from an early age and has sung in choirs since she was in school. She performed Bach's *Mass in B Minor* for the first time as a teenager and received positive feedback from her music teachers. Mary has taken lessons in classical singing and has experience in singing solos and duets. She has been singing with the Croydon Bach choir for 15 years.
3. **Louise** is a soprano. She comes from a musical family, learned the piano a bit but did not show any interest in music until later on, when she started singing in choirs. Due to family circumstances she had to quit school quite early and started working. She has had a career abroad and in her adult life she has taken university degrees where music played a big part. Louise has been singing with the Croydon Bach choir for one year.
4. **Gerald** is a tenor. Gerald comes from a musical family where his mother played the piano and he himself learned to play the viola. He has 20 years of experience

- in choral singing and has been singing with the Croydon Bach choir for one year.
5. **Jacob** is a tenor – his musical background is based primarily on his father’s interest and encouragement and his father started him singing in choirs. Jacob has been singing since in his mid-thirties. He has no formal music education but has attended lessons and workshops. Jacob has been singing with the Croydon Bach choir for three years.
 6. **David** is a tenor. David used to sing at his services and thus grew up in a musical home with a strong classical music tradition and has sung with choirs since he was in primary school. David has been singing with the Croydon Bach choir for 19 years.
 7. **Meredith** is a soprano. She has sung with choirs since she was in elementary school. She grew up with a lot of music in the family and attended concerts frequently in her childhood, but she has no formal music education except for music and singing lessons in school but has been encouraged to proceed with her singing. Meredith has been singing with the Croydon Bach choir for three years.
 8. **Irene** is an alto. She learned to play the piano and her parents were great fans of classical music and her father used to play the piano. Irene has been singing with the Croydon Bach choir for one year.
 9. **Peter** is a bass. He did not start singing in choirs until in his fifties but he has a record of having sung in a rock band in his twenties. His mother was an active member in an operatic society but otherwise he does not have formal music education. Peter has been singing with the Croydon Bach choir for the last 15 years.
 10. **Patrick** is a tenor. He grew up with a lot of music in his house and has taken piano lessons from an early age. He started singing in a choir while very young and has taken lessons in classical singing. Patrick has been singing with the Croydon Bach choir for one year.

11. **Sophie** is a soprano. She has no formal music education, except for music lessons in school, and her parents showed general interest in music but did not perform or practice themselves. Sophie was encouraged by her music teacher to carry on singing in choirs. Sophie has been singing with the Croydon Bach choir for the last 10 years.

12. **Emily** is an alto. She comes from a musical family where her brothers have both pursued a musical career and she learned to play the piano in her childhood and also did some singing. Her mother liked singing as well. Emily has been taking piano lessons for the last ten years and she has been singing with the Croydon Bach choir for 15 years.

13. **Catherine** is a soprano. She took basic music lessons in school and she has been singing in choirs since early childhood and learned to play the flute. She used to sing alto but now she sings soprano and has taken singing lessons on and off for the last 10-15 years. Catherine has been singing with the Croydon Bach choir for one year.

Looking at the profiles of the interviewees, most of them are 50 years or older, or 10 out of 13. This, in a way, reflects the choir as around 80% of choir members are fifty years or older. However, regarding gender division, I interviewed seven women and six men, even though gender division in the choir is 65% female and 35% male. Like the majority of the choir, the interviewees have little or no formal music education, but a couple of the interviewees have attended lessons in classical singing and some of them have learned to play instruments a bit, mostly the piano. It is worth noting that the piano seems to be the most popular instrument

This chapter has presented the participants of this research. The methods of this research have been described and the setting of the research has been defined. Now it is time to turn to the actual findings. In the next two chapters, key findings of the research will be presented and discussed.

6. MUSICAL IDENTITIES AND SOCIO-CULTURAL CAPITAL: INTRODUCING THE CONCEPT OF ‘CHORAL CAPITAL’

In this chapter I propose the concept of ‘choral capital,’ based on the findings of this research. This chapter is divided into three main sections:

The first section represents the origins of choral/musical identities of participants in this study and the pathway towards choral capital. Along with statistics regarding levels of music education and choral experience, the focus will be first and foremost on the musical histories of interviewees where they describe the role of influential actors and encouragement, both internal (within the family) and/or external (in school or anywhere outside the family home). These issues represent the musical identities of participants and the foundation and basis of their identities as choral singers as a pathway to pursuing a certain socio-cultural capital, or ‘choral capital.’

In the second section, I address the participants’ perspectives and perceptions towards their musical taste and preferences through their own choral performances, early memories of music consumption in childhood homes and early influential concert experiences (that had an impact on participants’ musical taste and preferences) as pathways towards increased cultural capital. I also present certain gender differences regarding musical taste.

The third section represents the choral community of the Croydon Bach choir. Firstly I describe the participants’ perspectives towards the choir as a community in the local context; how participants describe the first impression the choir had on them and whether they chose to join the choir based on either the social factor (e.g. belonging to a group of like-minded people). Secondly I discuss the participants’ perceptions towards the well-being factor of collective singing in everyday life, and thirdly how participants use the collective learning methods in order to gain better results in the learning process of the *Mass in B Minor*. This section represents how participants use their choral participation as a source of increased social capital.

6.1 MUSICAL IDENTITIES - MUSICAL BACKGROUND: PATHWAYS TO ‘CHORAL CAPITAL’

In order to map how participants have developed their musical taste and preferences, I identify three steps in the pathway towards ‘choral capital.’

The first step is to look into the background, or the alleged musical habitus. This includes the level of musical education and choral practice, what kind of music education they pursued, whether the family’s musical participation was practiced, and how it affected their taste and perceptions of musical aesthetics.

The second step refers to the continuation from adolescence into adulthood by identifying identity perspectives towards skills, vocal identity and gender differences regarding encouragement and confidence.

And finally, the third step points towards the notion of choosing music as a career or not; e.g. the choice of choral singing as a musical career instead of going into professionalism. By identifying these factors, the pathway to ‘choral capital’ is thus described as well as different stages of the participants’ choral career.’

6.1.1 FIRST STEP: CHILDHOOD MUSICAL BACKGROUND AND CHORAL EXPERIENCES

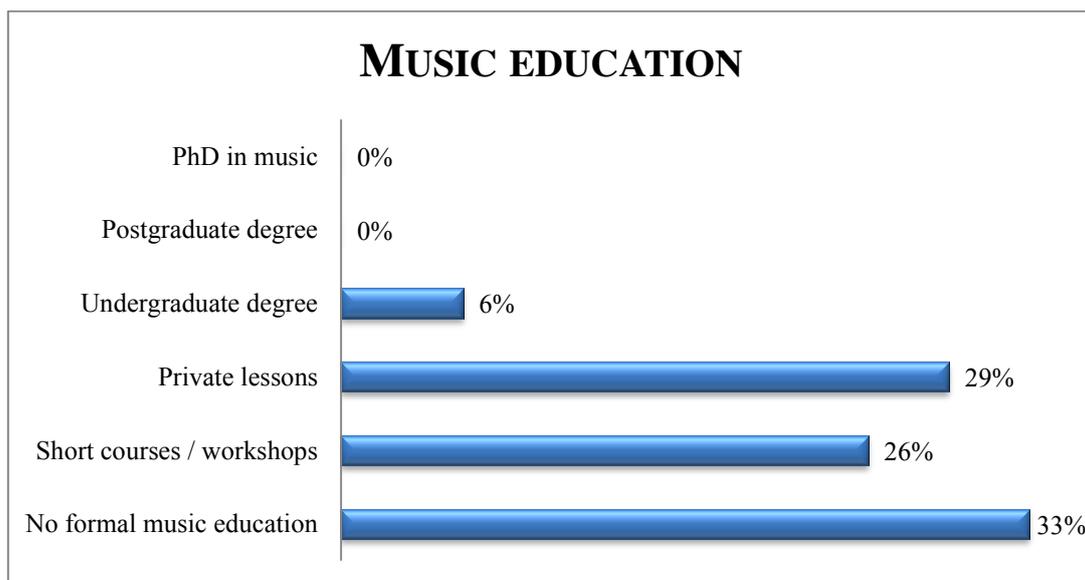


Figure 11: Music education (Q6)

The first step refers to the early stage of developing ‘choral identity’ by referring to childhood musical experiences, musical background and level of education. In the survey, a number of questions pertained to musical background of the choir members who were asked about choral experience and music education. According to the results in the survey, 33% have no formal music education, 6% have an undergraduate degree in music and 55% have attended short courses, workshops and/or private lessons (see Figure 11). Figure 34 in Appendix 17 illustrates that 26% have attended private lessons.

Relatively few choir members have music education near a professional level and the main musical training of the group, besides singing in a choir, is in the form of short courses, workshops or private lessons. Thus the musical habitus of choir members, i.e. their perceptions towards music through earlier performance experiences, patterns of consumption and musical upbringing (Bourdieu, 1984), is mainly retrieved through performance experiences (discussed in the next section), choral participation and through music consumption.

Regarding choral experience, participants were asked about how many choirs they sing with at the moment, how many choirs they have sung with in total, how many years they have sung in The Croydon Bach choir and also for how many years in total they have sung with choirs in general.

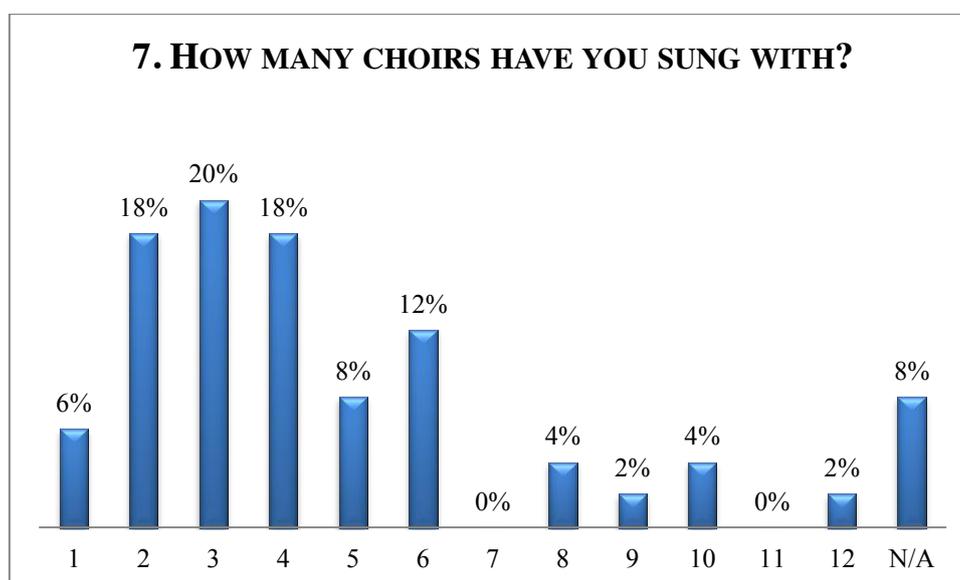


Figure 12: How many choirs have you sung with (Q7)

According to Figure 12 most participants have sung with 2-4 choirs during their lifetime. Crosstabs yielded no significant difference between men and women. As

demonstrated in Figure 13, half of the participants sing in one choir. There are no significant gender differences due to crosstabs.

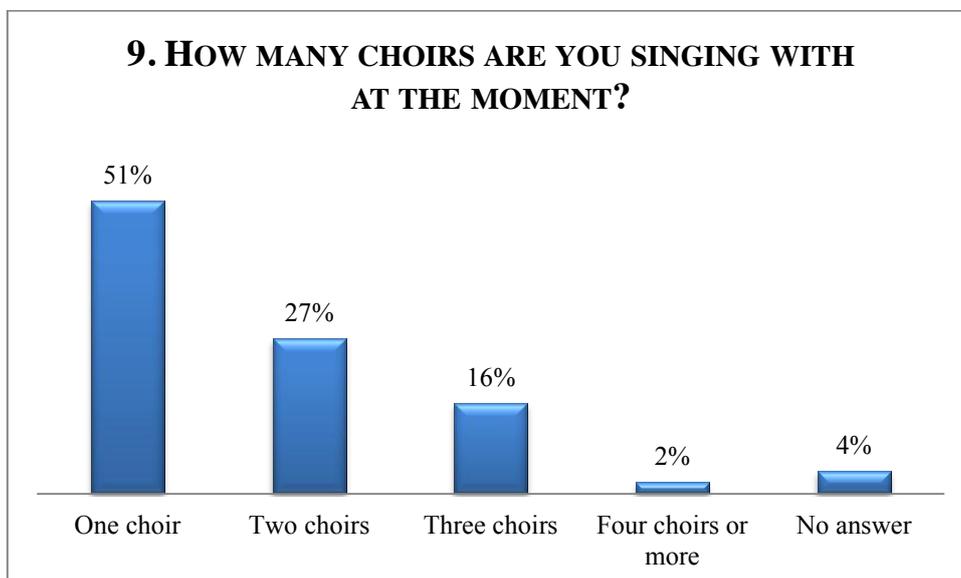


Figure 13: How many choirs are you singing with at the moment?

Figure 14 presents what kind of choir people sing with as a second or third choir.

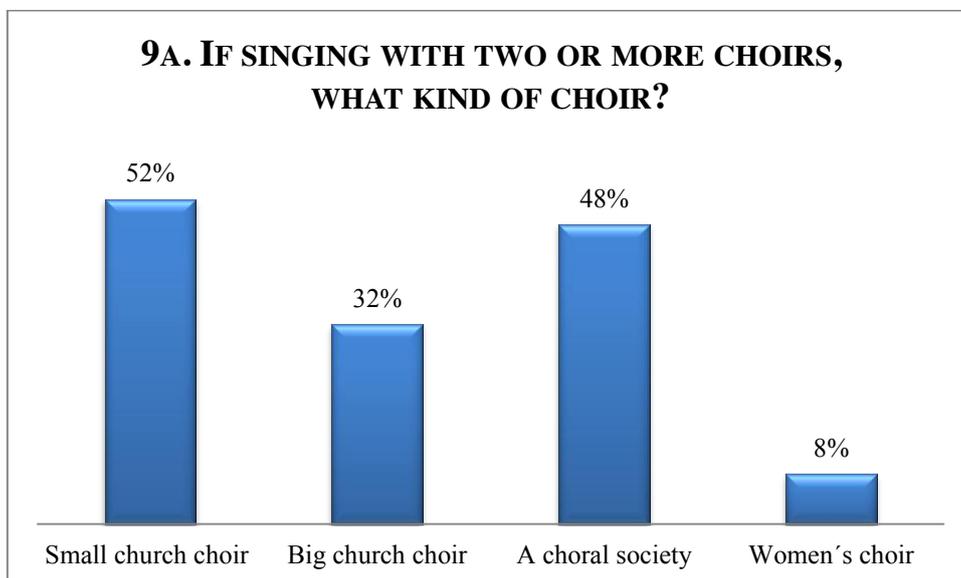


Figure 14: If singing with two or more choirs, what kind of choirs? (Q9a)

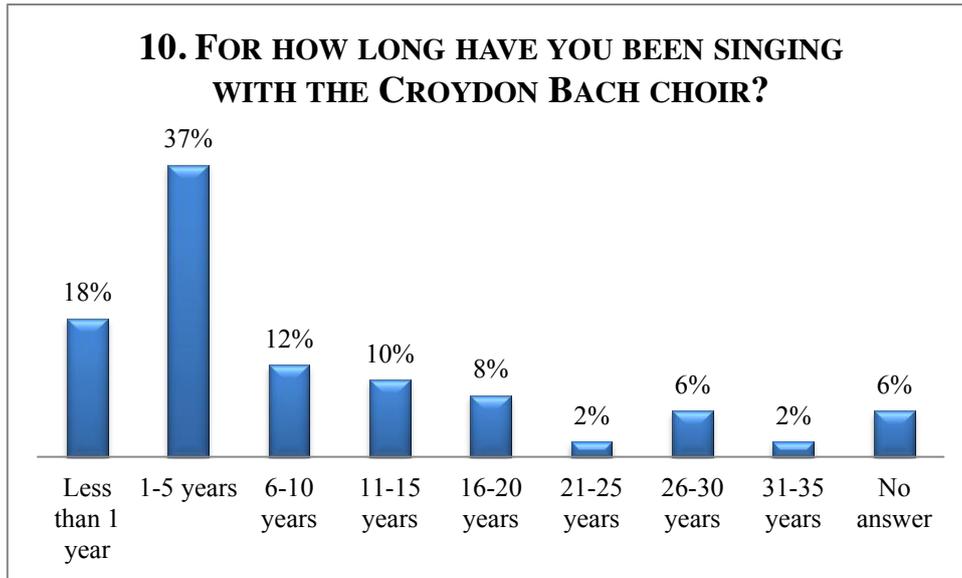


Figure 15: For how long have you been singing with the Croydon Bach choir? (Q10)

Figure 15 shows that over 50% are relatively new members. Both questions yielded no gender differences according to crosstabs.

Most the interviewees were quite experienced in choral singing. In the survey I asked the whole choir about their choral experience. 50% had more than 30 years of choral experience and 14% had more than 50 years (see Figure 16).

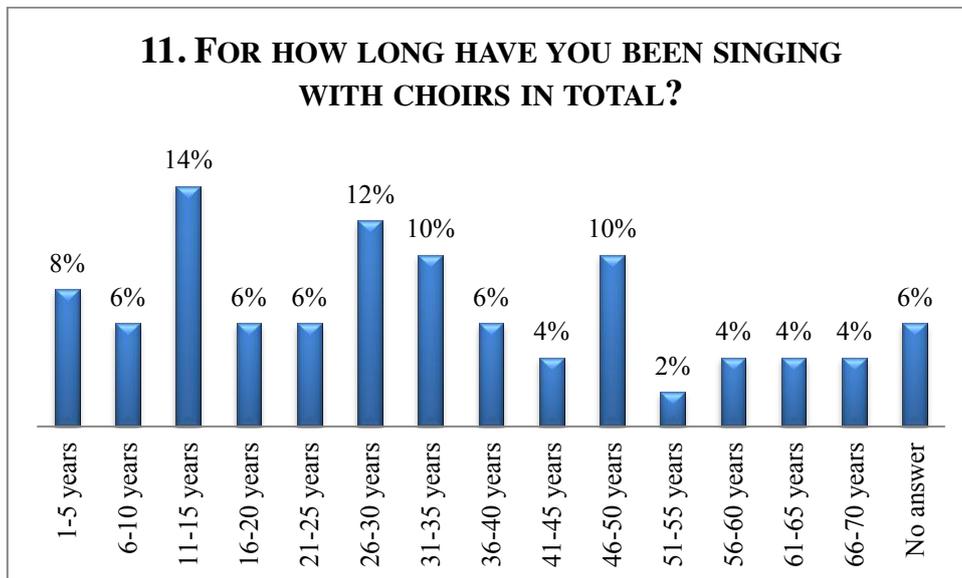


Figure 16: For how long have you been singing with choirs in total? (Q11)

When asked how many choirs participants have sung with in total, 62% had sung with 1-4 choirs in their life (see Figure 12) and about half of participants (45%) sing with two

or more choirs at the moment (see Figure 13). Therefore, one may assume that most people who sing in choirs have been doing so since childhood.

However, according to the interview findings, evidently not all participants had the experience of choral singing in childhood. Peter and Emily joined the choir 15 years ago and it was their first choral experience:

... my wife and I sing in the Bach choir and musical training - interesting, yes
- no, not really. I didn't sing until I was [middle age] in a choir ... (Peter).

Peter thus did not start to sing in a choral ensemble until in his adult life (although he had the experience of being a lead singer in a rock band for a short time as a young man) and has no formal music education of any sort. In this context, it is interesting to turn the focus to Jacob's narrative, as he described his process of making the decision of joining a choir in his adulthood and describing the problematic situation that people with little choral experience might face:

... actually the transition between that point - sort of wanting to sing in a choir and actually getting into singing in a choir was quite significant because if it is the case that you have not got a tradition of singing sort of choral music throughout your childhood into your adult life, it is likely to be the case that if you come, if you think about joining a choir in your adult life, it is very problematic. It is very difficult musically so surely - educationally because ... in terms of sort of sociology and knowledge and motional sort of knowledge you take for granted if you are singing in a choir ... all your life, throughout your childhood and school life ... reading a music score is not going to be difficult but if for example you're in your adult life and you enjoy singing and think 'oh I'd like to do a bit of singing,' [to] join a kind of choir that we have ... it is very difficult because I mean there is a side for many sort of social sort of facts ... making the transition from the desire to sing and the ability to sing the music score and know what the hell you're doing and know whether you're a tenor or baritone or base or whatever - that quite got problematic and nobody - it's not a system, not recognized as much as it should be ... (Jacob).

According to Jacob's words, it seems important for the choral movement that children get the opportunity to sing in a choir – what they learn during that time could be of value for them in their adult life if they want to continue singing. That children continue

to sing into their adolescence and have a continuous choral participation throughout their adulthood seems to be vital for the choral movement. However, recruiting new members seems to be getting harder. So the question is: How can a choir get adults, who have interest in singing but do not have any previous singing or choral experience, to join the choir? One of the solutions to this problem that Jacob is covering is to increase workshops and evening classes. Mary suggested a broader variety of repertoire:

... for me I was very, very lucky that there was in fact a choir in [location] where I lived in [name of area] that had an evening class. The following year from when I decided it would be nice to join a choir and that was sort of a route in that was an evening class and it was based on sort of the title of the evening was 'Come and sing *Messiah*' and it was excellent - it was very good - you got an audio tape with your part and there were ... 2-4 singers from the choir every Wednesday evening or whatever it was and at the end of that term in December, you got to join them and sing with their choir which in this case was at the [name] Cathedral which was wonderful and the following year I joined the local choir here when they were advertising - not the Bach choir, there is another one in Croydon - they were advertising in the beginning of the autumn for new members so I went along ... (Jacob).

My first conscious memories of singing in a choir was probably at senior school and that was an after school activity - and I just enjoyed that - we did different sort of things, we did more modern things like ... jazz, things that would encourage people who were not particularly musical but want to join in (Mary).

Choral workshops, like Jacob describes above, seem to be a way to introduce choral singing to people – that anyone can attend this workshop for a limited amount of time, test his/her singing voice, get the idea of how to function in a choir and therefore make a decision whether choral singing is something he/she finds appealing – without the commitment of joining the choir (with the possibility that he/she would have to quit). Offering a wide variety of repertoire is another method, as Mary describes.

Louise is one of those singers who started choral singing in her adulthood. Below she describes her first choral experience:

When I was living in [abroad] I joined a choir for the first time and it was completely new to me - a new experience and I loved it so much that when I

came back to England, that was one of my first priority to join a local choir ... Well, I began because I was living in [a country abroad] and getting to know people and ... I remember now that I met through some I friend I met an English girl who was just going back to England and she said to me 'I go to a choir - why do not you come along as well?' And to be honest I didn't really know what it involved and I turned up and I didn't even know there were different voice parts so I just sat next to her and she happened to be a soprano and - started - I could read music already but not as well as I do now obviously ... (Louise).

It is noteworthy that, in this context, Louise learned to play the piano and that preparation came into use regarding sight-reading. As Louise describes her first experience, the reason that she joined the choir was that she wanted to get to know people since she was living outside England – and that joining a choir would be an ideal method to do so (this will be discussed further in section 6.1 about social capital).

James has quite a lot of experience in choral singing, although he too did not start singing in choirs until in his early adulthood. He started singing with one of the Bach choirs in Central England – he was encouraged by a conductor (who had a big influence on him musically) to do an audition, which he passed. The first work he sang was Bach's *Mass in B Minor*. Along with his career as a musician, he took courses at a prestigious music school:

I never sang in a choir as a boy ... I just loved the church music and the choir ... And of course when I joined the [Bach choir], you know, I mean that was superb, singing all these pieces for the first time (James).

As previously mentioned, James seems to have come from a somewhat non-musical family and he developed his interest in music on his own. His first choir was a Bach choir and the first piece he sang was the *Mass in B Minor*, and even though he had little experience, he managed to pass an audition as well.

Jacob and David have the common story of having fathers who influenced and encouraged them to join a choir. Jacob's father got Jacob into singing in the church choir at the age of seven:

... they [the church choir] sang the mass on a Sunday morning and that was a really wonderfully rich sort of musical experience - we had music - my father

was very keen on music but never sang so those experiences of singing in the mass and on an Easter Sunday they sort of small orchestra and so typically that was masses by Mozart and Schubert and Easter Sunday was known as *St Cecilia Mass* which was absolutely wonderful experience and but then I stopped singing when my voice broke in terms of choral singing (Jacob).

Jacob did not, however, sing in the school choir which he found ‘quite appalling:’

... and in this country there’s quite a division between historically, sort of musically, rich schools which tend to be in the private independent sector as supposed to the state sector which is I think is very important - I’ve always felt quite strongly about that (Jacob).

After Jacob’s voice broke, he did not start singing until he was in his mid-thirties. David has a similar story – his father influenced him with his participation in choral singing and personal performances singing tenor solos, for example in oratorios like Handel’s *Messiah*. He started as a choirboy in school but did not become a part of the senior choir. During his period as a university student he became a part of a big Bach choral society, performing all the large-scale choral works by Bach, Handel and other great composers.

These narratives raise questions regarding the on-going choral participation of adolescent males who go through a transition period when their voice starts to break, particularly whether the changes the male voice undergoes during voice-break causes them to quit singing, temporarily or for good (see also Elorriaga, 2011). The question is, if that happens, do they return to their choral activities after this transition period or not.

As a result, it is evident in this section that a major part of the participants are experienced choral singers who have emphasized choral singing in their development as amateur singers, instead of following the route of formal music education. In the next section, the second step will be demonstrated in relation to certain gender differences that are presented, regarding the linear process of on-going musical participation and the emphasis on internal and external encouragement.

6.1.2 SECOND STEP: FROM ADOLESCENCE INTO ADULTHOOD – IDENTIFYING GENDER DIFFERENCE, VOCAL IDENTITY AND INTERNAL / EXTERNAL ENCOURAGEMENT

The second step in the pathway refers to the continuation of musical activity from adolescence into adulthood in terms of gender differences due to internal and/or external encouragement and vocal identity. This step sheds light on how to make men and women more involved in terms of encouragement and building a positive identity in relation to becoming involved in music. As discussed in previous sections, the narratives indicated certain gender differences regarding encouragement and how participants interpreted and illustrated encouragement. Issues that arose were whether men seem to be less dependent on the recognition of their environment, whether at home or in school, than women and how they respond to encouragement from their families in order to attend music lessons or get engaged in musical activities. Peter, for example, did not want to take piano lessons, despite his parents' offer:

I never learned and still do not read music and I've never learned music, [never learned to play] an instrument. When I was eight, my parents offered me the piano and I said 'NO' [laughter] so - that was my musical background, sort of thin and interesting to me anyway (Peter).

Peter is referring to his reaction to his parents' offer – it is like he felt that they were sort of putting a bit of pressure on him and he responded to it in that way, instead of feeling like he was being encouraged. Among the interviewees, most of the women referred to encouragement they received from family and/or teachers as a means of assurance that they did well musically.

This leads to the question of whether women respond to encouragement in a different and/or more positive way than men. This may be an example of a gendered discourse of 'telling about the past.' Women may thus be more likely to refer to encouragement from others than men. The question is whether this is a fact or an artefact of gendered narrative modes of telling, that women may seem somewhat more dependent on male hegemony and their narratives' analysis needs to be based on what they mean instead of what they say (see Kitzinger, 2004, p. 125-127). In this perspective the only male participant who commented about encouragement was James,

who, as previously mentioned, did not receive encouragement or interest in music from his family, but from another benefactor outside his family:

... we had a very musical vicar who gave me a few lessons but then he paved a way for me to have proper lessons with the most wonderful teacher in [name of a town] and she was the musical inspiration in my life and subsequently I had all the lessons in [city] ... Well, as a child I was fascinated - I always wanted to learn the piano - my parents - we didn't have a piano and we couldn't afford to buy a piano but I was always fascinated - whenever I got the opportunity I was strolling along on the piano (James).

James was influenced by an external actor who took interest in his talents. Turning the focus to the women, Mary and Emily considered it important for them to receive good feedback for their performances and that this was the main reason they continued in their singing, especially when it came from members of their families or their music teachers. Mary, a soprano, describes the importance of the encouragement she received from her early childhood on:

I think my uncle, who in a way was my musical mentor - he was always very encouraging - he told me that I had a good voice and I'm guessing when you're asked consistently to do things you think well, someone must think I'm okay [laughter] ... Probably when I did sing, I was encouraged and people said 'oh, that's nice' you know and I had teachers at school that said 'yes you can do that ... you can read music' ... I was always encouraged ... I had a really good music teacher, he encouraged me to join a choir (Mary).

Here, Mary is emphasizing that people liked her singing and considers this praise as empowerment for pursuing her musical activities, not just as a choral singer, but also as a quasi-professional solo singer. It is probable that this encouragement played an important part in her decision to take the step further and attend singing lessons. It seems like external encouragement is a bit more important for the women than the men in this group, as it seems to provide them with enhanced self-confidence in performing and in seeking some kind of authority in order to perform on an individual basis.

This applies to the perspective that women seem to be led more by praise and support from others. Putting this into the perspective of the performance of the *Mass in B Minor*, that particular choral work includes as many solo opportunities for female

voices as for male voices and this applies to the choruses as well and the women are equally musically required (unless the female voice parts are performed by boys).

However, referring to the gendered reception of encouragement, it must be taken into consideration what kind of encouragement is provided and how; whether the encouragement is provided from a family member, a teacher or someone coming from the outside. Another example is Sophie's narrative. Sophie, a soprano, explains the encouragement from her teacher:

Well, in school I was told that I have a good voice which flattered me and I enjoyed singing - then later on my music teacher said 'oh, you got a good voice but not an exceptional one but do use it and join a choir' so - so I did - I've made an interest ever since (Sophie).

Here, Sophie describes in detail the implications from her music teacher, claiming that she had a good enough voice for choirs but not good enough for pursuing a professional career as a solo singer. Even so, Sophie took this comment into account and has been singing with choirs since primary school and did not consider this as negative or dissuasive – it seems that she took it in as an encouragement in a way that her voice was good as a choral voice. Later in the interview Sophie claims that she did not have any interest in becoming a professional.

Another example of gender issues: I noticed in my first rehearsal that there were far more altos than sopranos. Still, more sopranos volunteered for interviews than altos. This can also be the result of aging (lower voices = higher age). For some it may be hard to find out their real voice parts, whether being an alto or soprano or a tenor or a bass. For Catherine, it took her a long time to discover that she was really a soprano, after having sung the alto part for many years:

CATHERINE: I remember when I was in [location] in school ... we did the first part of Handel's *Messiah* - and all first years had to sing soprano and all the second years had to sing alto and I found it really, really difficult to sing high and I did want to sing tunes and harmonies. So I decided that I was going to be an alto and until I was 41 I sang second alto ... And when I was singing in [country outside UK] I had a choir master who said: 'Why are you singing alto? You are a soprano.' But I said: 'I do not know how to sing soprano.' When I go above C, I start to squeak - but that kind of comes with the idea.

Q: So you are singing second soprano - or first?

CATHERINE: Well I'm singing - that's a good point - I was asked to sing second in Bach because the first part in the Croydon Bach choir are very good [first sopranos] they've got nice voices ... and I - I've been having lessons again - I had ... a break from lessons and so I've been having lessons with someone who teaches at the [academy] and knows this stuff - for two and a half years now. So he's saying to me that I'm really a second - so I'm a second with yet to sing first soprano - it depends on the choice of works really so - I'm finding that I'm getting more mezzo tones coming out now - so we shall see but I know I'm not the Queen of the night [Mozart], that's for sure.

As is evident from this quote, Catherine presumed that she was an alto, based on previous experience of singing Handel's *Messiah*. One might assume that Catherine did not receive sufficient guidance and that her voice had not been tested by a conductor to find out if she was a soprano or an alto. This arrangement of dividing voices into parts based on age (like in Catherine's secondary school choir) instead of testing every individual's voice range could cause the children to misinterpret where their real place is in the choir (especially girls).

As DeNora (2000, p. 16) claims, it seems to be characteristic for the altos, where the alto part is usually the supportive part and makes the sound of the choir more rich, that they do not necessarily want to be in the spotlight (see also forthcoming PhD study of Pedro Santos Boia on the identity of the viola player). Irene (an alto) claims that she feels very comfortable in singing the alto part – she is a part of the choir, singing music she likes without standing out or being very noticeable. Thus Irene prefers to be a part of the group and she does not want to be noticed – she has no interest in singing solos or anything like that. The uncertainty regarding vocal identity is something that choral conductors may have to take into consideration regarding balance between voice parts. However, the Croydon Bach Choir (like many other choirs) is dealing with a decline in membership and faces difficulties in recruiting young people, especially young soprano voices (however, according to Mary, the choir does not make comments about age, but if it starts to affect the group, the conductor intervenes).

Emily, for example (an alto), refers to a solo performance in school where she received compliments and keeps this memory in mind as she means to go back to music at certain point later on:

... I enjoyed singing in school and I sang a big solo when I was 12 or something on that stage and some said 'oh, you got a very nice voice' - and then I didn't take it any further but I had always meant - there was something I had in mind to go back to later on - but I had the children and I got very busy. I then thought later on that I'll start up again when I had made a bit more time and so I just decided it would be a new interest to take up at that time and the children grew older (Emily).

Here Emily is referring to her status as a young woman, married with young children. Mary tells a similar story – she had been learning to play the piano, describing her music education in childhood as constant and starting to have singing lessons:

... when I was [working] in London I went and had external lessons at [music school] and that's where I did my [grade in] singing - after I got married I didn't have lessons because I couldn't afford them and then the children came along ... after child number one I supposed it was 7 months old I joined [choir in Croydon] because I couldn't get out to town to sing with [a London choir] - my husband and I needed to sing on different nights so that's why I joined in Croydon and I sang with them for 12-13 years ... (Mary).

Here, different family circumstances / situations and the effort of establishing a family and household caused Mary to give up lessons. It may be assumed that women in that age range are busier working and raising children and thus, like Emily, putting their hobbies and leisure activities aside until the children grew older and postponing their musical activities and education due to economic reasons, like Mary. However, when David took up his working career, got married and had children he reduced his choral participation due to lack of time with a growing family and challenging work commitments but did occasional choral activities:

... I did sing in [the] school choir occasionally - I sang various things ... I also sang in a [a composer-oriented music society] for several years, singing all the tenor roles ... but I was a bit of old for some of them. When I retired ... I took up choral singing again and joined this particular choir so I've been singing in this choir since I joined ... (David).

Therefore taking a break from choral activities due to family reasons seems not entirely tied to women in this group. The age range of amateur choir members has not been

examined or researched in full but it would be interesting to test the hypothesis of whether there is a gap in the age range of 25-45 especially among the women. For future work it would be an interesting study to examine whether family situations have any effect on men's musical activities versus women's musical activities.

Still, other men in this group, when describing their musical background, did not comment on whether different kinds of family situations had any effect on their musical activities. There was one exception – James's non-musical background is unusual compared to other interviewees' narratives:

There's no music in my nearest family - I think I had a cousin who I didn't know who was playing music but I didn't know him - there was no other music in my family ... and of course when I started to play the piano and the organ and I just loved the music ... I was very interested in playing the piano when I was a child, although I didn't get the opportunity until I was in my teens. I was first of all self-taught, I taught myself to play the piano, especially playing hymns ... and then I had the most marvellous tuition from this church and some courses in church music - basically a lot of what I've learned, I've learned by experience ... eventually I did get my piano from a friend of my mother and it was in my bedroom and that was when I started to teach myself to play (James).

James is an example of an individual who on his personal basis developed his own interest in music as a child, regardless of the influences of the parents, who did not seem either to encourage or prevent him from engaging in music, although he eventually got himself a piano. He pursued his music education by teaching himself and later on having piano lessons, seeking primarily external encouragement in engaging in music. James also described the influences that the church and church music had on him in childhood - he went to church on his own whereas his parents or relatives never did.

In this section I have discussed the gender differences of how participants have interpreted and utilized both internal (family) and external (teachers) encouragement they have received and how the internal and/or external encouragement has affected their musical identities. In general, women seem more dependent on internal and external encouragement and respond to encouragement in a different manner than men. There might also be an age gap in choirs where women in the age group 25-40 are having children and taking care of the family household and may consequently

withdraw their choral participation. The next section refers to the third step which demonstrates how participants dealt with the question of which career to choose in music: the amateur or professional, with certain amateur / professional perspectives discussed by interviewees in terms of their views towards musical activities as a career or a hobby.

6.1.3 THIRD STEP: CHOOSING MUSIC AS A CAREER OR A HOBBY? AMATEUR / PROFESSIONAL PERSPECTIVES

As previously referred to, in this section I discuss the third step regarding music as a profession or a hobby and discuss the interviewees' perspectives towards the question of being a professional musician or not. Evidently, as will be further discussed in section 7.4, every choir can benefit from recruiting strong singers who have the level of skills needed to give individual performances. But is it the case that amateur choirs consist of people with broken dreams of becoming professional singers?

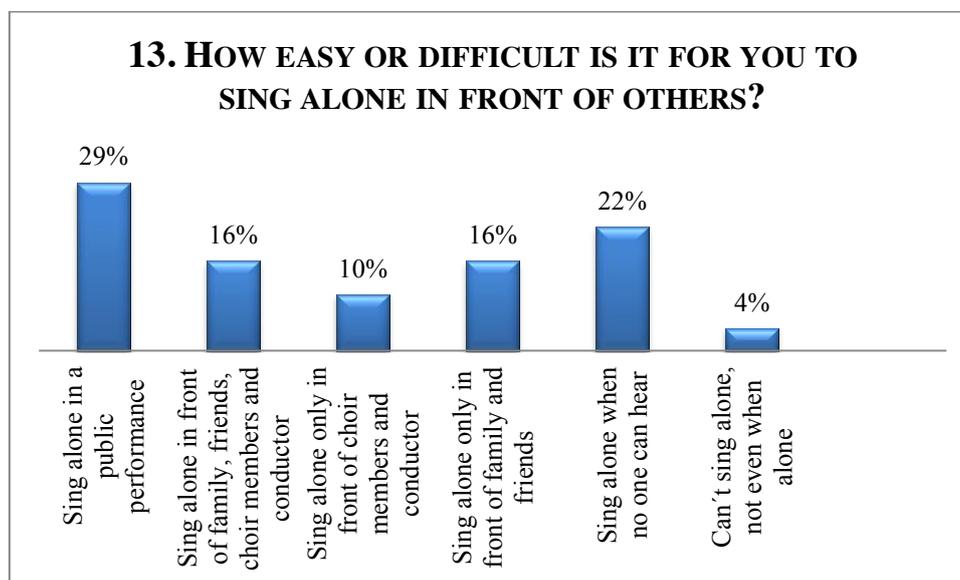


Figure 17: How easy or difficult is it for you to sing alone in front of others? (Q13)

According to Figure 17 nearly 30% of choir members considered themselves comfortable with singing alone in public, and according to Figure 33 in Appendix 17, 44% of the men consider themselves comfortable singing alone but only 21% of the women, so there is a significant gender difference in this matter.

Among my interviewees, there were three who had experiences in solo performances: Patrick (a tenor), Meredith (a soprano) and Mary (a soprano). They have been taking singing lessons in order to improve their skills and claim that the lessons give them more confidence when it comes to solo performances. Patrick, for instance, was asked to sing a solo and before that he didn't think he had the talent or the skills to do that:

PATRICK: I've been singing solo for the past [number] years, not before because I didn't have the confidence and my solo singing is mainly at church - on a Sunday night it is and if you got the acoustics, you've got the arts around you - I'm in the church and there's a lot - you often get nervous while singing solos but you get used to it. I've got used to it now - I'm not as nervous as I was the first time - I stood there with the book shaking. Now I just pretend that I'm sitting there - you know - and yes, I just carry on from time to time.

Q: Do you think that you get different element on the one hand singing a solo and on the other hand singing in the choir?

PATRICK: Yes, it does, yes - it actually gives me a lot of freedom - I do not have to use my voice as much when I'm singing in ensemble situation. I think all I can do - mom doesn't want to do solos, she has never done them - if you actually - and I was like that for years. I'd never do a solo and from the situation you have 20 other singers in your part, no problem and when I was told for the first time that I'm doing solos I was like 'oh, am I really? Do you think I can?' and the answer was 'it's up to you.' Okay - and obviously you'd have to coach for it and then now I'm doing solos and I'm getting better and I'm getting coaching as well to get better - so yes my voice is splitting up. I can do solos and choral singing stuff so I can blend ... and I can sing on my own. Other thing, people have been asking me to come to a karaoke bar - why? 'Because you can sing' but I cannot sing this. My voice is for classical stuff - yes, doing solos really opens up doors for you and new skills I didn't think I had and because for some reason if you had someone telling you that you're better than - and when you do a solo. You know the work, you know how and you got to know what you're doing because suddenly that thing clicks up with discipline and I have to get the notes right, I have to get the music right. I cannot hide behind someone else - I cannot mime and it does open up some [notes], it really does.

In this narrative, Patrick describes his first experience of giving an individual performance and getting used to it, and also experiencing more confidence as he took

more lessons. His narrative describes the feeling of singing a solo but as Patrick describes it – he received a kind of external authority when being asked for the first time to do a solo, presumably from his conductor. He also describes the difference between individual and ensemble performances.

It has often been said that solo singers cannot sing in a choir (voices such as counter tenors, for example), but this is a kind of myth that may not be entirely true. Indeed some singers have such exceptional voices that they have difficulties in adjusting their volume and blending in with the rest of the group. That is not always the case and Patrick claims that he can do both. However, as he describes, being able to sing a solo in a classical music setting does not necessarily mean that you can sing everything. Patrick, for instance, refuses to sing karaoke since it is his perception that his voice is not fit for a popular music performance. He perceives his singing to become more vulnerable when there is no one else singing but him, making the individual voice sound defenceless if something goes wrong.

The second soloist in the choir, Mary, has had opportunities to sing solos with the choirs she has been a part of. In her interview, she discussed the issues in choral auditions whereas she had quite an experience going through an audition (and usually passing):

I suppose when I was seventeen and went to [name] choral - as a youngster I got tremendous encouragement there. I had to have an audition and I had to have a piece of sight-reading and the conductor was amazed because it was accurate [laughter] (Mary).

Her skills as a choral singer did not make her afraid of undergoing auditions, which can be an obstacle for amateur singers. The fact that Mary had had singing lessons gave her both more confidence in her voice and her own skills and also her experience in giving individual performances. In Catherine's case, she has bad experience with doing auditions, mainly because she lacked confidence at the time:

I'd like to do a solo - now that I've been given a bit more confidence with myself as a person but also having lessons, I'd like to. But when I've been in audition situation I've sang [humming badly] - I got into the [name of choir] few years ago but they didn't like the sound of my voice very much because I hadn't had lessons for a long time and had developed some bad

habits - but my sight-reading was okay so they let me in for a year and told me to get some lessons which I couldn't afford at the time and - I had to re-audition a year later and I was absolutely terrified ... I had an asthma attack when we were doing a concert ... and then when it reopens [e.g. her breathing and her voice], it's a real disgust and I couldn't sing for three months so I couldn't audition ... So I had an audition [re-audition a year later] and that audition was the first time I had actually sang a song for somebody - doing exercises and doing some sight-reading so I felt quite pleased that I had actually done that - I didn't get in because I didn't have any sleep the night before - so I couldn't do the sight-reading so I do not know if they will let me re-audition. I've asked them - so we'll see - but - so I felt that I had achieved something by standing and singing for somebody which is quite good (Catherine).

In Catherine's case, it is tempting to conclude that auditions exclude many skilled choral singers because of the fact that probably some choral singers are terrified of the thought of singing alone in front of the choral conductor and being judged on the basis of the quality of their voice and skills in sight-reading. In a situation like that, an experience in personal performances (e.g. practice in singing solos) could be beneficial. Another aspect in Catherine's narrative is how the stress and pressure can produce physical pain (such as coughing and sore throat). According to Alford & Szanto (1996) physical pain among musicians can be associated with stress due to competition, which is something Catherine is addressing here.

Thus choirs, especially those who have the reputation of being choirs of a high standard and quality, might be missing the opportunity to recruit experienced singers. There is a general assumption that a choir that consists of solo performers (or those who are seeking and aiming at a solo career) might lack a certain pure, amateur sound (that of course depends on the abilities of the singers to sing in a group without standing out) and somehow the alleged professional sound may not suit a choir. However, regardless of the quality of the choral sound, singing should have an additional something. Peter claims that there is something about amateur performance that is hard to explain:

Well, I think having the music right is good and then there is this additional quality, isn't there? The sort of passion about things – when that comes across, then that can sometimes co-up for imperfect quality. In a way I quite like the amateurishness that probably applies to theatre performances as well. An amateur theatrical performance is rarely perfect but somehow it's

more intimate for being slightly imperfect and you know it's not a well-off machine ... (Peter).

What Peter is referring to is that the amateur sound has a certain charm and an amateur performance seems to have an attraction in his mind. Therefore auditions may increase the quality of the sound at the expense of the personal element. This point leads to the question of what kind of sound people value in general and for conductors it might imply that auditions may draw in certain types of voices, perhaps of a more professional level.

Considering Catherine's situation above with the big choir that she was aiming for, her fear of failure seemed to be a threshold for her to get through the audition. Note also that these findings suggest some potentially interesting differences between men and women in this regard. Therefore it is interesting to hear Peter's example. He had a short career as a lead singer in a rock band when he was in his early twenties. The band did well after he left, according to his own words, and got a choral scholar as a lead singer who looked the part better than Peter did, or so he said. When asked about singing solos or singing alone he said:

I'm always singing alone you know, wandering around the house singing, mainly with things that I cannot get out of my head because the Croydon Bach choir has put them into my head but [humming] as I have to practice a lot to sing solo and it's not necessary (Peter).

According to this testimony, Peter is not afraid to let his voice be heard (he is actually quite a good bass), using his singing in his house to deal with all the music that is in his head (and getting some practice in the meantime). Allowing themselves to be heard, even within the walls of their own homes, is not necessarily common practice with all the interviewees. Sophie, for example, has little interest in doing solo work and does not want anyone to hear her voice:

Q: Did it ever occur to you to become a professional singer?

SOPHIE: Only in my fantasies but I knew that I didn't have an exceptional soloist type [of] voice - so I make of it what I could and sing in choirs - I joined them ever since. I cannot say that I've been terribly tempted to sing solo - when people have asked me to sing solo I've [makes faces].

Q: Do you ever sing alone?

SOPHIE: Alone? No - not even in the bath [laughter]

Returning to the possible gender differences, the fear of solo singing does not seem to be totally linked to gender, at least not as far as my interviewees were concerned. Consider Gerald: He describes a very similar notion as Sophie does above:

Q: Did you ever want to become a professional?

GERALD: No - I'm not that good.

Q: Do you prefer music more as a hobby?

GERALD: It probably wouldn't work otherwise.

Q: Is there ever a situation where you sing on your own? Have you ever done solo?

GERALD: No, no, no - because - no.

Q: Is there ever a situation where you just sing alone?

GERALD: It has never happened to me.

Q: Not even at your home when no one is listening?

GERALD: [Laughter] Maybe.

Both Gerald and Irene claim they don't use the opportunity to sing when they are alone. This is another confidence issue, or maybe it is just their habit – not to sing unless they are in the somewhat safe and risk-free environment of being a part of a vocal group where they can blend in and their voices merge with the others singing. Irene, however, admits to singing alone in her flat (even in front of her flatmate):

IRENE: I do not really like people hearing me sing - I like singing and I like being a part of the choir but I ... certainly wouldn't want to do solo. One of the things that attracted me to this choir is that I didn't need to do audition to get into it.

Q: Do you ever sing alone?

IRENE: I do [laughter] I sing in my flat all the time but I pretend that no one except my flatmate can hear me - and I will do karaoke but it's a different atmosphere - I do not like the feeling of people really listening and judging how I sing - it makes me quite nervous.

Irene describes feeling up to giving karaoke solo performances because that setting is totally different and not 'serious.' In a karaoke setting, all kinds of people with all kinds of skills choose their song to perform, regardless of whether they can perform it in tune

or not. Usually it is the entertainment value and the social experience of performing solo in a group of people with the lead goal of having fun - that the fun factor overshadows the need for singing in tune or giving a breakthrough performance. On the other hand, the karaoke setting is the ideal venue for an individual to test his/her singing ability, for example while singing popular music or other genres that are available in the musical collection of the karaoke equipment itself.

In relation, another example that comes into my mind in particular is Susan Boyle, who was second in the well-known British TV-series *Britain's Got Talent* (2009-2010) did her early performances in a karaoke bar near to her home and thus had gained experience performing, something that paid off when she was on stage in the audition for a place in *Britain's Got Talent* – and from there, there was no going back.

In reference to Patrick's words earlier in this chapter, the karaoke-setting does not always hold an attraction for people who categorize themselves as classical singers. For such people, there seem to be very few venues for releasing a need for singing alone, except the walls of their own homes.

The idea of needing the 'whole package' as Louise describes seems to be quite widespread (see my example about singers like Susan Boyle and Paul Potts who have succeeded in their careers, following appearances on the previously mentioned reality TV-show). Three of the interviewees admitted that they would go for a professional career if they were offered the opportunity, and Sophie mentioned it earlier as being 'a fantasy.' Catherine and David said:

... if I had my time again I would [go for a professional career] – definitely. I fancy myself in the opera chorus or something - something too flashy but without the riskiness of having too much (Catherine).

... it has occurred to me that if I had my life all over again, I would do differently - it occurs to me that if I was going to do it again I might think - I might - I do not know about being professional but I would certainly try for a choral scholarship and - for university and things like that - whether that leads into professional singing is not the matter - I do not have any desire to be a professional singer but I mean I - I mean I've sung solos - you very often have people who will regard you as their soloist but you won't do it for money [laughter] (David).

Catherine and David both claim that if they could relive their life, they would do differently. This might be common, especially among those who do not necessarily discover their musical abilities until later in life, depending on the musical traditions in their family. Meredith, a soprano, does not intend to seek a professional musical career herself – while she has this dream, she is not ready to fulfil it:

So in other words I'm an amateur but it is nothing to be ashamed of, although I've very much liked to take this seriously if I can say this and if I got the opportunity to study this, on the professional level, I'd love to do it. So some people are saying to me 'look, this could be wonderful, we really like you being around and singing for us but we do not think that this will ... this career and this profession could - will be something that you could be very happy with because it's you know - in terms of the money you're going to earn, how are you going to - do you have enough money for your family?' And I very much dislike this because in generally I believe that whatever you do, if you do not like what you're doing, the money should not be an issue ... because you could still be working in an office, longer hours, being under stress and under pressure, getting the money but it could be at the expense of your health... (Meredith).

What Meredith is demonstrating is that the environment is generally positive towards music education, but when it comes to choosing music as a career, people question the practicality of it. The competition is hard and it can be difficult for professional singers to provide for themselves and/or their family as well. However she debates this issue and the emphasis on practical matters, arguing that people should follow their dreams without being too focused on the career factors, whether they make a lot of money or not. She also claims that she wants to give individual performances without the pressure of having qualifications or long-term music education, similar to the performances that she is currently participating in (like in an amateur production of Carmen). Emily and Mary have another perspective towards the question of becoming a professional musician and Emily's answer is ...

... no, I'm not good at it like that - no, part of the interest is to do something to have an interest in which is completely different to what I do every day (Emily).

Emily claims that in her everyday job she needs to be in the spotlight. Thus she prefers to have a hobby in which she does not have to be in the spotlight or the centre of attention. Therefore singing solos does not seem to appeal to Emily. Mary, however, made the decision to not pursue a professional career in singing, even though she got the opportunity and the encouragement to do so:

Q: Was there ever a possibility in your mind to become a professional singer?

MARY: Not really because [type of occupation] was something I'd always wanted to do and I didn't feel that I was good enough to be a professional and - also it is a risky profession unless you really, really are at the top of it and it to me has always been the most wonderful and fulfilling and rewarding hobby without the pressure of having to earn a living from it.

Q: Yes, so you prefer it as a hobby than profession?

MARY: Yes I have been paid on about three occasions but mostly I love doing it [laughter] and the thrill of being asked to sing solo is all I need.

In her mind, she prefers to have music as a hobby instead of her career. In this way, Mary claims that she can enjoy performing as a fulfilling activity in her life and thus eliminate the pressure and requirements on technical / vocal / interpretational brilliance that is often required from professional musicians, with sponsors, music directors and reviewers breathing down their necks.

The question remains: Are all these amateur choirs full of people who use their choral singing as a replacement (or rebound) for their lost dream of becoming a professional performer? Apparently not in all cases – obviously the competition is getting harder since more music students are graduating from music schools and universities each year. It seems to be that in the attitudes of the society towards seeking a professional career, practical aspects often play a significant role, particularly when a teenager or a young person in his/her early twenties is facing options regarding the future, including the option to study and specialize in something that is safe and secure – or to seek a professional standard in music making – entering an industry where the competition is hard and only few people can make a decent living on.

Choral singing is thus a way to fulfil this need of participating in a musical performance with a group of like-minded people, without the pressure of making a living in the competitive musical branch and without the demands of a professional standard in performance – not necessarily the second best option, but a different option.

The next two sections (6.2 and 6.3) demonstrate the development of ‘choral capital;’ the former refers to musical memories and the development of musical taste and preferences through choral singing and in the ways musical preferences may be gender-oriented among participants.

6.2 ‘CHORAL CAPITAL:’ DEVELOPING MUSICAL TASTE AND CULTURAL CAPITAL THROUGH CHORAL PERFORMANCE AND CONCERT EXPERIENCES

The aim of this section is to illustrate what it takes to grow choral capital and it deals with the ways participants have developed their musical taste and preferences. This section also explores the ways participants have developed cultural capital through musical memories and choral singing as a part of developing ‘choral capital.’

6.2.1 MUSICAL TASTE AND GENDER DIFFERENCES

Table 10 in Appendix 17 (on musical taste) represents the survey results regarding the choir members’ musical taste. Considering gender differences, the men in the choir seemed more conservative towards music whereas 60% of men claimed they never listen to pop music, 94% never listen to underground music, 83% never listen to rock music and 66% never listen to musicals or secular music. 56% of the men listen to sacred, baroque music three times a week or more, 33% to opera (whereas only 12% of women listen to opera) and 56% listen to choral music two to three times a week.

This makes one wonder if men who sing in choirs are more likely to have had a musical upbringing than the women who sing in the same choirs. The women in the choir seemed more open minded and there was more demographic variety within the women’s group when it comes to musical taste.

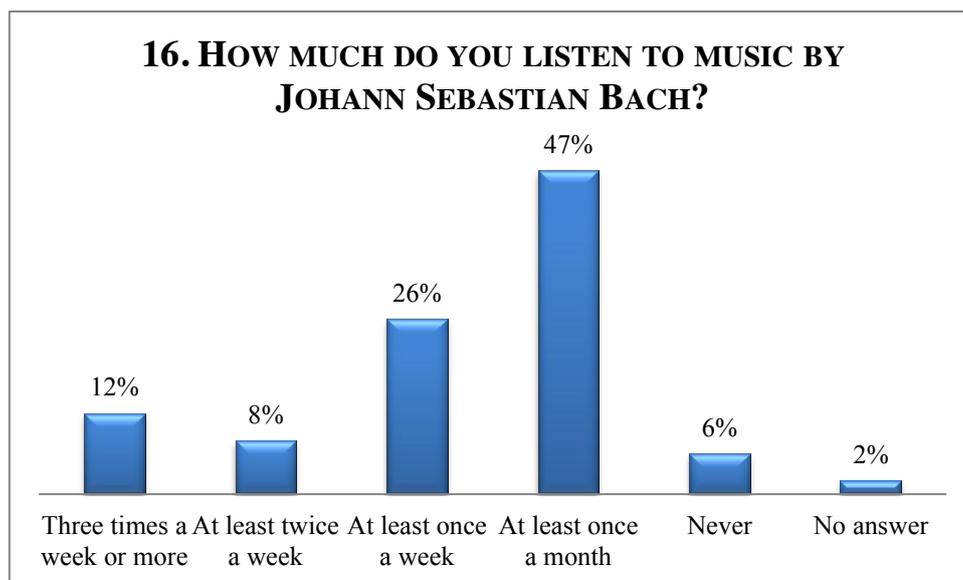


Figure 18: How much do you listen to music by Johann Sebastian Bach? (Q 16)

Asking about the music of Johann Sebastian Bach (see Figure 18), results demonstrated that 46% listened to Bach once a week or more and crosstabs indicated that the men in the choir listened more frequently to Bach than women – or 61% of the men listened to Bach once a week or more, but only 36% of the women did so (see Figure 41 in Appendix 17). 41% claimed that their favourite music by Bach was the *Mass in B Minor*, followed by the *St John Passion* (22% and *St Matthew Passion* (18%) (see Figure 42 in Appendix 17). This can be attributed to two things: firstly, that they were rehearsing the *Mass in B Minor* while responding to the survey, and secondly a big part of the new members joined the choir in order to perform the *Mass in B Minor*.

Apart from the musical influences in childhood (described in the previous section) how did individuals develop this musical taste and what influenced it? In their narratives, interviewees discussed how their musical background and choral participation has influenced and further developed their musical taste while describing their personal musical preferences.

The musical consumption in most of the interviewee's childhood homes consisted of various genres, although classical music was frequently mentioned. Specifically mentioned was piano music, operas, symphonies and other classical music, for instance the music of Gilbert and Sullivan. Catherine, for example, was brought up partly with her grandparents and her single mother, who seemed to be quite a young mother, listening to mainstream popular music at the time and her grandparents listening to more traditional, classical music:

... my grandparents ... were caretakers of a great building ... so when there was nobody around, I had plenty of space to run around downstairs - I had the choice of three pianos to wreck but I never learned to play the piano, sadly, my grandmother used to like Gilbert and Sullivan ... my uncle used to play Wagner on 78's. I love Wagner, even today and - my mum used to play rock 'n' roll - Jerry Lee Lewis, Elvis, Little Richard (Catherine).

Catherine describes a childhood memory where she learned to appreciate Wagner from her uncle and had the opportunity to 'wreck' three pianos, thus getting the opportunity to try out an instrument in her early age. Catherine also regrets that she never learned to play the piano. She was, therefore, musically stimulated from her nearest environment, which means that even though there was no active music participation in the family, the influences come from a small interest of the family. Even though Catherine did not pursue a professional career in music, she claimed that she had the dream of becoming a professional musician. Sophie, an alto, said that her parents had a general interest in music but had no musical background and did not participate in any musical activities or performances.

Peter, a bass, claimed that his mother's musical activities made him aware of music:

... my mother had quite a nice voice and she sang in [an amateur operatic] society - she was singing Gilbert and Sullivan so the house was always full of her wobbling so there was song around ... (Peter).

What Peter is describing here might be classified as a way of musical upbringing – by his mother's 'wobbling' she was, consciously or unconsciously, making an example for her children by portraying her interest in music, rehearsing her parts while doing her housework and tending to the children. This is one example of how the family's musical participation and the mother's interest in music played an important part in the musical upbringing, as did the interest of fathers, grandparents, siblings and other relatives. According to a recent study by Pitts (forthcoming) fathers seem to be more influential in the musical upbringing, whereas the mothers were more occupied with the household duties, which is quite obvious in Peter's case.

Viewing another example, Irene, an alto, was influenced by her father's piano playing and her parent's general interest in classical music. In the following quote she describes a memory of her parents and specifically her father playing in the background:

Yes, both my parents enjoyed classical music a lot, particularly my dad - sort of playing in the background and my dad is a very good piano player - that was going on as well. Not much singing - it's actually - I got my dad in singing, it was the other way around - now he sings in a choir, but yes, a lot of general classical music in the background (Irene).

Here, as Irene describes how she got her father into choral singing, it is evident that children can become influential actors in their relatives' perspectives towards music. Therefore, an interest of a child in music might arouse a parent's interest as well. The parents allow the child to take music lessons and/or attend concerts at their child's choir and therefore engage in musical performances as listeners and consumers, starting to appreciate different kind of music through their children's musical activities. As a result, it may be assumed that the influence of parent/relative on a child can also be reversed and the interest of the parents / family does not always pass on to the children. Louise, for example (a soprano), was brought up in a musical family but she claimed that she didn't have much interest in music as a child, it only developed later on in her adult life as a choral singer. Being brought up in a musical family does not seem to guarantee the interest of all the children. It may also be the case that in a group of two or three siblings, one child may 'claim' the mother's attention when it comes to musical activities but others do not (a kind of sibling rivalry) (Borthwick and Davidson, 2002).

6.2.2 DEVELOPING MUSICAL TASTE THROUGH MUSICAL PERFORMANCES AND EARLY CONCERT EXPERIENCES

Whereas most of the participants had significant experience with choral singing, choral music was one of the music genres that were frequently mentioned, and it is one of the factors that have influenced participants' musical preferences through performance itself as well as early concert experiences.

Most of the interviewees mentioned choral music, especially oratorios, even though most of them have wide musical tastes, incorporating other music genres. James and Sophie prefer baroque and classical music above all but Patrick likes all kinds of

music like pop, R&B/Soul, Latin, Spanish and of course classical music and choral music, especially oratorios by Bach and Handel which have an emotional impact on him:

We're singing ... many masses and oratorios, with some of them I get really emotional, sometimes you get really emotional about them - you really, really - if you really get into the heart and soul of what you're singing about, I like that ... (Patrick)

Singing oratorios and masses is an emotional procedure for Patrick, who (like a number of other interviewees) claims that the right method to get really intimate with a musical work is to take part in its performance – i.e. getting into contact with the music through performance instead of 'just' listening to it and thus developing taste through the performance itself. Jacob is an example of a choral singer with a wide range of music taste and is less conservative about the repertoire:

I think I have a whole range of music - I'm very fond of - it's not casual music but if it's good and enjoyable so there's a whole range of music and - the whole range of popular music, The Beatles, Elvis Presley, Jackson Brown, West Side Story, the Eagles, The Emily brothers, Buddy Holly, Simon and Garfunkel, Carol King, Burt Bacharach - I mean I love all that music and that's important and I like Bach and Handel - I mean that I'd like a choir like the Bach choir having a more popular works I suppose, but there is that sort divide [sic - division] which is into my mind unfortunate ... (Jacob).

What Jacob is referring to is that the Croydon Bach choir should maybe focus on a more diverse repertoire, which would benefit choir members, maybe draw more young people into the choir and thus influence the musical preferences of members. Meredith's favourite composer is Mozart. She claims that she is touched by his life and finds his music 'absolutely beautiful and outstanding' thus referring to the life of Mozart and kind of familiarizing herself with the 'young' Mozart (who died young). She is a bit younger than the rest of the interviewees and she emphasizes the importance of giving different types of music a chance:

As any single individual I've got preferences and I've got a favourite types of music but the same time I try to be open minded and to accept everybody's

taste, everybody's preference in terms of music so I cannot say 'oh, this type of music I do not like - I do not want to be listening to' but most of all I like classical music and I like classical singing ... (Meredith).

Gerald and Louise favour Bach and other baroque composers like Handel and Vivaldi and also Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*, but Gerald does not find the periods after Baroque of any interest. They are examples of middle-aged choir members who are more conservative than individuals like Meredith in their musical preferences. Both Gerald and Louise are experienced choral singers who have been singing the works of the baroque composer and thus 'learned' to appreciate them through their choral participation as a result of the typical choral repertoire in English choirs throughout the years.

Mary claims that she 'could sing Bach all the time' but she claims to have a wider taste as well, particularly in classical music where she finds it relaxing to listen to *concerti grossi*. Irene prefers folk music, early baroque, and Mozart on the piano. These are just brief samples of the narratives about musical taste offered by interviewees. They illustrate how, as observed by Hennion (2001), musical taste develops as a learning process and how, on occasions, taste is redefined through performance.

Many modern music lovers use Mp3-players on a daily basis, thus using music in all kinds of circumstances: at home, on the way to and from work, while travelling etc. (for example Bull (2000), Bull (2007), DeNora (2000) and Skånland (2012)). For example, Catherine used her iPhone while discussing her favourite music and her musical preferences:

Let's look and see what's on my iPhone. What have I got? [Browsing through her iPhone] It's actually many choral and opera - I mean I've got some Bach, quite a lot of Christian music which is a favourite of mine. Chichester Psalms is one of my favourite pieces - I'm beginning to get into Lieder, I'm discovering Wolff and Renaldo Hahn and a Welsh couple called Edwards [surname] they write beautiful songs, all in Welsh which is interesting because I do not speak Welsh. Otherwise it's things I've sung with choirs - I've got quite a bit of Brahms but to listen to, I like opera, I like Wagner, Puccini and Verdi. I'm less of a baroque person but I do like Bach. Bach is so hard to sing and - but I got quite a few French things as well. Opera choruses, Prokofiev. I like singing in other languages, I do like singing in the original language. I think it is not right to sing everything in English

and I like the cheesy stuff like John Butter. But then I've got Shirley Bassey, Susan Boyle and - Rock and roll, yes - eclectic. I would certainly take one CD with worship music ... Well; modern and ... I have an extra-long playlist. And then for the other one ... I do not know - it will be mix and match - it will certainly have some Bach on it and probably have the first movement of third *Brandenburg* and Sanctus - but I think it might depend on what's going on at the time. I'm really into John Edwards's songs at the moment so I'd take some of that - Renaldo Hahn and some Puccini - you know (Catherine).

Reviewing Catherine's quote above, it is evident that participating in choral singing and other performance activities affects their musical taste in one way or another. Catherine uses her iPhone to demonstrate her taste and also her 'pattern of listening,' or a portrait of her musical taste. As is evident from her narrative, her musical preferences depend on circumstances; according to her story, what she is rehearsing in her choir at the moment plays a part in the development of her musical taste.

Another example: After he started choral singing, Peter claims that his choral participation has made an opening for new kinds of music he had not anticipated:

... you know I'm playing music and it's the - yeah playing music and ... it's been an opening so my choice of musical listening has changed and ... if I listened to classical music, I listened to symphonies and such and now I've got quite a lot of CDs of classical music which do not involve singing. I do not play them as much as I should and so it's made me to new experiences which hopefully become very personal to me - and I still play all sorts of music as well. I play world and rock music and stuff like that but it's probably the case that the CD is very likely to be choral music. It's actually interesting because it has actually increased my appreciation on other things like jazz singing because you could see what's being done ... I relate to it in the way of someone who knows very little about technicalities of music and that I can hear what I hear and - yes, so it's changed in that way (Peter).

Peter describes how his choral participation has widened his musical taste and the variety of music that he chooses to listen to – performing choral music has led him to choose more choral music as well as other genres – even genres he does not perform himself. Performing choral music has been a learning process for Peter, in that his interest in choral music has not only grown – it has also increased his interest in other musical genres as well. Peter is thus an example of an individual who becomes more

omnivorous in musical preferences due to his choral participation (see van Eijck, 2001 and Savage & Gayo, 2011).

Emily agrees with Peter – she prefers to listen to choral music after she started choral singing and her choice of music involves Tallis, Purcell and other renaissance and baroque composers, as well as Brahms and some piano music. Singing the choral repertoire is highly educational in Emily’s perspective:

Well, I like the choral music now and it has been an education - very nice way to learn pieces ... now I know the pieces more because I’ve sung them before but before I joined the choir I’d never sung any of those pieces before. I was always starting the piece from scratch and so just having learned about completely different orchestral or piano pieces but I’ve never really focused on choral pieces like that so it has been very nice to learn quite a lot of that choral repertoire and to hear these pieces on the radio and follow things up ... (Emily).

Emily agrees with Peter on the educational part. Singing a new piece that the singer has never heard or heard of before is an introductory phase. Putting the music into a socio-historical perspective and figuring out the meaning and the message that the music is supposed to deliver to the audience makes the music more meaningful for the performer him/herself. James implies that singing a piece in a choir is the ultimate way to learn about it:

Well, there is no doubt about the singing - you really get inside the music as well. It’s a wonderful experience but they are good to listen to as well but there is nothing that replaces taking part in the performance (James).

David takes an example of a music that he didn’t particularly like at first:

... it is funny because I didn’t like Gilbert and Sullivan. I was very snooty about them until I got involved with taking part in them and then I found that they were really very, very good but I mean I got involved not because my friend who often used to get to go on singing in this choir. When they were putting on oratorios, he asked me to come and sing the - that was [some Gilbert and Sullivan piece] (David).

David's example above presents how participating in a musical performance can alter and change people's perspectives towards musical works or even certain composers (see further in chapters 7.2 and 7.3 on how interviewees discuss their aspects and perceptions towards the *Mass in B Minor*). There might be many reasons why choral singers listen to various kinds of music. As mentioned above, one reason is for learning purposes, especially when it comes to learning voice parts in difficult large-scale choral pieces like the *Mass in B Minor*:

I do not think I enjoy listening to choral music unless it's to learn it because I feel frustrated for instance if there is a performance of the *Mass in B Minor* at the church close to where I live and my husband says 'oh, we must go to that.' I'm slightly worried because ... I like to be doing rather than listening to. If I were to go to a concert, I'd go to a piano recital because I'm not a good pianist and I'd be overwhelmed by how good somebody was or an orchestral concert but I do like listening to choral music only because listening to a recording only because I could be singing this and actually being in the audience I do not enjoy. I'd like to be on that side (Louise).

Louise claims that she is not that keen on going to choral concerts – she likes to be on stage herself and she only listens to choral music outside rehearsals for learning purposes.

Another example shows this kind of frustration of sitting in the audience instead of being on stage:

... so that's just 20 years ago and that was when I went to a performance of Handel's *Messiah* and it was very much one of those moments when you decide 'oh I could do that, what am I doing sitting in the audience?' Sitting in the audience when I could be singing in the choir which is interesting (Jacob).

Jacob claimed that after this experience he joined a choir after he took an evening class in choral singing. However, some of the interviewees described certain concert experiences in their early age as being a factor, inspiring their musical interest and desire of taking part in a musical performance themselves. James is one example who, as previously discussed, was brought up in a household that was not particularly into music:

Obviously I also began to sing in a church when I was a child and I went to church - in fact I went to church on my own - my parents didn't go ... and I just became so fascinated by it all [the music] and I just loved it (James).

On his own as a child, James developed his skills and musical interest and attending church made an impact on his love of music. There were a couple of examples where interviewees attended classical concerts or other similar musical experiences that had an encouraging impact on them and thus provoked their interest in musical participation:

I went to my first classical concert when I was thirteen and that was with the others from school and I heard Beethoven Pastoral symphony which made a big impression on me (Mary).

The chapels that I used to attend, it was quite usual to put on sacred oratorios, that's the tradition I was brought up in - sacred choral music including cantatas and oratorios ... and singing *Messiah* quite a lot. I've got copies at home from my father's performance, oratorios often sung by my father, singing the tenor solo - even at the last minute ... I can remember going to hear a concert ... it was Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and I bought a copy to go and sit in the audience to listen to - and that in itself is an example of the fact that I was committed to that kind of music and listening - like taking part in it (David)

In 1990 I saw a Mel Gibson film which had a recording of Kiri Te Kanawa singing [a] wonderful song by Richard Strauss and I thought: I want to sing that. I gave up smoking as well and I've also - what came across - after I moved to my next place I came across a singing teacher and I've had some lessons - so I became a soprano [laughter] (Catherine).

Mary's early attendance is an example of how giving young people an opportunity to attend concerts is an influential factor. David was brought up in an oratorio tradition where he attended concerts where his father was one of the leading performers, thus acting as a role model for his son's choral activities later on. Catherine was also greatly influenced by one musical 'event' that made a huge impact on her – not a live performance, but a performance in a Hollywood motion picture - an example of identifying a role-model (e.g. Kiri Te Kanawa).

These findings include key elements in the process of developing the concept of ‘choral capital.’ Firstly, by participating in a choral performance, a choral singer ‘learns to like’ new music, new works, even new music periods, composers, styles and/or genres. Secondly, this new experience has broadening effects on the singer’s musical taste, and thirdly, it encourages the singer to get even more involved in further choral performances, thus opening up a new ‘musical’ world to the singer.

Additionally, musical participation has an educational value, whether it influences an individual’s musical skills, interest or musical taste, and it plays a part in forming the identity of the performer. These examples present a certain pathway of musical experience that results in change in musical taste and preferences and even as encouragement for further participation in musical performance. These results indicate that the development of musical taste is a constantly changing ‘variable’ where influential factors (like performance experiences, concert experiences, choral experiences etc.) must be taken into account.

However, as presented in next section of this chapter, the cultural and social values of choral participation merge into one where choral singing is a collective process and experience. Therefore, the next step in developing the concept of ‘choral capital’ is to discuss the social capital of choral singing.

6.3 ‘CHORAL CAPITAL’: DEVELOPING SOCIAL CAPITAL AND COLLECTIVE WELL-BEING THROUGH CHORAL PARTICIPATION

This section presents the collective phenomenon of choral singing and introduces the community of the Croydon Bach choir as a way of growing ‘choral capital.’ Here I present how participants describe whether the music and the performance or the social context is the primary motive of their participation. I also address how participants illustrate the well-being factor of collective singing as a pathway towards increased social capital and thus a part of developing ‘choral capital.’

6.3.1 THE BACH CHORAL COMMUNITY IN CROYDON

A friendly group of people, very willing – quite good in the sense that they are very prepared to work hard at music and you can see over the weeks a big improvement in what they were doing and I still feel that about them and yes, a generally welcoming group of people – happy to have me there – they seemed very grateful when I was there, you know, nice and I always feel supported and they always tell me how much they appreciate what I'm doing and that's always nice to hear (Tim Horton).

This is how the conductor of the Croydon Bach choir described his first impression of the Croydon Bach Choir as a group. Focusing on the choir as social phenomenon, being in a choir is like being a part of a group or an organization. This participation bestows additional forms of social capital or belonging, bonding and bridging across differences through mutual participation (Bourdieu, 1980 and Putnam, 2001) as well as cultural capital, understood as enhancing knowledge and skill.

The results of the survey demonstrate that 88% of members of the Croydon Bach Choir are relatively socially active and do not only have choral singing as leisure or a hobby, but also other hobbies as well. Most frequent hobbies mentioned were walking, gardening, reading and doing church activities (see Figure 36 in Appendix 17). In an open-ended question in the survey (Q21), 11 respondents commented that social aspects drew them into the choir, that they were invited to join by friends (or wives) and that the choir had a reputation of being friendly. However, according to results from the survey presented in Table 15 in Appendix 17, 32% of participants considered the social life to be important or very important, 30% considered it important or very important to have a good social life and 39% considered it important or very important that the choir has a good atmosphere. Only 22% considered it important or very important and that they joined the choir because they wanted to meet new people, 40% joined the choir because a friend or a family member sings with the choir and 42% thought that the choir has a good reputation. These results indicate that the social factor is probably not something that majority of participants consider important above the music making itself (but may become more important later on).

In order to be able to thrive and enjoy being in a group, the first impression of the group became a topic in the interviews. In their responses, interviewees considered

the good first impression of the choir to be something that had value in their mind. Irene describes her first impression of the choir in her first rehearsal:

I was really nervous when I first came along because I hadn't sung in a choir for two years and I'd never turned up before without knowing anyone so – but everything was very relaxed and very friendly and I was introduced to couple of the other second altos and I sat next to them and they were very friendly and made you feel very at home straight away ... (Irene).

Other interviewees had a similar story to tell, and in their mind, as in Irene's, the first impression of being made welcome and immediately feeling part of the group was considered important. I can relate to this first impression, referring to my field notes. However, Jacob was more critical and his words indicate that some choirs might have a special strategy in recruiting and welcoming new members.

In my field work, I noticed (and found out later on in the results of the survey) that the group consisted of 'old' members who had sung with the choir for number of years and new members who have joined the choir in the last five years (and some of them had sung with the choir for less than a year). The results of the survey confirm this, whereas 18% have sung with the choir for less than a year and 37% for one to five years – making 55% of choir members relatively 'new' members (see Figure 15 on how long people have sung with the Croydon Bach Choir). In this context, the results demonstrated that 51% socialize with other choir members outside rehearsals and concerts (see Figure 37 in Appendix 17), and the men socialize more than the women (see Figure 38 in Appendix 17 – see further results in Figure 39 on how many times people socialize).

Thus it may take some time to 'mix' both groups and, comparing this choir with the small chamber choir I sang with in the autumn semester, it was a bit hard to get to know all the members of the Croydon Bach choir. Inevitably there seemed to be less intimacy within the choir compared to smaller choirs. Another aspect I noticed was the size of the rehearsal venue, which caused people to scatter, creating 'too much' space which led to the question of the optimum size of rehearsal venue. For the acoustics, a big rehearsal hall might be a good option music-wise; for the choir to experience good sound and thus enhance the musical confidence of the group (like in this case). However, being in a space that is too big might affect the social interaction of the choir members.

In order to bring people together, the choral committee organized ‘extra-curricular’ events like dinner parties (at least twice that semester). In my observation at rehearsals I witnessed that the choir had raffles for fundraising, which was a social event. Every rehearsal, members of the choral committee put up a table with some items such as books, old vinyl records, VHS video cassettes, jam jars, wine bottles and other things and sold raffle tickets for one pound each. At the end of the rehearsal, the conductor announced the winners and this event created a fun and light atmosphere. Fortunately there were tea-breaks every rehearsal – an important venue for the singers to take a break, rest their voice for a bit, enjoy tea and a biscuit, communicate with fellow choir members in order to bond socially, share their experience and talk about the work they are singing at the time. I presume that this sharing aspect has a certain importance, especially when the choir is rehearsing a difficult work like the *Mass in B Minor*. The tea-breaks gave me the opportunity to blend in and communicate in this way as described above – sharing the experience of going through a different choir thus creates a certain bridge between people of different background, origin, class and age.

These examples mentioned above had the main aim of bringing people together and emphasized the local and social importance of the choir. Interviewees commented on their choir itself, describing the local context of the choir. Peter claims that he likes being a part of a choir because of ‘how quite conscious is the idea of social capital, the idea of the choir itself’ being ‘a part of the social value of the area.’ The choir is additional to the local area’s cultural life with its regular music events and concerts and creates a venue of recreation and leisure for the locals to sing together with like-minded people and allows individuals to meet other locals during the concert events. Emily describes:

There is a social side of it, yes – but it’s not very central ... that’s quite nice bit about it ... because it’s local, some of the people now come to the concerts, one [woman who attended a concert] used to be my babysitting circle so you meet someone after thirty years. At a last concert I met someone who I probably hadn’t seen for thirty years because our children are grown up now – it’s very funny ‘oh, how are you?’ So there is this sort of local context which is very nice and it is also quite nice to manage the local thing, like anyone does in the local area rather than going elsewhere (Emily).

The choir creates a venue for similar encounters such as those described above – a social event for people to meet and enjoy a good musical performance. Jacob's perspective was that the Croydon Bach choir was 'a fairly good example of a local choir – probably because it's in an urban area' where there is a choice between a number of choirs. He emphasized the importance of having a range of choices, 'not just one choir and you'd be stuck with it' and thus having a choice of with whom you sing, whether it's the 'right' group for you or whether the repertoire is to your liking or not.

As has already been described, the Croydon Bach choir does not have formal auditions when recruiting new members; the choir establishes open rehearsals on a regular basis, where people can try to come and sing with the choir to find out if they like the choir or not and whether they find themselves fitting in, both musically and socially. Therefore, instead of the formal audition where prospective members are tested and judged by the conductor both vocally and technically (especially when it comes to sight-reading), the prospective members audition the choir by attending one rehearsal; the choir itself being auditioned, not the choral singer.

These audition rehearsals are usually advertised and members are encouraged to invite people they know (who have or can sing). Couples can even join like in the case of Emily and Mary who both sing in choirs with their husbands. Emily finds it nice to develop a common interest with her husband and according to Mary:

... we pursued [their interest in choral singing] together and separately so – it's good and he [her husband] understands my need to sing and he doesn't think it's silly for example that I still want to have singing lessons and – he's my sternest critic but I know that he criticises – he wants to be constructive, not destructive because he knows me well and says things that I need to hear (Mary).

Joining a choir with a spouse or a friend is quite common, as Irene describes. She first joined a choir in secondary school with her friend, performing Mozart's *Requiem* which 'blew me away and I loved it so – I kept on' (Irene). Joining a local choir is also a way to get to know people in the area, especially for those who have relocated to a new town, city or suburb:

Well, I began when I was living in [a country outside England] and getting to know people ... I remember now that I met through some friend ... an

English girl who was just going back to England and she said to me ‘I go to a choir – why do not you come along as well?’ And to be honest I didn’t really know what it involved and I turned up and I didn’t even know there where different voice parts ... (Louise).

Louise thus joins a choir for the first time in her life while living abroad which enabled her to meet people whom she might not have met otherwise. Meredith’s story is similar – joining the choir was a positive step for her to adapt in a new country and she describes her happiness of being a part of the choir:

... I can just feel the community spirit, I can just feel we’re one big family, you just, you know – part of the big picture when you’re here ... (Meredith).

The group activity demands that members commit themselves to attend rehearsals and share some of their time rehearsing 1-2 times each week for the greater part of the year. Choral singing is a hobby competing with all kinds of leisure activities among young people. Therefore the main problem that choirs face seems to be in the recruitment – or the lack of recruitment of young people:

... singing in a choir is not a normal activity ... and very clearly the demographic profile of choirs like ours is that they are fairly middle age and there is a sort of distinct problem for choirs like ours – you know the gap of young people, finding young people ... (Jacob).

As evident in the background data of the choir (see section 5.3) the average age of the choir members is 64 years among the men and 62 years among the women, as Jacob describes above. Perhaps it does not sound very appealing for young people to join choirs with demographics of this kind. Tim Horton, the conductor agreed about this:

I guess there is lot more on offer now, isn’t there? In terms of entertainment - I mean television is designated towards amateur music making in some regards because people are less inclined to make their own entertainment - just sit home and switch on the TV - some people are I guess fundamentally lazy and that’s what they like doing. And lots of the choirs per se are getting smaller (Tim Horton).

However, for Meredith, joining a choir with people who are older than she is has been a valuable experience as she describes:

You're thinking to yourself ... if I want to stay here I have to be one of them so this has helped me to grow up ... to develop as well musical skills – also responsibility, organization skills ... I see a friend in everybody's face – I can talk to them, I can trust them and the most wonderful thing is that – well there's a difference between age and I can still talk to them and find no difficulties, it is actually even more pleasant for me so it does really help me to, you know, to relax, also to develop myself as a person (Meredith).

What Meredith is referring to is that age difference does not seem to be an issue in her case, which indicates that in this kind of group age barriers seem to be blurrier than expected. Thus choral singing forms a kind of bridging capital across the ages, combining and connecting people not only of different background and class, but also different age groups. Meredith was also asked to join the choral committee as a young representative, which she found very encouraging:

... when you get something, you also want to give something back so it is very important for me that if I'm part of this choir I have to be – I have followed the rose, I have to be here every single rehearsal ... (Meredith).

Meredith illustrates the commitment that members must stick with when joining a group like a mixed-voice choir, as Sophie says:

Well, it's a communal activity I suppose – it helps you develop your own sort of well-being while you are singing – you got to make sure that you are participating in the activity – it's not just your own ego trip although sometimes it can be [laughter] (Sophie).

Choral singing thus requires a certain level of commitment and discipline. Therefore, looking at choral singing as solo work is a long shot; being a part of a community requires that you adjust and adapt to the group in the best way possible:

... if you do not have the determination and if you do not put in the time, the hours and all this, because it's an effort. It's an extra, because you know it's so important for me because I like it. That's why I'm doing it but I know

people who for example I used to sing with them and they've got the ability and they like what they are doing but they still find a reason not to do it so in other words, I do not know – sometimes I think you have to sacrifice, you have to make choices ... (Meredith).

As is evident in chapter 5, individual performances do not necessarily appeal to everybody, such as Emily who is very busy in her work and has a lot of responsibilities. What she considers important about her choral activities is that it is something completely different from her everyday activities and not something she must be brilliant in:

I do not have to be good, I do not have to be the main performer and that's quite nice you see – being part of the choir. I have to give talks [in her work], I have to chair things and being in charge of lot of things – I'm in this department and this is something where you are in the back, you are not very good – it doesn't matter so much, somebody else can be better. That's a nice thing to do – it's a little bit more relaxing just to be a part of something rare ... you're not the only person, if you're not wonderful on the moment, that thing doesn't fall . . . [it's good to participate in something] without having to be the star which is good, without the pressure – so much pressure, you're right, just a little bit of pressure – not very much. If you're going to make a terrible mistake, nobody dies [laughter] ... (Emily).

Emily's description could refer to any other hobby that people attend to – something different from one's everyday work, something to enjoy without the urge to be the best in it, on a professional level. Emily considers it important to be a part of the group and seeks out the group activity of singing instead of an individual experience.

As in any group, choirs do have to deal with certain social problems like cliquishness, social exclusion where new members might either be considered not to 'fit in' or some kind of threat. Louise describes below one of the choir she used to sing with:

Then I went to [choir] which at that time in the early nineties was a really good choir – in fact they were singing the *Mass in B Minor* and they were really good but over the years they got worse and worse and – what I didn't like in the end was there were too many strong personalities and it was less

about music ... every time I came I felt irritated over what people said and what they'd done and so I left ... (Louise).

What Louise is describing is that choirs are sometimes not idyllic organizations. On the contrary, mobbing (or bullying), social exclusion, lack of communication and other problems may be present. According to the interviewees in the pilot study conducted prior to this research, there were a number of narratives about negative experiences of choirs where problems like social exclusion, negative atmosphere and cliquishness thrived. None of the interviewees in the present study described any such phenomena – however, most of the interviewees volunteered to be interviewed and it could easily be assumed that they did not have any negative experiences in their present choir. Moreover, (as previously described in Table 15 in Appendix 17) only around 30% of survey respondents considered the social aspect of choral singing to be important or very important. However, as is evident, even if participants did not consider the social context as a deciding factor when choosing to join a choir, it might matter when the individual actually becomes a part of the group. Thus, problems like social exclusion and other issues mentioned above might affect the well-being of the choral singer.

6.3.2 THE WELL-BEING FACTOR OF COLLECTIVE SINGING IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Talking about issues like individuals overly full of self-importance, or prima donnas, the interviewees claimed the Croydon Bach Choir to be prima donna-free while having quite a number of good singers. I actually noticed this during the rehearsals and mentioned it in my field notes, describing my impression of the members as ‘nice, down-to-earth ordinary people who sing like angels but are very modest and love singing.’ A non-threatening environment, according to the interviewees, is important to be able to maintain certain well-being in the choral activities.

**Table 5: Results from various assumptions in order of importance (Question 27 –
1=highest, 5=lowest)**

ASSUMPTION (Q27)	1	2	3	4	5	NO ANSWER
Singing gives me a lot of pleasure and fulfilment	77%	14%	0%	2%	4%	4%
Singing in a choir is good for my mental and physical health	55%	24%	8%	6%	4%	4%
I get a thrill out of performing in concert	31%	29%	14%	10%	8%	8%
Singing in a choir is a field for my need of creativity	28%	28%	22%	6%	6%	12%
For me, singing in a choir is a spiritual experience	35%	18%	16%	10%	14%	8%

Table 5 demonstrates the results of respondents being asked to rate various assumptions in order of importance. Results regarding singing as a source for pleasure and fulfilment are staggering – 91% consider them to have a high importance and 79% consider singing as good for their mental and physical health. Results yielded that 60% considered it important to get a thrill out of performing in concert and over 50% claimed that singing was both a field of creativity and a spiritual experience.

Interviewees frequently discussed the importance of choral participation in their everyday life and music as a satisfactory part of life (as per David's comments above) as Jacob describes it:

I think ... in terms of sort of music and singing it's an indispensable passion, it's a part of my life ... I couldn't imagine sort of life without music ... I cannot imagine life without singing ... if I'm not active sort of physically singing at the time – it's an essential part of my life and it's a chance to be sort of creative and expressive and [a] wonderful sensation – mentally and emotionally and physically ... it's sort of emotional, it's a physical experience, a chance to be creative and expressive so yes, I really love that so that's the driving force ... it's just wonderful experience (Jacob).

In this quote above, Jacob refers to the well-being factors of singing, both mentally and physically. Terms like 'relaxing' and 'de-stressing' were frequently mentioned in the interviews, as Irene and Meredith refer to:

Q: Could you maybe describe what music does for you as a person and maybe in your daily life?

IRENE: It's soothing, very calming and relaxing. Music can take you out of your normal life and ... you get caught up in it and it relaxes you and de-stresses you. You do not worry about other things because you are caught up in the music and that affect can last ... (Irene).

... when you're here and it's just a good sort of distraction and just getting your mind away from things that you know, all your worries and sad things that we all have, I'm sure but it's a very good type of relaxation for me (Meredith).

Therefore singing is a good way to deal with pressure in everyday life and according to Gerald's testimony, singing gives encouragement to make things happen and be proactive. Patrick agrees and claimed that singing is 'relaxing and also keeps your mind going as well' (Patrick) and Emily considers her choral participation as a means of keeping everyday life in perspective. Mary and Louise both made a statement of how singing has affected their everyday life and has helped them to cope with stress and everyday worries:

When I was working I was very busy and sometimes on Wednesday evenings I felt tired, I didn't really feel like coming out but I always did and I always felt better after two hours of singing – always so I think singing is healthy, it's good for you – it's good for your breathing, it's good for social interaction without this ... it gets the endorphin going and – I just think it's tremendously valuable ... (Mary).

... I think what happened was that after two or three rehearsals I remember this: If I went there feeling really down after a difficult day, I always came away feeling really on top of the world ... (Louise).

Louise, in this case, is describing her first experience in choral singing, whereas she joined her first choir in her early adulthood. She refers to the impact that choral rehearsals had on her mood and Mary demonstrates how attending a choral rehearsal empowered her and gave her both strength and a kind of rest after a busy week at work. Sophie and Louise referred to the physical benefits of singing:

I think [singing] makes you feel better ... certainly physically, I mean it's nothing good as singing high and your lungs are exercised which is good ... I think choral singing is very beneficial. You get a chance to express yourself and be in a group (Sophie).

I remember my voice getting stronger because I was singing in the car on my way home [from rehearsal] and thinking 'gosh, my voice really got strong' and that's got something to do with this choir and it was really a feeling of revelation and I think I was hooked after a very short time ... I think the experience of doing it at the time is for me, you know, it's as nice as eating a bar of chocolate – it's a good physical feeling and as I've said before when I first started I was surprised that I could go to a rehearsal,

feeling quite down and come out feeling elated and I think there is a physical reason for that apart from that, the endorphins and something – there are physical benefits (Louise).

... during the war ... the church [in a city] was utilized for people who were bombed out so there were often people brought there, during the big air raids and ... [the minister] used to do is that he sometimes used to sing to these assembly of people ... he certainly used to sing because people were very emotionally [upset] ... (David).

Sophie and Louise demonstrate their experience of the exercise their voices get while singing, the positive impact on the lungs and the strength of their voices.

What interviewees are describing refers to the therapeutic value of music as is evident in the literature on music and health. David's story is an example of how music can be used to affect people's emotions even in turbulent times, and while facing an external threat from a common enemy. These kinds of situations, despite being both unpleasant and inhumane, can bring people together and music can be used as one of the tools for soothing people's fears and worries. Therefore, the collective impact of music can be a benefit to local societies, whether its purpose is for local entertainment (thus creating collectiveness within the society), increasing musical competence or creating chemistry with the audience, as discussed in the following section.

6.3.3 'MUSIC AS PRIMARY MOTOR' – THE PERFORMANCE ITSELF AS AN ATTRACTION TO SINGERS AND AUDIENCE

Although the social aspect of choral singing plays a part in the minds of the interviewees, there were some who did not consider the social factor either central or even very important. Peter, for example, had no expectations or ideas about the social context before joining the choir:

... I was going for the music rather than for the people – and I mean I'm growing to like various people in the choir – but I wasn't particularly interested in seeking new social life but my first impression was possibly shadowy because I didn't have any expectations (Peter).

According to Peter, the music (the choice of repertoire) was the driving force to join the Croydon Bach choir, rather than the social aspect. Catherine agrees that the music was her first and foremost reason to join the choir, especially since the choir is performing the *Mass in B Minor*. Patrick's story is similar:

Well I came from another choir with members quitting and the musical director wasn't very good. I thought at the first rehearsal the impression was really good and at the first rehearsal I was inspired and I did miss singing the big pieces and it was actually Bach's *Mass in B Minor* - we needed singers for that. Last year we did Brahms's Requiem so we'd done that already so I was asked to join so we went to the rehearsal and on the first rehearsal we did the warm-up and in fact the first impression - we did arpeggios and then we went into an aria and the sound of the choir was just incredible. I thought the music and the sound of it was just breath-taking. I was standing at the front, hearing it all coming forward from behind you - it did something - wow, that's a choir that I'm going to stick with, you know, because they know their stuff, numbers are going up and people are not dropping out, they are joining which is quite thanks to Tim [the musical director]. I looked him up on the internet and he's quite fresh about what he does - he's also young so he's got a lot of good ideas and my first impression was 'I'm coming back' and that was it (Patrick).

Patrick emphasizes the quality of the choir, the sound and the repertoire as the driving force of his participation in the choir as well as the level of teaching and coaching from the hand of the conductor. He also claims that these factors are relatively important to draw people into the choir, especially when dealing with performances of large-scale choral works:

There are going to be a lot of people in the audience that know people inside out so they are going to spot errors but if we do adjust it, that's going to attract people and say 'oh, you know, I'd fancy joining them' ... (Patrick).

Thus communicating with the audience, both in terms of drawing experienced and skilled singers into the choir and entertaining the audience with a good performance, became evident as an important factor in the choral activities, especially when the interviewees were asked to describe a good performance. According to Patrick it is good

for the performer to get a joy out of performing and the audience is thus given a chance to listen to it – ‘so everyone gets food for the evening’ (Patrick). Mary likes to see singers who look as though they enjoy singing:

It’s hard to say – sometimes you see a performance and it just captivates you and you cannot say what it is – it’s some sort of presence ... it’s a communication with whoever is listening – it’s trying to get across an emotion that the composer is trying to get over to you and others, particularly in song and the leader is particularly moving both of the singer and hopefully for the person who hears ... above all that you enjoy singing it yourself and you need to feel comfortable with your own ability to sing the piece – if you do not think you know it very well, then you’re less likely to feel that you’ve given a good performance (Mary).

According to Mary, a good performance, or musical competence, consists of a few factors: First of all, a certain level of musical competence. Then there is the well-being factor that the audience senses that the performers are enjoying what they do and that the performers are comfortable with their skills – that they will be able to ‘do the job.’ The performers allow the audience to take part in the performance by linking themselves to the performers through the music - or as Jacob describes it:

... it’s that wonderful sense in engaging in wonderful music in the same way you can engage with a sort of wonderful art work and pictures; different kind of experience but you know, it’s about encountering that and engaging with it and sort of making it a part of your life – is that sort of aspect to it (Jacob).

This metaphor that Jacob describes is based on mutual trust between the performers and the audience – that if the audience is supposed to believe that a good performance is about to take place, the performers must be confident in their skills, like Mary describes above. Emily goes on:

I suppose what makes a good performance is when the choir is enthusiastic and not noticeably kind of stopping short or looking horrified or stumbling or something. You kind of enjoying the performance I suppose so that it is enjoyable and you are not thinking ‘oh my goodness’ - you can start to get worried during a performance that things are going wrong but in the end it

doesn't really matter, you know. No one really notices, if the choir feels sort of right, a bit of a stumble or something, you know. If you talk to the audiences and ask 'oh, how was that?' and they say 'oh, it was lovely' – 'what about that bit?' – 'We didn't notice'. So you know, what you worry about, as long as it's not really being transmitted in a big way, that's important ... (Emily)

What Emily is demonstrating is probably one of performers' worst fears: Making errors or a drastic mistake during a performance. Not only must the performer trust him / herself, this trust must be made between the performer and the audience:

Music is a vehicle for touching emotions and spirits and that's what makes a good performance. If you have an audience thinking 'oh my god, the sopranos are going flat on the top again' or you know 'are they going to make this next entry and?' - that's not good, not good for anybody ... music is a vehicle for touching emotions and spirits and that's what makes a good performance (Catherine).

Another question is whether the concert and the presence of the audience and the performer gives extra value to the event, apart from listening to a recording:

Obviously it must be sung right and with the right feeling but one thing that really affects me when I'm watching a concert is whether you feel that the performers are enjoying it and really engaged in it or whether just repeating what they have rehearsed a lot. In some concerts you go along and you really feel that they are enjoying it and it is refreshing and exciting and that makes a big difference how you hear the music - in a song that makes a difference to me, seeing something live or listening to it on a CD (Irene).

It can be, yes or you can feel it so more easily - in some way the polish may take away your appreciation of the personal element (Peter).

What Peter and Irene are referring to is that despite the progress made in music recordings (the CD is supposed to have concert quality sound) and increased access to music videos and live video recordings of concerts via YouTube and other media on the internet, people still go to concerts to see live performance and to see the personal

element that Peter refers to, whether the performance is on a professional or amateur level.

In summary, these results indicate that participants consider the value of the performance on a broader aesthetic scale and indicate that they are driven by the performance. They emphasize the importance of the performance over the more social side of choral singing, namely, the broadening of social networks. Thus, singing beautiful music along with the added aesthetic value of participating in a performance seems to be a kind of primary motivator, along with the feeling of interconnection between the performers and the audience.

6.4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

As referred to in the previous section, these findings aim at defining and developing the concept of choral capital. In this chapter, I have introduced pathways to choral capital by, firstly, describing the musical backgrounds and histories of the interviewees in general and how they have developed their musical identities through their childhood memories of musical activities and experience. Secondly, I introduced certain key elements in the process of developing the concept of choral capital (what it takes to grow choral capital). This consisted of the learning process of choral singing, to learn about new music and to learn to like new musical works, periods, styles, genres and developing a broader musical taste and encouraging the singer to engage in further choral performances, which opens up a new musical world for the singer.

Thirdly, I have discussed and implemented the discussion of the choral community and the collective experience and well-being factor as a pathway towards increased social capital. This includes how the individual creates certain senses of well-being within a group of like-minded people and expands the individual's social network. Evidently, the social factor may not be the primary reason for participants to join the Croydon Bach choir but findings indicate that the social context starts to matter, as time passes, when the individual becomes a member of the choral group. Thus it is important as well for the individual to create certain collective senses of well-being, because problems within the group (such as social exclusion, bullying, bossy prima donnas, and conductors with tendencies of a dictator) may cause people to leave the choir, despite the quality of the singing and the difficulty of the repertoire.

Therefore, joining a choir and engaging in musical performances creates a certain capital for choral singers – not only increased social capital but also increased cultural capital through the informal education of performing a challenging choral work, which I define and develop as the concept of ‘choral capital.’

The next section illustrates a case of the Croydon Bach Choir in the process of rehearsing the *Mass in B Minor* by J. S. Bach and how the choir develops a certain ‘choral capital’ through that process. I explore how participants define their choral identity by describing the meaning of singing in a composer-oriented Bach choir, how they construct ‘their Bach’ through the performance, in what way they perceive the work itself and also how they benefit from the informal learning process of collective singing (using the collective cooperation to learn from each other whereas more experienced singers support those with less experience) and the function of the leadership of the conductor in that process.

7. 'CHORAL CAPITAL' AND 'CHORAL IDENTITY' – A CASE STUDY: BACH (CHOIR) IN EVERYDAY LIFE AND THE *MASS IN B MINOR*

In this chapter I introduce how participants develop 'choral capital' as they engage in choral activities in the Croydon Bach choir, rehearsing and performing the *Mass in B Minor* and identifying themselves with the composer J. S. Bach. The purpose of this chapter is to cast light on what 'Bach choral capital' adds and how the 'choral identity' is formed.

The first section illustrates how participants experience the meaning of the concept 'Bach choir' defining the 'Bach choral identity,' leading to the construction of the composer ('my Bach') in the second section. In the third section I explore how participants perceive and experience the *Mass in B Minor*. Finally, I will discuss and demonstrate the collective support of the group in the learning process of the *Mass in B Minor* and the importance of the musical director's leadership.

7.1 'BACH CHORAL IDENTITY:' A MEANING OR A LABEL / EVIDENCE OF QUALITY CHORAL SINGING?

As is evident in the methods chapter, the participant choir is defined as an amateur choir, although it is composer-oriented. For me personally, the concept of a Bach choir indicates some kind of a statement of quality choral singing and ambitious repertoire, although beforehand I was not familiar with this kind of 'tradition' since no particular composer-oriented Bach choir exists (yet) in my home country (Iceland). According to the history of Bach choirs in the UK, the first Bach choir was established in London in 1875 where the main aim of that choir was to perform Bach's oratorios. In order to do so, it was necessary to build up a sufficient mass of skilled singers to be able to deliver the music properly.²⁷

According to the understanding of the conductor of the Croydon Bach choir (Tim Horton), the story behind the name Croydon Bach choir is that it was established around a performance of *St John Passion*. One aspect that needed to be studied was the

²⁷ See <http://www.thebachchoir.org.uk/about/history.php>

participant's understandings of the term 'Bach choir' and whether they specifically chose to sing in this choir due to the fact that it was a 'Bach' choir.

In an open-ended question in the survey, members of the Croydon Bach choir were asked why they joined this choir and whether the concept of Bach choir had influenced their choice (Question 21). Out of 51 participants, 21 commented on their love of music, that they liked singing and especially singing 'works of significance' (Male, born 1931). They also liked to sing harder repertoire of a high standard and preferred good quality singing and to 'experience a more professional approach to singing and music.' 11 of these 21 specifically mentioned the opportunity to sing works by Bach, especially those who had recently joined the choir, like one woman, born in 1933: 'I greatly enjoy being challenged and my church choir conductor recommended this choir and this work as a piece of music which would satisfy my requirements.'

Louise, a soprano, claims that her admiration of Bach influenced her choice of choir:

Q: Do you think that choir called a Bach choir signifies some kind of a value?

LOUISE: Yes, it does to me personally because I think very highly of Bach. I'm actually quite proud and quite pleased to say that I belong to a Bach choir rather than the Joyful Company of singers or some silly name – I think it sounds more conservative, serious.

Louise links the name Bach to the classical music tradition, using concepts like 'serious' and 'conservative' and Emily agrees with her. Jacob says ...

... it's probably because it may have something to do with certain people deciding that Bach may be promotive [sic] and I didn't know until recently that the origins of the Croydon Bach choir, that it deliberately set up in order for Bach passions to be sung and in a chorus of times of other composers got a look in so I mean I do not know if that's the case with other Bach choirs ... (Jacob).

Thus according to Jacob, naming a choir a Bach choir might be for promotional purposes, both to draw people into the choir and also, in a way, to draw people to the choir's concerts. Irene claims that the Bach name is ...

... important to people who know a lot about music. It's probably a sign of quality and setting a standard for yourself as well as a clear indication of people singing proper music so – but I think that there must be a point when Bach choirs became common and that when people used that badge (Irene).

So according to the quotes above, the label, 'Bach choir' may indicate some kind of strategy and a declaration about the quality of the singing and the difficulty and quality of the repertoire. One may assume, as Catherine claims, that people would 'expect a Bach choir to have a quite good proportion of Bach and baroque music' (Catherine), even though most Bach choirs do not only sing music by Bach. Bach choirs seem to be, as Mary indicated:

... sort of synonymous with good choral singing because most people have heard of the Bach choir which has had a reputation in London for many, many years and it isn't the case that every other Bach choir in the country is as good as that but there is an idea that if you want to join a good choir then a Bach choir is a good one to go for (Mary).

Therefore, the original Bach choir seems to have created a reputation for quality choral singing which other Bach choirs may have benefitted from, in one way or another, as Patrick mentioned:

... there is a freshness about that name. It gives you the impression that people are specialized in singing Bach ... I really like Bach's works but it was rather a random choice of the choir. The name didn't draw us in but the name does have a part in my love of Bach because I play a lot of his stuff (Patrick).

According to Patrick, there is a possibility that the name 'Bach choir' might give people the impression that a Bach choir is specialized in singing Bach and Patrick claims that 'when it comes to a Bach choir doing a Bach piece, I think we really need skills to pull it off ...'

However, participants did not entirely agree on the importance of the Bach choir name. In the survey results (Q21), seven participants especially mentioned that the Bach name did not play a special part in their choice of choir. When asked, Emily said that

the Bach name is not a central piece and Sophie had not really given the significance of the Bach choir concept real thought. However, Emily went on:

... it was sort of classical music choir ... I didn't particularly look for a jazz choir or musical school or something ... particularly when we joined we weren't singing any Bach at all. It's kind of a wild card choir – didn't seem to have any relevance really. I think that bit more recently we've actually tried to sing more of Bach here and there and you know - have it in our repertoire ... but it wasn't a reason for joining really, it was just – you know someone said this was quite a standard (Emily).

For Emily, the name itself did not necessarily matter at first, even though it grew on her as time passed. David has previous experience in singing with another Bach choir but the fact that the choir is local was more important for David than the name itself:

... one of the reasons I came here I think was because it was more or less on my doorstep. I've moved further away now but I used to live a mile away from here ... I didn't have to drive, I used to walk ... (David).

In the open-ended question in the survey (Q21), 10 participants commented on the importance of the location of the choir, that their choice was based more or less on their doorstep. Jacob agreed with David on the importance of the local context of the choir and that the Bach aspect did not make any difference at all – however he claimed that the concept 'Bach choir' signified a certain statement about the repertoire and the standard of choral singing:

I think probably from the outside it's a significant factor ... the image of Bach is – I think in the public knowledge of Bach is very hazy compared to Mozart and Beethoven traditionally so the idea of Croydon Bach choir ... you would need to know some of Bach's music to know what it is about (Jacob).

Irene demonstrated that the Bach choir name signified to her repertoire-wise:

I think the fact that this is a Bach choir – I like the idea that it would be quite early music and that would be a proper music with four parts and proper harmony but it wasn't specifically because it was a Bach choir ...

when you actually are a part of making music, you are so much more drawn into it than when you are listening (Irene).

Therefore, in Irene's case, it was more the question of what the concept of Bach choir would mean regarding the choice of repertoire instead of the Bach name itself. However, Louise joined the choir because Bach is her favourite composer and the *Mass in B Minor* is her favourite choral work. Still, she insisted, 'it didn't have to be a Bach choir, it could have been any choir but in fact not many choirs tackle works like that.' Peter said that calling this choir a Bach choir would introduce a certain bias towards Bach:

... the word Bach in the Croydon Bach choir is a sort of anchor ... the ship sort of whirls around it and just in different places around this anchor ... it directs the repertoire but doesn't restrain it and that's fine. I come quite happy with ... the repertoire and some things of it are a bit stupid really ... it's such privilege to sing for yourself and it tells you things about music which you cannot quite pick up from just listening (Peter).

The Bach name in the choir would thus be a directive force when it comes to choosing repertoire – a guiding light without limiting the choice. Therefore it seems to be, in the mind of the interviewees, that the concept Bach choir is more like a promotional label, a declaration of quality choral singing and choice of repertoire, rather than having any special impact when it comes to choosing a particular choir to sing with, or like Peter puts it: '... maybe using the word Bach is short hand to Baroque.'

7.2 CONSTRUCTING 'MY BACH:' BACH CHORAL SINGERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS THE COMPOSER

Since the participants in this research sing with a Bach choir and perform Bach chorales on a regular basis with other works by other composers as well, interviewees as well as survey participants were asked to describe their experience and their own view of Bach as a person and a composer. This was done in order to study how they reconstruct the composer and in what way the image of Bach played a special role in their musical identities. From this perspective, I am examining the members' understandings and constructions of Bach and the extent to which these understandings draw upon the

various images and resources about Bach that are available in the present bibliographical literature. In the survey, participants were asked how they acquired their knowledge about Bach and the most common methods were through concerts, music lessons, reading books, learning about Bach in history classes and performing Bach in choirs (see Figure 43 in Appendix 17).

In question 19 in the survey, participants were asked how they experienced Bach as a person and a composer (see further Appendix 17 p. 264). The responses can be divided into two main categories: Firstly, respondents (13) commented on Bach's technical brilliance, that respondents experience Bach as a genius, a very gifted and innovative composer; serious, prolific, driven, imaginative, organised and disciplined where among the adjectives frequently mentioned. Respondents commented on Bach's alleged mathematical skills, being meticulous, a master of all technical aspects but writing for the voice as if it were an instrument. In this perspective, both genders mentioned the alleged mathematical skills of Bach (see further below in this section). Secondly, respondents commented on the religious aspect of Bach as a devout, hard-working Lutheran and a family man who composed music in the glory of God (this will be discussed further in this chapter).

The interview responses included several narratives of personal experiences of Bach's music and Bach as a composer. Catherine described the very first time she heard Bach and is very descriptive in her narrative:

And the first time I came across Bach really was when I was 18. I had a boyfriend who was a classical musician and he introduced me to classical music. He showed me how to read music properly, on the recorder and stuff so I learned to turn papers from him – it must have been enough but one impression I had - it was one Saturday morning when I had been staying at his family house and their spare room was next to where he had his stereo and his father was really indulgent, he thought he had really posh stereo and he played the third *Brandenburg* and it was a sunny morning – sun streaming through the window and I just remember to be knocked out by this, 'oh, what's this?' And I think that switched me on to Bach and that switched me on to classical music per se (Catherine).

Louise's description is very picturesque of how, at the age of 18, she became a Bach fan by listening to a single movement of Bach's third *Brandenburg Concerto* (the first movement) played on a quality stereo on a sunny morning. Here she describes an

external influence on her musical taste, thus turning her focus towards classical and baroque music. The third *Brandenburg Concerto* ‘knocked her out’ as she implies with very strong verbs and emphasizes in her description. In a way, I can relate to this standpoint, though in my case my first real experience with Bach was through my performance of the *Christmas Oratorio* - I remember how impressed I was when listening to it for the first time, which of course was for learning purposes.

Interviewees were asked which qualities came to their minds while thinking about Bach and his music. The conjunction of beauty and complex harmonies and expertise in music writing is what came into the interviewees’ minds:

PETER: Intelligent, beautiful, intriguing, elaborate, complex chords all the time – integrated, hangs together well, inspiring.

LOUISE: Complex, sublime, I think – sincere ...

PATRICK: ... very highly skilled, very good in musical writing and scoring ... outstanding music writer, composer ...

EMILY: Well, it’s the complexity and the harmony are very interesting and the structure of it ... it’s a kind of chord the way he manages the chord with both hands so it works together ... It’s interesting, isn’t it? Well, it does sound very nice [laughter] ...

MARY: ... I think he was just amazingly gifted to be able to write such complex harmonies and intertwining parts ...

These quotes describe the more general view of Bach among the interviewees – however some of the narratives were on a more personal level like Catherine’s experience above and the narrative of James. While talking about Bach, he described his visit to Bach’s church in Leipzig and has even attended a special Bach tour:

... some years ago I went on a Bach tour and it was a Bach organ tour in all the places Bach was associated with from his birth back to Leipzig and – since then I’ve also been back at least twice and been to St Thomas Leipzig ... I could see his tomb – and also there was a wonderful staying last winter and the first time I went there, I was very moved by that ... it was in 1987 when I first went there on this Bach journey and last time I went there five years ago on what they call a concert tour where we sang some Bach in St Thomas Leipzig. Then we sang Handel’s *Messiah* in Halle where Handel was born and baptised and then we sang some Mendelssohn in Dresden (James).

What James describes may be categorized as one form of cultural pilgrimage – visiting the sites where Bach used to live in chronological order, visiting his tomb and performing Bach’s music in St Thomas Church in Leipzig and Handel’s *Messiah* in Halle. To discuss further this idea of cultural pilgrimage, the religious context seems to emerge in different dimensions within the data. Peter demonstrated his view towards the religious context of Bach:

I’m ... amused being in the choir and I’m slightly amused because quite a lot of people in the choir are Christian and they sing in Parish churches whereas I’m certainly not Christian. On the other hand I’m culturally Christian because I’ve been - happened in the Methodist church who [sic] are absolute rubbish in singing but - so I quite like quirky composers, such as atheists who write English church music. Brahms was clearly pretty agnostic and - so I quite like the tension between the religious bits that I do not have and the spiritual bits which music gives true sound so - yes, I’m quite amused to be in a choir that is seriously culturally Christian and it kind of obliges me to come and sit in churches in a way that I didn’t do. As I said I’m culturally Christian, if I’m in a strange village or town I look into the church and that’s a different things. So if you like a choir is slightly alien to me because of this religious cast of people which is a diversion of religious cast of singing (Peter).

Peter addresses the notion of cultural pilgrimage, or cultural tourism, where tourists visit famous sites that have religious contexts but are not only visited for religious purposes, but also for cultural purposes, like the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela (see Gonzales & Medina, 2003), St Peter’s Cathedral and Sistine Chapel in Vatican city, for example. This implies that some fans of religious music like Bach’s masses and oratorios, may enjoy it for aesthetic / cultural purposes rather than religious purposes (this will be discussed further in chapter 7.3). Louise’s pilgrimage might be described as more internal as she describes an encounter with Bach in a dream:

LOUISE: ... strangely when I was doing my degree I had a dream once that I was wrapped up about – I dreamt that I met him [Johann Sebastian Bach], I was speaking to him and I said ‘you know that after you died you became very famous, a hundred years later – Mendelssohn rediscovered’ and I was telling him and he was surprised because in those days it was like writing a

computer program, it wasn't meant to prosper, it was just meant to be thrown away.

Q: Do you remember how he reacted in the dream?

LOUISE: I think he was flattered and surprised but it was more that I felt the need to tell him – that's what I remember – I wanted him to know that he weren't forgotten and 'you were rediscovered and you are still considered the greatest' because he probably died not thinking that.

This narrative reflects a certain interest in the composer. Firstly, the metaphor of the music of Bach as just another computer programme in those days, to be thrown away and becoming out of date quite soon. Secondly, Louise believes that it is a shame that Bach might never have been aware or acknowledged for his compositions, and, like so many other artists and composers, became famous a century after his death. Somehow in her sub-conscious she finds a need to tell Bach, one way or another, that he isn't forgotten. In this way she reconstructs her 'relation' to the composer on a more personal level. Catherine too claims that she wouldn't mind getting to know Bach:

... I'd love to have met him. I think he'd be quite an interesting person to talk to, although I do not know if he was a very outgoing person ...
(Catherine).

Questions like 'which famous historical person would you like to meet?' are sometimes a theme in newspapers and journals and here Catherine is displaying her interest, although she gives the precaution that she might be disappointed to find out that her favourite composer would maybe not be a person who is easy to talk to and it might affect his somewhat 'saint-like' status in Catherine's mind. However, other members emphasized more 'down to earth' connections with Bach on a more 'tangible' level. Sophie is more on the 'down to the earth' level in describing her image and construction of the composer:

Q: What kind of descriptive or adjectives would you use for Bach and his music in general?

SOPHIE: What sort of things come to my head? Oh, gorgeous, heavenly, lovely bells ringing. Complicated, fantastic 18th century baroque fleece - I just think of fleece or embroidery, so intricate - does that make sense [laughter]? Because with that music I've got to - if I think of a part and if I have to learn it I think when was it written? Who's it written by and

who[m] is it written for and what were people dressed in at the time and what was the architecture like? What did they enjoy at the time apart from this music?

Q: So you connect the music to something ...

SOPHIE: Tangible, yes - artistic a lot - that's a way of creating connections, what sort of pictures did they look at that time - it's got to have a certain - it has to recall certain visualisation.

Q: I know one woman - she thinks all music has certain colours - some songs are dark brown and blue and some are yellow - she sees colours when she hears music. I've always envied her to have this ability.

SOPHIE: Sometimes music can be associated with taste and it happened to me twice. I got this strange taste sensation when I heard certain singers, yes. It has only happened occasionally, some people have that facility to taste something.

In this dialogue, Louise locates the composer and his music in a socio-historical context, referring to the baroque design, especially the clothing – a sort of visual/tangible connection to the music in order to put the music into its historical environment and thus connect it to its contemporary fashion. Smell, taste and visual experience are known by some people, as Louise refers to when she sometimes associates music to certain taste and smell which is closely linked to the notion of music and memory (see DeNora, 2000, p. 66-68). Adding sense into the musical experience and using sense as a bridge between herself and the long-deceased composer, through the music added with the tangible architecture and design of the baroque period. A similar paradox appeared in Catherine's interview:

Intellectually I think he had a brain of the size of a planet [laughter] because certainly for example when I am learning the mass you see the way the lines wave around and these things come up like a tapestry how it's woven in. It's beautiful ... to have that kind of very precise brain. I suppose he had a mathematical brain as well as this wonderful creative brain – absolutely amazing ... (Catherine).

According to Louise as well, Bach chorales were used in her music studies as an example of a complex work that functioned like a jigsaw puzzle. Comparing Bach's music to a tapestry establishes another reference to the design and crafts of the Baroque period; weaving a tapestry must be very complex as well (like solving a jigsaw puzzle)

and requires a good deal of skills and Catherine transfers this complex form of creative design to presumably describe Bach's brain as a work of beauty and complexity. She therefore agrees with this metaphor claiming that Bach is 'brilliant in terms of intellectual brilliance but also in terms of - atmospheric brilliance, certainly he's like a rich tapestry' (Catherine). James uses the same metaphor:

... [Bach's music is] certainly very touching, its wonderful music Bach – the way it's like a tapestry, the way it moves, all the melodies and the complexities of his music (James).

... it's probably me projecting from my scientific background but he seems very logical music, everything precise, everything fits in the right place so project that about his personality. I think a lot about this ... (Irene).

Bach is often described as the musician's musician – so much is Bach to music ... I also often think that Bach is like the music of heaven coming down to earth, Handel's music like music of earth going up to heaven (James).

The notion of a 'musician's musician' refers to the common fact / theory that a number of composers (like Beethoven, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Mozart) sought their inspiration from Bach and his works. James therefore puts him on a musical pedestal; however, this pedestal seems to have a bit of a religious context as well, like the paradox of Handel and Bach in James's quote above.

These ideas presented above reflect the perspectives of the choral conductor (Tim Horton) who also mentioned the mathematical context of Bach and Bach's music:

I think he must have been a bit one-off ... I think he was a genius in a sense that his music stacks up on all sorts of level - from a kind of analytical, mathematical point of view you can get very excited about the music of Bach and find all kinds of mathematical imagery and symmetry and stuff inside his music or you can just take the music's face value and think what/why actually this is fabulous music ... that is written entirely musically and musically satisfying if you like so I think if he was ... aware of the fact that he was constructing music so perfectly, one of the same time writing music was fabulous just as music and he was aware of that and must have been the most extraordinary character and if he wasn't aware of

it, he was exceptionally gifted and – I guess if you can write music like that that works mathematically and practically and physically like that without realising it then there must be – that’s kind of once in a lifetime – once in many hundred years kind of talent (Tim Horton).

As is evident – the ideas of the choir members and the conductor are quite similar, which makes one wonder whether the conductor and his representation of Bach has influenced the choir members’ perspectives in one way or another. In this rehearsal process the conductor did not discuss the history of Bach in particular, or discuss what kind of man Bach was or what make him seem special as a composer. The main emphasis was on the work itself and I noticed that there were almost no historical references used by the conductor, only in regard to the difficulty of the *Mass in B Minor*. It is possible that the conductor might have discussed Bach and his characteristics with choir members, either in rehearsals or private conversations.

As previously discussed, the religious atmosphere of Victorian England may have created a certain romantic image of Bach as the faithful husband and family man: a devout, hard-working Lutheran who composed and wrote music to glorify God (see Russell, 1988 and Parry, 1909). Later biographical writings of Bach (Wolff, 2002; Parrot, 2000) have more or less deconstructed this idea. On the other hand, these romantic ideas appear both in the interviews and in the survey responses, especially about Bach’s compositions and Bach as a servant of faith.

This Victorian image of Bach may be the result of the historical education regarding Bach (as a part of the music education within the school system). Thus, in a way, Bach may have served not only as an example of a brilliant composer, but also as an exemplar for idealised Christian values. In the survey, comments such as devout Christian, hard-working composer, spiritually inspired and influenced, deeply religious family man, serious, gifted and committed to music and faith are evident. These ideas are reflected in the interviews as well:

He stands out ... He wrote music to glorify the Lord. Maybe it’s just my understanding, to me he’s just tremendous, a real depth – he’s something else, you know ... very deep, superb ... a very hard working musician, a devout Christian, hard fan of Jewish so [laughter] well, my dad’s mom was Jewish so he became Jewish, he even took Hebrew lessons but no - certainly he wrote music to glorify the Lord which to me is absolutely incredible (Gerald).

... musicians were very much servants, they had to turn out so many oratorios, be there and conduct. His music was his life - he was totally devoted to music and I imagine him to be inspired as well by his faith and by God and because he had this supreme gift and he used it faithfully and I imagine that he was very hard working. I hear that he had a family to support and I should just imagine that the house was full of music all the time in some form or another and it was a true picture of devotion (Sophie).

These quotes reflect the romantic image of Bach as the devout Lutheran, hard-working composer, the family man, and the man of faith. This might be considered something that relates to people who are active in their Christianity and worship, like Catherine:

I would say first and foremost that he was a Christian and that is something that I connect to because I am too and I think that it comes across very strongly and not composers of his era who were composing masses and masses and other religious stuff where I would say believers really are doing it as a job. But I would say that his belief comes across very strongly in in the way the music is written - passion of course which is important to be honest and so - I would think he was somebody who had a passion about his music - as well as passion about his faith (Catherine)

Catherine relates to the religious context of Bach and his music, claiming his Christianity to be the driving force of his composition. This idea, as it appears in Russell's work (1997) on popular music in Victorian England, highlights how the masses and oratorios of Bach and Handel were not only a platform for the everyday person to join a choir and perform the music, but also part of informal religious, or at least moral, education. Therefore, participating in a performance of the choral works by Bach and Handel were considered to be a sophisticated, acknowledged recreation in a religious context. The conductor of the Croydon Bach Choir claimed that liking Bach's music was also a kind of intellectual business in that it needed an education in itself, by familiarizing oneself with the works of Bach either through performance or mere consumption. Therefore this image of Bach might have helped to make his works even more popular and the *person* J. S. Bach may have had more appeal to the Victorian mentality, making it easier for Bach and his works to be discovered. Bach's works, however, may not have reached the same popularity as Handel's works, whereas Handel

was more well-known, especially in England. Asking whether respondents thought a typical concert audience and/or a choral singer might relate to Bach, considering his life and the romantic reconstruction of his image, responses were both yes, and no:

Q: Do you think that people relate to him as a person, the way he lived?

JAMES: Possibly some do – I mean if one is a Christian and a believer and the music would move even more a Christian person, would probably enjoy the music a great deal more.

Q: Do you think this might be the reason that people like him - that this image of Bach, devoted servant of faith?

CATHERINE: Not necessarily, I think that he's got a broader appeal than that - because of the richness of his work - he appeals to people with more artistic streak but because of the precision of it he'll appeal to the kind of technicians of this world but also the fact that his work has been adapted for all sorts of things, like I think in 1960s [name of an artist, outside noise blocking] he started to swing it and stuff like that. So yes, but I think he's got a very broad appeal, even if people do not know very much about him and his music - they have heard some Bach ... Bach is always uplifting, I do not find Mozart always uplifting, I think the spiritual thing – I think there is something else spiritually going on with Mozart ... yes, I think Bach has that extra dimension to it ... I think there is a darker side of Mozart, very much so ... I do not know how to pinpoint that, it's just a feeling you get when you listen to the music (Catherine)

Jacob, who claims to be an atheist, also connects with this definition:

... I think to me the image I have of Bach is somebody who is musically just gifted and in some way he was a musical genius ... despite sort of social, sort of religious context that he was in ... I suppose in terms of religion it sort of very clearly is devout - and clearly the matching of the music and the emotion and the story line is there - that is obvious, very clear and so obviously you know there is that sort of wonderful contrast between the darker, more sad aspects of the story if that's what it is and - celebratory, outpouring (Jacob).

Jacob described his experience and the contrasts between the sad and the celebratory sides of Bach, even though he considered Bach not to be his 'first laugh' and finds some

aspects of Bach to be ‘dodgy’ and ‘off-putting.’ There is also a contrast in Louise’s evaluation and imagining of Bach:

I think when he died he was considered to be very old fashioned – chucking most of his works in the bin. But I do not think anyone has ever come close to him – the harmonies are so complex – I think he was a little rebellious to his world (Louise).

Bach did include some unusual compositional techniques, such as giving the harpsichord a long solo in the first movement of the 5th *Brandenburg Concerto* (Concerto no. 5 BWV 1050 in D major: Allegro) and adding organ fugues between verses in many of his hymns. Still he was considered a bit old fashioned in his lifetime and was not the first choice of the Leipzig authorities when he was appointed as the master of music – a position he served until his death. In his interview, Peter discussed which aspects create an artistic drive for composers and artists in general:

PETER: [Group of composers] were drinking together and misbehaved most dreadfully but they were actually very productive as well and some of the productivity came from their bad behaviour but yes.

Q: Do you think that when artists and composers have this image of being slightly dis-behaving – not to be perfect – do you think that it makes them more popular?

PETER: Only indirectly. I think that sometimes it drives the music – it’s something driven a bit by testosterone and ... it’s fairly clear that Mozart was driven and Bach was driven ... they were very different personalities but they were both driven ...

Somewhat inevitably, while discussing Bach, respondents also discussed Handel in this context. Jacob explains:

I suppose and particularly Handel’s *Messiah* in this country is as I’m sure you’ve become aware sort of that particular choral work is immensely influential and significant, stayed to us in this country particularly from Victorian time and - which is less of the case for - I mean if you went out to the local street here and sort of quizzed people about Handel’s *Messiah*, yes, they would probably tell you a whole range of choruses everybody

knows these choral. But if you'd ask about Bach's *Mass in B Minor*, it wouldn't be as well known, not as popular ... (Jacob).

In a way, Handel and Bach are partly associated with each other – both born in the same year (1685), Bach died in 1750 and Handel in 1759 (both died from the same eye disease after being operated on by the same eye-surgeon). Their lives, position and situations were very different, however, as it is generally assumed, Handel lived more the life of a celebrity while Bach worked as the servant of the church. As a result, there are many correlations in the interviewee's narratives about J.S. Bach the person and the composer – his religious context is somewhat dominant in the respondents' minds while constructing both the composer and the person J.S. Bach.

To highlight these views of choir members about Bach as a devout servant of God and a family man, this section ends with a quote from the conductor's perspectives:

I think in terms of his practical life he was - he was very busy, very hard working, rather frustrated - you know trying to make ends meet - unappreciated, you know, there are legends of stories that may not be true about performances of great pieces sung terribly by the choirs that he had to work with which he found very frustrating and had a lot of children and had to find a lot of money to support them and - I think that life must have been really tough - particularly that period in his life where he had to write a new cantata every week for the churches, yes, it must have been absolutely exhausting, just to fit physical effort of writing it on paper - I just cannot imagine how he went on doing it (Tim Horton).

To some extent, my experience and perception of Bach is in line with what most of the interviewees described. However, my focus is more on his music than his person, whereas his music functions as a certain pathway for my devotion of faith²⁸ which I experience first and foremost through music, even though I do not consider myself only as a minor active member of my church. An example is my experience of listening to and performing the Kyrie in the *Mass in B Minor*, which is probably one of my foremost religious experiences (along with singing Christmas carols).

In summation, this section has examined the participants' understanding and construction of Johann Sebastian Bach. The participants' views on Bach are twofold:

²⁸ Being a member of the National Icelandic Lutheran Church

Firstly, they discuss the brilliance of Bach as a musical genius and refer to certain mathematical skills they consider Bach to have had. Secondly, a major part of the discussion is related to the romantic image of Bach in the early biographical writings, which parallels the choir members' perspectives towards Bach and is thus reflected in the narratives of participants in this study. Moving on to the participants' perceptions of the *Mass in B Minor* in the next section, the romantic image of Bach reflects their emotions and experiences of learning and performing the mass itself.

7.3 THE WELL-BEING FACTOR IN THE *MASS IN B MINOR*: THE EMOTIONAL / RELIGIOUS / SPIRITUAL CONTEXT AND THE THRILL OF 'GETTING IT RIGHT'

As previously discussed, the *Mass in B Minor* was Bach's last grand choral work, even though it was composed over a long period of time in bits and pieces and presumably the only work that Bach did not conduct himself as a whole. The *Mass in B Minor* is considered to be one of the most challenging works a choir can ever undertake, due to the complexity of the harmonies, the constant change in styles, rhythm, keys – the stretching choral parts which are a true challenge to any choir, particularly an amateur choir.

It is believed by some Bach scholars (Butt (1997), Parry (1909), Wolff (2002) and Parrott (2000)) that the *Mass in B Minor* actually reflects the composer, i.e. as his grand finale it demonstrates all of Bach's musical abilities as a composer, his various styles and talent as a whole. As such it mirrors the image of Bach, not only as a composer, but as a servant of the church and, in a way, a man of faith. Before turning our focus towards the experience of learning the *Mass in B Minor*, let's put the work into the perspective of religious, spiritual and emotional dimensions and perceptions of respondents.

... the *Mass in B Minor* takes in all moves, is exhilarating with its wonderful exhilarating choruses but also the more intimate choruses – every move and it sums up the whole Christian belief ... I think he may have written it as a part of his legacy to the world and his music (James).

Gerald described the *Mass in B Minor* as ‘a worship of heaven’ and spiritually uplifting. Catherine continues:

I think all music has a spiritual element in it because I think music is a vehicle for spiritual things, both from the body’s side and also from the other side. It’s very powerful thing because it’s not just an emotional thing - it touches people’s spirit, even if they do not recognize it. That’s what’s going on and it touches people physically as well because they respond to the rhythm and so ... music is used in spiritual settings of all types ... (Catherine).

Note that Catherine’s perspective is presumably influenced by her religious beliefs as a Christian and an active worshipper. In the final rehearsal before the dress rehearsal and concert, I wrote in my diary that there was something about the Kyrie in the *Mass in B Minor* that is spiritual – that I could almost sense the spiritual experience of the choir while singing it. The conductor emphasized that, in his opinion, this is extraordinary music and that we should sing it with gratitude within us while singing it.

Emily, on the other hand, who emphasised that she is not a Christian, regards music and the *Mass in B Minor* as more of an emotional experience rather than a spiritual one:

I mean that music is actually emotional reactions in a way that we do not fully understand ... it’s rather how you feel about it and it does that rather directly. You could be moved to tears by hearing a piece of music ... very quickly it can make you feel weepy or cheery or something, it is very nice to be able to access that and being sort of overwhelmed by the beauty of it ... I wouldn’t say that was a spiritual experience. I think it’s an emotional experience ... I wouldn’t particularly like the Crucifixus ... I’m not religious at all, that’s probably why [laughter] (Emily).

Like Emily, Jacob is not religious, he has clear humanist ethics and he claims the experience to be more on the emotional side:

In terms of the bits that I like [in the *Mass in B Minor*] I think I like the sort of uninhibited, pouring, passionate bits - I have to say some of Bach I do find dirgy so I mean for example Tim - the Kyrie is wonderful, musically maybe. I find that a bit dense and unappealing but maybe it’s sort

of less appealing, the exuberant, outburst and - of course I like the Sanctus and Cum Sancto spiritu - that's actually wonderful. I've actually enjoyed it - of all the works that I've ever sung I've really enjoyed this - I mean I take it seriously, trying to do more homework (Jacob).

In this quote, Jacob, being an atheist, is more drawn to the passionate movements like the Crucifixus, even though movements like that do not appeal to him on a religious basis. Louise claimed that there is a difference between religious and spiritual experience – with the spirituality compensating for the non-religious aspect. Considering this emotional factor, Irene had another view about the emotional aspect of the *Mass in B Minor*:

To me, it's less emotional music than some composers – I mean it's still very – it draws you in when bits of the Mozart *Requiem* can make you cry – it makes you feel sad and the Bach does not have that effect on me – it's much – it's beautiful music but it's not emotional (Irene).

Finding the *Mass in B Minor* and Bach's music in general unemotional is beneficial in Irene's case. Louise agreed, in a way:

To me it [The *Mass in B Minor* and music by Bach] leaves me breathless at times and I think it's because of the constantly changing harmony – tensing and relaxing, tensing and relaxing – and you feel at the end of it as if you've been running or something. The slower grander movements are so absolutely sublime but I think it's not the melody – it's the harmony. So it's a different experience as I mentioned I also like Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* – that moves me to tears because of the meaning of it, because of the story that it's telling and it's also very beautiful. But with Bach it's a musical experience, it's not – there's no story behind it for a religious person either and for me that he dedicated everything to God it doesn't really mean anything to me except it makes it purer, maybe (Louise).

Louise is comparing her reactions to the *Mass in B Minor* on the one hand and to Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* on the other, which moves her emotionally, whereas the religious story behind Bach's music has no meaning for her at all. Sophie took an example of a performance of *Requiem* by Herbert Howell, an emotional work which was difficult for people to get through:

... It had that strange effect on people – some people had to leave – they just couldn't cope with it. They found it emotionally draining and each time I started to sing I was dwelling up. You had to concentrate hard and in the end they ... were all coordinated – did what the conductor wanted them to do – just managed to keep neutral in themselves and controlled and it was the audience that was crying ... that's what opera singers have to do every day, don't they? Work with emotions without being too emotional themselves (Lousie).

It is probably very easy for many people who are experienced choral singers to relate to the experience Louise describes above. There are certain types of music and certain songs that I myself find difficult to sing – for example, certain Christmas hymns including 'Silent Night' and 'Der ist ein Ros Entsprungen', since they remind me so much of my late grandmother. Although it is crucial for the singers to know the background and the storyline of the music (in order to interpret the music and deliver it to the audience) these emotions (especially sad and tragic) must not overtake the performance, making the performer lose all control. Therefore, a performance must not become too emotional – however, as previously discussed, liking the repertoire makes the performance better and more enjoyable both for the performers and the audience.

According to Peter's words, the *Mass in B Minor* is 'all so brilliant' – he thinks about how wonderful the music is every time they practice and Gerald uses terms like 'tremendous, incredible' and how it is 'all equally difficult.' Even those singers who had sung the *Mass in B Minor* a number of times, like Mary and Catherine, still found some parts of it difficult:

... [opening the music scores] the fast movements are difficult [like Cum Sancto Spiritu]. In order to be – first of all in the faster movements you've got to learn the notes – but then you have to make music with it so it's so much work to do before you make music with it ... (Catherine).

While discussing the most challenging movements, respondents frequently referred to the thrill of getting the difficult parts right, as Catherine demonstrates above. Irene, for example, said that getting the Sanctus right would be amazing and considered it the hardest section.

As James refers to, the *Mass in B Minor* is Bach's supreme work, the peak of Bach's music: 'I do not think you cannot get anything much more grander [sic] for a special anniversary year – our jubilee year.' In rehearsal one, two of my fellow sopranos referred to this work as the hardest work ever written for a choir; 'if you can sing the *Mass in B Minor*, you can sing everything' they said. As James mentioned, the Croydon Bach choir was celebrating their golden jubilee (50 years) and on this occasion, the opportunity was taken to rehearse and perform this, the biggest and most difficult work by Bach. Looking at the programmes of various Bach festivals, the *Mass in B Minor* is frequently the last piece – the festival's last big event. Louise had this to say about the opportunities to perform the *Mass in B Minor*:

The opportunities to sing it are quite rare because for choirs it's too big for many choirs. Normally they are doing it in one school term so there are about 8-9 rehearsals. Most choirs won't put that much work in (Louise).

Louise refers to the current situation that many choirs face – a decline in membership levels, aging choir members, and more problematic opportunities for singing challenging works. Like the Croydon Bach choir, in order to raise membership levels (even temporarily) choirs advertise for more people to participate in this one event of performing a large scale choral work in order to draw more members in, without the obligation to join the choir formally. This is even done when choirs plan to go on a concert tour abroad. However, I know that in Iceland two or more choirs are co-operating in rehearsing big choral works and perform them together – especially choral works like *Messiah* and the *Mass in B Minor*, which both require a certain mass of people in order to deliver the music properly.

In short, this section demonstrates that participants seem to bond with the work, either in a religious / spiritual way or in an emotional way, making an intimate connection to the music in the learning process, as previously referred to in previous chapter. Through the performance, the individual gets to know it in a more profound way than just by mere consumption through listening to a recording or attending a concert. This relates to the discussion in the previous chapter: participants familiarize themselves with new music (or reflect on earlier experience) which opens up a new musical world and encourages them to engage further in future musical activities. The learning experience gives choral singers a more intimate and profound understanding of

the work itself. In the following section I will discuss how the learning experience of a challenging piece like the *Mass in B Minor* becomes a collective process.

7.4 THE COLLECTIVE GROUP SUPPORT OF LEARNING THE *MASS IN B MINOR*

As I have described earlier, I am an amateur choral singer myself – I have years of experience of singing since I was five years old in my parents’ church choir in the countryside on the south coast of Iceland. I sang at school, which was a part of everyday life, and I discovered my ability to sing in my secondary school choir, continuing to sing in various quasi-professional choirs in my adulthood. My experience with large-scale choral works is not extensive; I have performed Handel’s *Messiah*, Bach’s *Christmas Oratorio* and I had previously performed sections from Mozart’s *Requiem* and Vivaldi’s *Gloria* along with other repertoire consisting mainly of Icelandic choral music (both religious and secular) and hymns (there are not many opportunities to sing grand choral works for people who live outside the capital of Reykjavík). Thus I was one of the members singing the *Mass in B Minor* for the first time. In this section, I will further discuss this experience of preparation and learning and I reflect on the autobiographical data collected during the participant observation. I refer to my interviewees and their perspectives towards this process of learning and making music.

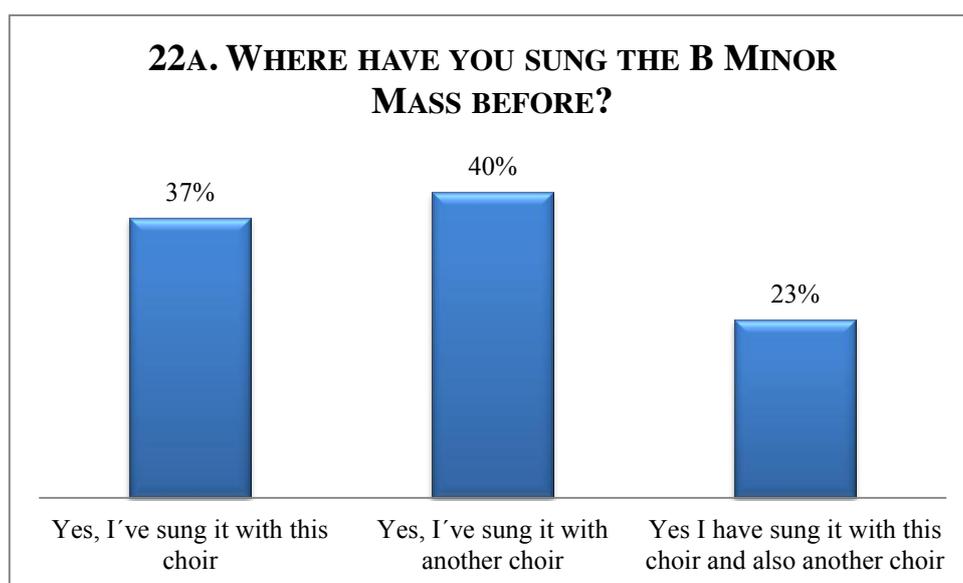


Figure 19: Where have you sung the B Minor Mass before? (Q22a)

According to the survey results, 63% of choir members had sung the *Mass in B Minor* before (see Figure 44 in Appendix 17) and of those 63% Figure 19 demonstrates whether they sang it with the Croydon Bach Choir or with another choir.

More than half of the choir members already knew the *Mass in B Minor* at the beginning of the rehearsal period. For someone who is learning it from scratch, however, in order to be able to keep up in a rehearsal period (especially if it is only 10 weeks rehearsing 16 choral parts), both the choir and the individuals within the choir must have developed singing and sight-reading skills. Thus the group consisted of a mixture of experienced choral singers (who had sung the *Mass in B Minor* previously) and those who were learning it from scratch.

In the case of this particular performance, people from other choirs (like local church choirs, who seldom have the opportunity to perform a work like *Mass in B Minor*) joined the choir temporarily and some of them told me they were encouraged to do it by their conductor in their local choir. Both Louise and Catherine joined the choir in order to perform the *Mass in B Minor* and according to Emily, having the opportunity to perform it ‘you kind of get to know it in a way that you just wouldn’t know other music and start listening to it’ (Emily) as previously discussed.

The first impression and the first experience of the work can be influential as well in both a good and a bad way – either encouraging or discouraging. For me, as a participant and a researcher, I had anticipated that this work would be difficult but it surprised me even more in the process itself how complex it really is.

In order to dig deeper into this matter, respondents were specifically asked how they became acquainted with the *Mass in B Minor* and they were particularly descriptive about how the work first caught their attention. When Catherine first heard the Sanctus in the *Mass in B Minor* in the 1970s, she said: ‘I have to sing that.’ In relation, survey results demonstrated that 29% of the choir members chose the Sanctus as their favourite section in the *Mass in B Minor* (see further Figure 46 in Appendix 17) but only 4% chose the Kyrie.²⁹ Related to this context, James reflected on his first experience performing the *Mass in B Minor*:

... that was the most wonderful inspiration, I was singing the most wonderful pieces of music for the first time. I’ll never forget the first time I sang the *Mass in B Minor* ... I can remember it made such a wonderful

²⁹ Which is my favourite, actually

impression on me, it's just absolutely out of this world, and in fact my music teacher came to the performance because she greatly loved Bach and I remember she said after the performance: 'You know ... I've not yet recovered' and what she meant [is that she] was just so entranced by the performance ... (James).

This first memory of the performance seems to be a sort of anchor for James, who presumably uses and reflects on this first memory of performing the *Mass in B Minor*, reliving this sensation of being a part of an entrancing performance. Irene, who was performing the *Mass in B Minor* for the first time linked her first experience in the first rehearsal to an external situation at the time:

The Kyrie ... I think it's beautiful but also the first bit we rehearsed and I just wow! Especially in the first rehearsal when it was in the middle of the snow. There were not that many people here and the idea that we were sight-singing it – quite a small group around the piano. Still you could feel how it was going to be – it's quite inspiring (Irene).

In January 2010, England suffered from severe snow and Irene linked her first rehearsal to these conditions.³⁰

According to James, the *Mass in B Minor* was very difficult for an amateur choir since the music is very complex. Louise was surprised to see the progress in the rehearsals, most of the time:

... the Croydon Bach choir is getting through couple of movements a week and maybe they are not absolutely polish but I think they are putting in enough work. Well they are actually-ish, well, some people are struggling but I also get the feeling people will go home and they will learn singing their parts. There have been some weeks that I've been surprised to see people come so well prepared. I mean last week was an exception – I think last week was a bit rough. I think people got out of the habit of learning and dropped out for a while and stopped listening to it and some of the runs were just complete blurs but I'm sure people will put their mind to it – it's difficult, very difficult (Louise).

³⁰ I can relate to her experience. My first performance of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* was during Christmas in 1996, making me think of snow, Christmas bells and decorations and the scent of smoked lamb when I listen to this oratorio. Again, here is evidence of relating music to something tangible, as in relating Bach to the baroque era as well as his religious image, as discussed in section 3.2.

What Louise is emphasizing is the importance of being focused on the work every week. As previously mentioned, in this case the project is to perform the *Mass in B Minor* after 10 weeks of rehearsal, which is not a long time for a work of this magnitude. Therefore liking the repertoire certainly helps people to learn more quickly, like Louise referred to:

I've talked to some people – the lady who sits next to me says she loves it [The *Mass in B Minor*] so much that she cannot stop listening to it and that's what is helping people. If they fall in love with it, they will learn it, maybe just because they are listening to it all the time but I cannot imagine anyone who'd not like it ... it's not everyone's cup of tea, I suppose (Louise).

In my experience, learning this work from scratch is very difficult like Meredith:

I'm learning it from scratch and if I'm being honest, I'm finding it very, very difficult - very challenging but at the same time this motivates me - this gives me an incentive to work harder and you know to put in the effort and to commit myself to it. I haven't sung it before and you can almost say if you sing next to a person whether he or she has done it because of the confidence with which they are singing but I'm always happy to learn new things and to experience something new and I'm sure it's always the case with everybody when you learn something and you leave it behind you have to face it again. It comes back to you so quickly so I think - I do not know - maybe in a few years I will hear this or I'll have to sing it again with another group so I'm definitely enjoying myself even though I have to learn it from scratch, something very new but it's a beautiful piece and I'm really glad that I'm singing it (Meredith).

What Meredith referred to was her enjoyment of learning and achieving something, crossing a barrier – a theme that has frequently surfaced in the data in this research. Patrick, who was rehearsing the *Mass in B Minor* for the second time, claimed that 'this is more of refreshment – more refreshing than learning it for the first time' and that even so, there were still some bits that he did not yet know.

Peter's first choral experience was to participate in rehearsing and performing the *Mass in B Minor*, but this time was his second 'attempt:'

... this is the second time I've sang the Mass [in B Minor]. The first time I did it when I just joined the choir and it was very scary [laughter] and it's still scary ... it was such a long time ago and I remember I was very tired of it (Peter).

As an experienced choral singer, I can relate to Peter's notion - I know that going through a difficult work like the *Mass in B Minor* also requires some patience and it can really be tiring at times, trying to get through the same bar over and over again, without getting it right, missing a note here and there, and having difficulties in getting the phrasing correct and in place. Some rehearsals are a total disaster, making most singers irritated either towards themselves for not being able to get it right, or irritated towards those who do not presumably prepare themselves or who attend on an irregular basis and are not up to date with what is going on (whereas the work may be a bit too challenging).

Another aspect of the difficulty of the repertoire is that in many cases, Bach did not include in his compositions specific instructions for singers on where to breathe on a regular basis, or as Mary puts it: '... he writes for the singer as it was an instrumentalist, I think.' Tim Horton (conductor of the Croydon Bach Choir) agreed:

... for all his genius he didn't have a great grasp of how the voices work. I think so it's conceived certainly orchestrally I think - I think he thought sopranos could be like violins a little bit and of course things like semiquavers is rather easier for violins than they are for singers ... (Tim Horton).

Therefore, one of the greatest challenges of performing choral works by Bach is the supernatural stamina required from the singers. As an example, while rehearsing the 1st part of the Credo, I felt that it was difficult to sight-read some of the bars and it was hard to know where to breathe (Rehearsal 4). Another example was in rehearsal 5, while practicing the Sanctus (where especially the 1st soprano needs to support the high notes) there was not much space in the music to breathe (like many other Bach chorales). I remember that I found this odd, considering that Bach wrote his choral music for choirs that he conducted himself, and, according to historical documents, he only had 16-20 singers in his choir. Yet, in order to deliver chorales like the Sanctus, the singers need to

have almost inhuman ability when it comes to breathing. This perspective is one of the factors that make this work so complex to learn and to sing.

Due to the complexity of the *Mass in B Minor*, the larger group forms a certain supportive apparatus for the choral singer. As within so many groups, there comes a kind of automatic ‘hierarchical’ division in which the strongest singers are the leaders and the other singers, who do not have the same level of skills, act as followers, as Louise describes:

I think I’m not a follower. There are some people and when they sing they just wait for the person sitting next to them and then got the confidence to come in when I make sure I know something so well that I could sing quite happy. I could do a solo, not that I got the voice for it so I think that my skills have more to do with timing and accuracy and learning something well rather than having a good voice, I do not think I got a good voice but I think that I’m accurate (Louise).

What Louise is describing is that she is not afraid to take the initiative and does not necessarily want to rely on others to make the right entry or to hit the right notes; as she had previously mentioned, she takes time to prepare before every rehearsal. Even though it is possible to find a pattern of leader-follower relations within the group, the division is not always black and white. As within every type of group work, different individuals have different strengths and skills, and individuals contribute their talents to the group using the social force and dynamics to create something great. Take Emily and Peter as examples: Emily (an alto) learned to play the piano when she was young and describes her sight reading skills as moderate and she has, with other two altos, formed ‘a small group within the group:’

Q: How would you describe your skills as a choral singer?

EMILY: I’m not sure really. I can read music - I would think I am kind of moderate really - I’m moderate and enthusiastic. I’m not marvellous but ... we are three sitting side by side and we are doing quite well at the moment.

I’m good in hitting notes, I’m rubbish at counting, I feed off the other singers in the bass and some of them are very good at counting and some of them who are good at counting do not have that nice voice so I sort of project their counting outwards ... I think that I’ve got better because I’m in the choir. I

was always capable to make a reasonable sound but I think I got better projecting it ... (Peter).

David and Emily both describe how they seek their support from the other members within their part: Peter claims he has good pitch, but he relies on the assistance of his peer singers when it comes to keeping time. The group, consisting of individuals with different strengths and skills, forms a unit and helps each other out. As for Emily's small group, according to my experience as a choral singer, I have seen this micro formation of groups within each part (especially among the female parts) in every choir I have sung with. The singer finds his/her place within his/her part, sits next to the same two people and chooses these people according to how they sound together; the person next to you is usually accurate (or even better than you are) and if your voices sound well together. Singers with relatively little experience also tend to try to sit next to a person who has more skills and is confident while singing – whether it is sitting beside that person or even in front of him/her. The group seems to support individual contributions in order to make the result of the group work better when it comes to the quality of the sound, pitch and accuracy.

It was evident in some of the narratives, especially when interviewees were asked whether they wanted to become professional singers or not, that some of them claimed they sing better in a group. Louise, for example, does not consider her voice good enough for solos and likes to sing when no one is listening but her remarks on the value of group singing highlight another feature of collective singing and its value:

I honestly think that I sing better with the choir - when I'm alone I feel like I am struggling more but yes I sing on my own ... I think it would be fantastic to do [a solo career]. If you got a good voice to be a soloist is wonderful - I do not think - it's very competitive - there are very few people who get on, particularly these days. You have to have the whole package - if you look like Catherine Jenkins, you go ahead (Louise).

Louise is demonstrating that she uses the power of group singing (the social, collective, aesthetic experience) to enhance or 'increase the quality of my own singing' (Louise) – using the collective power to sing aloud without hesitation. This indicates that singing together might be better for the individual voice in many cases, whereas the individual

is also enhanced by the collectivism and finds that he/she does better in a group (see Putnam, Feldstein and Cohen, 2004).

Thus the group dynamics have a positive influence on new members, who were at times struggling with getting through the work itself. These new members, especially those who were singing the *Mass in B Minor* for the first time, were spread throughout the group, sitting next to people who had sung the work before in order to benefit from the group support (Rehearsal 5).

Mary, a soprano, was rehearsing the *Mass in B Minor* not for the first, or second time described her favourite choral part in the mass (Cum Sancto Spiritu). She shares her frustration of having to stop in the middle of a section or measure during rehearsals:

Oh, it just makes me want to carry on singing and – anything that really annoys me at choir practice is that we have to keep stopping [laughter] and obviously that's so other people can learn notes and to get the balance, everything tied together but I find that a bit frustrating [laughter] (Mary).

What Mary describes might be common among more experienced singers. In many choirs, singers come and go – experienced singers leave the choir and new members (even less skilled) join in – this difference in skills can be both positive and negative: Positive in the sense that new members get support from more experienced singers while learning new and challenging works and thus benefit from collective learning process.

In the beginning of the rehearsal period, due to my lack of practice in sight-reading and my pitch problems, I placed myself next to a very good soprano (rehearsals 2 and 3) who had sung this work a number of times before. I was in a new situation – I was seeking support from others to learn the repertoire. Usually I am in the position of learning my part quickly and thus supporting my fellow sopranos, but this time it was the opposite. I was experiencing, pretty much for the first time in my life, how it felt to be a singer who benefits from the more experienced singers.

Although my aim was to be self-sufficient and not to rely on others, I admit that having her support was very helpful, especially when I was going off track and had to get back into the performance fairly quickly with her help. Peer-support of this kind was very helpful to me and demonstrates that teamwork of this kind is efficient; if one fails during a measure or two, there is definitely someone else who stayed on track. This kind

of collective learning made the work of the musical director much easier in the meantime. In fact, as strange as it might sound, I was quite relieved not to be in my usual role as the singer who knows the repertoire before anyone else within his / her part, as it was a relief to be just one of many strong sopranos, not the only strong soprano. In this way, it meant less pressure on me, I could enjoy it more and I did not have to worry about my voice being too strong or standing out; I could sing out loud as much as I was able, without making a mess of the music.

This, however, can be a bit frustrating for the more skilled singers who get the feeling that they are not actually improving when they are not being challenged enough and, in the worst case scenario, they get bored. I have experienced this lack of challenge in some of the choirs I have sung with, which is not a good thing, especially if the main emphasis is on singing challenging repertoire and not necessarily being a part of a group, or a part of a society. Additionally, this clash of skills can be discouraging for skilled, experienced singers, like James demonstrated:

I just sang the *Mass in B Minor* last summer ... and it was with what is called the [location] Festival Choir that is to say various singers from different choirs come together and rehearse - and what this means is that you get a lot of singers who probably didn't know it and have never sung it and some who did sing it before and I found that much more difficult because the standard can sometimes suffer slightly and it was a very large number of people and I think you need a smaller number because to get all the complexities needs a lot ... obviously you need a choir of good ability to do it because it's probably one of the most difficult works in the repertoire (James).

On the other hand, it must be taken into consideration that those who are more skilled than others are not necessarily right all the time, as Meredith describes. These discussions above address the importance of collective learning: Not only do strong, experienced singers provide support for their fellow members (who may not be as experienced); they also save the conductor a lot of time and effort in teaching and training relatively new and inexperienced members. Therefore, these singers who have both good skills and experience are valuable to the choir, especially when the conductor and the choral committee decide to go forward with challenging repertoire. This can be

a risk, especially if they are not fully aware of both the quality and the musical ability of the choir as a whole. James commented on this issue:

Well, as Tim [the musical director of the Croydon Bach choir] said the other week, he said that we are not here to achieve absolute note perfection – very few amateur choirs ever do, well you aim for that. Nevertheless it needs to be as well rehearsed as it possibly can be (James).

Like James above, when discussing performances in general, the matter of accuracy and the intellectual challenge ‘in sense of working on something and achieving something’ (Jacob) were frequently mentioned in the interviews. Mary, who is an experienced singer like James, emphasized that the note accuracy was not always an issue if the group is big enough:

... as long as it’s pretty much on the note because everybody’s voices are different and you might have one person who is perhaps singing a weeny bit under the note but because they are all singing together, it’s not going to be noticeable and I think that in rehearsals a conductor of a smallish choir has a pretty good idea where the problems lie in intonation. Yes, it would be ideal if everybody is absolutely in pitch but I do not think it’s always a problem. It might be if you were singing a capella but we might only do that perhaps for some folk songs and things like that which we’ve done maybe in some lighter concerts (Mary).

Here Mary is referring to the power of collective singing where the group (i.e. the choir) can make up and almost ‘delete’ individual errors or off-pitch singing. Performing the *Mass in B Minor* is certainly a challenge in that field – making it an ideal work to perform on special occasions.

This section has addressed my experience as a participant and a researcher and the experience of the interviewees in the process of learning and rehearsing the *Mass in B Minor*. Previously I discussed how choir members experience the social value and importance of the choir as a route to well-being. What has not yet been discussed is the conductor’s role when it comes to the learning process and how the conductor influenced and encouraged choir members. In the next section, I will summarize my perspective and the interviewee’s perspectives on his role and work in this process.

7.5 THE SUPPORT AND LEADERSHIP OF THE MUSICAL DIRECTOR IN THE LEARNING PROCESS OF THE *MASS IN B MINOR*

Actions taken by the conductor in the beginning of the rehearsal period can make a huge difference in whether the conductor is able to ‘get it all together’- teach, conduct, support, deliver. In previous writings (Einarsdóttir and Sigurjónsson, 2010) I have discussed the role and the importance of the choral conductor from the perspectives of choir members themselves and the results indicated that without the actions taken by the conductor, the choir itself would rarely be able to deliver a full concert program – the choir would be a ‘headless doll.’

As discussed in the previous chapter, the rehearsal period of 10 weeks is not a long time for a choral work like the *Mass in B Minor* and therefore getting it all together in time is truly a challenge for the conductor. According to Catherine ...

It’s the conductor’s job to bring the music out of the performers. I would say conductors have responsibility for the singers to learn the music – I think it’s the singer’s responsibility which should be encouraged by the conductor and where there are sticky passages that are certainly in the Bach, there is this element of teaching going on but in that sense the conductor is a facilitator rather than a repetitor – but I think there must be a very good [connection] between the conductor and the choir (Catherine).

Catherine emphasizes the role of the conductor as a mentor and the importance of the elements of teaching and getting things to come together for the final phase – the concert.

A part of my participant observation was to monitor the interaction between the conductor and the choir members in the rehearsal phase in order to demonstrate the function of the cognitive learning process. I also monitored which methods the conductor used in his reaction and to prevent people from getting stressed or becoming insecure. I must confess that I thought (and still think) very highly of this conductor and my respect for his musicianship grew as the time passed. During the rehearsal process he was very professional in his approach, organised, and managed the rehearsals in a confident manner and was able to effortlessly maintain discipline. He was also quite

quick to spot errors, had good leadership skills and was also very organized, which is not always the case with many conductors of this calibre. He also has a very likeable personality, although not very extroverted, but had a good, moderate sense of humour without being a joker or a clown. Most of the interviewees agreed with me on the professional abilities of the music director:

To me he's very good, he knows what he's doing – he never loses his temper which is very good – very positive ... (Gerald).

... he's got confidence and he is clever and sharp and he doesn't pick out people individually. I'd really like to see what he's like – I know this is a difficult work and there isn't enough time (Louise).

David explained that he was getting better, though still not perfect. David thought he was a bit too reserved - a valid criticism but not a very harsh one. At first, he struck me as more of an introvert but as the term passed, I gradually changed my mind. At one point during the rehearsals I wrote (referring to the field notes) 'I hope that I managed to impress the conductor by demonstrating my skills as a choral singer – bearing in mind that I have never sung or performed the *Mass in B Minor*.' It is possible that my (professional) admiration of the conductor might have clouded my judgement while assessing his skills. These results are based on my personal perspective as a choral singer rather than as an objective musical / technical evaluation, particularly as I discuss my experience with how he solved problems and kept things going, despite the pressure of getting the piece together in time before concert.

There were three key elements displayed during the term in regard to the style of the conductor used in order to manage stress and enhance the confidence of choir members: use of humour, use of compliments, and giving supportive and practical, cognitive advice during the learning process of the *Mass in B Minor*.

What I like very much is the fact that he's very strict, he demands a lot from us and I like this but also he's you know, he's always able to bring in a joke or something, you know, to cheer you up – I'm sure he's aware of how our day is like, very busy, very tiring, very exhausting and he knows that this is the time when we come and we have to enjoy ourselves and he helps us to achieve this so this is what I like (Meredith).

Meredith refers to the conductor's modest use of humour to lighten the rehearsal and trying to get people out of their everyday hassle while also respecting that singing in this choir is not their main profession.

As an example, the most difficult chorales like *Cum Sancto Spiritu* were particularly challenging, not only for the choir members but also for the conductor. He reassured the choir that this piece was as hard as it got and used humour to lighten up the atmosphere, claiming that if he could, he would like to sing 2nd soprano. To which the sopranos said 'go on – we are not going to stop you' making the choir laugh. Laughter is a good way to release stress and at that time, it was as if the conductor sensed that some of the singers (including me) were getting nervous about not being able to get their parts.

The use of humour is a good way of managing stress and making people relax under pressure. Even while dealing with the heating problem at the rehearsal venue, the conductor apologized for the cold and offered his coat if anyone needed it and made the group change positions (stand up – sit down) more frequently than usual in order to get at least a minimum amount of physical exercise. Another example – in rehearsal 4, while practising the *Credo in unum Deum*, the conductor told a joke right after the pause – a joke he had heard in a funeral eulogy about a general, and the funeral took place at the Guard's Chapel. At this moment this was a very important move from the conductor because, at this rehearsal, people were starting to realise that there was only a month until the concert and a lot would have to be done before that time. Some were struggling with the chorale and under these circumstances in general.

The second key element regarding the role of the conductor was the use of compliment and encouragement. Emily emphasized the importance of encouragement instead of bashing and lecture-giving as a successful way of empowering people:

Tim sort of understands that people have other jobs and other things to do and we're not professional singers and he seems to be okay with that. I think a choir where they get very grumpy with you and sort of telling you awful lot is a bit tricky when you're an adult and you've had a busy day – you really do not want to go somewhere where they start [lecturing you] ... you should be encouraging people instead (Emily).

Emily refers to how the conductor should be complimentary and encouraging rather than creating a dictatorship. In this case, the conductor did not over-use compliments

during rehearsals but in some circumstances used the phrase ‘well-done’, even though the choir didn’t do so well. The aim of the conductor was to encourage choir members in order to make them accomplish even more than they thought they could and to give people compliments on their performance. As an example, while rehearsing *Et resurrexit* he gave the basses very good feedback, considering they had a very difficult solo line to deliver. Probably the most difficult part in the Mass is the 2nd soprano line – in this choir, there were not many singing the 2nd soprano part so the strategy was to give them more confidence to enable them to deliver.

The third element was the aspect of teaching and giving practical advice. Jacob explained that ‘Tim got a good sense of what a choir needs in terms of attention and taking out parts.’ According to Mary ...

... it is important that people like what the conductor is doing; how he behaves, how he takes the rehearsals because I do not think that they want to keep coming back if they are not inspired by him and occasionally amused by him – and that they feel that the way he breaks down the music say if you are doing a new piece – the way he breaks down the music and how you learn its parts. It’s got to feel inclusive that he doesn’t spend all the time on one part and not on another and that he just do not go on and on and on with one bit – trying to get it right. It’s best to leave it, come back to it at another occasion. It’s getting the balance right so that everybody feels that they’ve had a good rehearsal and not just one part (Mary).

Mary refers to how the methods that the conductor uses must be appropriate for the group and that the conductor must be aware of balance and make people enjoy what they are doing. Patrick had a prior experience rehearsing the *Mass in B Minor* under the direction of another conductor:

... the way Tim teaches it and comes across it’s enjoyable and if you enjoy something in the way it’s taught to you, the better and you understand better. When we learned it before it was with the other choir I sang with and that was the first piece my mother did, she joined the choir and sang it in a concert – we rehearsed her up to it and I was singing it before but the music direction wasn’t the same as Tim so I have enjoyed the rehearsals more with Tim because Tim has injected them all – you know ... so it’s the first time I heard it last year live and I thought I’d never be able to sing it but I’m enjoying it ... (Patrick).

Since the *Mass in B Minor* is indeed very challenging, the strategy was to pull this work together as a whole, first and foremost. Ten weeks of rehearsal is not a very long time and Louise, when asked about the learning process, said:

... I'm surprised that he's getting through movement by movement. I do not know what it'll be like on a simpler work. If he'd spend a lot of time refining things which to be honest with the *Mass in B Minor* there isn't much time to do that – just getting the notes is what you can hope for in this time so it would be interesting to see what he's like with something [easier] ... (Louise).

Louise refers to how the conductor emphasized that even though we didn't know every single note, we shouldn't worry and should not let one mistake ruin our evening. The first thing would be to get back on track, even though we didn't get every bar perfect. It would be important for us not to panic if we got off track, just keep our happy faces on and get back on track, in order to avoid the whole voice part getting off track. This strategy was used to prevent too much stress and Patrick emphasized that ...

... on the night, you do not want anybody to be lazy, missing because you stand out. You think you do not because you're in an ensemble of 120 singers but that one person; someone will pull that person out and say: You weren't singing, he wasn't singing, he ought. You know, he ought to have, she didn't, you know, audience notice this ... and so does Tim [the conductor] [laughter], oh God, yes (Patrick).

Patrick refers to the emphasis of the conductor – whenever a choral singer gets lost, it is important to get back on track as soon as possible, to minimize the odds that it would be noticed by the audience. However, leaving a bar or a tone imperfect here is doable in a big choir like the Croydon Bach Choir, even though not everybody confessed to knowing only 95% of the work, like Louise:

I think even the conductor said 'look, no one can get through the whole thing [The *Mass in B Minor*] in just – you have to leave out a bar you do not like' [laughter] – I think that's the only way to do it but I wouldn't do that – that's kind of cheating – I just want to sing every note ... (Louise).

It is quite normal to have it as a main aim to learn the work as well as one possibly can and set the standard high, as Louise did and in some situations, the singer must know every note. I can recall while performing with my pilot choir in the autumn term (2009) that we were only four 1st sopranos and the rest of the sopranos relied on my knowledge. I couldn't allow myself not to know every single bar or note. I thought to myself that the number of choir members is a deciding factor in order to be able to perform a work of this magnitude, like the *Mass in B Minor*, after only a 10 week rehearsal period. With a smaller choir, this would be more problematic and only possible if the main core of the choir consisted of strong, advanced, experienced quasi-professional singers.

In order to conclude, the support of the musical director is vital in that the conductor forms a sort of educational bridge between the work (and, in a way, the composer) and the choir – it is the conductor's job to bring the music out of the performers. As in this case, the conductor of the Croydon Bach choir is a highly skilled conductor, and his strategy of bringing it all together can be divided into three main categories: his use of humour to lighten the atmosphere (releasing stress), his giving of compliments and encouragement to the members in the process, and the offering of technical advice regarding the repertoire, as well as the aspect of teaching and coaching.

7.6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presented a case study of how a group of people developed 'choral capital' through singing together and the collective learning process of the *Mass in B Minor* and being a part of a composer-oriented Bach choir. The concept of a Bach choir signified in the minds of the interviewees a certain directive force regarding the choice of repertoire – more of a guiding light than to be limiting and the label 'Bach choir' as a promotional label. Findings demonstrate that singing in a Bach choir indicates a certain quality of choral singing but is not necessarily a deciding factor when choosing a choir. Thus the choir shapes a certain 'choral identity' while promoting itself as an amateur choir performing quality music and challenging repertoire.

This identity reflects the development of choral capital in that participants construct Bach as a musical genius on one hand and the devout, religious Lutheran and hard-working family man on the other. The image described above is synonymous with

early biographical writings that evoke a romantic image of Bach and is reflected in the narratives of interviewees when inquired about Bach as a person and a composer.

Discussion regarding the romantic ideas about Bach (which may be a result of general curriculum in music education in primary and secondary schools) continues in participants' perceptions towards the *Mass in B Minor*. The learning experience leads to a profound and more intimate connection to the music, either in a religious / spiritual or emotional way allowing the individual to get to the heart and soul of the work. The singers become familiar with it in a more intimate way than simply being in the audience.

This dynamic situation in the learning experience of the rehearsal period gives the choral singer a deeper understanding of the work itself while using the collective effort of peer-support and learning under the supervision and leadership of the conductor. As a result, the choral singer forms a pathway towards 'choral capital' in order to broaden the choral singer's musical experiences, preferences and visions, and encourages the singer to get involved in further projects.

This leads to the question of what happens after great events like a concert performance of the *Mass in B Minor*? Do people quit the choir and take breaks? In many cases choirs work with lighter repertoire after an intense performance, which can be a good thing; but for those who like challenges, it can also be discouraging (at least that is my experience). As is evident, choirs are getting smaller and the competition is getting harder, i.e. to recruit new members, especially young people. One might ask if performances of works like the *Mass in B Minor* might become rare in the future.

8. DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter represents a summary of key findings that will be discussed in relation to the theoretical context of the thesis. The main aim of this research was to study how choir members' use the collective learning process of rehearsing and performing large-scale choral music to develop socio-cultural capital and socio-musical identity. In the findings I have suggested that choral participation and performance create a certain 'choral capital' (a combination of social and cultural capital within the choral setting) and how the choristers reconstruct and relate to the composer (J.S. Bach) and how being a part of a Bach choir creates a certain 'choral identity' among the members. These aspects will be illustrated in this chapter in relation to theory and previous studies.

8.1 BACH CHORAL SINGERS: SOCIO-MUSICAL IDENTITIES AND PATHWAY TO 'CHORAL CAPITAL' AS A RESULT OF MUSICAL HISTORIES?

This study has joined two different bodies of literature in musical studies: Firstly, it used literature on musical preferences. This has included work on the development of taste via Bourdieu (1980; 1984), why people love the music they do and how taste is developed through performance (referring to Hennion's concept of taste as performance (2001)). It has also included a focus on the love and image of Bach and how people seek to perform together. Secondly, the study used the choral literature regarding communal bonding, group dynamics and the imagined idea of communal transfer dimension and the development of musical / choral identity.

The foundation of identifying choral capital and defining choral identity is to observe how participants define their musical identities by casting light on their musical histories. As referred to in chapter 6, looking primarily at the level of formal music education only gives certain clues about the choir members' musical backgrounds and training. Therefore I looked at their level of choral experience and how they developed their musical identity through (non) active musical upbringing at home among their families and benefitted from both internal and external encouragement based on the narratives of their musical backgrounds.

8.1.1 'INFORMAL' MUSICAL BACKGROUND?

As is evident in the results of the survey, the majority of the choir members have extensive *experience in choral singing* (see section 6.1.1) with relatively low levels of *formal music education*; 33% have no formal music education but 55% have attended short courses/workshops and/or private lessons. There were also examples of participants who started choral singing in their adulthood (without prior experience of choral singing in childhood and/or adolescence) which is not very common, even though I know of a few examples myself. As a result, having little or no prior experience in choral singing can be problematic for these individuals, particularly in figuring out which voice part they should sing and how to read music scores. One interviewee underlined the importance of choral workshops and courses for people who are interested in joining a choir but do not have the courage to do so, either because they have not sung since they were children or have no previous experience with choral singing.

Discovering *vocal identity*, particularly which voice part to sing is not always an obvious process. Auditions, with their advantages and disadvantages, may be useful in order to 'locate' individual voices, which can be the 'real purpose' of auditions. It is typically in the hands of the conductors to guide choral singers where they 'belong.' There was one example of one of the participants who had been singing alto for over 15 years before realising she was a soprano, thus spending a lot of time singing a voice part that was not suitable for her voice. Singing the wrong voice part is not good for the voice in the long term. Thus defining vocal identity can be problematic if the individual has little or no musical training and/or little or no experience in choral singing (see Monks, 2003).

8.1.2 MUSICAL HISTORIES – FAMILY INFLUENCES?

Previous findings indicate that family, friends and other relatives play a key role in the development of a child's personal identity for the first years (Davidson, Howe, Moore and Sloboda, 1996 – see North and Hargreaves, 2002). Later on and into adolescence, friends, schoolmates and the school environment gradually become more influential in the development of musical identities (Lamont, 2002). Regarding musical background

and influences, it was evident in the findings of this study that the *musical interest of parents and musical activity* (instrumental playing, musical consumption, singing) in the childhood household was an influential factor in the narratives of the interviewees regarding the development of positive musical identity, including whether the musical interest of parents / siblings / relatives or any of them being musically active. There was no particular difference in whether the mother or the father had more impact, a finding that is not quite in line with Pitts' results (forthcoming) that indicate fathers were more musically influential than the mothers (who often were busy attending to the household). In summary, findings indicate that parents' interests and music consumption (such as listening to the radio or an album, having musical instruments in the house) in the childhood home plays a key role in the development of the musical identities of participants, as is evident in the narratives of the interviewees.

These influences can go both ways, however, as the findings demonstrate. One of the interviewees had actually influenced her parents' musical interests, including introducing her father to choral singing in adulthood. There are examples of parents gaining interest in sports (football-moms) through their children and the same can also happen through music. The other example indicated that despite the importance of the influences of the family and childhood home, children may develop interest in music in relation to external encouragement, as was the case of one of the interviewees (James). Going into adolescence, factors such as peer comparison, support and encouragement from music teachers, along with other external encouragement, play a key role and may be a deciding factor in whether adolescents pursue their musical career and further develop their musical identities. This includes attending extra-curricular musical activities, learning to play musical instruments and whether or not they make the decision to follow the pathway into the world of professional musicianship (see Lamont, 2002).

8.1.3 ENCOURAGEMENT AND MUSICAL CONFIDENCE – GENDERED PERSPECTIVES

My findings indicated certain *gendered perspectives in the narratives regarding musical encouragement*. The women (among the interviewees) referred more frequently to encouragement they received when they were young, and how they told their stories indicated that they seemed more dependent on external encouragement than the male

participants. However, while describing, for example, external encouragement, it was evident that the women were hesitant of taking praise too seriously. One of them reflected on the words of her music teacher saying that she had a voice ‘good enough’ for choral singing, but not an exceptional voice – a comment she seemed to regard as a form of encouragement. This is an example of how music teachers, according to the writings of Lamont (2002) and Plummeridge (1991, p. 82 – quoted in Lamont, 2002), seem to make certain distinctions between children who are musical and those who are not. Most music teachers in this geographic location are a product of the Western music tradition through their formal music education (Green, 1998 – see Martin, 2005). According to Cook (1998) this is a direct result of the music hierarchical system of 19th century European classical music and these teachers are therefore influenced by that tradition in their attempt to identify potential future professional musicians.

Additionally, there was a difference in how the genders responded to encouragement of further musical development. One male participant considered the alleged encouragement more as a pressure, and that his parents ‘insisted’ that he take music lessons. It may be assumed (as is reflected in the findings of Elorriaga (2011)) that boys and young male adolescents respond to encouragement in a more negative way and it was also evident in the narratives that voice-breaking during adolescence was somewhat discouraging for continued singing (see Elorriaga, 2011).

Thus external encouragement seems slightly more important for women. They internalized it and implemented it, as opposed to the men in this group, in order to provide enhanced self-confidence in performance and in seeking some kind of ‘musical authority.’ However, this ‘musical authority’ may not apply to the image of the vocalist, which, according to Dibben (2002) is more salient in relation to the female body. Similarly, Ashley (2006) shows that the male voice before voice-breaking stands contra to the formation of male identity – therefore, keeping boys and adolescent boys within the frame of the choral setting may be problematic. This stands in contrast to the alleged ‘male-orientation’ of the Western classical music tradition, based on men’s initiative. Whereas women, in a historical perspective, were left out in the cold in regard to public performances until in the 19th century, both as composers and performers, except for domestic performances of the middle and upper class women in Victorian England (see Blake, 1997; Dibben, 2002 and DeNora, 1995). According to Aleman (1997), public institutions such as universities are shaped and designed especially for men. The patriarchal discourse dominates, causing women to seek more validation as they do not

find their secure place within the patriarchal system and still, despite increased gender equality, seem to be facing problems in receiving the same status as men. This might lead them to be more hesitant to define themselves as musicians, which could possibly be a product of historical nature. These aspects are evident in the findings, whereas the narratives of the female interviewees indicate this tendency of seeking certain patriarchal authority by specifically referring to the acknowledgement of their former music teachers.

8.1.4 AMATEUR BACH SINGERS – BROKEN DREAMS OF PROFESSIONAL CAREER?

The participants in this research define themselves as *amateur musicians*, having various musical backgrounds (music lessons, choral singing in primary / secondary school and onwards) but in their narratives, the encouragement (both from family and also external encouragement from music teachers and others) functioned as a pathway towards participation in choral activities and to pursuing further amateur choral singing in adulthood. While defining and discussing their musical skills, men claimed to be more confident in, for example, sight-reading and there were gendered perspectives in how participants defined the level of their musical skills, whereas the women were more modest in that part.

When asked, interviewees claimed that choosing music as a profession was not particularly on their mind, even though they like performing music, they questioned the practicality of it (the risk of going into a profession without the certainty of financial security) for several reasons. One of these was the need for having music as a life fulfilment; to be able to participate in a collective musical performance without the pressure of having to make a living from it, without the pressure of vocal / technical requirements and without the pressure of being on the edge in this competitive profession. Another aspect that was evident in several narratives was the need for participating in a musical performance without being in the spotlight – taking collective part without being the leading ‘star of the show.’ Linking this discussion to the classification of amateur musicians (put forward by Robert Stebbins (1979)), these interviewees can be classified as ‘pure amateurs’ that have no intention of going into professional careers and thus somewhat support Drummond’s research (1990) on the amateur’s emphasis of enjoyment in musical activities.

In short, these findings indicate that generally some kind of musical interest in the environment of participants was an influential factor in the development of positive musical identities, especially the interest of parents, family members and the encouragement both from family members and music teachers. The musical background and histories of participants gives an indication of how they have developed their musical taste and preferences in general. The next section refers to their choral participation as an influential factor in the cultural context of ‘choral capital’.

8.2 THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF ‘CHORAL CAPITAL:’ LEARNING TO LIKE NEW MUSIC AND DEVELOPING ‘CHORAL IDENTITY?’

The identification of social and cultural capital within the choral context gives evidence of the benefits of choral singing both from the social context of the choir affecting the social capital (being a part of a choral ensemble, building social networks, meeting people with common interests, gaining new friendships) and the impact of choral singing on cultural capital (impact of performing music of various genres on musical taste and preferences, being introduced to musical works, genres, composers or even periods in the history of music). In order to bring these perspectives together, I attempt to identify ‘choral capital’, which consists of both social and cultural aspects of choral singing.

8.2.1 CHORAL SINGING INFLUENCING THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUSICAL TASTE AND PREFERENCES?

The cultural side of choral participation consisted of the artistic challenge in learning new works and being introduced to new composers, genres or periods. In the perspective of Bourdieu (1986/2008) there are three forms of *cultural capital*. Choral singing can firstly be defined as a community-based transmission and embodiment of cultural capital, in that the choral performer also becomes a consumer of the music through the rehearsal process and the concert where the ‘final product’ is delivered to the audience. Secondly, choral singing can be defined as an informal music education. It may be described as a mixture of the institutionalized state of cultural capital (the choir

as an institution of music education) and as a kind of semi-domestic and/or hereditary transmission of cultural capital. In this perspective, the transmission of cultural capital appeared through the introduction of new music being rehearsed and performed in the Croydon Bach Choir, influencing the musical taste and preferences of choir members.

Discussing *musical taste and preferences*, male participants were more conservative in their musical preferences than the women, preferring classical music, especially baroque music (see Table 10 in Appendix 17) and they listened more to music by Johann Sebastian Bach. There is a question whether men (and particularly men in the Croydon Bach choir) who sing in choirs may have had a certain upbringing in liking classical music, and that factor may have influenced their decision on joining a choir in the first place. In a way this reflects a certain male centred discourse regarding what good music is, which can be traced to the male-oriented dominance of the Western classical music canon. The women in this study claimed to be more open minded towards a variety of music genres. This was also common in younger participants, which is in accordance with my previous research on 10 Icelandic choirs (Einarsdóttir, 2009). Previous research has indicated that women (especially young women and teenage girls) tend to like popular music. This again is somewhat undermined and (often) ridiculed by the male dominant music discourse, while genres like rock music (even heavy metal) are considered ‘good music’ (Richards (1998; Dibben, 2002; Colley, 2008).

Furthermore, simply looking at statistics does not always ‘tell the whole story’ since the interviewees defined and described their musical preferences in their own sort of way. The personal narratives in this research thus cast further light on how participants (in this case the interviewees) define and discuss their musical taste. This is in accordance with Antoine Hennion’s (2001) critique towards Bourdieu’s academic classification of cultural taste and consumption (1984): that people must be asked how they use music and why they develop their musical preferences, as indicated in the results of Chorus America (2003). Results in this study of the musical preferences of the Croydon Bach choir did not indicate any correlation between musical taste and education and thus support Hennion’s theory (2001) that social status (especially educational stage) does not entirely affect individual cultural preferences. Development of musical preferences has different sorts of pathways, like participating in an amateur music performance, thus crossing certain boundaries and blurring the distinction between ‘high art’ and ‘popular art’ more than before (concluded by Savage and Gayo,

2011). These findings demonstrated that access to concerts and other musical experiences in early childhood also impacted musical preferences of participants: both live performances of great classical works like Handel's *Messiah*, as well as musical performances in motion pictures. Some of the participants claimed that they did not like to go to concerts, especially choral concerts, because they experience frustration with not being on stage. This urge to be on stage, rather than in the audience, indicates a need to provide cultural leisure to their society as well as fulfilling their artistic need of performing and communicating with the audience with an appealing repertoire.

Results regarding the importance and the variety of the choral repertoire (presented in Table 11) demonstrate that about half of the participants consider it important to have a good *variety of the repertoire* so the other half seems fairly content with the repertoire as it is. Generally, as in the case of the Croydon Bach Choir, the conductor is usually the one who makes a final decision regarding choice of repertoire. The choir in my pilot study had democratic methods of choosing repertoire, like survey questionnaires, where people could choose among a few selected works, or even propose some works they were interested in. The choral committee then took notice of the results of the questionnaire while choosing the repertoire for the following term. Deciding which music to perform can be tricky – obviously it is fairly impossible to please everyone in the choir and, as William Weber (2008) referred to, deciding a concert program is based on a compromise between the preferences of choir members (and also the conductor's preferences) and appealing to the audience, in order to draw people into the concert.

Key findings in this category indicated that participants considered their choral participation to have an *impact on their musical preferences and lead to a broader variety of musical taste*, not only regarding the repertoire being sung every time, but also other musical genres that did not relate to their choral singing. Keeping in mind the demographic profile of the choir, it must be taken into account that the average age of the members is 62. Putting this into context with the recent study of Harrison and Ryan (2010) in which they identified the development of musical taste as a life-course trajectory. The musical taste of children is fairly narrow, but it expands into adulthood and then starts to narrow down again after middle age. This life-course is demonstrated in Figure 20:

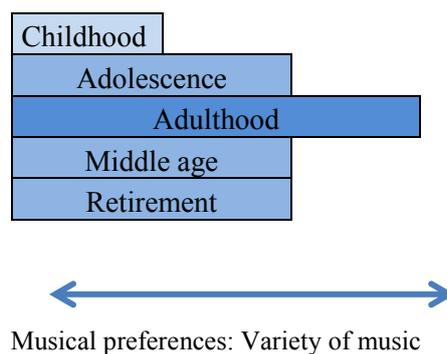


Figure 20: Life-course trajectory of musical taste (Author's representation on Harris and Ryan (2010))

Before continuing, it must be taken into account that figures demonstrated in this section are drawn for heuristic purpose. They are not based on actual statistical data of any kind. Looking at this model as my representation of the findings of Harris and Ryan (2010), my goal is to suggest an adjusted or applied development model of musical taste of choral singers (see Figure 21):

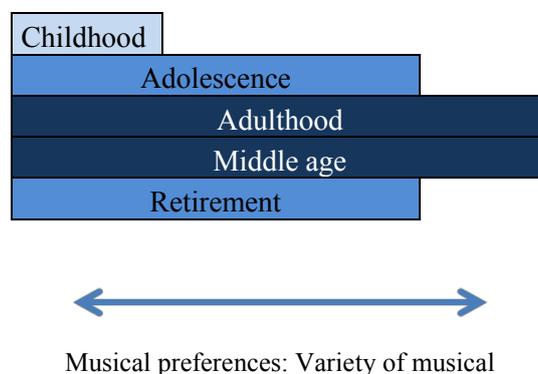


Figure 21: Model A. Development of musical preferences of the amateur choral singer

The model presented in Figure 21 is a simple presentation of the possible development of a choral singer who starts singing in childhood and continues singing (with little intervals) until retirement and elderly age. Results of this study indicate that by participating in choral activities, participants are introduced to new musical works on a regular basis. They have often not heard these pieces before and the composers were previously unknown to them, thus they become acquainted with certain periods of music within music history or even new musical genres. Given the fact that the average age in the Croydon Bach choir is relatively high, a majority of participants are middle-

aged and older (see also results in Figure 5 regarding age division) and should be therefore in the process of narrowing down their musical tastes and preferences. On the other hand, findings in this research indicated certain gender differences regarding both musical taste (previously presented) and whether their choral participation was continuous from childhood into adolescence or not:

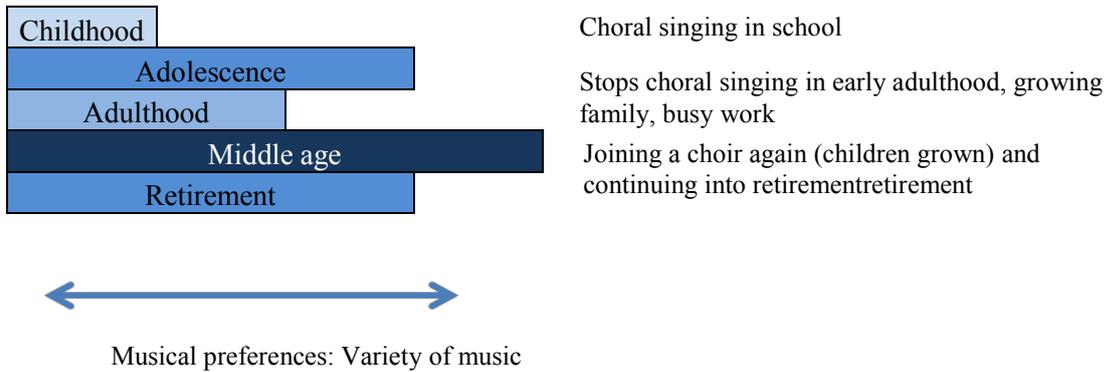


Figure 22: Model B. Development of musical preferences of female choral singers

Figure 22 demonstrates my hypothesis on the development of female choral singers, based on the findings from the interviews. In my previous discussions regarding gendered issues in the narratives of interviewees, some of the narratives of the female interviewees indicated a certain gap in their choral participation. Narratives of female interviewees demonstrated that they had previous experience singing in choirs in primary and/or secondary school, even in college or university, but when they married and/or had children they stopped choral singing. They often started again in their late forties or fifties, thus getting to know choral works that are different from those they sang in the school choir.

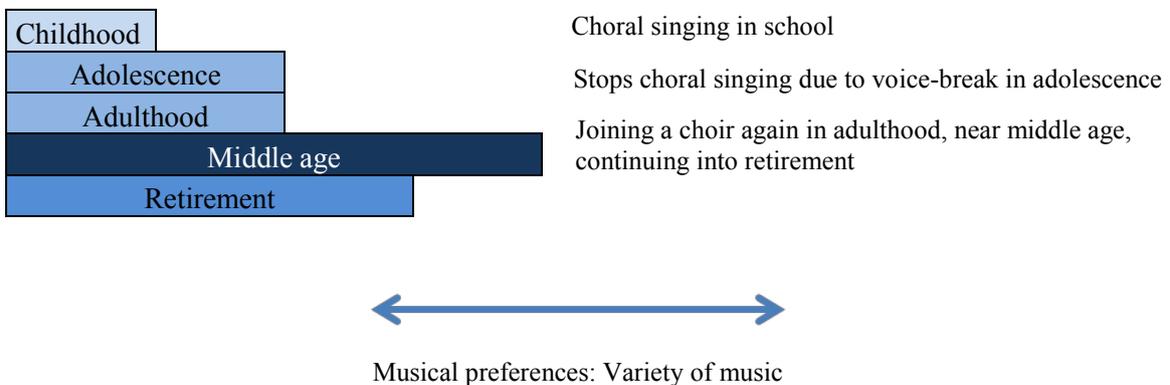


Figure 23: Model C. Development of musical preferences of male choral singers

Figure 23 presents the development of male choral singers. I had some examples among the interviewees who, despite having experience from primary or secondary school, left choral singing during adolescence due to their voice breaking and did not return to choral singing until in adulthood (in some instances not until in middle-age).

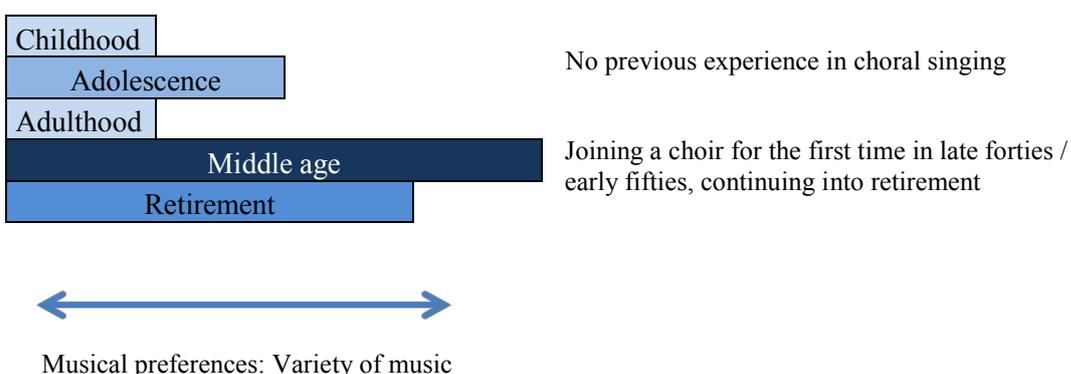


Figure 24: Model D. Development of musical preferences of middle age beginners in choral singing

Figure 24 demonstrates examples of members that joined a choir for the first time in adulthood (in their late forties and fifties). In their narratives they described how their choral participation had opened up a new world of music, not only the music performed in the choir, but also other music genres as previously discussed. Even previously disliked music became likeable and participants claimed that singing the music, learning it and performing it gives them a deeper insight into the heart and soul of the music than merely just by listening to it. In this perspective, the group notion within the choir must be taken into account. The common experience of learning and performing a certain choral work can result in certain in-group favouritism (see Lonsdale and North, 2009) where the choir as a group creates a common musical preference towards the choral work throughout the rehearsal process and into the performance itself. However, these models presented above need to be further tested and challenged in a bigger study based on more quantitative approaches.

In conclusion, findings indicated that singing in a choir had an impact on participants' cultural capital through the music being introduced. The musical taste of participants seems to be under constant revision and construction in the informal music learning process of choral singing. Therefore the cultural context of 'choral capital' consists of the new musical works / periods / genres being introduced to the choral

singer. This study focused on the case of the Croydon Bach choir and in the next section I illustrate from the findings the centrality of Bach in how participants have developed a certain ‘choral identity’ by associating themselves with the composer-orientation of their choir.

8.2.2 THE ‘CENTRALITY OF BACH’ IN THE BACH ‘CHORAL IDENTITY’

Previously discussed in the literature review is the concept of a Bach choir, what kind of choir is a Bach choir and why so many composer-oriented choirs have been established in general. The purpose of establishing choirs like The Bach Choir in London and The Croydon Bach Choir was to perform Bach’s oratorios – The Bach Choir, established in London in 1854 to perform the *Mass in B Minor*, and the Croydon Bach Choir, established in 1960 to perform the *St John Passion* (see Keen, 2008). There is a general assumption that Handel is considered more popular than Bach in England. There are, however, no Handel choirs that I found in my search for composer-oriented choirs. On the other hand, it must be taken into account that Handel’s works never ‘died,’ i.e. they were not forgotten for the almost 80 years that Bach’s works were. As previously discussed, most Bach choirs in the UK can be classified as semi-professional choirs who audition their members (and some choirs even re-audition their members every three to four years – see further Figure 2 and discussions in chapter 4.3).

The big question was whether the relation to Bach had any special meaning to the participants in itself – whether the composer-orientation influenced their choice of choir and why/why not.

Figure 25 demonstrates and summarizes the aspects drawn from the findings.

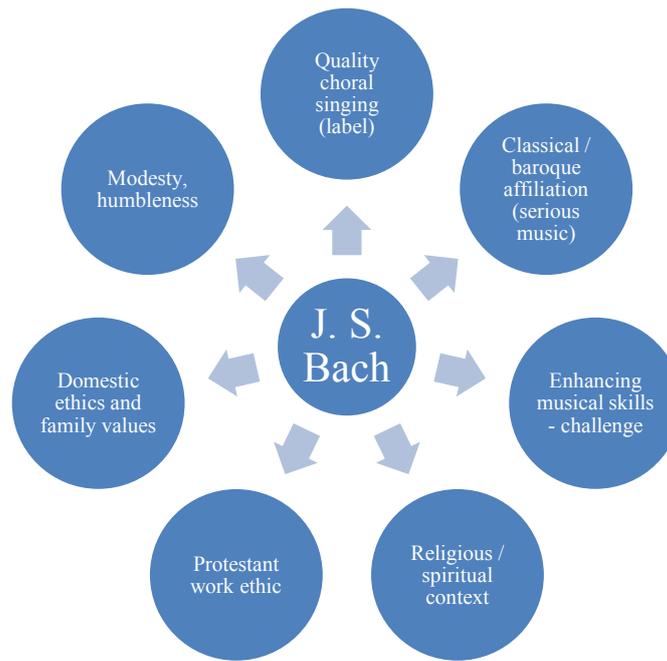


Figure 25: A demonstration of ‘Bach choral identity’

These findings indicated that participants developed a certain ‘choral identity’ due to three different perspectives:

Firstly some of the participants did not consider the Bach-orientation to be of any importance when they chose to join the choir. Instead they joined first and foremost because the rehearsal venue was located in their local area. However the name grew on them as time passed and they started to acknowledge a value in the Bach name itself, linked to the quality of the performances and in relation to the composer (see further in this section).

Secondly, the other half, and particularly some of the interviewees, linked Bach to the classical music tradition, as a serious and conservative choir in relation to the choice of repertoire and as a ‘short-hand’ for the baroque era. The Bach-orientation was even considered valuable for promotional purposes, as a kind of brand in order to distinguish the choir in a way, initiating some kind of a specialization in order to draw good singers into the choir and appeal to the audience. Existing relevant literature covers the use and the effect of background music on consumer behaviour (see for example Bruner (1990), Wagner (2008) and Alpert, J.I. & Alpert, M. I. (2006)). I did not, however, come across any research on how choirs choose their names. The meanings behind names selections, particularly in how they try to distinguish themselves from others, would be an interesting field to study. In this case however,

participants considered that people in general associated the composer-orientation of Bach with The Bach Choir in London. Thus associating the name of Bach with quality choral singing and a challenging, conservative choice of repertoire, represents a valuable addition to the local area's cultural life, enhancing the variety of choirs for people to choose from (not just being stuck with one choir) and creating a venue for the locals to meet and enjoy a choral performance in a good standard. In addition, this performance added to participants' musical skills and performance experiences.

Thirdly, what may be considered unorthodox about this choir (compared to some choirs I have previously sung with) is the fact that it is relatively prima donna-free. Presumably the overall character of the choir, namely that choir members do not seem to put themselves forward, draws me to conclude that in that way they assimilate themselves with Bach and their construction of Bach. Therefore they may use Bach in order to identify themselves as projects of him; thus Bach plays the part of a role model or an exemplar template. Bach may thus serve as a validation of amateur identity, due to the reconstruction of Bach's domestic being (the devout, religious Lutheran and family man) and his somewhat protestant work ethic. These specifically 'Bachian' identity resources offer additional pathways for choral capital (see Figure 26). In other words, the composer-orientation allows for affiliation with Bach (previously described) and focused emphasis on the artistic level and quality of the repertoire and thus creates a specific Bach choral identity.

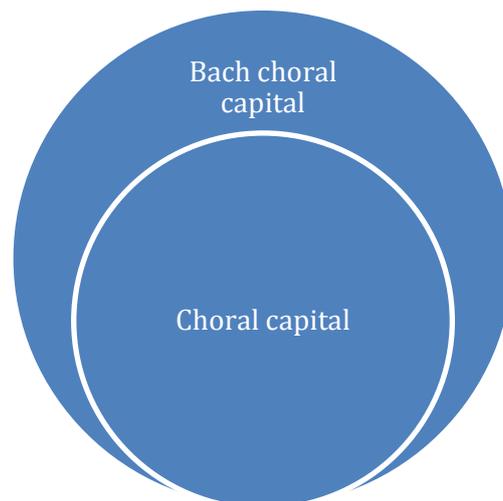


Figure 26: Proposed added value in 'Bach choral capital'

8.2.3 'CHORAL CAPITAL' IN PERCEIVING THE *MASS IN B MINOR*

A part of enjoying music, especially classical music may be associated with certain socio-historical contexts, to recognize the composer, the period and the musical genre itself, the history behind the work, which story and/or metaphor the work is telling and/or referring to. As previously discussed, the process of getting into the heart and soul of the music can be done through reception (by listening to the music on a CD, on the radio or attending a concert), but findings indicate that taking part in a performance enables the performer to dig deeper into the work and get to know it in a way that would be otherwise impossible by merely consuming it. In the process, the audience or the performer may construct a certain image of the composer and certain composers have become symbols of creativity, outstanding talents and pure brilliance (see further Hennion and Fauquet, 2001). Beethoven, Mozart and Handel, for example, may each have a certain, general image: Beethoven the deaf and unhappy genius; Mozart, the child of wonder, the player and party lion; and Handel, the celebrity and successful composer at the British court.

Johann Sebastian Bach is another example of a particular cultural icon and in chapter 3.2 I discussed Bach's image has been constructed and re-constructed through early and late biographical writings on his life-course by various Bach scholars (see for example Parry (1909), Butt (1997), Wolff et al. (1997), Wolff (2002) and Parrott (2002)). Findings in this research regarding how choir members in the Croydon Bach Choir experience and reconstruct 'their' Bach can be divided into two main categories (remembering that participants were specifically asked how they experienced Bach, regardless of how familiar they were with certain historical facts about him and his life):

Firstly, participants described Bach as a musical genius: a musician's musician (James) with a mathematical brain and technical brilliance – that his music bears witness of meticulousness and precision. Some of the interviewees described Bach's music as a tapestry or a jigsaw puzzle, indicating the difficulty of the work with complex harmonies and everything adding up in the end with mathematical precision. This metaphor (e.g. the tapestry) relates to a certain tangible reference in which Bach's music is associated with a design linked to the Baroque period – another example of a similar notion is the narrative of Sophie who linked Bach's music to fleece, embroidery and other Baroque fashions. This tendency is linked to DeNora's (2000) theories of the

embodiment of music and that music can be related to other senses than just listening, such as taste, feeling, smell and other perceptive notions.

Secondly, participants referred to certain religious perspectives based on the romantic image of Bach constructed by late 19th and early 20th century biographical writings (Parry (1909), Crowest (1902) and Blume (1950)). Bach was depicted as the deeply religious and devout Lutheran, a hard-working family man who was committed to his work and supported his family by writing music in the glory of God. Previous literature about the life of J. S. Bach supports this notion, whereas Leaver (1997a) refers to the exaggeration of Bach's religious convictions as a product of the Victorian era. Participants considered this perspective to be very dominant in his music; that Bach had a certain passion for music as well as passion for his faith (Catherine).

This paradox of the religious / non-religious aspects of Bach also appeared in regard to participants' perceptions towards the *Mass in B Minor*. Narratives in the interviews indicated that the *Mass in B Minor* was like a summary of the whole Christian belief, very spiritually uplifting. The religious context is considered to make it even 'purer' and the work probably had a deeper meaning to people who were active in their religion (particularly Christians). However, those interviewees who did not consider themselves religious considered the *Mass in B Minor* to be rather touching to the emotional side, rather than the spiritual or religious (thus in a way compensating for the non-religious context). They considered the work itself to be beautiful although without making people too emotional and the constantly changing harmony was the key to its beauty. Interviewees in this research considered that Bach not only had a broad appeal to those who were Christian, but also referred to certain artistic and aesthetic aspects of the music itself for people who were fans of classical music without being very religiously active.

What also seemed to have touched participants was the fact that Bach was not particularly well-known in his lifetime and the comparison with Handel seemed inevitable, since they were born in the same year but lived completely different lives. Bach was first and foremost an organist and director of music, more a church servant who had a big family to support (and suffered tragic losses in his family). Handel was a successful composer and musician in London, living more the life of a celebrity and was popular and well-known in his lifetime.³¹

³¹ It must be taken into account that very little is known about Handel's personal life – it is not known that he was ever married or if he had children or not.

It was evident though that those who knew Bach's story, especially the fact that his works remained forgotten for 80 years seemed to regret the fact that he was nearly forgotten and that thankfully his big choral works were rediscovered by Mendelssohn. Bach's instrumental compositions were considered a source of inspiration for Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn and other successors in the field of composition. Louise's dream of Bach where she allegedly meets him and informs him that he wasn't forgotten, that he was famous after all – feeling that certain justice has been done.

Previously I discussed the reasons behind the establishment of composer-oriented Bach choirs, particularly in England where they were formed in order to perform Bach's oratorios in particular. Again, despite Handel's popularity, there seem to be no composer-oriented Handel choirs existing within the English choral tradition, not that I am aware of. It may be assumed that the establishment of composer-oriented Bach choirs was an attempt to 'make things right' and show the big choral works some respect after nearly 80 years of silence. Referring to the legacy of the 19th century Victorian era, the romantic image of Bach as the underestimated and mistreated genius who had a family to support and little to live on seemed to fit the religious atmosphere at the time and still seems to appeal to music lovers today – and especially to the participants in this research. However, previous literature on the religious context of Hennion and Fauquet (2001) have criticised this romantic reconstruction and later biographical writings have presented a deconstruction of Bach's image towards a more realistic vision of Bach as a mortal who had problems, weaknesses and made mistakes. This is in contradiction with the romantic vision of earlier biographies as previously mentioned. However, in their writings, they discuss the love of Bach in 19th century France and how people in that era defined the composer through the music, unaware of basic historical facts of his life and thus approach him through the music and the religious context of it.

This section has illustrated the cultural context of 'choral capital,' while the social context of choral capital forms the second 'axis' as illustrated in the following section.

8.3 THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF ‘CHORAL CAPITAL:’ COLLECTIVE, PEER-LEARNING SUPPORT AND COMMUNAL WELL-BEING?

The other ‘pillar’ in the development of ‘choral capital’ is the social context, i.e. what participants have benefitted from the communal aspect of singing in the Croydon Bach Choir. Findings indicated two main features regarding social capital: Firstly, the aspect of social capital as a pathway of well-being, and secondly, the collective peer-support while learning the *Mass in B Minor*.

Narratives indicated the importance of the friendly atmosphere in the choir and most of the interviewees described the Croydon Bach Choir as a non-threatening, prima donna-free environment. Looking at the statistics from the survey, around 32% of the choir members considered the choir’s social life to be important or very important and 30% considered it important or very important to have a good social life. Only 22% claimed that they joined the Croydon Bach Choir because they wanted to get to know new people (see Table 15 in Appendix 17). However, 51% socialise with their fellow choir members outside rehearsals and concerts, and 88% have other hobbies besides choral singing. Findings in the survey indicated that male participants were more socially active than female participants as they met other fellow choir members more frequently outside rehearsals and concerts and also were more socially active besides singing in a choir. Some of the interviewees claimed that when relocating to another town / city or even country, joining a local choir would be an ideal method to meet new people in a new place.

There is a general assumption that women have larger social networks than men, are more socially active and have more need for social interactions. Previous research regarding gender differences in social networks indicates that in childhood, males generally have larger social networks than females (thus dependent on peer group acceptance) (Benenson, 1990) but this difference attenuates in adolescence (Neal, 2010). According to Stokes and Levin (1986), two studies on undergraduate and graduate students’ social networks indicated that men use more group-oriented measurements when defining loneliness, i.e. based more on the sheer quantity of individuals than the nature of the relationship. The study of Shye, Mulooly, Freeborn and Pope (1995) (15 year study on elderly groups) indicated a correlation between

men's low network size and higher mortality risk, whereas no such correlation was found among women. Therefore it may be assumed that men seem to be, despite all general assumptions, more dependent on the quantity of social activities and the size of their social networks than women (who may perhaps focus more on the quality and intimacy in social relations) and this may be applied to the results of the social activities of the men in the Croydon Bach choir.

8.3.1 'CHORAL CAPITAL' IN THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF WELL-BEING

According to the results presented above, the social aspect of choral singing does not seem to be the most important aspect in participants' minds. What did score significantly were perspectives of choral singing as a pathway for well-being whereas 91% of participants considered singing as a way of pleasure and fulfilment important or very important, 79% considered singing good for their mental and physical health; 60% get a certain thrill out of performing in concert; and 56% consider singing as an outlet for their need of creativity (see

Table 5). In the narratives, participants experienced physical and emotional / spiritual well-being through attending rehearsals on a regular basis: feeling de-stressed and relaxed, forgetting everyday worries, gaining opportunity for artistic self-expression, releasing tension and negative feelings and feeling empowered. The joy of performing for the audience, enhancing musical competence and giving a good performance created a certain pathway for well-being.

These results are in accordance with previous research on the well-being factor in amateur choral singing (see for example Durrant (2005), Clift and Hancox (2001), Clift et. al. (2007), Bailey and Davidson (2005), Beck et al. (2004), Kreutz et al. (2004), and Balsnes (2011 and 2012)) but on the other hand they indicate that the well-being factor is more on the individual basis and linked to the music itself. The collective belonging in the performance itself and the aesthetic and challenging experience of learning new music is thus more important than the social aspects of choral singing, whereas the collective force is rather linked to seek support to the group as a part of the learning process, as demonstrated in the findings of this research.

Findings indicated certain negative aspects of the social contexts. The narratives of the interviewees bore witness to previous choral experiences where cliquishness, social exclusion and mobbing, self-importance, intolerable prima donnas and manipulative conductors played a key role in creating negative choral experiences. In my pilot study I found similar narratives, where choir members described negative previous experiences regarding group conflicts and incapable conductors. This can be linked directly to the study of O'Toole (1994) whereas conductors can have significant influences regarding the well-being of choir members, both in positive and negative ways.

As previously referred to in the findings of the survey (see Table 15 in Appendix 17), the social factor in the choral activities may not be what members were initially looking for. Some of the interviewees claimed that the music and the singing was what encouraged and lured them into the choir, not necessarily seeking a new social life, but the social context started to grow on some of the interviewees in time and added to their social capital (thus enlarging their social network), as they started to get to know their fellow choir members and were made welcome in the group. Thus in this case the social aspect may not necessarily be a driving force to make people join choirs, but it becomes a part of the process and may become more and more important (see Figure 27). According to my previous research (Einarsdóttir, 2009) participants who had sung in

their choir for a long time emphasized more the importance of the social aspect than those who had sung for a shorter period of time. However, if the social atmosphere is not in order (due to certain conflicts between choir members or due to the conductor's lack of communication skills) it may cause decline in membership; people may leave the choir, no matter how beautiful the music is and even though the initial goal was to join in order to sing first and foremost. These findings give certain indications but need to be further challenged in a bigger research (even quantitative research) with more variety of choirs and choral types.

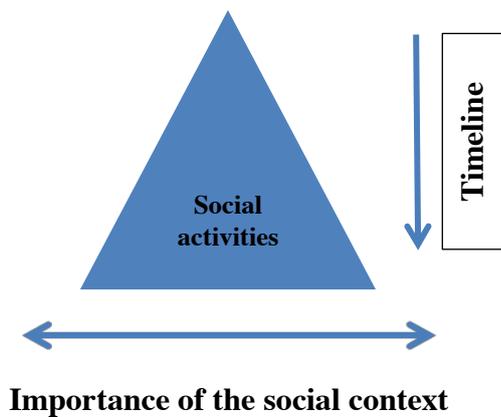


Figure 27: The development of importance of social context in choral singing

8.3.2 THE VALUE OF COLLECTIVE LEARNING OF THE *MASS IN B MINOR* (UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CONDUCTOR)

The experience of the rehearsal process is a complicated phenomenon – while discussing the *Mass in B Minor*, the interviewees frequently referred to the complexity of the work, required vocal/technical skills, good sight-reading and ability to learn and have good pitch as well. It was evident that most participants liked the repertoire – some of the choir members had joined the choir specifically to perform the *Mass in B Minor* and findings suggested that liking the repertoire is helpful in the learning process and in creating certain in-group favouritism (see Lonsdale and North, 2009). However, it became evident that rehearsing a choral work of this magnitude in 10 weeks would be a challenge. Reviewing the learning process of the *Mass in B Minor* as it appeared in my data is presented in Figure 28:

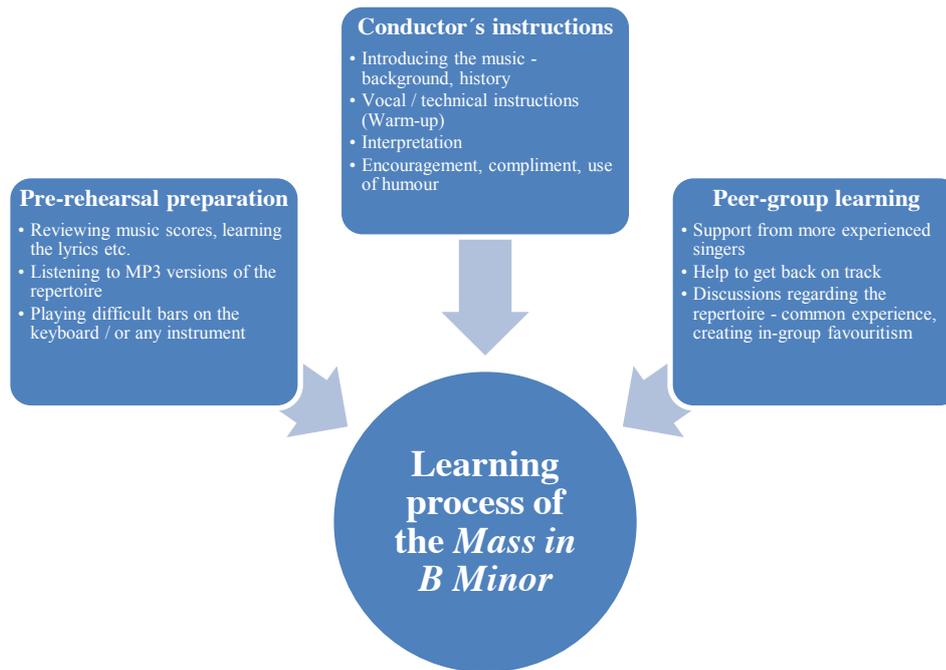


Figure 28: The learning process of the *Mass in B Minor*

As presented in the figure above, the learning process had three main aspects: Pre-rehearsal preparations, conductor's instructions and peer-group learning.

Looking at the experience of choir members, over 60% of choir members had sung the *Mass in B Minor* before which made the learning process, both for them and the 37% (me included) who had no previous experience of the work (as well as for the conductor), a lot easier. For these individuals, the collective, peer support of the rest of the group, especially experienced choral singers who have previous experience in performing the *Mass in B Minor* became evident. Thus in a way, this collective force has eliminating effects on off-pitch notes and I experienced from the first time being an individual in a choir who was seeking support from a more experienced singer. Usually this situation is reversed, but I found this very helpful – being supported enabled me to get back on track if I got lost while sight-reading the repertoire.

I have previously discussed the importance of collective learning as an informal music education (see section 2.2.3 and findings in section 7.4). According to Green (2005a), using group learning rather than individual learning leads to the process of peer-learning through imitation, observation and discussion and that is what I experienced for the first time. In a way, being in the role of the 'ordinary' singer and not the one who learns fairly quickly or knows the repertoire already was a nice change for me personally – I didn't have to be in the role of the 'strong, more experienced soprano'

and thus I was able (sort of) to relax and enjoy singing without the pressure of being in the ‘leading role.’ In my pilot study, one of my interviewees described the pressure she was under in another singing group, where she always learns everything first and feels like it’s a sort of obligation to attend rehearsals ‘because she had to.’ These findings are in line with primary results from Zadig’s study (2011 – described in section 2.2.3) where informal leaders were identified within each voice part and examines how the relationship between followers and leaders. Instead of finding myself in the role of the informal leader, I was suddenly taking the role of the follower which gave me a new perspective on the vocal interactions within individual voice parts.

Thus, different choral singers have different skills, strengths and weaknesses – as is evident in the narratives, some have good pitch, others are good in counting and they can thus help each other and use the collective force of learning and support. Strong, experienced singers sometimes automatically take on a leading role within their voice part (‘leaders’) and take initiative in singing, while other less experienced singers follow the leaders and learn from them (‘followers’) – auditions do not necessarily anticipate this kind of cooperation and interrelation between choral singers.

In the perspective of the somewhat passive perception towards individual performances, choral auditions may prevent experienced choral singers (especially women) from participating, since the idea of singing alone in front of the conductor may seem intimidating and thus experiences in giving individual performances may be an advantage. Some of the interviewees claimed that they felt like their voice sounded better while singing in a group and therefore were not likely to undergo choral auditions. Choirs who force people to get through these kinds of audition may perhaps get singers who are efficient in sight-reading and perhaps get people with more experience in individual performances (semi-professionals) but perhaps at the expense of the amateur sound and the personal element of the sound of amateur choirs.

This is something that conductors must be aware of – it is of course very important for any choir to have some strong singers for the learning process and the ability of the choir to perform (plus saving the conductor a lot of time rehearsing a challenging choral work). This situation for the strong singer can, however, be frustrating on occasions. If and when a strong, experienced singer knows the repertoire being rehearsed while others are struggling to learn (and the conductor keeps stopping after singing a few bars in a middle of a section) he/she may feel that this is not challenging enough. I can relate to this kind of experience and have experienced it

myself couple of times – if I do not feel any challenge, I start to get bored. This can be discouraging and is an issue that both conductors and choral committees must bear in mind.

However, performing repertoire that is very difficult can also be discouraging for singers with less sight-reading and / or vocal skills. Richards and Durrant (2003) discuss the tendency among conductors to recruit skilled singers instead of putting effort into training less skilled singers. In this perspective, conductors should not underestimate the process of peer-learning and using the support of the group in order to train less skilled singers to become more skilled in time (see Green, 2005a). Group learning could thus be beneficial, not only for choir members but also for conductors and the choral movement in general.

On the other hand, group learning has its disadvantages like practically any other learning method. Chit-chat, disturbance and low levels of discipline can be a problem during a rehearsal. I have frequently experienced this in my previous choirs but in this case, the difficulty of the repertoire and the narrow rehearsal time frame may have caused the participants to be very focused during the rehearsals and chit-chat was rare. I noticed that while the conductor was reviewing a few bars with one voice part, the others read along, or tried to figure out their parts in their minds. It must be taken into account that the group included quite a few new members and people were slowly getting to know each other. I noticed in rehearsal 7 that people were starting to chat a bit more. At that time, things were coming together and the chorales were becoming familiar to people and the importance of ‘putting things in the drawer for a while’ was paying off. A chorale that seemed impossible to learn 2-3 weeks ago is suddenly both easy and accessible to sing and difficult bars became fewer and fewer every week. At that point, people were starting to feel that their hard work was paying off and felt more secure. In this study, this became evident in the last phase of the rehearsal process.

Furthermore, the leadership of the conductor played a key role in the learning process, in order to get people through the work. By observing his methods of leadership, I identified three main objectives in his leadership style: Firstly, it is the use of humour, cracking jokes and making people laugh in order to make people release tension. This is particularly important while rehearsing a challenging piece and when people are feeling a bit nervous due to the complexity of the repertoire. Secondly is the use of compliment and encouragement, praising people for what is well done. In this case, the conductor must take into account that the group consists of amateur choral

singers and that it is not possible to make the same demands as on professional singers. Thirdly, is the aspect of teaching and having a sense of what needs to be done in order to put things together and ensure that the singers are enjoying what they do. This is in accordance with Durrant's study on the role of the choral conductor (2005). Conductors can have both a positive and negative impact on choir members' senses of confidence and can influence their performance skills, both at rehearsals and at concert.

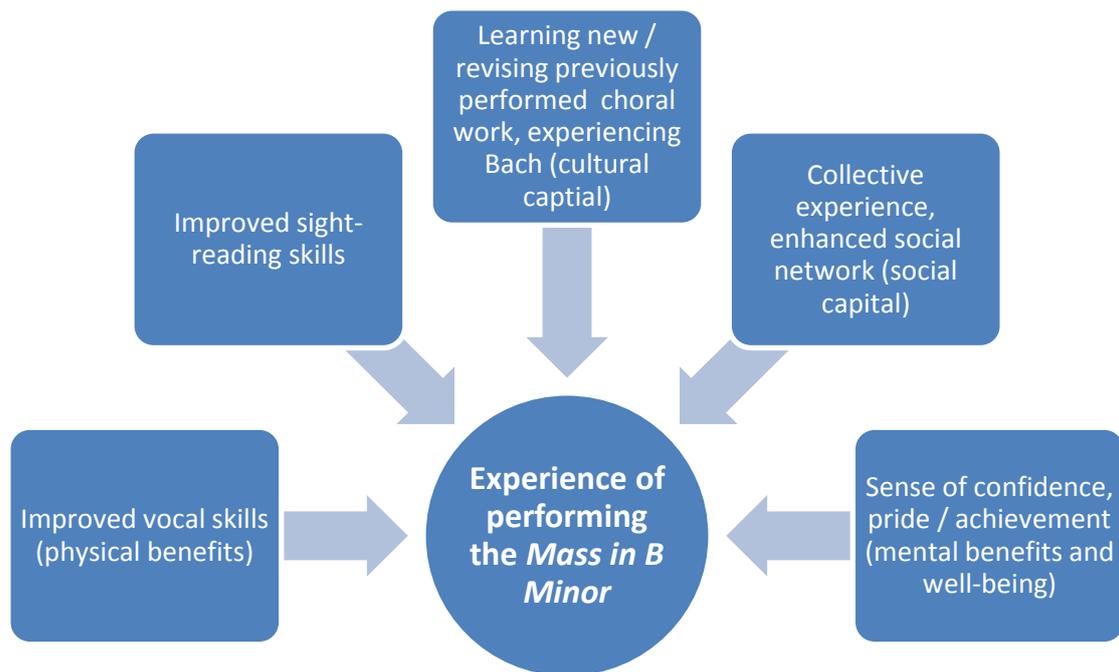


Figure 29: Summary of the experience of performing the *Mass in B Minor*

In order to summarize the experience itself, I demonstrate key factors in the experience of rehearsing and performing the *Mass in B Minor* in Figure 29. The data indicated that participants claimed that the rehearsal process of a challenging work like the *Mass in B Minor* had positive impact on their vocal skills (certain physical benefits) and the process was a good way of improving sight-reading skills. Becoming familiar with a new work, or revising previous experiences of performing the *Mass in B Minor* had positive influences on the cultural capital of choir members in the learning process itself. This creates a collective experience and impacts individual's social networks, since many new members joined the choir for this particular occasion.

Last but not least, there was a certain feeling of pride and achievement that was evident as things were finally coming together and the hard work of pre-rehearsal

preparation and attending intense and focused rehearsals was finally paying off. This is in comparison to Arasi's study (2006) on adult choral singers joining a high school choral program, where findings suggested that participants felt the sense of pride and achievement and an increased ability to criticise and evaluate their own performances, as well as gaining increased self-confidence. Evidence demonstrated in Figure 29 could be tested further on more performances of the same work (perhaps in different countries) in order to see whether the results will be similar or not.

In terms of theory building, this study has extended the ordinary definition of social and cultural capital a bit further by drawing it into the context of the amateur choral setting, by proposing the concept of 'choral capital.' In that context, the pathway to choral capital is developed through the formation of musical identities by looking at musical histories of members of the participant choir. Furthermore, the added value through identification via the composer (Croydon Bach Choir) adds an additional dimension – a form of 'Bachian' choral capital or identity formed through this composer-orientation and the performance of 'art music.'

Future work and further research project ideas and implications of this study will be discussed in the last two sections of this chapter.

8.4 FUTURE WORK

Findings in this research have raised certain issues and questions that still remain unanswered. These findings have also stoked ideas for further study and future work.

The question still remains of what happens after a big performance that requires a lot of preparation, both for the conductor and the choir members (all this work for one performance and then what)? In my pilot study, in discussing the repertoire for the next semester, it was evident that choir members wanted a program that was lighter after dealing with particularly challenging repertoire.

This can be a two edged-sword; it must be taken into account that an amateur choir is in many instances a mixture of people with different backgrounds and musical skills, as I referred to in chapter 6.1. Evidently it is difficult to please everyone in a whole choir and as a result compromises must be made in order to appeal both to the audience and the choir members themselves. The key point in this context is how to go on with the 'show', how to secure that the choir will keep its position and musical

strength and, more importantly, try to appeal to the broad variety singers by providing them a programme that is both pleasing and fun but also challenging and ‘worth learning.’ Future work could include studying the process after a performance of a choral work on the same scale as the *Mass in B Minor*, to see ‘what happens next.’ It is difficult for me to switch over to a light program after performing a beautiful and challenging choral piece. This has caused me to withdraw my choral participation for a term or so. Furthermore, for some singers, it could be a deal-breaker to sing challenging repertoire every term. However, this assumption must be further tested and researched before it is possible to conclude on this matter.

I would like to see further choral research on a macro-level, like the research conducted by Chorus America in 2003. This could be done in England by investigating in what way choral activities, despite increased ‘competition’ from other leisure activities, may play a relatively big part in the cultural life and everyday life of those who participate in amateur choral activities. It would also be interesting to do a study of choral identities: how different types of choirs define their identity and self-image and what factors make the foundation of such definitions.

As previously mentioned, choirs are organizational units and therefore it would be compelling to study choral structure and strategy from the perspectives of organizational studies – how the choral activities are organized, notions of power / democracy and who makes the decisions (regarding finances, choice of repertoire etc.). One could potentially observe and discover common patterns in whether choirs are member-oriented, conductor-oriented or a mixture of both (or whatever form would emerge in the findings). One question might lead to an investigation of whether amateur choirs indeed have certain strategies or identities (fun and friendly, musically ambitious, quasi-professional etc.) and in which ways it might be possible to enhance that identity (like being composer-oriented or other ‘kinds of branding’).

In addition, the age range of amateur choirs has not been examined or researched in full, but it would be interesting to test the hypothesis of whether there is a gap in the age range of 25-45. It may be assumed that women in that age range are busier working and raising children and thus, like Emily, putting their hobbies and leisure activities aside until the children grew older, or postponing their musical activities and education due to economic reasons, like Mary. The men in this group, while describing their musical background, did not comment on whether different kinds of family situations had any effect on their musical activities. Therefore, for future work it would be an

interesting study to examine whether family situations have any effect on men's musical activities versus women's musical activities (except for one man, David).

The concept of Bach choir and the widespread 'Bach choral tradition' (in the UK, USA, Australia, Germany, Austria, Japan, South-Africa, Netherlands, and other countries) became an inspiration to this research and raised the idea of further studying the use of composer-orientation as a kind of brand for promotional purposes – therefore the Bach choral movement would be an ideal case for that kind of research. It may thus be assumed that this research could be entering a new field of study: to investigate further the meaning of composer-orientation in relation to a certain 'choral identity,' tradition and strategies for promotional purposes and do a more thorough research on the influential factors on musical preferences of choir members in the process of performing challenging repertoire.

As previously discussed, I put forward some hypotheses regarding the correlation between choral experiences and development of musical taste and preferences (see chapter 8.2). These hypotheses need further research in order to conclude whether there is a connection or not but my findings give certain indications in that matter.

In order to conclude, it will be interesting to monitor how the choral movement develops in the nearest future – if, and what changes choirs will be facing in a rapidly-changing society. Certain scholars like Richards and Durrant (2003), Bell (2008) and O'Toole (1994) have raised awareness that there might be a growing tendency towards semi-professionalization in which conductors aim at recruiting singers who do not need training, instead of recruiting people who might become skilled with a bit of training. There are examples of semi-professional choirs that re-audition their members every 3-4 years – it would thus be an interesting study to investigate the well-being of singers in professional and/or semi-professional choirs who have to undergo regular auditions of this kind.

It is worth considering whether ordinary amateur choral singers, who do not like to be auditioned, might refrain from participating in choral activities. This, combined with the fact that choirs may be getting smaller, might mean that opportunities might become more scarce for amateur singers to perform choral works like *Mass in B Minor* in the future. That, however, all depends on what kind of strategy choirs adopt and it would be compelling to learn whether composer-oriented Bach choirs will trend towards semi-professionalization (with auditions as presented in Figure 2) or try to

create a venue for amateur choral singers (without the pressure of auditions) to participate in performances of large-scale choral works. Let's hope so, since the amateur sound is considered to have, in a way, a broad appeal to the audience.

8.5 IMPLICATIONS

This study includes implications for the choral movement in general, and also considers how adults make the decision to sing in a choir and why. Reasons such as pleasure of singing, love of music and improved well-being are factors that cannot be ignored in this perspective. In summary, these findings consist of implications of how men and women function within the choral setting in terms of confidence, skills, identity and well-being. The study also considers the function of the choral community and the meaning of the choir within the community, and it explores what conductors need to bear in mind in their work (e.g. artistic leadership, facilitating learning, distribution of skills and how to help choir members to accomplish and develop their skills). It also examines how composer-orientation and strategic choice of repertoire might help the choral movement to maintain its status in the future.

Previous findings have indicated the therapeutic value of choral singing (Clift et al. (2007), Clift & Hancox (2005), Durrant (2005), Langston & Barrett (2008), Bailey & Davidson (2005), Bell (2008), Palmer (2008) and Balsnes (2012)) – this thesis draws attention to factors that may be exploited in order to maintain the choral tradition and identifies ways to maintain and sustain it. Findings of this study indicate that the social aspect of choral singing may not necessarily be the main factor that draws people in to joining a choir in the first place, but it becomes more important afterwards. A negative social atmosphere can drastically impact choir members' senses of well-being and, in the worst case scenario, it can cause a decline in membership. This declining membership is a serious concern for choirs like the Croydon Bach Choir, who seek to be financially sustainable and self-sufficient and build their finances on members' submissions. Therefore, the social structure within choirs, including how 'extra-curricular' social activities are conducted and organized, how group identity is formed and how new members are introduced and somewhat 'integrated' into the group, is something that every conductor and/or choral committee should take deeply into consideration.

Problems (such as mobbing, social exclusion, disputes within the choral committee, as well as between the conductor and the choral committee or the conductor and individuals in the choir) that arise within an organization like a choir, should be identified and tackled as soon as possible in order to prevent a decline in membership.

Without trust the conductor's task to lead the choral activities becomes difficult, which can cause many more problems if not dealt with as soon as possible. A choir is like any other organization – even though earlier studies have demonstrated the benefits of choral singing, choirs need to deal with similar or even the exact same issues as any other workplace (company) or organization. I am not familiar with the content of choral conductors' education and wonder whether the programs include courses or materials regarding building a successful strategy or aspects of human resource management. I would imagine such elements to be a valuable addition if they are not already a part of a choral conductor's education, as it would allow conductors-to-be to realise for example about the advantage of peer group learning,³² as discussed in the previous chapter.

My findings and related previous findings (for example Lamont (2002), Davidson (2002), Pitts (2008), Pitts (2009) and Green (1998)) indicate that music teachers and choral conductors have a significant impact on children's and students' attitudes towards musical participation (playing instruments and singing). These teachers and conductors often influence whether children's musical activities will continue into adulthood or not. This perspective emphasizes the importance of giving children and adolescents the opportunities for extra-curricular music activities, such as singing in a choir, to enhance the odds of continuing musical activities. It may be vital for the choral movement to support the amateur tradition in choral singing and thus prevent the increasing tendency towards semi-professionalization in the choral context.

This study indicates the importance of early experiences with choral singing, as it can be challenging for people to join a choir for the first time in adulthood. One option that choirs have (and many of them use already) to ease this situation is to establish choral workshop or evening choral courses for people with no prior experience with choral singing in order to help them take the first steps. Such preparatory steps to joining a choir for the first time in adulthood could at least assist individuals in identifying to which voice part they are best suited. Another aspect is how conductors promote particular music, composers, time periods and genres in order to influence the singers' perspectives towards the repertoire on socio-historical grounds. The music directed at choral singers may occasionally feel strange or exotic and thus it is important that conductors introduce and implement the work to the singers in a way that allows the singers to understand and contextualize the socio-historical context of the work.

³² Something that many conductors already are aware of, as a result of their experience

They can thus relate to the music which is important for interpretation while performing.

Regarding the promotion of the art of choral singing, much has been accomplished within the choral movement in England during the last decades. Choral organizations have been established (like Making Music),³³ choirs are increasingly using the internet (their own websites, Facebook and other social media) in order to promote their activities, advertise their concerts and seek new members. Music, particularly singing, has received increased attention following the emergence of reality talent TV-shows (like the *X-Factor*, *Britain's Got Talent* and other similar programs), even choral singing has its 'own show' on BBC, *The Choir* which has been a success for the last 3-4 years. Despite all this promotion of singing, discussions regarding recruitment of new members and the alleged high average age within the choral movement were prominent during the research. Participants claimed that getting young people to join choirs seems to be harder than before, causing a certain 'age gap' to develop in choirs.

Referring to my findings, young women may also have a tendency to withdraw from their choral activities while their children are still young. Thus it could be practical to look at the structure of choral activities, whether the regular 'once a week' rehearsals are the only form or whether rehearsals should be more in the form of choral workshops once a month, as an example. In the meantime, choral singers would rehearse at home, using musical scores, instruments or audio recordings to learn their voice-part. This may be more ideal for singers who, for example, have children to attend to and think it is too much to attend weekly rehearsals.

Regarding young male choral singers, duties, obligations and voice-breaking in adolescence might discourage young men to proceed in choral singing, consequently choirs generally deal with a lack of male voices (especially good tenors, in many cases). As a result of this alleged age gap, choirs may have certain tendencies of choosing repertoire that is not overly challenging for either the sopranos or the tenors, since the average age is quite high. Therefore, the choice of 'mediocre' repertoire may be discouraging, specifically for sopranos who typically sing the melody.

Choirs should therefore put more effort into recruiting members with a more strategic approach. In order to promote choirs and make them an appealing choice of leisure and participation, choirs should aim at forming a strategy or create a declaration

³³ See www.makingmusic.org.uk

of how they envision the future including what they want to represent - whether to be a semi-professional choir (with challenging repertoire) or a choir that emphasizes variety in the repertoire, and also emphasize how the choir is different from others (thus trying to 'sell' people the idea of joining), for example.

In short, findings have shown how participating in 'art music' performance is experienced by participants and how the Bach-orientation serves as added capital and worship of music in everyday life. However, some composers may work better than others, especially for amateur choirs. Thus, the composer (which the choir is oriented to) should be someone suitable for being identified with and perhaps Bach – simultaneously 'great' and 'homely' – is an excellent example. Other composers, and indeed popular musicians, might also work well and this is a subject for future research and perhaps even action research. This could be one way to get people involved and engaged in musical activities.

As previously discussed, data collection in this research was based on a methodological approach that is rarely used in choral research, i.e. from the standpoint of the amateur choral singer. This choir was unusual in relation to my previous experiences in that it was prima donna-free and there were no obvious signs of any disputes or mistrust between the choir and the choral conductor. Through the use of participant observation with myself (and my progress) as a part of the research, I used the relatively fresh perspective of the amateur choral singer in choral research.

I have a moderate background in music, having learned to play the piano and recorder in primary school and started classical style singing in 2nd grade. I, however, have no qualifications of any sort in order to categorize myself as a musician on a professional level. I discovered through the rehearsal process that I was busy learning the choral work myself, so observing others doing the same was a difficult task to deal with. Since I received no reply to my request of videotaping rehearsals, it made the observation a bit tougher. However, adding myself as a part of the research, describing my experience in the process (a self-observation) as well as the experience of my co-singers gives the study added depth. In the future I would like to do more research by using self-observation. One idea of further study is for me to continue where I started 10 years ago when I attended singing lessons, to proceed with my studies and conduct self-observation in the process (from amateur to professional singer).

In conclusion: This research raised questions and ideas for future research in the field of choral research. It is also my hope that this research may be a source of ideas and encouragement for further research in this field. I also hope that the amateur choral movement might benefit from my findings and use them as a resource to help maintain status, promote activities, identify repertoire that suits the choir, and also raise awareness of certain issues (whether social or musical). This could be beneficial for the work of the musical director and secure recruitment of new members, and in turn sustain the position of the amateur choir into the future.

APPENDICIES

1. AN OVERVIEW (TABLE) OF PREVIOUS RELATED CHORAL RESEARCH

This table includes previous, related research on choirs that are related to this study. Qualitative research are coloured with white, quantitative research are coloured with light grey and mixed method research coloured with dark grey.

Table 6: Previous related choral research (overview – author’s representation)

Research	Methodological approach
Anshel, A., & Kipper, D. A. (1988). The influence of group singing on trust and cooperation. <i>The Journal of music therapy</i> , 25(3), 145.	Quantitative: Survey
Arasi, M. (2006). Adult Reflections on a High School Choral Music Program: Perceptions of Meaning and Lifelong Influence. <i>Middle-Secondary Education and Instructional Technology Dissertations</i> , 8. Retrieved from http://digitalarchive.gsu.edu/msit_diss/8	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews
Ashley, M. (2011). The Canaries in the Cage: Lessons in the Role of Leadership and Pedagogy in Conducting from the Widening Young Male Participation in Chorus Project. In U. Geisler & K. Johansson (Eds.), <i>Choir in Focus 2011</i> (pp. 89-103). Lund, Sweden: Choir in Focus.	Mixed methods: Interviews and surveys
Bailey, B. A., & Davidson, J. W. (2005). Effects of group singing and performance for marginalized and middle-class singers. <i>Psychology of Music</i> , 33(3), 269 -303.	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews with choir members
Balsnes, A. H. (2011). Songs of Sogne - Aspects of Place, Identity and Belonging. In Ursula Geisler & K. Johansson (Eds.), <i>Choir in Focus 2011</i> (pp. 33-47). Lund, Sweden: Choir in Focus.	Qualitative: Case study: participant observation (researcher in the role of the conductor), interviews and document analysis
Balsnes, A. H. (2012). Choral singing, health and quality of life: The story of Diana. <i>Arts & Health</i> , 1-13.	Qualitative: Individual case study of one member of a Norwegian mixed amateur choir
Beck, R. J., Cesario, T. C., Yousefi, A., & Enamoto, H. (2000). Choral Singing, Performance Perception, and Immune System Changes in Salivary Immunoglobulin A and Cortisol. <i>Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal</i> , 18(1), 87-106.	Quantitative: Surveys
Bell, C. L. (2008). Toward a definition of a community choir. <i>International Journal of Community Music</i> , 1(2), 229-241.	Qualitative: Own experience, choral vignettes and in-depth interviews and personal observation of the author on community choirs (not participant observation)
Cannady, G. D. (1989). <i>Performing a Johann Sebastian Bach Cantata with a High School Choir</i> . (Unpublished MA Thesis). University of Wyoming, USA.	Self-observatino regarding technical issues in conducting a Bach Cantata
Chorus America. (2003). <i>America’s Performing Art: A Study of Chorus, Choral Singers, and Their Impact: Chorus Impact Study Report on Findings</i> . Chorus America.	Mixed methods: Nationwide telephone polls, focus group interviews and data from various other sources

Clift, S., Hancox, G., Morrison, I., Hess, B., Kreutz, G., & Stewart, D. (2007). Choral singing and psychological wellbeing: Findings from English choirs in a cross-national survey using the WHOQOL-BREF. <i>Proceedings, International Symposium on Performance Science, Porto, Portugal</i> (pp. 22–23).	Quantitative: Survey questionnaire - 600 English choral singers (random sample)
Clift, S. m., & Hancox, G. (2001). The perceived benefits of singing. <i>The Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health</i> , 121(4), 248 - 256.	Quantitative: Two rounds of questionnaires - written comments analysed with content analysis
Conway, C., & Hodgman, T. M. (2008). College and Community Choir Member Experiences in a Collaborative Intergenerational Performance Project. <i>Journal of Research in Music Education</i> , 56(3), 220 -237.	Qualitative: Focus group interviews, collaborative intergenerational performance project journals, postproject individual interviews and a teacher - researcher's personal log of collaborative intergenerational performance project interactions
Durrant, C., & Himonides, E. (1998). What makes people sing together?: Socio-Psychological and Cross-Cultural Perspectives on the Choral Phenomenon. <i>International Journal of Music Education</i> , 32(1), 61-71.	Qualitative: Observation, interviews
Durrant, Colin. (2005). Shaping Identity Through Choral Activity: Singers' And Conductors' Perceptions. <i>Research Studies in Music Education</i> , 24(1), 88 -98.	Qualitative: Descriptive and interpretive case study; interviews with conductors and singers, observation of choral rehearsals and occasional concerts
Durrant, Colin. (2011). Engineering, Settling Baritones and Sexuality: the Togetherness of Choral Singing. In Ursula Geisler & K. Johansson (Eds.), <i>Choir in Focus 2011</i> (pp. 48-63). Lund, Sweden: Choir in Focus.	Qualitative: Interviews
Eades, G., & O'Connor, M. (2008). Sounds Lively! Choirs: introducing singing into healthcare. <i>The Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health</i> , 128(2), 60 -61.	Mixed methods: Action research - evaluation in voluntary completion of questionnaires and the writing and collection of participant testimony
Einarsdóttir, S. L. (2009). <i>Why do you sing in a choir? Choral views of singers in 10 Icelandic choirs (Af hverju syngur þú í kór? Viðhorf kórfélaga í tíu íslenskum kórum)</i> . Unpublished MA-thesis, Bifröst University, Iceland.	Quantitative: Survey questionnaire - 10 Icelandic choirs
Einarsdóttir, S. L., & Sigurjonsson, N. (2010). Without somebody to keep you going, you're like a headless doll, aren't you? <i>Rannsóknir í félagsvísindum XI (Research in Social Science)</i> , 253-259.	Qualitative: Participant observation (in the role of the choral singer) and interviews
Elorriaga, A. (2011). The construction of male gender identity through choir singing at a Spanish secondary school. <i>International Journal of Music Education</i> , 318-332.	Qualitative: Grounded-theory based 'teacher-research' strategy of inquiry, participant observation, unstructured interviews, focus groups, sound recordings and analysis of choral arrangement and scores, vocal and singing exercises
Faulkner, R., & Davidson, J. W. (2006). Men in chorus: collaboration and competition in homo-social vocal behaviour. <i>Psychology of Music</i> , 34(2), 219 -237.	Qualitative: Interpretive phenomenological analysis - qualitative method using autobiographical data (one of the researcher is the conductor of the choir)
Finnegan, R. H. (2007). <i>The hidden musicians: music-making in an English town</i> . Wesleyan University Press.	Qualitative + historical: Observation, surveys, document analysis, historical analysis
Freer, P. K. (2009). 'I'll sing with my buddies' — Fostering the possible selves of male choral singers. <i>International Journal of Music Education</i> , 27(4), 341 -355.	Qualitative: Narrative analysis of three school boys

French, T., & MacDonald, R. A. R. (2011). 'Sing For Life': An Investigation of the Effects of Choir Participation on Health and Wellbeing. In M. Shipton & E. Himonides (Eds.), <i>Proceedings SEMPRES Conference</i> (pp. 52-53). Presented at the 'Striking a Chord': Music, Health and Wellbeing: a conference exploring current developments in research and practice, University Centre Folkestone: Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health.	Qualitative + media: Participant observation (the researcher in the role of the conductor), interviews, video recordings
Johansson, K. (2011). Inside Views on Contemporary Swedish Choral Practice. In Ursula Geisler & K. Johansson (Eds.), <i>Choir in Focus 2011</i> (pp. 15-32). Lund, Sweden: Choir in Focus.	Qualitative: Interviews with 26 Swedish choir leaders
Keen, B. (2008). <i>The Bach Choir: the first hundred years</i> . London: Ashgate.	Historical
Kreutz, G., Bongard, S., Rohrmann, S., Hodapp, V., & Grebe, D. (2004). Effects of Choir Singing or Listening on Secretory Immunoglobulin A, Cortisol, and Emotional State. <i>Journal of Behavioral Medicine</i> , 27(6), 623-635.	Quantitative: Salvia samples and subjective measures of affect - repeated measures
Langston, T. W., & Barrett, M. S. (2008). Capitalizing on community music: a case study of the manifestation of social capital in a community choir. <i>Research Studies in Music Education</i> , 30(2), 118 -138.	Mixed methods: Survey, field notes and artefact-elicited, semi-structured interviews in a qualitative interpretive case study design (one of the researchers is the conductor of the choir)
Lawlor, M. F. (2011). The Fifty-Year History of the Phoenix Bach Choir: From Amateur to Professional. BiblioBazaar.	Qualitative + historical: Document analysis and interviews
Monks, S. (2003). Adolescent Singers and Perceptions of Vocal Identity. <i>British Journal of Music Education</i> , 20(03), 243-256.	Qualitative + media: Longitudinal study - recordings taken every two months of 30 singing students in secondary school; Case studies of 15 students of the 30 - self assessment by the students over the one year period; Videotaping of an informal concert and singers commented on their own performances
Nørsett, B. K. (2003). Hva er eitt godt kor? Tankar og haldningar kring vurdering i internasjonale korkonkurransar. Unpublished Thesis. University of Oslo, Norway.	Qualitative: Observation (choral competition) and interviews (with competition judges)
O'Toole, P. (1994). I Sing In A Choir But I Have 'No Voice!' <i>The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning</i> , 4(5).	Qualitative: Self-observation and own reflections on choral conductors
Palmer, R. (2008). Questions arising from the views of some members of four amateur classical music organizations. <i>International Journal of Community Music</i> , 1(2), 203-216.	Qualitative: Focus groups
Parrott, A. (2000). <i>The essential Bach choir</i> . Boydell Press.	Historical analysis
Pitts, Stephanie. (2005). <i>Valuing musical participation</i> . Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.	Qualitative: Observation, qualitative interviews
Pitts, Stephanie. (2008). Extra-curricular music in UK schools: investigating the aims, experiences and impact of adolescent musical participation. <i>International Journal of Education & the Arts</i> , 9(10), 1-19.	Mixed methods: Case studies: Survey questionnaires, audio diaries
Pitts, Stephanie. (2009). Roots and Routes in Adult Musical Participation: Investigating the Impact of Home and School on Lifelong Musical Interest and Involvement. <i>British Journal of Music Education</i> , 26(03), 241-256.	Quantitative: Survey with open-ended questions among 71 respondents with lifelong interest and involvement in music
Richards, H., & Durrant, C. (2003). To Sing or Not to Sing: A study on the development of 'non-singers' in choral activity. <i>Research Studies in Music Education</i> , 20(1), 78 -89.	Mixed methods: Observation through a 7 months period, questionnaires and interviews
Shiel, A. I., & Choir, A. B. (1996). <i>Aberdeen Bach Choir: Its Origins and History</i> . Aberdeen Bach Choir.	Historical analysis
Silber, L. (2005). Bars behind bars: the impact of a women's prison choir on social harmony. <i>Music Education Research</i> , 7(2), 251-271.	Qualitative: Action research where the researcher was in the role of the conductor

Southcott, J. & Joseph, D. (2011). Sharing community through singing: the Bosnian Behar Choir in Victoria, Australia. <i>E-Journal of Studies in Music Education</i> , 17-25.	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews with choir members
Walters, R. (2010). <i>The Bethlehem Bach Choir: an Historical and Interpretative Sketch</i> . BiblioBazaar.	Historical
Zadig, S. (2011). The Single voice in the Choral Voice. How Does the Role of Informal Leaders in the Choral Vocies Affect the Other Singers? In Ursula Geisler & K. Johansson (Eds.), <i>Choir in Focus 2011</i> (pp. 64-74). Lund, Sweden: Choir in Focus	Qualitative + media: Interviews, multi-track recordings of choral singing

2. THE LIFE AND WORK OF JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) has often been categorized as one of the great composers in the Western musical tradition. Born in Eisenach on 21st of March 1685 into a family and belonging to a long line of musicians, Bach received little formal tutoring (outside his family) like Handel and later Beethoven (Jones, 2007, p. 6) but was presumably tutored by his father, Johann Ambrosius, who was a city musician in Eisenach. At the age of nine, both of his parents died and he was from that point forward brought up by his elder brother, Johann Christoph, organist at Ohrdruf. He received his first formal keyboard lessons from his brother, Johann Christoph (Boyd, 1997). At 15 years of age, he transferred as a student to the Michaelisschule in Lüneburg, where children of poor parents could attend and pay for tuition costs by singing in the choir of Michaeliskirche. It is believed that Bach took keyboard lessons from Georg Böhm, the organist of the Johanniskirche – although no references exist to confirm this theory. Until he was appointed as a Kapellmeister and *Director Musices* in Leipzig in 1723, he served in the following places:

- Weimar (1703) – served as a ‘lackey’ and violinist in the chapel of Duke Johann Ernst of Saxony-Weimar (1664-1707)
- Arnstadt (1703-1707) –organist of the Neue Kirche
- Mühlhausen (1707-1708) – organist at the Blasiuskirche
- Weimar (1708-1717) - appointed by Wilhelm Ernst (1662-1728) as an organist and orchestra member.
- Köthen (1717-1723) – Kapellmeister by Prince Leopolt von anhalt-Köthen (1694-1728)
- Leipzig (1723-1750) – Cantor, later director of *Collegium Musicae* (Butt, 1997, xi-xv).

In the Arnstadt period Bach was mostly obsessed by the organ and refused to practice with the church’s boy choir, as was a part of his job. He also had a famous conflict with a bassoon player in a street fight, after having called the player various unpleasant names. He took four weeks off to head off for his legendary pilgrimage to Lübeck in October 1705, to meet and encounter with Buxtehude and returned two to three months

later (Parry, 1909, p. 46). He was also accused of ‘making music’ with a strange maid in the church, who was believed to be his first wife and cousin, Maria Barbara, whom he married in October 1707 in Mühlhausen. Bach was a young, impatient, ambitious young man who did not exactly behave like a saint in the Arnstadt years (Butt, 1997).

Arriving in Mühlhausen, his interest in vocal composition grew but it was not until when he returned to Weimar that his fame grew and was a significant step in his career, both financially and professionally, since he was ambitious and eager to improve his social and financial status. His work in Weimar included writing one cantata per month in the Italian style. The cantatas were specifically composed for ceremonies and contained special dramatic scenarios based on the Gospel for the Sunday on which the cantata was originally performed, as the main purpose of the cantatas was to be a part of a liturgical action (Day, 1961).

But his Weimar career ended in a strange way when he got into conflict with his superior, Duke Ernst August, who would not allow him to take a position in Kötchen. Bach refused to write more cantatas, which indicates that the glory of God was not his only reason for writing music. This caused Bach to be arrested and imprisoned for a month until he was dismissed with disgrace but permitted take his position in Kötchen (Wolff, 2002; Parry, 1909).

In Kötchen, Bach’s working hours were flexible, he even went to Berlin in 1719 to get a harpsichord for the court. He was not obligated to write music but he wrote most of his chamber music in these years. After his return from Berlin, however, Maria Barbara, his wife, died of sudden illness and was buried before his arrival. He married his second wife, Anna Magdalena Wilcken in 1721 – she was a gifted soprano who Bach had been working with for a year. It has been debated as to whether they married because Bach ‘needed’ a wife to take care of his children or actually out of love. Many things indicate the latter and some scholars assume that the happiness in his second marriage was no less than in his first. When he decided to leave Kötchen, he applied for four posts but ended up as a Kapellmeister and *Director Musices* in Leipzig, after Georg Philipp Telemann declined the position due to his acceptance of the position as a *Director Musicae* in Hamburg (Siegele, 1997). Bach’s work in Leipzig was hard; he was responsible for choirs in four churches in Leipzig, he was supposed to write one cantata a week for the first four to five years - a massive production of cantatas and many of them were masterpieces. The first performances of *St John’s Passion* took place in 1724 and *Magnificat* (1723) and *St Matthew Passion* (1727 or 1729) were

composed. There was also little time for rehearsals, since he had to conduct rehearsals on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. His salary was only one fourth of what he made in Kötchen, leaving him dissatisfied, both financially and professionally. In 1729 he achieved the position of director of the Collegium Musicum (Parry, 1909; Boyd, 1997).

During the early Leipzig years, the Bach family suffered great losses – Anna Magdalena went through twelve pregnancies between 1723 and 1737 and eight of their twelve children died between the ages of infancy to five years. One of the remaining four children (Gottfried Heinrich) was mentally handicapped. The last child was born in 1742, when Johann Sebastian was 57 and Anna 41. In all, Bach had 21 children but 11 died in young age. Johann Sebastian Bach suffered from blindness in his last year – he died in 1750, after a failed eye-surgery. His wife, Anna Magdalena, died in poverty in 1760 and was given a pauper funeral (Parry, 1909; Boyd, 1997).

It is a difficult task to discuss Bach's compositions as a whole. According to Table 8 in Appendix 4, 1219 of Bach's works have been preserved and these can, without a doubt, be categorized as his works, whereas 99 works are categorized as 'doubtful' or 'falsely attributed.' One must bear in mind that it is assumed that many of Bach's works were lost, especially some of his older works and the existing works vary and differ when it comes to length, quality and magnitude. If we assume that Bach began composing when he was around 20 years old and continuing composing until his death in 1750, then his average 'productivity' was around 30 compositions a year, or over two a month. We must also bear in mind that Bach had a big household to provide for and had to endure tragic losses in his private life.

General aspects of the compositions of J.S. Bach as a whole have often had the tag of the so called religious tendency and 'obedience' of the composer. As expected, Bach had to demonstrate a basic theological knowledge in order to receive his post as Thomascantor. But the question is whether Bach was a Lutheran by conviction or convenience. Leaver (1997a) suggests that his convictions had been too much taken for granted in the latter part of the 19th century. Thus the exaggerated image of Bach was constructed as the pious Christian, supreme Lutheran cantor, even elevated to the level of the primary author of the New Testament – almost as the fifth evangelist (Leaver, 1997a). Surely Bach's approach to music was in the theological tradition of Luther, who emphasized the use of music in liturgical ceremonies (claiming music to be a gift from God, a foretaste of eternal life) and modified the existing choral tradition of the

medieval school system in order to teach primarily the music of the church (Leaver, 1997a).

3. LIST OF BACH'S LARGE SCALE CHORAL WORKS

Table 7: List of Bach's large scale choral works (Source: www.jsbach.org)

MASSES AND MAGNIFICAT SETTINGS	
BWV 232	<i>Mass in B Minor</i>
BWV 243	<i>Magnificat in D Major</i>
BWV 243a	<i>Magnificat in E flat</i>
BWV 233	<i>Missa in F Major</i>
BWV 233a	<i>Kyrie 'Christe du Lamm Gottes'</i>
BWV 234	<i>Missa Brevfis in A Major</i>
BWV 235	<i>Missa Brevis in G minor</i>
BWV 236	<i>Missa in G Major</i>
BWV 237	<i>Sanctus in C Major</i>
BWV 238	<i>Sanctus in D Major</i>
BWV 239	<i>Sanctus in D Major</i>
BWV 240	<i>Sanctus in G Major</i>
BWV 241	<i>Sanctus in D Major</i>
BWV 242	<i>Christe Eleison</i>
BWV 1081	<i>Credo in unum Deum in F dur</i>
BWV 1082	<i>Suscepit Israel puerum suum</i>
BWV 1083	<i>Tilge, Höchster, meine Sunden</i>
PASSIONS AND ORATORIOS	
BWV 244	<i>St Matthew Passion</i>
BWV 245	<i>St John Passion</i>
BWV 246	<i>St Luke Passoin (Spurious)</i>
BWV 247	<i>St Mark Passion - Passio secundum Marcum</i>
BWV 248	<i>Christmas Oratorio</i>
BWV 249	<i>Easter Oratorio: Kommt, eilet und laufet</i>
BWV 11	<i>Lobet Gott in seinen Reichen (Ascension Oratorio)</i>
BWV 244a	<i>Klagt Kinder, klagt es aller Welt</i>
BWV 244b	<i>Jesum lass' ich nicht von mir</i>
BWV 245a	<i>Aria aus der 2. Fassung der Johannespassion</i>
BWV 245b	<i>Aria aus der 2. Fassung der Johannespassion</i>
BWV 245c	<i>Aria aus der 2. Fassung der Johannespassion</i>
BWV 249a	<i>Entfliehet, verschwindet, entweichet, ihr Sorgen</i>
BWV 249b	<i>Verjaget, zerstreuet, zerruttet, ihr Sterne</i>
BWV 1088	<i>So heb ich denn mein Auge sehulich auf</i>

4. OVERVIEW OF BACH'S COMPOSITIONS

Overview of

Table 8: An overview of Bach's Composition (Source: www.jsbach.org)

VOCAL WORKS	
Masses and Magnificat settings	17
Passions and Oratorios	15
Church Cantatas	210
Secular Cantatas	26
Spurious Cantatas	8
Chorales (other than above)	189
Hymns	74
Motets	11
Pieces from Notebook 2, Anna Magdalena Bach	12
Quodlibet	2
Wedding Chorales	3
Sacred Chorales	6
Total	573
ORGAN WORKS	
Arrangements of Works by Other Composers	7
Chorale Settings	32
Das Orgelbüchlein (Chorale Preludes I)	47
Duets (all for Organ and harpsichord)	4
Eighteen 'Leipzig' Chorale Preludes (Chorale Preludes III)	34
Fantasias	4
Fantasias and Fugues	3
Fugues	10
Organ Chorales from the Kirnberger Collection (Chorale Preludes V)	29
Other	1
Other Chorale Preludes	26
Partitas and Variations on Chorales	6
Passacaglia	1
Preludes	3
Preludes (Tocattas/Fantasias) and Fugues	29
Seventeen Chorale Preludes - 'German Organ Mass' (Choral Preludes IV)	21
Short Preludes and Fugues	8

Six Schübler Chorales (Chorale Preludes II)	6
Sonatas	7
Toccatas and Fugues	4
Trios	4
Various	5
Various Chorale Preludes	28
Total	319

CLAVIER WORKS

English Suites	6
Fantasias	4
Fantasias and Fugues/Fughettas	8
Five Preludes	5
French Overture, Italian Concerto	1
French Suites	8
Fugues and Fughettas	20
Inventions and Sinfonias	31
Keyboard arrangements of concertos by other composers	17
Little Preludes	10
Miscellaneous Suites	9
Partitas	6
Preludes	3
Preludes and Fugues/Fughettas	10
Six Little Preludes	6
Sonatas and Sonata Movements	8
Suites and Suite Movements	15
Toccatas	7
Variations, Capriccios, and Miscellaneous	7
Well-Tempered Clavier	51
Total	232

OTHER INSTRUMENTAL WORKS	
Canons and Late Contrapuntal Works	11
Chamber Works for Duos and Trios	30
Concertos and Orchestral Suites	34
Solo Instrumental Works	20
Total	95
BACH WORKS IN TOTAL 1219	
DOUBTFUL WORKS	
Organ work	1
Choral Adaptations - Appendix	31
Concertos	2
Fugues on the name BACH	6
Movements for a Music Box	18
Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach	22
Total	80
FALSELY ATTRIBUTED WORKS	
Chamber	6
Organ or Clavier Works	7
Vocal Music	6
Total	19

5. LIST OF BACH CHOIRS IN UK

Table 9: List of Bach choirs in UK (listed with a webpage)

CHOIR	LOCATION	FOUNDED	MD
The Bach Choir	London	1875	David Hill
Edinburgh Bach choir	Edinburgh, Scotland	1889	Neil Mantle
Oxford Bach Choir	Oxford	1896	Nicholas Cleobury
Aberdeen Bach Choir	Aberdeen, Scotland	1913	Gordon Jack
Newcastle Bach choir	Newcastle	1915	Eric Cross
Birmingham Bach Choir	Birmingham	1919	Paul Spicer
St Albans Bach choir	St Albans	1924	Andrew Lucas
Ipswich Bach Choir	Ipswich, East Suffolk	1929	Patrick McCarthy
Leicester Bach Choir	Leicester	1930	Richard Laing
Manchester Bach Choir	Manchester (Stockport)	1932	Jim Cooke
Bury St Edmunds Bach Choir	Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk	1932	Philip Reed
Northampton Bach Choir	Northampton	1936	Lee Dunleavy
Royal Leamington Spa Bach Choir	Warwickshire	1939	Nigel Stark
Southend Bach Choir	Leigh-on-Sea	1943	Colin Edwards
Bath Bach Choir	Bath	1946	Nigel Perrin
Cheltenham Bach Choir	Cheltenham	1946	Stephen Jackson
Gwent Bach Society	Gwent, Abergavenny	1951	Roger Langford
Nottingham Bach Choir	Nottingham	1954	Paul Hale
Derby Bach Choir	Derby	1959	Richard Roddis
Croydon Bach Choir	Croydon, London	1960	Tim Horton
Cardiff Bach Choir	Cardiff, Wales	1962	Tim Taylor
Swansea Bach Choir	Swansea	1965	John Hugh Thomas
East Cornwall Bach Choir	Liskeard, Cornwall	1965	Paul Ellis
Southport Bach Choir	Southport	1965	Ian Wells
Bristol Bach Choir	Bristol	1966	Gavin Carr
Grimsby Bach Choir	Grimsby	1969	Steven Maxson
Reading Bach choir	Reading	1973	Matthew Hamilton
Eye Bach Choir	Eye, Suffolk	1974	Leslie Olive (Male)
Keele Bach Choir	Keele, Staffordshire	1975	Matthew Willis

Yorkshire Bach Choir	York, Yorkshire	1979	Peter Seymour
East Sussex Bach Choir	Lewes, East Sussex	1986	John Hancorn
Bournemouth Bach Choir	Bournemouth	1987	Tim Hooper
Colchester Bach Choir	Colchester	1992	Patrick McCarthy
Exeter Bach Society	Exeter, Devon	1995	Peter Hurford
Chesterfield Bach Choir	Chesterfield	Not known	Robert Girdler
Furness Bach Choir	Cumbria	Not known	Anthony Milledge
Sheffield Bach Choir	Sheffield, Yorkshire	Not known	Simon Lindley
Hull Bach Choir	Hull	Not known	Anthony ford
Chester Bach Singers	Chesterfield	Not known	Martin Bussey
Tilford Bach Society	Tilford	Not known	Not known

6. FRAMEWORK FOR FIELD NOTES - PILOT STUDY

I NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Performance of the conductor

- Warm-up
- Approach to the repertoire
- Interaction between the conductor and the choir members

Repertoire

- What kind of repertoire was rehearsed?

Choir members

- The atmosphere in the rehearsal
- Interaction between choir members

II EVALUATION

My experience and evaluation of the rehearsal

- Choir conductor
- Choir members
- Repertoire
- Anything unusual?

Conclusion

**7. INTERVIEWS: REQUEST FOR VOLUNTEERS FOR INTERVIEWS -
PILOT STUDY**

SIGRUN LILJA EINARSDÓTTIR

Dear members of [name of choir],

First I would like to thank you all so much for allowing me to sing with you – you are a very strong group and I would like to thank you also for all your kindness and goodwill.

In my pilot study, I planned to do interviews (one-on-one) with at least four choir members (at least one founding member). Therefore I would like to ask if anyone would like to be my interviewee next week. A full anonymity and confidentiality will be promised.

If yes, please contact me via telephone (07879 358289) or by e-mail (sle210@exeter.ac.uk or sigrunlilja@bifrost.is). I will be very grateful if you would participate in this study.

With kind regards,
Sigrun Lilja Einarsdóttir

8. INFORMATION / CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWEES - PILOT STUDY

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT: *Choral participation, structure and repertoire - A pilot study for PhD Research design*

DETAILS OF PROJECT: This project is a pilot study performed in order to get inspiration to define the scope of Sigrun Lilja Einarsdóttir's PhD research project. The main aim of Mrs. Einarsdóttir's PhD project is to study participation of amateur choral singers in performing 'fine art' like the masterpieces of Bach and other composers.

The project is run by Sigrun Lilja Einarsdóttir under the supervision of Professor Tia DeNora.

The researcher would like to have your permission to use the results of the interview in her pilot study and also to use quotes. A full anonymity will be secured. Please note that you have the right to withdraw your consent at any time. You also have the right to refuse to answer any questions without giving any reason.

If you have any questions regarding your interview, concerns regarding the research or any dissatisfaction, you may report them in confidence to:

Tia DeNora, Professor – Department of Sociology and Philosophy (HuSS)
University of Exeter, Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter, EX4 4RJ, United Kingdom
Telephone: +44 (0) 1392 263280, Email: T.DeNora@exeter.ac.uk

CONFIDENTIALITY: Interview recordings and transcripts will be held in confidence. They will not be used other than for the purposes described above and third parties will not be allowed access to them except as may be required by the law. Any references to the interviewee in articles or papers written will use a pseudonym and not their real name and will change all identifying details.

CONSENT: I confirm that I allow Einarsdóttir to use results from my interview and use anonymous quotes in her research. I understand the above information and voluntarily consent to my participation in the research project: *Choral participation, structure and repertoire - A pilot study for PhD Research design*

NAME OF RESPONDENT: _____

SIGNATURE OF RESPONDENT: _____

EMAIL AND/OR PHONE: _____

DATE: _____ **SIGNATURE OF INTERVIEWER:** _____

You may contact the researcher via email: sle210@exeter.ac.uk or telephone 07879 358289

9. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – PILOT STUDY

PILOT STUDY FOR PHD-THESIS - STUDENT: SIGRÚN LILJA EINARSDÓTTIR

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR TIA DENORA, PHD

CHOIR MEMBERS

1. Tell me a little bit about your background

- a. Name, age, profession
- b. Music education or training (if any)
- c. Explain to me what kind of musical tradition you find familiar, i.e. what kind of music you grew up with and you relate to and why.
- d. Tell me how you began to sing and what inspired you
 - i. [ask about relation to the background, if any relative used to sing etc.]

2. Tell me about how you began to sing in a choir

- a. How many years have you been singing in choirs?
- b. Tell me about how you would describe your skills as a choir member
- c. Have you been in other choirs before joining this choir?
 - i. Tell me about those choirs, the music they performed and the atmosphere in these choirs.
 - ii. [If yes] Why did you quit singing in these choirs?

3. How did you get involved with this choir?

- a. Tell me about your first rehearsal with the choir
 - i. What were you singing?
 - ii. The conductor ect.
- b. Tell me about your first impression with the choir
- c. Tell me about the tradition in this choir, how it is similar and/or different from other choirs you know

4. Tell me about it when this choir was founded [ask a founding member]

- a. Why did you start this choir?
- b. What was the inspiration? Where did the need come from?
- c. Who contributed to it? What role did the conductor play?

- d. How many people were in the founding group? Where are the rest of the founding members?

5. Explain to me how this choir is organized

- a. Tell me about the committee
 - i. The role of the committee
 - ii. The cooperation between the conductor and the committee

6. How would you describe the role of the conductor in your choir?

- a. Tell me about the conductors you remember of that have been conducting this choir
- b. Tell me about the influence of the conductor towards the choir members
- c. How would you describe the importance of the conductor?

7. Explain to me what you consider to be a good performance / a good singing

- a. How would you describe your 'perfect' experience in a choral concert?

8. Tell me about the music that you have been singing in this choir?

- a. How did the choir decide to sing that program?
- b. How does the choir make decisions about the repertoire?
- c. Tell me about *Christmas Oratorio* – how did the choir decide to sing that?
 - i. Have you sung it before?
- d. Tell me about your experience and perspective on the chorales in the second cantata
- e. Tell me about how much you were familiar with the *Christmas Oratorio* and other of Bach's works before you started rehearsing this autumn.
- f. Tell me about the motets the choir is singing now
- g. Tell me about the repertoire that you relate most to and why

9. What is the source about your inspiration when you are singing? (?? If necessary)

- a. How would you describe your choral experience?
- b. Explain to me why you think people sing in a choir
 - i. Explain to me why you sing in a choir
- c. How does your choral participation affect you in everyday life?
- d. Would you consider doing something else rather than singing in a choir?
Why / why not?

10. Other things you would like to consider?

CONDUCTOR

1. Tell me a little bit about your background

- a. Name, age, profession
- b. Music education or training (if any)
- c. Tell me why you choose to conduct and what inspired you
- d. What is your favourite music? What music do you prefer your choir to sing?

2. Tell me about how you began your career as a conductor

- a. How many years have you been working as a conductor?
- b. How would you describe your skills as a choir conductor?
- c. Have you been conducting other choirs prior to this choir?
 - i. Tell me about those choirs, the music they performed and the atmosphere in these choirs.

3. How did you get involved with this choir?

- a. Tell me about your first rehearsal and your first impression with the choir
- b. Tell me about the tradition in this choir, how it is similar and/or different from other choirs you know
- c. How would you describe the combination of singers in this choir (in terms of skills and voice quality)?

4. Explain to me how this choir is organized

- a. Is there a special committee?
- b. Explain to me the role of the committee
- c. Explain the cooperation between the conductor and the committee

5. How would you describe your role as the conductor in this choir?

- a. How influential do you think you are as a conductor?
- b. How would you describe the importance of the conductor?
- c. Tell me about the overall relationship you have with choir members

6. Explain to me what you consider to be a good performance / a good singing

- a. How would you describe your 'perfect' experience in a choral concert?
- b. Tell me about your perspective on an amateur performance and professional performance regarding choir performances

- i. Where is the line between amateur and professional performance in your opinion?

7. Tell me about the music that you have been singing in this choir?

- a. How would you describe the repertoire you have conducted in your career?
- b. How did the choir decide to sing this program (i.e. in autumn 2009)?
- c. How does the choir make decisions about the repertoire? What is your role in that decision making?
- d. Tell me about *Christmas Oratorio* – how did the choir decide to sing that?
- e. Have you conducted it before?
- f. Tell me about your experience and perspective on the chorales in the second cantata
- g. Tell me about how much you were familiar with the *Christmas Oratorio* and other of Bach's works before you started rehearsing this autumn
- h. Surprised / Disappointed?
- i. How would you describe your favourite repertoire?

8. What is the source of your inspiration as a conductor*

- a. How would you describe the experience of your choir members?
- b. Explain to me why you think people sing in a choir
- c. How does your work as a conductor affect you in everyday life?
- d. Would you consider doing something else rather than conducting a choir? Why / why not?

9. Other things you would like to consider

10. FRAMEWORK FOR FIELD NOTES FROM PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION – PHD STUDY

I NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Performance of the conductor

- Warm-up
- Approach to the repertoire
- Interaction between the conductor and the choir members

Repertoire

- What kind of repertoire was rehearsed?

Choir members

- The atmosphere in the rehearsal
- Interaction between choir members

II EVALUATION

My experience and evaluation of the rehearsal

- Choral conductor
- Choir members
- Repertoire
- Anything unusual?

Conclusion

11. QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS - PHD STUDY

CHOIR MEMBERS

1. Tell me a little bit about your background

- a. Name, age, profession
- b. Music education or training (if any)
- c. Explain to me what kind of musical tradition you find familiar, i.e. what kind of music you grew up with and you relate to and why.
- d. Tell me how you began to sing and what inspired you
 - i. [ask about relation to the background, if any relative used to sing etc.]

2. Tell me about how you began to sing in a choir

- a. How many years have you been singing in choirs?
- b. Tell me about how you would describe your skills as a choir member
- c. Have you been in other choirs before joining this choir?
 - i. Tell me about those choirs, the music they performed and the atmosphere in these choirs.
 - ii. [If yes] Why did you quit singing in these choirs?

3. How did you get involved with this choir?

- a. Tell me about your first rehearsal with the choir
 - i. What were you singing?
 - ii. The conductor etc.
- b. Tell me about your first impression with the choir
- c. Tell me about the tradition in this choir, how it is similar and/or different from other choirs you know

4. Why did you join a Bach choir?

- a. Why a Bach choir? Why this choir
- b. When and where did you first learn about Bach and his music?
- c. Tell me about Bach and how you experience Bach (how do you think he was like a person, a composer, how do you see his pictures etc.)
- d. Tell me about what Bach and the idea you have about Bach does for you in general
- e. Have you read any Bach? Seen documentaries? Been to Leipzig?

- f. How would you compare Bach to other composers, for example Handel, Beethoven, Mozart etc.?

5. Tell me about the music that you have been singing in this choir

- a. How did the choir decide to sing that program and how does the choir make decisions about the repertoire?
- b. Tell me about the B-minor mass**
 - i. How did the choir decide to sing that?
 - ii. Have you sung it before?
 - iii. What is your favourite part and why [listen to the part and discuss]?
 - iv. Is there any part you find more difficult than others? Why?
 - v. Tell me about your experience and perspective on the chorales in the B-minor mass – what it does for you
- c. Tell me about how much you were familiar with the B-minor mass and other of Bach's works before you started rehearsing.
- d. Tell me about the repertoire that you relate most to and why

6. What is the source about your inspiration when you are singing? (?? If necessary)

- a. How would you describe your choral experience?
- b. Explain to me why you think people sing in a choir
 - i. Explain to me why you sing in a choir
- c. How does your choral participation affect you in everyday life?
- d. Would you consider doing something else rather than singing in a choir? Why / why not?

7. Explain to me what you consider to be a good performance / a good singing

- a. How would you describe your 'perfect' experience in a choral concert?

8. How would you describe the role of the conductor in your choir?

- a. Tell me about the conductors you remember of that have been conducting this choir
- b. Tell me about the influence of the conductor towards the choir members
- c. How would you describe the importance of the conductor?
- d. How would you describe the perfect conductor and why?

9. Other things you would like to consider?

CHORAL CONDUCTOR

1. Tell me a little bit about your background

- a. Name, age, profession
- b. Music education or training (if any)
- c. Tell me why you choose to conduct and what inspired you
- d. What is your favourite music? What music do you prefer your choir to sing?

2. Tell me about how you began your career as a conductor

- a. How many years have you been working as a conductor?
- b. How would you describe your skills as a choir conductor?
- c. Have you been conducting other choirs prior to this choir?
 - i. Tell me about those choirs, the music they performed and the atmosphere in these choirs.
 - ii. Tell me about the amateur choral tradition in England
 - iii. Where do you think there is a boundary between amateur and professional choirs/choir singers?

3. How did you get involved with this choir?

- a. Tell me about your first rehearsal and your first impression with the choir
- b. Tell me about the tradition in this choir, how it is similar and/or different from other choirs you know
- c. How would you describe the combination of singers in this choir (in terms of skills and voice quality)?

4. Why did you start to conduct a Bach choir?

- a. Why a Bach choir? Why this choir
- b. When and where did you first learn about Bach and his music?
- c. Tell me about Bach and how you experience Bach (how do you think he was like a person, a composer, how do you see his pictures etc.)
- d. Tell me about what Bach and the idea you have about Bach does for you in general
- e. Have you read any Bach? Seen documentaries? Been to Leipzig?
- f. How would you compare Bach to other composers, for example Handel, Beethoven, Mozart etc.?

- g. Why do you think there are so many Bach choirs in UK? Why are there no Mozart or Handel-choirs?
- h. Do you think that English composers are in the shadow of the German/Austrian composers?
- i. Explain to me how you see the possible 'Bach influence' on the English choral tradition.

5. Tell me about the music that you have been conducting in this choir

- a. How did the choir decide to sing that program and how does the choir make decisions about the repertoire?
- b. Tell me about the B-minor mass**
 - i. How did the choir decide to sing that?
 - ii. Have you conducted it before?
 - iii. What is your favourite part and why [listen to the part and discuss]?
 - iv. Is there any part you find more difficult than others? Why?
 - v. Tell me about your experience and perspective on the chorales in the B-minor mass – what it does for you
- c. Tell me about how much you were familiar with the B-minor mass and other of Bach's works before you started rehearsing.
- d. Tell me about the repertoire that you relate most to and why

6. How would you describe your role as the conductor in this choir?

- a. How influential do you think you are as a conductor?
- b. How would you describe the importance of the conductor?
- c. Tell me about the overall relationship you have with choir members and the committee

7. Explain to me what you consider to be a good performance / a good singing

- a. How would you describe your 'perfect' experience in a choral concert?
- b. Tell me about your perspective on an amateur performance and professional performance regarding choir performances
 - i. Where is the line between amateur and professional performance in your opinion?

8. What is the source of your inspiration as a conductor*

- a. How would you describe the experience of your choir members?
- b. Explain to me why you think people sing in a choir

- c. How does your work as a conductor affect you in everyday life?
- d. How would you describe the ‘perfect conductor?’
- e. How would you describe the ‘perfect choral singer?’
- f. Would you consider doing something else rather than conducting a choir? Why / why not?

9. Other things you would like to consider

12. INFORMATION/CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS – PHD**STUDY**

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT: THE ‘BACH-LEGACY’ AND PERFORMANCE OF FINE ART MUSIC IN THE ‘NEW ENGLISH BACH AMATEUR CHORAL TRADITION’
THE CASE OF THE CROYDON BACH CHOIR IN LONDON PERFORMING BACH’S *MASS IN B MINOR*

DETAILS OF PROJECT: This project is Sigrun Lilja Einarsdóttir’s PhD research project. The main aim of Mrs. Einarsdóttir’s PhD project is to study participation of amateur choral singers in performing ‘fine art’ like the masterpieces of Bach and other composers.

The project is run by Sigrun Lilja Einarsdóttir under the supervision of Professor Tia DeNora.

The researcher would like to have your permission to use the results of the interview in her pilot study and also to use quotes. A full anonymity will be secured. Please note that you have the right to withdraw your consent at any time. You also have the right to refuse to answer any questions without giving any reason.

If you have any questions regarding your interview, concerns regarding the research or any dissatisfaction, you may report them in confidence to:

Tia DeNora, Professor – Department of Sociology and Philosophy (HuSS)
University of Exeter, Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter, EX4 4RJ, United Kingdom
Telephone: +44 (0) 1392 263280, Email: T.DeNora@exeter.ac.uk

CONFIDENTIALITY: Interview recordings and transcripts will be held in confidence. They will not be used other than for the purposes described above and third parties will not be allowed access to them except as may be required by the law. Any references to the interviewee in articles or papers written will use a pseudonym and not their real name and will change all identifying details.

CONSENT: I confirm that I allow Einarsdóttir to use results from my interview and use anonymous quotes in her research. I understand the above information and voluntarily consent to my participation in the research project: *The ‘Bach-legacy’ and Performance of Fine Art Music in the ‘New English Bach Amateur Choral Tradition.’ The case of the Croydon Bach choir in London performing Bach’s Mass in B Minor.*

NAME OF RESPONDENT: _____

SIGNATURE OF RESPONDENT: _____

EMAIL AND/OR PHONE: _____

DATE: _____ **SIGNATURE OF INTERVIEWER:** _____

You may contact the researcher via email: sle210@exeter.ac.uk or telephone 07510 708033

13. THE CROYDON BACH CHOIR - SURVEY

This survey is a part of a PhD research conducted by Sigrun Lilja Einarsdóttir, a PhD research student at the University of Exeter. Her supervisor is professor Tia DeNora. Please note that you are not obligated to answer any questions in the survey, or the survey in whole but all answers are appreciated. A full anonymity is promised, the names of participants will not appear anywhere nor will any personal details be traceable.

1. GENDER

Please choose one option

Male

Female

2. IN WHAT YEAR ARE YOU BORN? _____

3. WHAT IS YOUR NATIONALITY? _____

If you are not originally from UK , where are you originally from?

4. WHAT IS YOUR MARITAL STATUS?

Please choose one option

Married

Living together (not married)

Distance relationship

Single

Divorced

Widow / widower

If you are married or living with someone: Does your partner sing in a choir?

Please choose one option

Yes, my partner sings in the same choir as I do

Yes, my partner sings with another choir

No

5. EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND*Please choose the highest degree that you hold at the moment*

- Secondary school
- Job related qualification (e.g. craftsmanship, mechanic etc.)
Please indicate which: _____
- College
- Undergraduate Certificate or Diploma
- Undergraduate Degree (BA, BSc, B.Ed. or equivalent)
- Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma
- Postgraduate Degree (M.A., M.Sc., M.Ed., MBA or equivalent)
- PhD, DBA or equivalent
- Do not know
- Other, what? _____

6. MUSIC EDUCATION*Please choose the highest degree that you hold at the moment*

- Short courses / workshops: vocal / instrumental
- Private lessons: vocal / instrumental
If I have taken private lessons, how many years? _____
- Undergraduate degree – B.Mus.
- Postgraduate degree – M.Mus.
- PhD in music
- I have no formal music education
- Do not know
- Other music education - which?

7. HOW MANY CHOIRS HAVE YOU SUNG WITH? _____

8. DO YOU HAVE OTHER HOBBIES OR LEISURE ACTIVITIES BESIDES CHOIR SINGING?

Please choose one option

- Yes
- No

If yes, what kind of hobbies / leisure activities?

9. HOW MANY CHOIRS ARE YOU SINGING WITH AT THE MOMENT?

Please choose one option

- 1 choir
- 2 choirs
- 3 choirs
- 4 choirs or more, how many? _____

If 2 choirs or more, what kind of a choir to you also sing with?

Please choose whatever applicable

- Small church choir (less than 30 members)
- Big church choir (more than 30 members)
- A choral society
- A choir linked to your workplace
- A choir linked to an organization
- Professional choir
- Men's choir
- Women's choir
- Choir for senior citizens
- Another Bach choir
- Other composer-specific choir
- Another kind, which?

10. FOR HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN SINGING WITH THE CROYDON BACH CHOIR?

11. FOR HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN SINGING IN CHOIRS IN TOTAL?

12. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR SIGHT-READING?

Please choose one option

- I can sight-read reasonably well
- I can sight-read in songs that are not very complicated
- I can sight-read with a good support from other member/s
- I cannot sight-read

13. HOW EASY OR DIFFICULT IS IT FOR YOU TO SING ALONE IN FRONT OF OTHERS?

Please choose one option

- I can sing a solo in a public performance
- I can sing a solo in front of my family, friends, fellow choir members and conductor
- I can sing alone, but only in front of my choir members and conductor
- I can sing alone, but only in front of my family and friends
- I can sing alone, but only when no one else can hear me
- I cannot sing a solo, not even when I'm alone

14. WHAT KIND OF MUSIC DO YOU LISTEN TO AND HOW OFTEN?

Please assign the following numbers to each category below

0 = never

1 = at least once a month

2 = at least once a week

3 = at least twice a week

4 = three times a week or more

- Pop music (including disco, soul etc.)
- Underground music (drum 'n' base, trance, hip hop, funk, punk, metal, heavy metal, death metal etc.)
- Rock-music
- Jazz and blues
- Musicals
- Sacred, baroque music (including Bach, Handel etc.)
- Symphonies
- Operas
- Other classical music
- Secular music
- Other, which? _____

15. HOW MUCH DO YOU LISTEN TO CHORAL MUSIC APART FROM THE MUSIC YOU PERFORM IN YOUR CHOIR?

Please choose one option

- Three times a week or more
- At least twice a week
- At least once a week
- At least once a month
- Never

16. HOW MUCH DO YOU LISTEN TO MUSIC BY J.S. BACH?*Please choose one option*

- Three times a week or more
- At least twice a week
- At least once a week
- At least once a month
- Never

17. WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE MUSIC BY BACH?

WHY? _____

18. HOW DID YOU ACQUIRE YOUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT J.S. BACH AND HIS WORKS?*Please tick whatever applicable*

- Through music lessons
- Read books / articles about Bach and his works
- Seen documentaries / films about Bach and his works
- Seen fictional films / read novels about Bach
- Been to concerts where Bach's music has been performed and introduced
- Visited the Bach museum in Leipzig
- Visited St Thomas Church in Leipzig
- Attended a lecture
- Learned about Bach in history in primary/secondary school
- Learned about Bach at the University
- Other, what? _____

19. HOW DO YOU EXPERIENCE BACH (FOR EXAMPLE WHAT KIND OF A COMPOSER DO YOU THINK HE IS OR WHAT KIND OF A PERSON DO YOU THINK HE WAS)?

20. HOW WOULD YOU COMPARE BACH TO OTHER COMPOSERS, I.E. HANDEL, BEETHOVEN AND MOZART?

21. COULD YOU DESCRIBE THE MAIN REASONS WHY YOU JOINED THIS CHOIR – AND WHY A BACH CHOIR?

22. HAVE YOU SUNG THE B-MINOR MASS BEFORE?*Please choose one option* Yes No**IF YES, WHERE?***Please choose either or both* Yes, I've sung it with this choir Yes, I've sung it with another choir – **which choir?** _____**23. WHICH CHORAL PART IN THE MASS IS YOUR FAVOURITE?**

24. DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE PART OF THE MASS AND IF SO, WHAT IS IT?

25. WHICH OF BACH'S LARGE SCALE CHORAL WORKS HAVE YOU SUNG BEFORE?*Please choose one option* Christmas Oratorio Easter Oratorio St Matthew's Passion St John's Passion Magnificat Some of Bach's cantatas,
which? _____ Other Bach works,
which? _____**26. ARE THERE ANY OTHER WORKS THAT YOU WANT TO SING IN THIS CHOIR?***Please choose one option* Yes No**If yes, what kind of music?** _____

27. PLEASE RANK THE FOLLOWING ASSUMPTIONS IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE, USING 1 FOR THE HIGHEST AND 5 FOR THE LOWEST

Please choose only one option in every row

	1	2	3	4	5
Singing gives me a lot of pleasure and fulfilment	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Singing in a choir improves my self confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Singing in a choir is a field for my need of creativity	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I get a thrill out of performing in concert	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Singing in a choir is good for my mental and physical health	<input type="checkbox"/>				
For me, singing in a choir is a spiritual experience	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The choir conductor encourages me	<input type="checkbox"/>				
My fellow choir members encourage me	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The choir's social life is good	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The atmosphere in the choir is good	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I'm happy with the choir's repertoire	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The musical skills of the conductor of the Croydon Bach choir are good	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The interpersonal / communication skills of the conductor of the Croydon Bach choir are good	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The choir needs more members	<input type="checkbox"/>				

	1	2	3	4	5
The choir has a wide variety of repertoire	<input type="checkbox"/>				
It is important to have a mixed variety of repertoire	<input type="checkbox"/>				
It is important to have an ambitious repertoire	<input type="checkbox"/>				
It is important that a conductor has good musical skills	<input type="checkbox"/>				
It is important that a conductor has good interpersonal / communication skills	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The social life is an important factor in the choir's activities	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I joined this choir because I like the choir's repertoire	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I joined this choir because I wanted to meet new people	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I joined this choir because a friend/family sings with this choir	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I joined this choir because of the conductor	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I joined this choir because the conductor has a good reputation	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I joined this choir because the choir has a good reputation	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Other, what?

28. PLEASE RANK THE FOLLOWING FACTORS IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE, USING 1 FOR HIGHEST AND 4 FOR LOWEST

Repertoire (song choice)	The social life in the choir	Interpersonal skills of the conductor	Musical skills of the conductor

29. DO YOU SOCIALIZE WITH YOUR CHOIR MEMBERS OUTSIDE REHEARSALS AND CONCERTS?

Please choose one option

- Yes
 No

If yes, how many times? *Please choose one option*

- Every day
 Once a week or more
 Every two weeks
 Once a month
 Once every two months
 2-5 times a year
 Once a year
 Less than once a year
 Do not know

If yes, where do you usually meet your fellow choir members? (at the pub, restaurant, at work, at a party after concert etc.)

30. DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOUR CHOIR PARTICIPATION IS A PART OF YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO YOUR SOCIETY?

Please choose one option

- Yes
 No
 Perhaps

If yes or perhaps, how?

31. WOULD YOU RATHER SING IN ANOTHER KIND OF CHOIR, IF YOU HAD THE CHOICE AND OPPORTUNITY?

Please choose one option

- Yes
 No

If yes, what kind of choir?

Please choose whatever applicable

- Small church choir (less than 30 members)
 Big church choir (more than 30 members)
 A choral society
 A choir linked to your workplace
 A choir linked to an organization
 Professional choir
 Men's choir
 Women's choir
 Choir for senior citizens
 Another Bach choir
 Other composer-specific choir
 Another kind, which?

Why? _____

32. IF YOU WERE OF DIFFERENT AGE AND/OR HAD MORE TIME OR MONEY, WOULD YOU EVER THINK YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A HOBBY OTHER THAN CHORAL SINGING?

Please choose one option

- Yes
 No

If yes, which hobby?

HERE YOU CAN ADD SOME THOUGHTS THAT YOU WANT TO CONTRIBUTE AND HAVE NOT BEEN COVERED IN THE QUESTIONS HERE ABOVE.

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

THE CHOIR'S REPERTOIRE

THE CHOIR CONDUCTOR

THE CHOIR'S SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AND COMMUNITY

WHAT SINGING MEANS FOR ME

☺ **THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION** ☺

**14. E-MAIL FOR A REQUEST OF MEMBERSHIP IN CROYDON BACH
CHOIR AND PARTICIPATION IN A PhD RESEARCH**

Sent to Marion Padgham, the secretary of the Croydon Bach Choir Thursday 21st of January 2010 (marion.padgham@blueyonder.co.uk)

Hello Marion,

I am a PhD student at the University of Exeter and in my search of a choir I came across your website and saw that you are looking for new members for your Golden Jubilee concert, performing the Bach Mass in B Minor. :) Are you still recruiting new members for next concert?

The reason I ask, along with my passion for singing Bach, is that at the moment I am currently starting my PhD research in Music sociology where my topic is to study Bach choirs performing the big choral works by J.S. Bach. My supervisor is Professor Tia DeNora, a well-known music sociologist and Director of a group of researchers at University of Exeter who work on the social and health benefits of musical activity in everyday life settings.

Therefore I'm looking for a Bach choir that is performing a great choral work by Bach and I'm wondering if you and your choir would consider the possibility of allowing me to do an in-depth study of the Croydon Bach Choir in London as a part of my PhD project.

The aim of the study will be the following:

- To take in-depth interviews with choir members and conductor
- Observe rehearsals
- Collect demographic information about the choir with a short questionnaire
- Participant observation; i.e. if you would do me the honour of allowing me to sing with the choir for a period of time, participate in singing the *Mass in B Minor* and write a journal about my experience on rehearsals and concert

This would not mean any extra work on your behalf, I'd simply ask few members if I can interview them outside rehearsals and maybe ask members to fill out one short questionnaire (this could happen in a coffee break, takes only 5-10 minutes).

I am a high soprano and I have a lot of experience singing both with amateur and professional choirs in my home country (Iceland) and have performed for example Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, Handel's *Messiah* and *Missa Brevis* by Mozart. This semester I performed the 2nd part of the *Christmas Oratorio* with a local choir in Devon and I did the soprano solo recitativo. I've also conducted one adult church choir in Iceland (see CV below). I'm also a big Bach-fan and my biggest dream has been to sing with a Bach-choir like your choir :)

Last semester I conducted a pilot study with a local choir here in the Southwest of England. The aim of this pilot is to develop themes and questions to be pursued in a further and more extensive study. The research has been designed to follow a choir as it prepares and performs one of the great works (The Mass in B Minor, for example, or one of the Passions) and to combine participant observation of this process with interviews with choir members. The pilot project has received full approval from the University of Exeter's relevant ethics committee and any further project proposal would be similarly examined by that committee.

The ultimate aim of this study is to try to document the great choral works by J.S. Bach and their meanings for choir members and if possible producing a radio documentary for the BBC and/or The Icelandic National Broadcasting Service. I and my supervisor would envision publishing articles in scholarly journals, books and possibly web-based sites on our findings and, though we would be keen to identify the choir, we would alter identifying details of all interviewees prior to publication.

I would be delighted, if by any chance you are interested in discussing it further, and would be happy to answer any questions you might have, provide references, meet the choir, and to take on board any of its concerns or interests which our research might help to address. Brief bio-notes of me and my supervisor are below.

If you are interested and want to consider this further, I can come to next week's rehearsal and meet you (no obligations).

I apologize for this long e-mail - please let me know if there's anyone else I should rather contact.

Many thanks in advance :)

Best regards,

Sigrun Lilja Einarsdóttir

PhD Student

Department of Sociology and Philosophy

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**15. CONFIRMATION FORM – ADULT CHOIR, NO MINORS – PHD
STUDY**

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT: THE ‘BACH-LEGACY’ AND PERFORMANCE OF FINE ART
MUSIC IN THE ‘NEW ENGLISH BACH AMATEUR CHORAL TRADITION’
THE CASE OF THE CROYDON BACH CHOIR IN LONDON PERFORMING BACH’S *MASS IN B
MINOR*

**IT IS HEREBY CONFIRMED THAT THE CROYDON BACH CHOIR CONSISTS ONLY OF
ADULTS AND THAT NO MINORS SING IN THIS CHOIR.**

Signature of the Chairman of the committee of the Croydon Bach choir

Signature of the Conductor of the Croydon Bach choir

Signature of researcher

16. RESEARCHER'S MUSICAL BACKGROUND

I was born into a large family, with five brothers and sisters and my grandmother in the house. My childhood home, a farm on the south coast of Iceland (with cows, sheep, chickens, cats, dogs and turnips), could easily be described as a miniature version of a central transport station as we always had many visitors, especially my father's siblings and their families. This was a very busy household, especially for my mother. There were mainly four people in my life that influenced my musical interest: My parents, my great aunt on my mother's side, and my grandmother on my father's side. Later on were my music teachers at school (Kristín Björnsdóttir, Guðríður Valva Gísladóttir) and my conductors (Anna Björnsdóttir, Hilmar Örn Agnarsson, Hákon Leifsson, Natalia Chow, Krisztina Schklenár, Hörður Áskelsson).

Musical background – relatives' influences

My grandmother, Þorgerður, was very musical and was very interested in music. When she was young, she had a very good singing voice and a keen interest in music. She claimed that in her young age she had a good voice range, being able to sing soprano and alto parts and was encouraged by the Bishop of Iceland while visiting her parish church. He said to her: 'You have a very good voice, very good sounds and secure ones.' These words meant a lot to her and this was one of her happiest childhood memories.

Coming from a poor family and being the youngest of nine siblings, my grandmother never got the opportunity to learn how to sing or play an instrument (and only pursued four years of primary school) but she described her sincere interest in playing the organ – there was an organ in her home where her siblings were almost fighting over who should be allowed to play. She taught herself to play the organ and at least two of her brothers became organists in small parish churches – after having pursued only six weeks of training in playing the organ.

As she never had the opportunity to learn to play an instrument, she encouraged me to learn to play, and I was thus given an opportunity she never had (she was in a way living her dream through me). I started to learn to play the organ, piano and the recorder and often when I was tired of playing and wanted to quit, my grandmother wouldn't hear of it – she insisted that I kept on having lessons so I continued. This

taught me a valuable lesson: You can on occasions get sick and tired of what you are doing generally but that means that you have to keep on going – quitting is not an option as you will get over your tiredness after a while.

An example of my musical talent was when my youngest sister (seven years older than me) was learning to play the organ when she was 13 (I was six) – she was practicing a song that I liked very much (this was before I started to learn to play the organ myself). I watched her as she played the song a few times and after a while, when she stopped practicing, I sat at the organ and played the song – just like that – and I even played it better than she did (and of course, she became very frustrated, who wouldn't?).

My grandmother constantly listened to the radio (and had the volume turned up so much that it could drive anyone crazy) and I can specifically remember her picking up hymns on our organ and humming and singing with the Sunday radio mass on Channel 1 (which was the only radio channel in Iceland back in those days). I realized later on as I myself began singing with church choirs that the alto parts were very familiar in some hymns and in some cases I knew them almost instantly. I realized that I had memorized them from my grandmother's humming and warbling in my childhood.

I can especially recall when my grandmother was humming 'Silent night' which is, at every Christmas mass in Iceland, usually the last hymn that is sung and then everybody in the church stands and the whole congregation sings with the choir – that is one of my favourite moments at Christmas. In my childhood we went to church every Christmas day where 'Silent night' was of course the last hymn. My grandmother died in the beginning of January 2003 (she was almost 102 years old). She broke her hip when she fell down on her bedroom floor in November 2002 and spent her last Christmas at a hospital where she later died. Before her funeral started, I sang a couple of songs and in the end of the ceremony, everybody stood up and sang Silent night. Still today, when I hear this song and sing it, I get emotional and I'm extremely fond of it, although Christmas is on occasion both a very enjoyable and at the same time emotionally difficult time for me. My grandmother was so much more to me than a grandmother – she and I shared the same bedroom since I was four years old until I became 10 so she was more like a mother to me than a grandmother – still today I miss her although I can accept that her time was due and I had her in my life longer than I ever anticipated. My daughter (and also my oldest sister) has her name, Þorgerður,

which means the helmet of the Nordic god Thor – a name for a strong woman like my grandmother was and my daughter as well.

My parents both sang in the small church choir in our little parish church. My father rang the church bells (and still does in his eighties) and also assisted the vicar, changing ropes among other tasks and was chair of the church committee for many years. Both my parents usually arrived very early before every mass / ceremony to prepare for the service and my mother cleaned the church regularly, or at least before every ceremony. My link to our little church was tight – I didn't always like to go to church but my parents insisted me on attending, which I did (and not always with a smile on my face).

From my early age I was allowed to join my parents at choir practices and I can very clearly remember that there were many occasions that the choir practices were conducted in our living room (I had almost forgotten that), especially during the coldest part of the winter (where it was difficult to put the heat on at the church) and my mother served coffee and cakes during the coffee breaks. Very early on the conductor (who was actually my great aunt on my mother's side) gave me the music scores. I remember that if I listened to a song once, I could remember the melody – I also remember that I very quickly got the feeling for a song, where it was heading – like I could kind of 'calculate' the next tone. For some reasons (my parents had been singing with the choir for many years) I was the only one of my brothers and sisters who attended choir practices with my parents. I asked my mother about the reason for this and she claimed that I was the only one of my brothers and sisters who was interested in music and singing. This is pretty much the case still today, as all my brothers and sisters are mostly into sports (whereas I am not).

There is one memorable music event that I can recall and had a great impact on me. On my grandmother's 80th birthday (the grandmother on my mother's side), my mother's brothers and sisters and my parents took her to the opera to see *The Barber of Seville* by Rossini. I was 10 years old and for some reason I was allowed to go with them – I was the only child, the only grandchild in the group. I was just fascinated and something clicked.

I mentioned my late great aunt – she was an organist and a conductor for many years – she encouraged me to both sing and play and I remember once in the Christmas mass (I was only 10 or 11 years old) that we played together – she on the organ and me on the recorder – the German Christmas song *Es ist ein Ros entsprungen* (Lo How a

Rose). This memory is very strong in my mind – perhaps the strongest one of all the memories I have about performances in my childhood. Still today, when I sing this song or hear a very good performance or recording of it, I get emotional and I go back in time to when we performed this song – my great aunt died when I was 12. This song is one of my favourites.

Formal music education and workshops

As I previously mentioned, I continued learning to play the organ and piano from the age of seven until I was 16, or at the time I went to secondary school. There were two teachers that I had there - one teacher taught me to play the recorder and I also have grade 3 on the recorder. She had a degree in flute from a music school in England (I do not remember which one) and she very early said that I had talent in music (and of course I did not believe her). My organ teacher was an amateur musician and she was also an organist at our parish church after my great aunt's death. She introduced me to the organ works by Bach and I finished grade 3 on the organ under her supervision. I went with her twice to a weeklong summer workshop in Skálholt Cathedral. This workshop was aimed at both organists and church choirs, where everybody could have lessons in singing, liturgy and lectures in church music. I took both organ lessons and singing lessons and I got the opportunity to play on a big pipe organ, which was a great experience. I remember that I met another girl my age (I was 16 years old at the time), who was at the workshop and also had a summer job in the cathedral. She came from a very musical family (a lot of musical habitus there), very confident in her voice and in her talent (she had this terrific voice and still has!) and she had a very clear vision of what she wanted to do – to become a classical singer – and so she did. She graduated from Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London with a degree in classical singing. There were these two great contrasts – me, the countryside girl with low self-esteem and completely unaware of her talent and the city girl who was given a lot of encouragement and beamed of self-confidence in her abilities.

Choral experience

As I mentioned earlier, I started singing with my parish church choir when I was five years old. When I went to primary school, there was no formal school choir but there

was a lot of singing – I remember that my teacher started every school day with singing for at least 10 minutes before the lessons started – I remember that I enjoyed singing very much. I was literate and I could write when I started primary school. At the same time it was hard for me to adjust socially, since there were no children in my age near my home, I never attended kindergarten / nursery and I had the moral and ethical sense of an adult. Due to various circumstances, I didn't sing much from the age of seven pretty much until primary school, even though I continued learning to play the piano, organ and the recorder.

Since there was no secondary school in my home area, I went to boarding school in Laugarvatn, Iceland – the same secondary school as two of my siblings. There were no opportunities for me there to continue playing the piano since there was no piano where I could practice. At this time I was unaware that I could sing. In my second year a school choir was established. I went to one rehearsal because my friend did and I was also at the time not feeling very well mentally – like there was something missing in my life – there was no music (and my heart was broken by some chap – same old story). The conductor of that choir had a profound influence on my musical interest and in that choir I discovered that I could sing. My role in the choir was singing the highest voice with another girl my age (we usually sang duets) and the conductor asked us for some help one time – he was recording a CD with another choir that he was conducting and he needed bright voices in two of the songs – so I had my first recording experience when I was 18 years old.

But I refrained from singing solos as it terrified me – the thought of singing alone in front of others was quite horrid (until very recently). My conductor also asked me to sing in the alto section and I did so for a year and a half which was very good both for my voice and my pitch. He encouraged me a lot but still I questioned my abilities and I quickly decided, even though people who had a lot of experience and qualifications in music encouraged me to do so, that I was not good enough to become a classical singer or to have a career as one.

After graduating from secondary school I went to the University of Iceland where I joined the University choir. They had auditions and that was the very first time I had an audition for a choir. I was completely terrified but somehow I managed to go through with it but I was not able to show my best abilities so the conductor put me in second soprano – but I passed. The conductor was very good – we were singing all kinds of contemporary choral music – some very difficult but interesting pieces written

by the conductor who is also a composer. His father was one of Iceland's best known composers and we were also performing some of his works. This time was very good for me – finally I was really being able to show what I could do and I surprised myself as well. Slowly I was crawling out of my shell and the conductor started to notice my abilities. I discovered that it did not take me a long time to learn my part and I really showed some progress in my sight-reading, which was by the way quite good since I had learned to play the organ and the piano. This was a very good time for me music-wise – we were having concerts in some of the biggest concert halls in Reykjavik, which was amazing. We also participated in a ballet performance (not dancing though) where our conductor composed the music.

After my first year at the university I went to Italy to work as an au pair, babysitting three crazy boys and learning Italian. I wanted to join a choir (of course) but to my astonishment, all I could find was a choir course – and that course was starting their second year. This was an interesting experience – I came there, did not know much in Italian, with my low self-esteem as usual and everybody looked very confident, starting their second year. Then the teacher gave a small speech at the beginning, saying that people here had not much experience (this is the bit I understood) except for the Icelandic girl - and when we started to sing, I was practically the only one who was on track and on the right pitch – the sound in the room was like in a horror movie. I was speechless – I thought, since I was in Italy, in the Mekka of classical singing, that there was a strong singing tradition. Later I learned that in Italy you are either a professional singer – or you do not sing at all – it seems that there was no amateur choral tradition at all. That was the situation in 1995 – this course was the first step towards establishing an amateur choir. After the first session (and my only session really) the teacher approached me and asked me if I was a professional singer. So that was my Italian choral experience.

When I returned to Iceland the year after, I continued my study at University of Iceland and joined the University choir again. I also joined one of the best choirs in Iceland – the Motet choir at Hallgrímskirkja Cathedral (which is the biggest church in Iceland) and that's where I had my first real experience of singing a Bach choral work. My friend from my secondary school choir got me to join and I rehearsed and performed Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* – we performed it at the cathedral with an orchestra, which was an amazing experience. This experience taught me to love Bach

and I really got into the heart and the soul of the music. From that point on I turned my focus towards Baroque and renaissance church music.

Later that year I started singing with a church choir in Hafnarfjörður, where I was paid both for rehearsals and masses. With that choir I performed Handel's *Messiah*, which was an amazing experience and I became hooked on baroque music for good.

At that very same time as I was rehearsing *Messiah*, I became pregnant (I was 25 years old). I noticed during the pregnancy that my voice suddenly started to change a bit. I had a baby-like high soprano voice but at the time it started to have a different colour – it was wider and had more richness in a way and was also a bit deeper, although I could still get the high notes, my voice lowered temporarily during the pregnancy (linked to hormones, I presume).

When my daughter was three months old, we moved to Vík, my old hometown. I started teaching at the local primary school and joined the local choir. The difference from singing with big choirs in Reykjavik to the small local church choir was enormous – it was as if I had minor culture shock. What was also very frustrating at times was the fact that my voice was so strong compared to the others and I always had to lower my sounds so I would not stand out in the crowd. Luckily the conductor was very talented and very supportive – she was also a music teacher and under her supervision I finished 2nd grade in classical singing, which is the only qualification I have in singing.

The choir went on a concert tour to Hungary (our conductor was Hungarian), which was the most amazing experience. We had a concert in the Cathedral in Győr and I sang a solo in a song by Peter Esterházy, a Hungarian composer and received a huge compliment from the audience. The time when I lived in Vík was very emotionally difficult for me, but I found great comfort in the music itself – singing in the local choir was a lifesaver.

After my divorce, I got a position as a secondary school teacher in my old secondary school in Laugarvatn. That period was an enjoyable and happy one (and has been happy ever since). Overnight, my life changed from being a single mother and a poor primary school teacher to being a secondary school teacher. At that time, I joined the Skálholt Cathedral choir where my old conductor (who used to conduct my secondary school choir) was in charge. Skálholt cathedral has the most amazing acoustics and we had two big concerts every year with an orchestra – a very festive Christmas concert and a springtime concert. During this time I became acquainted with 14th century Icelandic church music, Gregorian chants and contemporary 20th century

church music by the Icelandic composers Þorkell Sigurbjörnsson and Bára Grímsdóttir – their inspiration comes from the medieval and early renaissance period. We recorded one CD during that time with Icelandic religious music, and this was very enjoyable.

During this time, I had the opportunity to conduct a small parish church choir in Laugarvatn – their conductor had moved away and I said that I could conduct them until they found someone else (and only on that condition). I did that for a year, which was an amazing experience and I really liked it. Then they recruited a young woman who had qualifications. What happened later is that they fired her and asked me to come back. I did so and I conducted them until I moved from Laugarvatn to Bifröst. At Bifröst I was given the opportunity to join the West Iceland Chamber choir which consisted almost entirely of professional singers, but was in need of a bright and young soprano voice. I recorded a CD of Christmas music with this choir and I really enjoyed that time. My fellow sopranos were very skilled – therefore I could sing as I pleased without standing out of the crowd. I was a mere mediocre singer there (not the best or the one who the conductor noticed most) and I really liked that. In other choirs there was more pressure on me since I was able to learn my parts fairly quickly and had good sight-reading abilities but in this choir there was no such pressure. I could just attend rehearsals and enjoy singing beautiful music with highly skilled singers.

The next step was to commence my PhD studies – so I moved temporarily to England where I sang first with the local community choir in Devon and the Croydon Bach choir in London – and for that I refer to my field notes.

What does music mean for me?

As is evident in the chapters above, music plays a big part in my life. While growing up, I always felt like a stranger in my family, having all these siblings who were completely fanatic about sports and in my society, being good in sports was very important. Thus it had a huge impact on my self-esteem that I was not good in any kind of sport and people were asking ‘why are you not in sports like your brothers and sisters?’ My siblings were my role models and I was anxious about not being just like them.

Being good in music thus gave me some kind of self-respect and the feeling that I was good in something. I was also a fairly good student, although I have fought anxiety and depression from an early age. It was difficult for me to adjust socially and this was slowing me down at times (it was like trying to run with a broken leg). Music,

basically, saved my life. I cannot imagine what would have happened to me if I had not had music. I cannot thank my late grandmother or my parents enough for giving me the opportunity to learn to play and sing with the choir. When I see the TV program ‘The Choir’ on BBC, especially when the host was travelling from one school to another establishing school choirs – I can so easily relate to those children who were socially isolated, not sporty and completely unaware of their musical talent – to see how they flourish is so rewarding.

Being able to sing in choirs has also shaped my musical taste as well. Today I am very fuzzy in my musical preferences since music affects my nerve system – I can remember when I was a child that if a song was very sad, I could not stand to listen to it, especially if it made me sad. I am still a bit like that today – I choose the music I use in accordance with how I feel at the time. During the winter, I prefer baroque and renaissance choral music, also some string quartets – especially during the Christmas time and Advent – that’s when I listen to the *Christmas Oratorio* quite often. While I am working, I prefer Bach’s *Brandenburg Concertos*. It gets very dark in Iceland during the winter and to prevent me from getting the ‘blues’ I use Bach and Handel’s music. In the summer, I tend to listen to selected popular music – like U2, Dire Straits, Coldplay, Bon Jovi and other bands that were popular when I was a teenager. There are occasionally new bands and music that I like but this is very rare. The only individuals of the ‘new generation’ that have caught my attention are the late Amy Winehouse and Adele. This is my musical story.

17. EXTRA RESULTS FROM SURVEY

This appendix consists of extra results from the survey and is referred to in previous chapters.

MUSICAL TASTE AND PREFERENCES

Table 10: Musical taste

GENRE	3 TIMES A WEEK OR MORE	AT LEAST TWICE A WEEK	AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK	AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH	NEVER	NO RESPONSE
Pop music	20%	4%	6%	16%	49%	5%
- Men	17%	0%	6%	17%	60%	0%
- Women	21%	6%	6%	15%	42%	10%
Underground	2%	2%	2%	6%	84%	4%
- Men	0%	0%	6%	0%	94%	0%
- Women	3%	3%	0%	9%	79%	6%
Rock	10%	0%	10%	14%	63%	3%
- Men	11%	0%	0%	6%	83%	0%
- Women	9%	0%	15%	18%	52%	6%
Jazz and blues	12%	0%	14%	24%	47%	3%
- Men						
- Women						
Musicals	6%	6%	12%	22%	49%	5%
- Men	6%	11%	6%	11%	66%	0%
- Women	6%	3%	15%	27%	39%	10%
Sacred baroque	45%	14%	20%	10%	8%	3%
- Men	56%	16%	16%	6%	6%	0%
- Women	39%	12%	21%	12%	9%	6%
Symphonies	33%	4%	18%	28%	14%	3%
- Men						
- Women						
Operas	20%	2%	8%	41%	26%	3%
- Men	33%	0%	6%	39%	22%	0%
- Women	12%	3%	9%	42%	27%	6%
Other classical	47%	4%	16%	16%	14%	3%
- Men	47%	4%	16%	16%	14%	3%
- Women	42%	6%	18%	15%	12%	7%
Secular music	18%	4%	12%	16%	45%	5%

- Men	17%	0%	6%	11%	66%	0%
- Women	18%	6%	15%	18%	33%	10%
Choral music*	26%	14%	25%	25%	8%	2%
- Men	23%	33%	22%	22%	0%	0%
- Women	27%	3%	27%	27%	12%	4%

Participants were asked what kind of music they listen to and how frequently they listen to each genre. As demonstrated in Table 10, almost 50% of participants claim they never listen to **pop-music** and women participants seem to be more open to pop music than men.

Regarding **underground music** 84% of participants claim they never listen to underground music and women seem to be more open to that genre than men.

Participants are less positive towards **rock music** than pop-music with 63% claiming they never listen to rock. There is also a significant gender difference in that women participants seem to listen more to rock music than male participants.

Participants are a bit more positive towards **jazz and blues** than rock music. Almost 50% of participants claim they never listen to **musicals**. According to gender crosstabs there is a significant gender difference in that more male participants than women participants claim they never listen to musicals.

On the other hand, **sacred baroque music** seems to be quite popular among participants. Almost 80% claim they listen to baroque music every week and there is a bit of gender difference in that male participants seem to be fond of this genre. It appears that 55% participants listen to **symphonies** every week. According to crosstabs there is little gender differences.

30% participants listen to **opera** every week, but not as often as to symphonies. According to gender crosstabs men seem to listen a bit more frequently to opera than women. Around 67% participants claimed they listen to other kinds of **classical music** every week. According to gender crosstabs there is a significant gender difference in that male participants seem to listen more to other classical music than women participants.

Compared to other music genres asked about in this research, participants seem to be less interested in **secular music** in that 45% of participants claim they never listen to it and 34% listen to it every week. According to gender crosstabs, 66% of male participants and 33% of women participants claim they never listen to secular music. 7

people mentioned other music: three people mentioned folk music and others mentioned gospel, Christian worship, nursery rhymes and sacred church anthems.

About 66% of participants listen to **choral music** every week (choral music that they are not performing in their choir). According to crosstabs there is a significant gender differences in that 77% of men and 57% of women listen to choral music every week

Table 11: Results from various assumptions in order of importance (Question 27 – 1=highest, 5=lowest)

ASSUMPTION (Q27)	1	2	3	4	5	NO ANSWER
The choir has a wide variety of repertoire	18%	29%	18%	8%	2%	26%
It is important to have a mixed variety of repertoire	31%	26%	16%	8%	4%	16%
It is important to have an ambitious repertoire	16%	24%	29%	16%	16%	0%
I joined this choir because I like the choir's repertoire	18%	31%	16%	6%	12%	0%

Table 11 demonstrates results where respondents were asked about their perspectives towards the repertoire of the Croydon Bach choir. Almost 50% of participants consider the variety of the repertoire to be important and that it is important to have a variety in the programme. 50% consider it very important to have an ambitious repertoire and similar results when asked whether the repertoire had an impact on the participants in joining the choir. The differences between various perspectives of the respondents were not very significant.

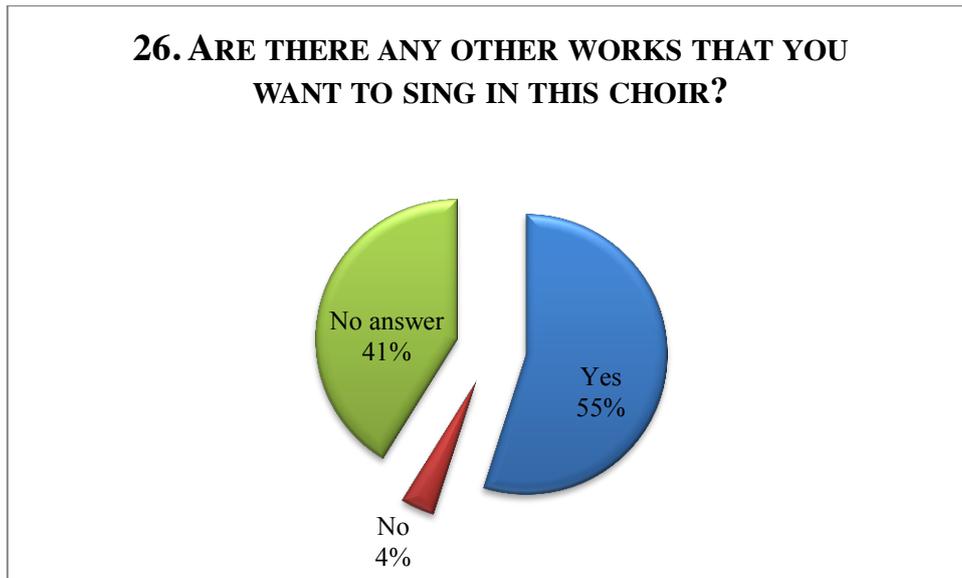


Figure 30: Are there any other works that you want to sing in this choir? (Q26)

Figure 30 demonstrates that over 50% participants are quite open to singing other works than are performed in the choir and

Table 12 contains a list of works, specific composers, genres and periods that participants mentioned in an open-ended question. However, there were 41% who did not respond to the question and only 4% said no. Respondents had the opportunity to express in an open-ended question what kind of works participants would like to perform.

Table 12: Other works that participants would like to perform (Q26a)

Period	Specific works
16-17th Century	Belshazzars Feast
17th Century	Brahm's Requiem
Modern	Brahms sing of Destiny
Modern	Cantatas such as the Elijah
Genre	Dream of Gerontius (Elgar)
Anything classical	King David
English music	Missa solemnis (Beethoven)
Lighter	Mozart Masses
Opera	St Matthew Passion
Sacred	The Kingdom
Specific composers	Vaughn Williams Dona Nobis Pacem
Bach and more Bach	Verdi Requiem
Beethoven Choral	Other
Bruckner	Any
Fauré	Anything not already experienced
Fauré	Variety is good
Gilbert and Sullivan	Good music
Haydn	Music that is popular with an audience
Mahler	Too much to think of
Karl Jenkins	
Rutter	
Purcell	
Verdi	
Vivaldi	

MUSICAL IDENTITIES – SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE

Participants were asked about their ability to sight-read, sing a solo in various circumstances and how they receive encouragement and confidence in their choral participation.

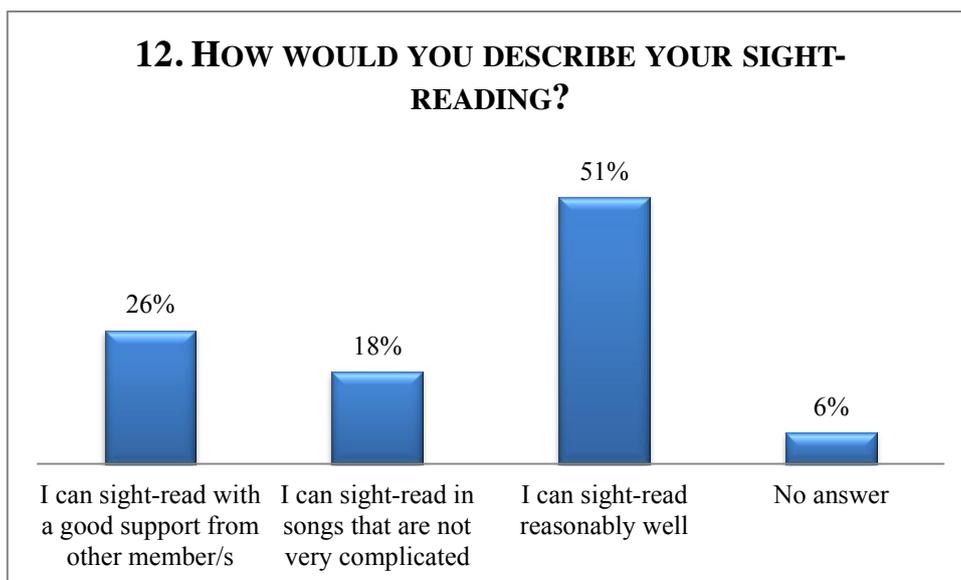


Figure 31: How would you describe your sight-reading? (Q12)

Figure 31 demonstrates the participant’s perceptions of their ability to sight-read. Figure 32 indicates a bit of gender difference whereas the men seem to be a bit more confident in their sight-reading than the women.

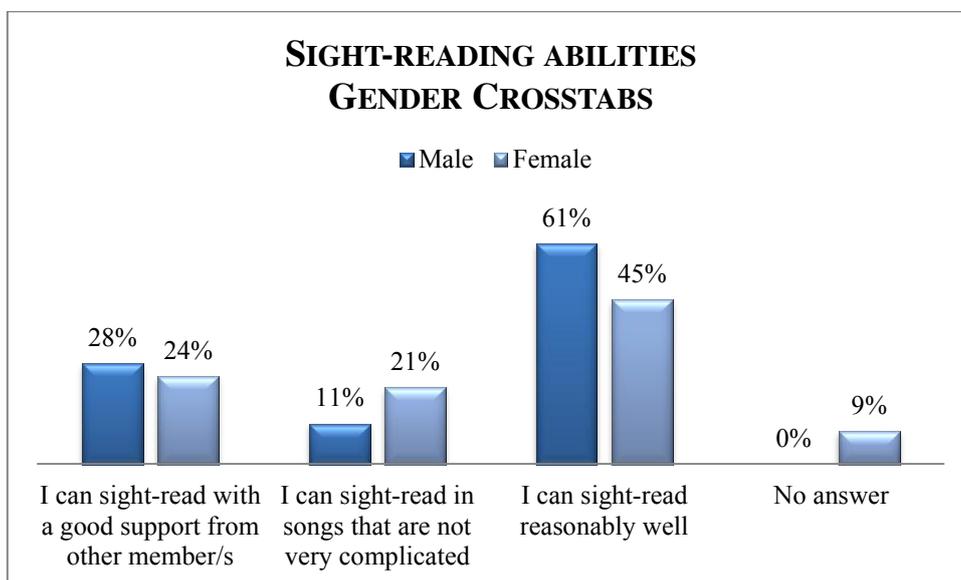


Figure 32: Sight reading abilities – Gender crosstabs

There is a significant gender difference according to Figure 33 in that the men in the choir are more confident in singing a solo in a public performance than the women.

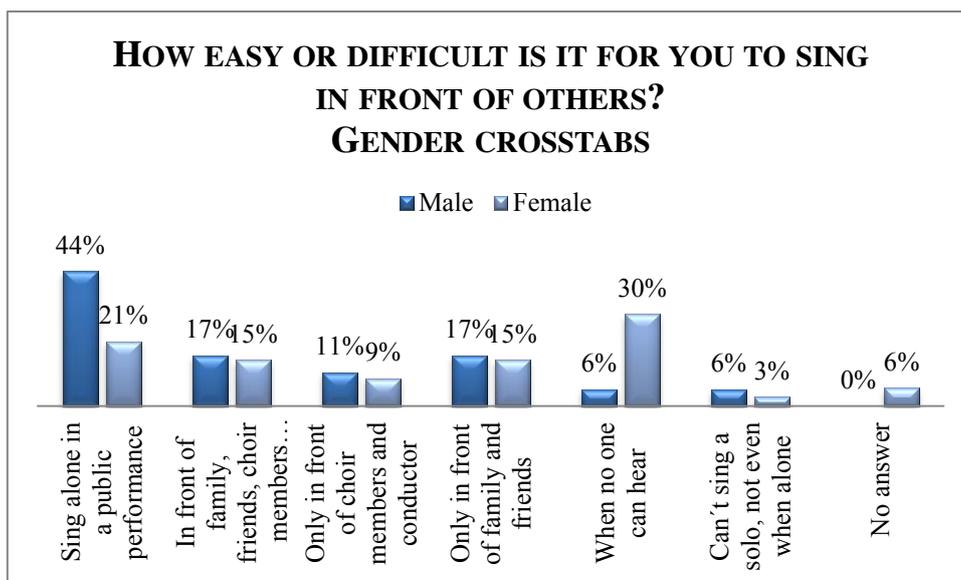


Figure 33: How easy or difficult is it for you to sing in front of others? Gender crosstabs

Table 13 demonstrates the results of three assumptions, which participants rated in order of importance. The results indicate that over 60% claim that they receive encouragement both from the conductor and also from other choir members and over 50% claim that singing improves their self-confidence.

Table 13: Results from various assumptions in order of importance (Question 27 – 1=highest, 5=lowest)

ASSUMPTION (Q27)	1	2	3	4	5	NO ANSWER
The choir conductor encourages me	33%	29%	14%	6%	6%	12%
Singing in a choir improves my self confidence	31%	22%	26%	6%	4%	12%
My fellow choir members encourage me	22%	39%	16%	6%	4%	14%

Figure 34 shows for how many years respondents have taken private lessons.

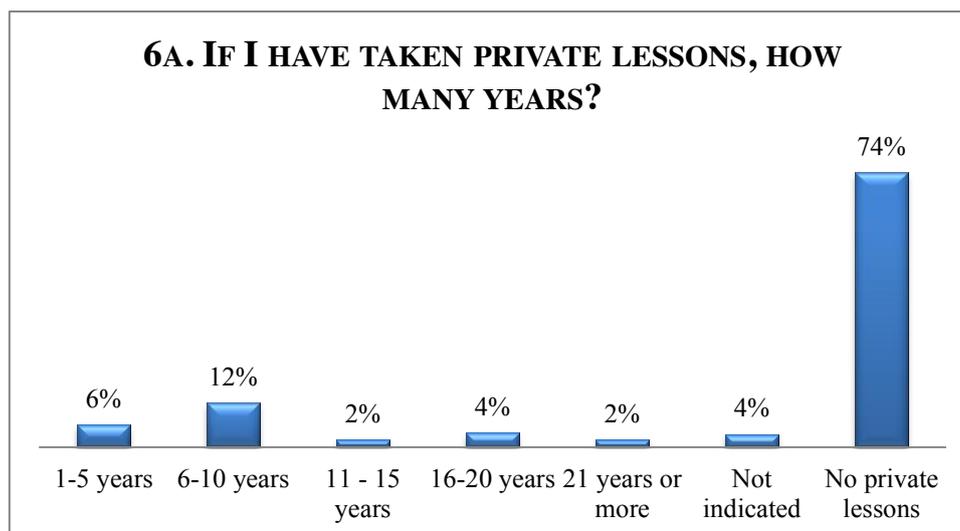


Figure 34: If I have taken private lessons, how many years? (Q6a)

13 participants mentioned other music education such as grade 1 and 7 on Piano, Grade 3 from Royal Academy of Music, classical ballet, Grade 8 in singing from Guildhall school of music as an external student, o-level, diploma in music from Open University, OV undergraduate degree, courses on piano and organ, cathedral courses, RSCM courses and certificate and theory and practice at secondary school with lots of choral singing.

SOCIAL CAPITAL AND WELL-BEING

Participants were asked about how they benefit from their choral participation regarding well-being, creativity, fulfilment, performing in concert and spiritual experience. They also responded to questions regarding their social activities, e.g. whether they socialize with their fellow choir members outside ordinary choral activities and whether they have other hobbies besides choral singing.

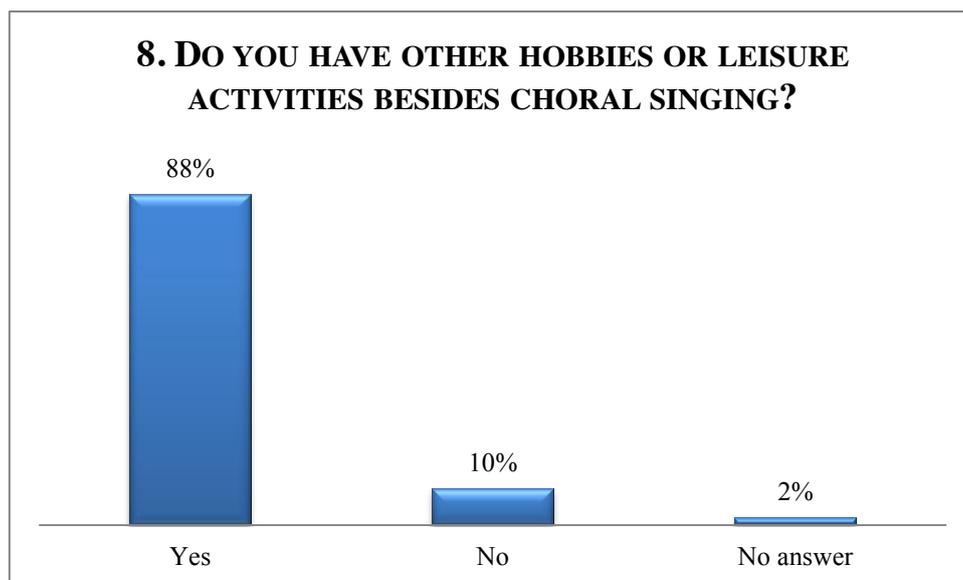


Figure 35: Do you have other hobbies or leisure activities besides choral singing? (Q8)

These results are quite significant as seen on Figure 35. The cross-tabulation did not demonstrate any differences regarding gender.

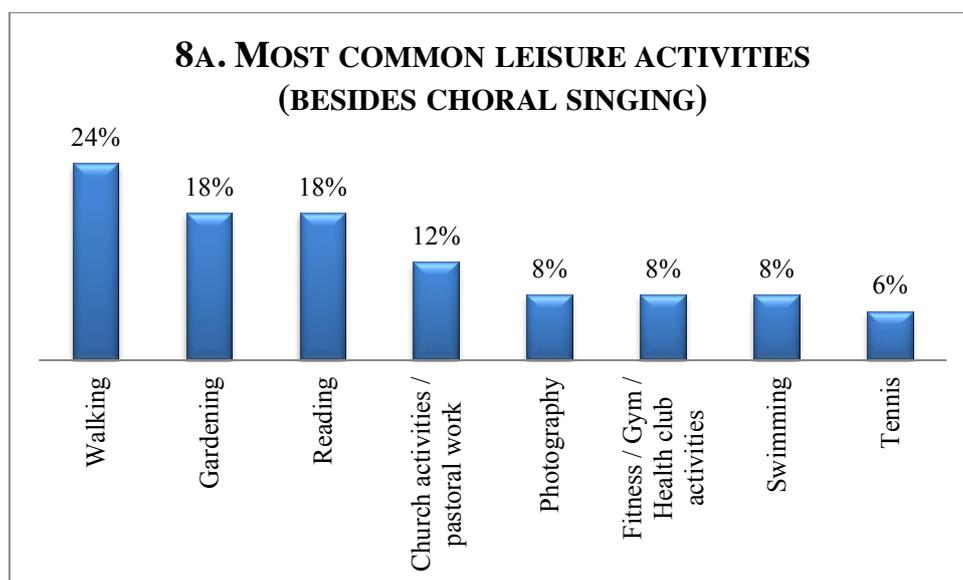


Figure 36: Summary of most common leisure activities (Q8a)

Figure 36 demonstrates a summary of the most frequent mentioned hobbies and leisure activities – one must note that some participants mentioned usually more than one activity.

Table 14: Other leisure activities mentioned in an open question (Q8a)

SPORTS		POLITICS	
Sports in general	2	Green party politics	1
Dancing	2	Local politics	1
Cycling	2	Politics	1
Riding	1	ACADEMIC / ACTIVITIES	
Running	1	Family history	2
Yoga	1	Lecturing in History	1
Playing squash	1	Genealogy	1
Scuba diving	1	Local History	1
PERFORMING OR MAKING ART		Archaeology	1
Acting	2	Languages	1
Piano playing	2	It+computery	1
Painting	1	Interior design	1
Organ playing	1	OV courses	1
Playing and making flutes	1	TRAVEL AND DINING	
Pottery	1	Travel	2
ARTS CONSUMPTION		Food and drink	1
Visiting museums	2	Cooking	1
Concerts	2	Dining	1
Arts	1	HANDCRAFTS	
Theatre	1	Knitting	2
Literature	1	Embroidery	1
Live musical theatre	1	Handicraft	1
Modern art	1	Sowing	1
Ballet	1	OTHER ACTIVITIES	
Books	1	Voluntary work	1
Studying Italian film	1	Puzzles	1
Friends of London Mozart players	1	Card making	1

Table 14 demonstrates other leisure activities that participants mentioned in question 8a and how often they were mentioned.

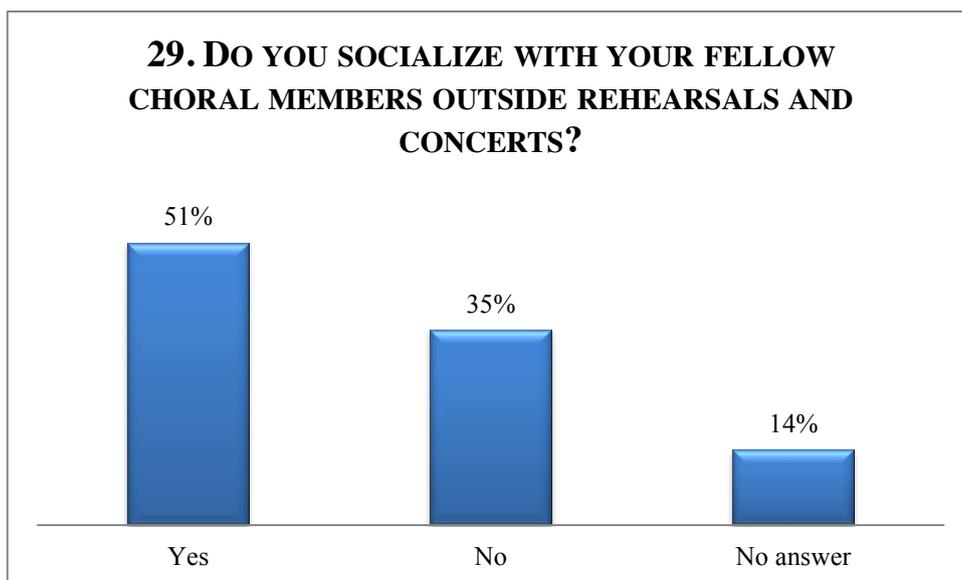


Figure 37: Do you socialize with your fellow choir members outside rehearsals and concerts? (Q29)

According to Figure 37, just over 50% of participants mingle and socialize with their fellow choir members in venues other than rehearsals and concerts. According to gender crosstabs there is a bit of gender difference where the male participants seem to be a bit more social with their fellow choir members than women (see on Figure 38).

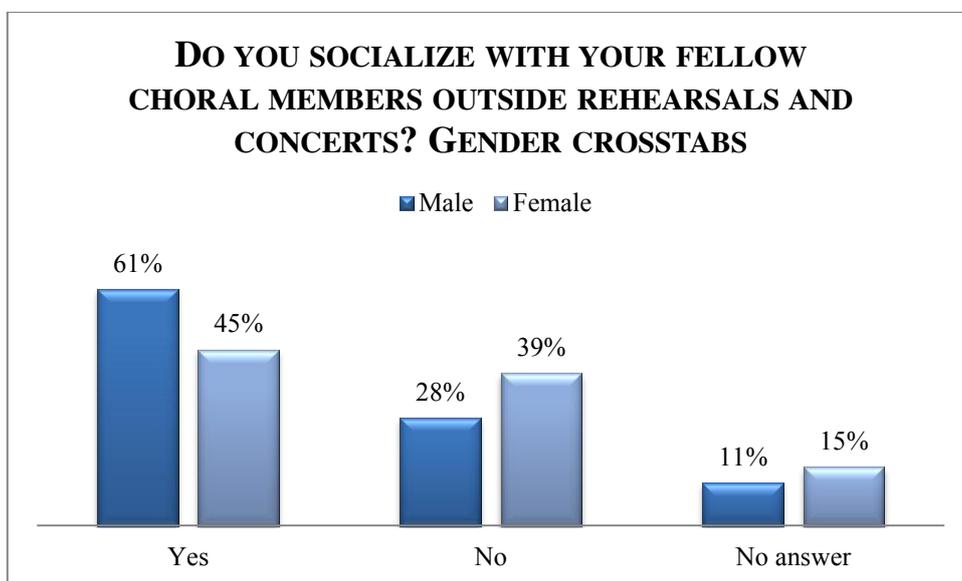


Figure 38: Do you socialize with your fellow choir members outside rehearsals and concerts? Gender crosstabs

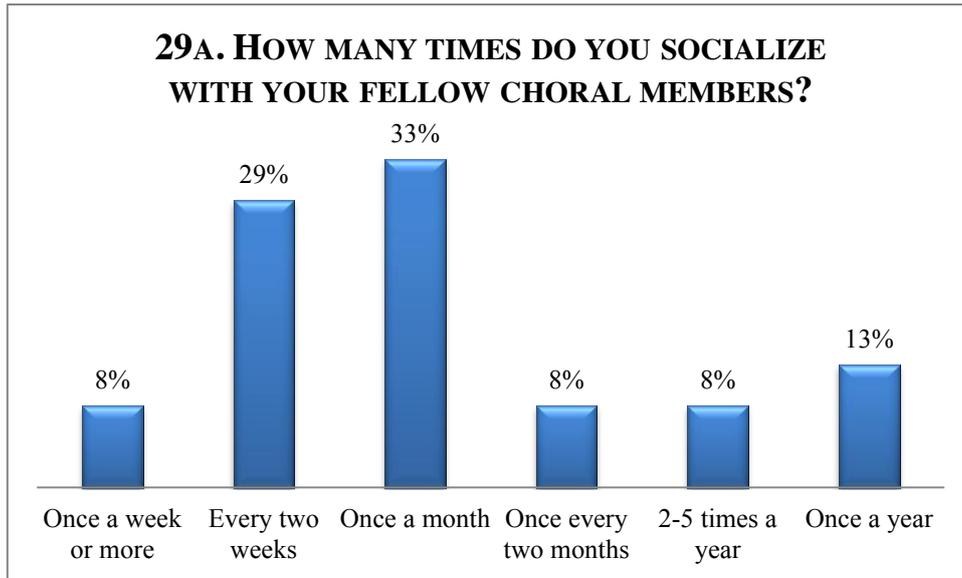


Figure 39: How many times do you socialize with your fellow choir members? (Q29a)

Figure 39 demonstrates how frequently those participants, who socialize with other choir members, meet their fellow choir members outside rehearsals and concerts.

According to crosstabs (see Figure 40), men seem a bit more social than women in that 20% of those who socialize, meet their fellow choir members once a week or more but only 9% of the women.

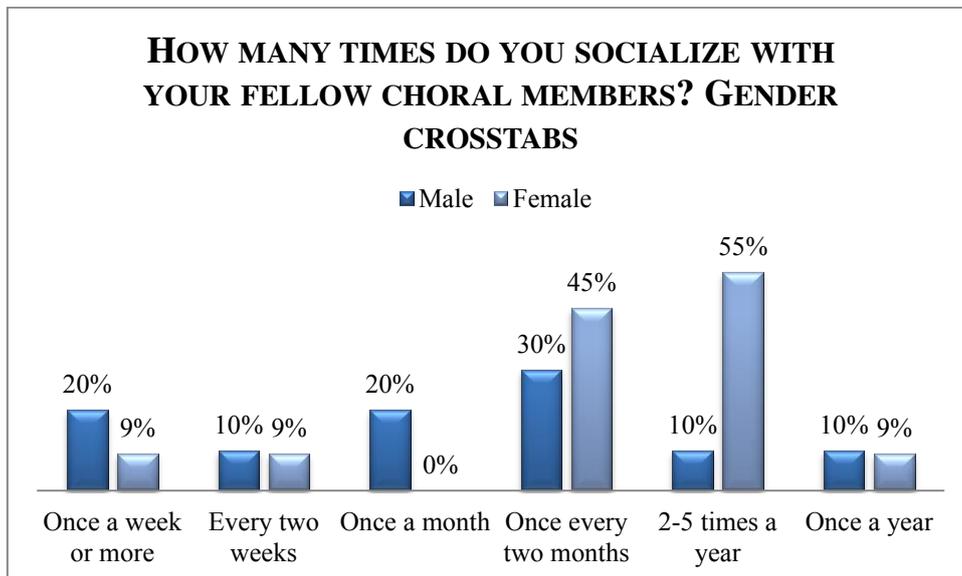


Figure 40: How many times do you socialize with your fellow choir members?
Gender crosstabs

23 commented on where choir members usually meet outside rehearsals and concerts. 7 participants mentioned home parties, 4 participants mentioned committee meetings, another 4 mentioned restaurants and 3 mentioned pubs. Other venues mentioned were the following: Parties after concerts, at work, in town, on Facebook, at garden parties and fundraising parties, church house group and Pizza Express.

Table 15: Results from various assumptions in order of importance (Question 27 – 1=highest, 5=lowest)

ASSUMPTION (Q27)	VERY HIGH	HIGH	AVERAGE	LITTLE	NONE	NO ANSWER
The choir's social life is good	8%	24%	24%	22%	8%	16%
The social life is an important factor in the choir's activities	20%	12%	24%	33%	12%	0%
The atmosphere in the choir is good	8%	31%	41%	14%	6%	0%
The choir needs more members	24%	22%	31%	8%	2%	14%
I joined this choir because I wanted to meet new people	2%	20%	35%	14%	12%	0%
I joined this choir because a friend/family sings with this choir	20%	20%	12%	8%	24%	18%
I joined this choir because the choir has a good reputation	18%	24%	22%	8%	12%	18%

Participants were asked to rate various assumptions regarding the choir's social life in order of importance. It is evident, given the results in Table 15, that the social aspect of the choral activities is in general only considered to be important by 30-40% of respondents. Only 22% claimed that the reason they joined was because they wanted to meet new people, 30% considered the social life to be good and 32% that the social life is important. However, 42% joined the choir because of the choir's reputation and 46% think that the choir needs more members.

BACH IN EVERYDAY LIFE

There were a number of questions regarding Bach and his music; e.g. participants were asked how much they listen to Bach’s music, their favourite Bach piece, how they acquired knowledge about Bach and also specific questions regarding the *B Minor Mass*, including whether they had sung it before and where, as well as what their favourite part of the Mass was.

Figure 18 presents how much participants listen to music by J.S. Bach. Most participants listen to it at least once a month but only 8% claimed they never listen to it or did not give their answer. According to Figure 41, men seem to listen to it more frequently than women.

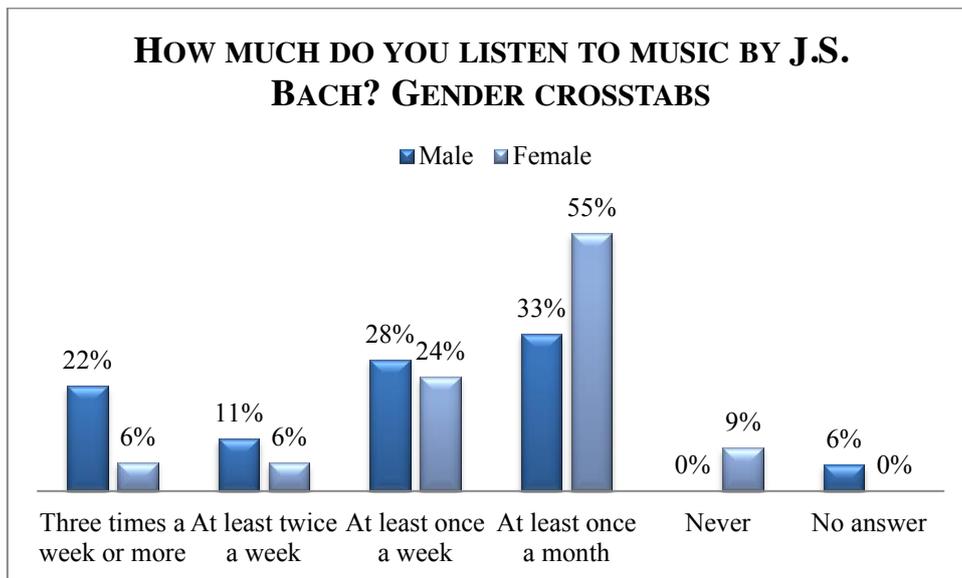


Figure 41: How much do you listen to music by J. S. Bach? Gender crosstabs

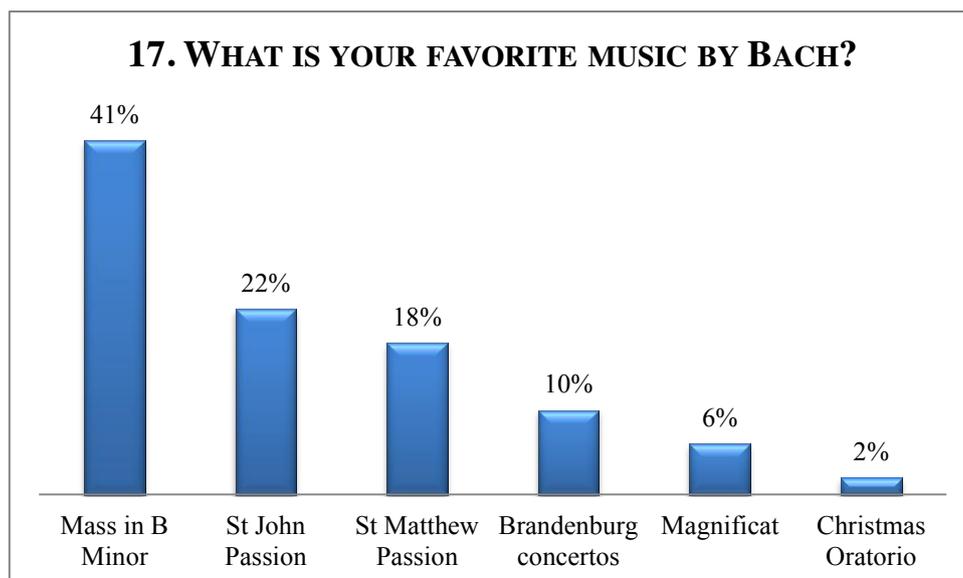


Figure 42: What is your favourite music by Bach? (Q17)

Question 17 (results demonstrated on Figure 42) was an open question where participants were asked about their favourite Bach music. According to the results, the *Mass in B Minor* was most often mentioned, which can result from the fact that when participants filled out the survey, they were completing a 10 week rehearsal period, singing the Mass itself. The passions came second but besides the works shown on Figure 42, participants also mentioned the *Brandenburg Concertos* where one participant claimed that *Brandenburg 3* reminded him/her of sunny mornings on *Brandenburg 3* - it reminds me of sunny mornings, and other cantatas and chorales, especially the exuberant bits. One participant claimed: 'I really love all Bach!' Two claimed that they had no favourite and another claimed that this was a 'silly question' whereas his/her favourite varied according to moods and conditions.

Other works mentioned were the following: Preludes and fugues, solo cello suites, Keyboard concerto in D minor, Piano and organ preludes, Sonatas and partitas for solo violin, Cello suites, Toccata in D, three part inventions for the piano, Traver ode, Unaccompanied partitas and sonatas, Wachet auf, and Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring.

17 a – What is your favourite music of Bach and why?

In an open-ended question, respondents could comment on why they liked the works by Bach that they most liked. 13 respondents commented on the *Mass in B Minor*:

Comments on Mass in B 13
It touches my spirit
I have sung it many times and know it well. It was the first large choral work I sang 2) like the complexity of his chorus both horizontally and vertically
It has amazing musical and spiritual depth and 2) depth of emotions. 3) It is a very moving piece and very beautiful. 4) It reminds me of beautiful rich 18th century lace and brocade 5) Lots of very good tunes
Enjoying it more as I get to know it
Because of the variety of music
Very soulful and uplifting
I enjoy playing the preludes and fugues and enjoy singing the Mass
Complexity, yet effortless
It is wonderful
All inspiring
I love the complexity, the harmonies and the splendor
Brilliant works
I love Baroque music especially, full orchestra and chorus

Comments on St Matthew Passion – 7
Very soulful and uplifting
All inspiring
I love the complexity, the harmonies and the splendor
Feeling
No objective reason
Both pieces convey a very high degree of spirituality and of artistic satisfaction
Tuneful

Comments on St John Passion - 7
It is wonderful
All inspiring
I love the complexity, the harmonies and the splendor
Excellent music - not too many recits 2) Just like it
Less long than Matthew
St Johns Passion, Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring: Great melodies; Jesu joy of man's desiring: memories of hearing it in the Albert Hall when I was a teenager
Because it's lovely music

Comments on Magnificat - 2

Learnt it with Michael Fleming

A very high degree of spirituality and of artistic satisfaction

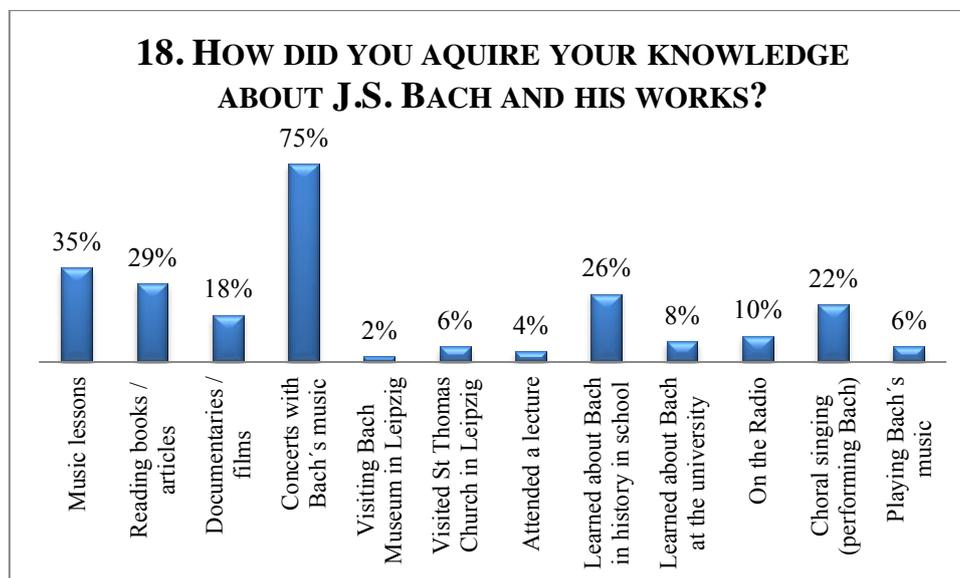


Figure 43: How did you acquire your knowledge about J. S. Bach and his works (Q18)

Participants were asked how and where they acquired their knowledge about Bach and Figure 43 presents the main results, whereas the most common methods of participants for gaining this kind of knowledge were through concerts, music lessons and reading books. Other ways of learning that were mentioned included through friends, from one's father and as a part of course of studies while learning German. One participant claimed he/she had very little knowledge about Bach.

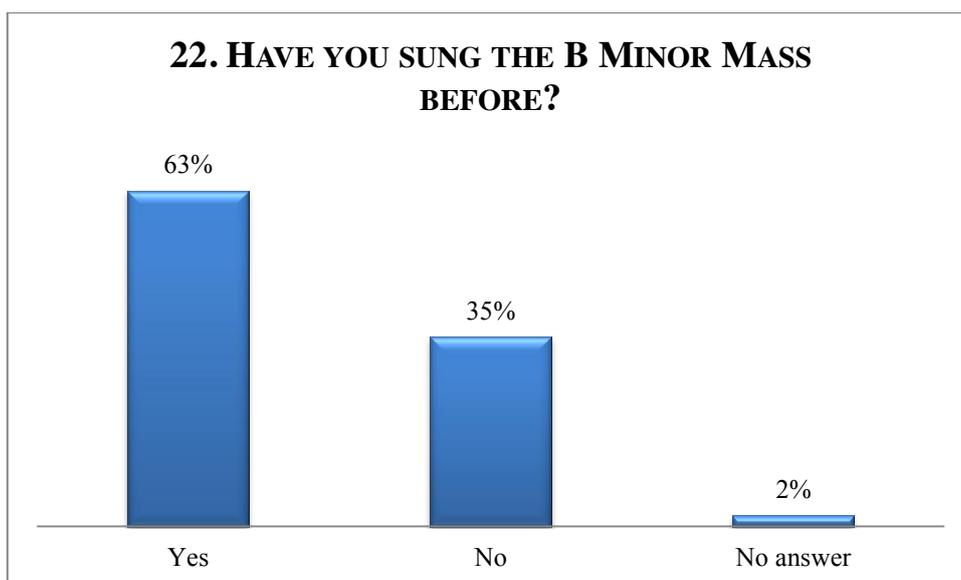


Figure 44: Have you sung the *B Minor Mass* before? (Q22)

As presented on Figure 44, 63% claim that they have sung the *Mass in B Minor* before which is not surprising since the choir has rehearsed and performed it before. According to crosstabs there is no significant gender difference.

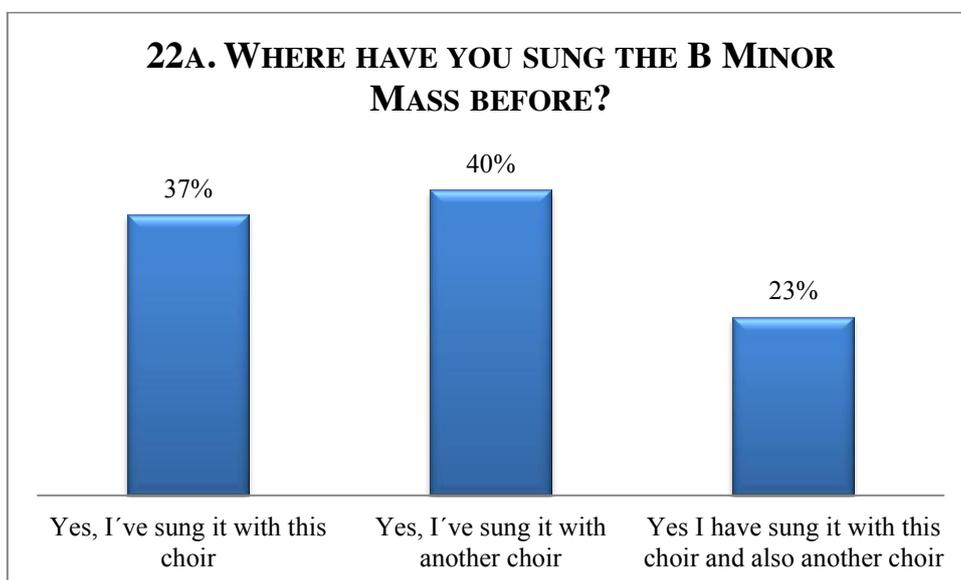


Figure 45: Where have you sung the *B Minor Mass* before? (Q22a)

Figure 45 presents whether participants have sung the *Mass in B Minor* with this choir (The Croydon Bach Choir), another choir, or both with the Croydon Bach choir and another choir. Participants were asked to name the choirs they have sung the *Mass in B*

Minor with, i.e. other choirs than the Croydon Bach choir. 21 participants expressed their view. 3 participants mentioned Croydon Philharmonic choir and other 3 mentioned East Surrey choral society. Other choirs mentioned were the Hampstead choral society, Ashlead choral society, Bath Bach choir Whitehall choir, London Philharmonic, Barstead Choral society, Nottingham University choir Oxford Bach choir, Royal choral society, St Alban's Bach choir, St Thomas Leipzig, The Bach choir and The London Singers. Other venues mentioned were RAM, English concert and Christmas workshop.

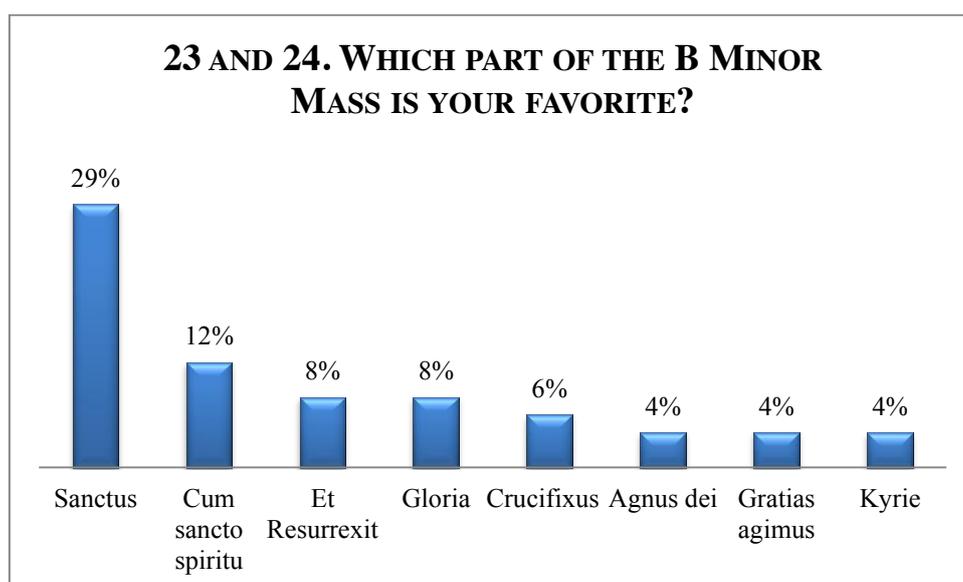


Figure 46: Which part of the *B Minor Mass* is your favourite (Q 23 and 24)

As seen in Figure 46, participants were asked to name their favourite part of the *Mass in B Minor* and the Sanctus is apparently the most popular among those 35 participants (or 68%) who expressed their view. Other parts mentioned were the change between Crucifixus and Et resurrexit, Laudamus te, Qui tollis peccata mundi. Figure 47 demonstrates which large-scale choral works by Bach (apart from the Mass) participants have sung before.

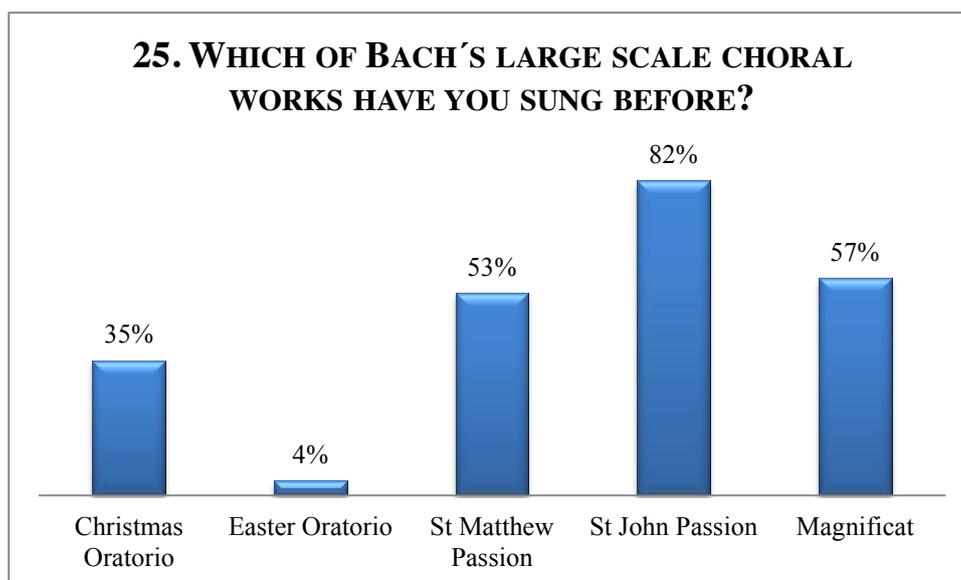


Figure 47: Which of Bach's large scale choral works have you sung before (Q25)

In an open question, participants had the opportunity to mention other choral works they have sung. 9 participants expressed their view and mentioned Lober der Herren (cantata), various chorales, Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring, Sheep may safely graze, Wachet auf, various motets, Singet den Herrn (Motet no. 1) and several anthems. One participant claimed that he/she had conducted the Magnificat and several others but had not sung any of them him/herself.

Question 19: How do you experience Bach (for example what kind of a composer do you think he is or what kind of a person do you think he was):

- Female, born 1939: Devout Christian, hard-working, a giant amongst composers
- Male, born 1932: A devout Christian, extremely prolific composer
- Female, born 1943: A genius
- Female, born 1939 (2): I like the tempo – the 'racy feeling' of the music moving forward. I also love organ music as well as choral. What an incredible brain to put all the parts together
- Female, born 1952: He was a Christian – so am I – so it lifts my spirit. Mozart's music rarely does this.
- Female, born 1950: He had an interest in mathematics and was very prolific in what he wrote
- Female, born 1941: I think he is at the top of all the other composers

- Female, born 1947: Do not know
- Female, born 1960: Have never considered this question
- Female, born 1961: No idea
- Male, born 1924: Meticulous
- Female, born 1933: My opinion of Bach is that he was a very devout Lutheran who was spiritually influenced by the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church.
- Female, born 1950 (2): Spiritual, inspired
- Male, born 1952: Devout, diligent, innovative and open to other musical influences
- Female, born 1950 (3): Family man – very religious
- Female, born 1943 (2): Wonderful music
- Male, born 1946: Amazing composer, person?
- Male, born 1932: Difficult
- Female, born 1950 (3): Very serious, pious, developed to duty, lived for music
- Male, born 1941: A person who gave God the glory in all things
- Female, born 1956: Very religious
- Male, born 1936: Finest composer par excellence – not excluding Mozart
- Female, born 1933 (2): He wrote for the voice as if it was a musical instrument
- Male, born 1936 (2): Meticulous
- Female, born 1961 (2): Very spiritual, broke harmonic barriers, a musician through and through, a family man.
- Male, born 1945: Serious mind and Godly man. Music raises the soul to the arms of the almighty
- Female, born 1951: Very gifted and innovative composer – if he were alive today he would probably be a jazz musician. A deeply spiritual man.
- Male, born 1955: Master of all technical aspects. Intuitive performer. Great wit.
- Male, born 1945 (2): Very clever musician
- Male, born 1955 (2): Very religious, very serious, gifted and hard working.

- Male, born 1952 (2): Serious. Not for small occasions.
- Female, born 1950 (4): Prolific. Driven. Imaginative. Organised. Disciplined.
- Male, born 1931: Committed to music and faith.
- Female, born 1950 (5): I do not remember much about him even though I studied him at school.

Question 20: How would you compare Bach to other composers, i.e. Handel, Beethoven and Mozart?

- Female, born 1939: All 4 equal giants
- Male, born 1932: All great in different ways
- Female, born 1947: Like them all
- Female, born 1943: His style is very similar to Handel – Mozart and Beethoven are similar to each other but they do not have that specific Baroque style which is so evident with Bach
- Female, born 1960: Bach is much harder to sing than Handel but more challenging, so ultimately more rewarding. Not sung Beethoven, Mozart but mainly opera solos do not much for a choir. Handel is most easy and enjoyable for choirs.
- Female, born 1939 (2): He is grand – serious – solemn. ‘mathematical’. Mozart can be humorous – facetious. They are all amazing.
- Female, born 1952: Bach = the master! The others are enjoyable to sing / listen to, too. But I love Puccini and Wagner too for different reasons.
- Female, born 1961: Heavier
- Female, born 1950: I like his complexity
- Female, born 1941: The style of these others and their music is different to Bach. They are each wonderful in their way.
- Male, born 1924: They are all great
- Female, born 1933: I consider that he developed the Baroque style of composition to a very intense degree and was fascinated by the complexities of the form.

- Female, born 1950 (2): for me, Bach has greater depth to his music than others – able to be so descriptive e.g. the passions, B Minor mass
- Male, born 1949: Precision vs. romantic
- Male, born 1952: Handel's music has had more appeal to British public – I think because he lived in GBR and much of his work is in English I love all four but would choose Mozart if forced to select one.
- Female, born 1950 (3): Still a Beethoven fan but obviously Bach ranks as top equal.
- Female, born 1943 (2): Bach is unique.
- Male, born 1946: I do not just enjoy music
- Female, born 1944 (2): More challenging to sing.
- Female, born 1950 (3): He's probably the best
- Male, born 1941: A person who gave God the glory in all things
- Female, born 1956: Do not know
- Male, born 1936: No
- Female, born 1933 (2): Heavier
- Male, born 1936 (2): All are as good as each other
- Female, born 1961 (2): His influence has possibly been more profound.
- Male, born 1945: On a higher plane than any of them, even Mozart.
- Female, born 1951: More difficult and demanding than Handel. A foundation for and prefigures much of Mozart congeniality [sic].
- Male, born 1955: Bach is greater in 'purist' terms
- Male, born 1945 (2): Possibly the best
- Male, born 1955 (2): Harder to listen to, you need to concentrate more to work it out.
- Male, born 1952 (2): Equal
- Female, born 1950 (4): One, if not the best composer.
- Male, born 1931: Greater
- Female, born 1950 (5): He is the master craftsman!

- Female, born 1962: On a par – I prefer music a bit lighter, more opera – Handel, Mozart, Vivaldi and Purcell of course!
- Female, born 1970: Heavier style.
- Female, born 1984: Bach's composing seems more technically brilliant than most composers – every note thought through and exactly right no matter how much is going on – but sometimes lacks the power of Beethoven or the joy of Mozart.

Question 21: Could you describe the main reason why you joined this choir – and why a Bach choir?

- Female, born 1970: Bach choir was not important.

Because of the music (21)

- Male, born 1924: I like singing
- Male, born 1951: Like singing.
- Female, born 1939: Love of signing. This choir performs Bach less than 50% of the time. Bach is not my favourite composer to sing.
- Male, born 1931: To sing works of significance
- Male, born 1955: Want to sing harder repertoire
- Female, born 1943 (2): I wanted to sing great music
- Female, born 1962: High standard singing.
- Male, born 1977: To experience a more professional approach to singing and music!
- Female, born 1943: Love of good music, well performed, balanced sound and professional leadership. Was invited by existing member and feel very privileged to belong to the Croydon Bach choir
- Male, born 1948: Not to do with Bach – simply a good standard of singing – although I enjoy a wider repertoire than sung here and ideally would put in a different sort of choir as well, if I had time.

To sing Bach

- Female, born 1952 (3): I used to sing in the Bach choir in London and was asked to join the Croydon Bach choir for this concert as I live locally.
- Female, born 1950 (4): Wanted a choir of 'good' singers. Bach choir so that I could sing Bach.
- Male, born 1936: To enjoy involvement with his music
- Female, born 1950 (2): I had always belonged to choirs since 16 years of age – big part of my life. I like the idea of singing a fair amount of Bach
- Male, born 1941: I love the music of Bach and feel closer to god singing his works
- Female, born 1961 (2): To sing the B minor mass
- Female, born 1950 (5): I like Bach's music. I wanted to join a slightly smaller choir than before. The rehearsal night suited me. I knew some people in the choir.
- Male, born 1932: Links with St Matthew's church, I like singing good music
- Female, born 1952: I'm a temporary member as I live in Uxbridge. I joined because I have friends here and I wanted to sing the Mass as I've never sung it before. I did two concerts last year (*St John Passion* + Brahms) and I'd sung the pieces before and wanted to do them again.
- Female, born 1941: I joined this choir because I have never sung the B minor mass before (I missed it when my choir did it in 1996). So I took the opportunity to desert my choir for a term. I have thoroughly enjoyed the experience. I have improved my singing ability – thanks to the choir master.
- Female, born 1933: I greatly enjoy being challenged and my church choir conductor recommended this choir and this work as a piece of music which would satisfy my requirements.

Location (10)

- Female, born 1950 (3): Local, good reputation
- Male, born 1952 (2): Convenient location, good location.

- Female, born 1934: The choir met in a convenient time and place and they sing a variety of music.
- Female, born 1947: The choir rehearsed in the church I attend
- Male, born 1952: Local and a good standard – the ‘Bach’ name being irrelevant
- Male, born 1932: Local Choir, know the conductor
- Female, born 1944 (2): Nearest to my home, good choral repertoire, not specifically because it is a Bach choir.
- Female, born 1956: It’s not only a Bach choir – really just a name. Found an advert on the internet, had already belonged to 2 other local choirs.
- Female, born 1950 (3): Wanted a local choir and a change from the Croydon Philharmonic.
- Male, born 1955 (2): It fits other commitments repertoire is stuff which I enjoy. Conductor makes rehearsals enjoyable.

Social aspects (11)

- Female, born 1944: After a workshop-day which I enjoyed.
- Female, born 1960: Because this is the best choir I have been in. They are helpful and friendly.
- Female, born 1961: Friends, good reputation
- Female, born 1933 (2): Because it was the best, smaller choir and I knew a lot of people in it.
- Female, born 1951: I was invited by a friend. I wanted to improve my musicianship and learn a wider repertoire.
- Female, born 1950: A friend recommended it when I was looking to join a choir. Did not join because it was a Bach choir.
- Male, born 1936 (2): Because my wife joined
- Male, born 1945 (2): My wife was in it. I like baroque music.
- Female, born 1939 (2): Just to support them for their 50th anniversary

- Female, born 1952 (2): Initially to meet new people in a new town. Also to be able to sing with others – I find it a spiritually uplifting experience.
- Female, born 1953: A year after my husband died suddenly, I wanted to do something regular in the evening. I'd always enjoyed choral singing and had heard of the Croydon Bach choir's good reputation. I had enjoyed singing Bach at school.

Well-being (3)

- Male, born 1946: Good therapy after hard working day.
- Male, born 1945: Wanted to relax, singing after a career encouraging others to do so. This is one of the best in the area.
- Male, born 1949: After several years without singing I was missing it – and Donald tempted me. Choral singing is very satisfying.

No responses (6)

- Female, born 1947
- Female, born 1957
- Female, born 1962
- Female, born 1942

THE CONDUCTOR

Table 16: Perspectives towards the conductor

ASSUMPTION (Q27)	VERY HIGH	HIGH	AVERAGE	LITTLE	NONE	NO ANSWER
The musical skills of the conductor of the Croydon Bach choir are good	55%	24%	4%	2%	8%	8%
The interpersonal / communication skills of the conductor of the Croydon Bach choir are good	14%	53%	18%	8%	8%	0%
It is important that a conductor has good musical skills	14%	73%	8%	2%	4%	0%
It is important that a conductor has good interpersonal / communication skills	14%	65%	16%	2%	4%	0%
I joined this choir because of the conductor	10%	8%	24%	14%	24%	22%
I joined this choir because the conductor has a good reputation	12%	18%	16%	16%	18%	22%

18. EXTRACTS FROM FIELD NOTES

REHEARSAL 1

Before meeting the choir for the first time (first rehearsal), I bought my own copy of the music scores, to be able to write in it some instructions from the conductor as well as my own reminders and reflections. I also discovered a webpage that contained special recordings for each voice part online. I had no idea about the rehearsal schedule when I met the choir for the first time but the plan was to rehearse *Et resurrexit* and *Et incarnates est*. In my field notes, I had underlined that I could ‘feel the challenge right away’ - there were parts and bars that I was unable to follow. *Et Resurrexit* was especially challenging and the conductor claimed that for a choir, it cannot get more difficult than this. I usually learn quite quickly so this was a really good sign, meaning that this work was going to stretch my abilities and enhance my skills as a choral singer.

Fortunately for me, there were number of choir members who have sung this work before – the choir was thus a mixture of people with previous experience on the one hand and people who were learning this work from scratch on the other hand. Two of my fellow sopranos referred to this work as the hardest work ever written for a choir; ‘if you can sing the *Mass in B Minor*, you can sing everything’ they said. However, the plan for the second rehearsal was to sing the second Kyrie and *Gratias Agimus Tibi*.

REHEARSAL 2

Before the second rehearsal I did quite a good preparation using my music scores alongside with listening to the work itself on iTunes in my computer, humming with it one octant below the real pitch (in order to both spare my voice and also thinking about my neighbours well-being ...). To my utmost enjoyment, the conductor started every rehearsal with a warm up – stretching our voices doing scales and arpeggios and doing some physical stretches as well at times which was quite beneficial since most of the members have had a long day of work and as I refer to in my field notes ‘I could literally feel all these hours spent in front of my computer cluttered together in my sore shoulder muscles.’

In the rehearsal itself, I found Kyrie relatively simple to learn (not the most difficult part) and *Gratias* as well. During my preparation, I marked those parts and bars

that I found difficult and paid extra attention in the rehearsal to review them. I found that I was really missing not having a keyboard or my piano which is my main instrument and helps me to learn difficult parts. I was fortunate enough to sit next to a very good soprano who had sung this work number of times before. I was in a new situation here – this is something brand new to me – I was seeking support from others to learn the repertoire. Usually I am in the position of learning my part quickly and thus to be a support to my fellow sopranos but this time it was vice versa. I was experiencing pretty much for the first time in my life to be the singer who benefits from other more experienced singers.

I also made another discovery that I was experiencing lack of pitch. In first Kyrie, the 1st and 2nd soprano divides and go criss-cross all the time, really testing my pitch. Since I have been singing soprano (and therefore usually the melody) for a long time, my pitch was getting ‘lazy’ and I am used to be ‘on top’ while singing. Getting through a challenging part like this was therefore a kind of ‘pitch rehabilitation.’

What struck me in this first ‘formal rehearsal’ was my first impression of the choir as being very focused and disciplined as a group, keen on attending rehearsals and being there on time. I did not notice any disruptions, like people talking and chatting during the rehearsal phase itself. Thanks to the tea-break, people got the opportunity to chat – although I found it hard to chat to people I didn’t know and make an initiative, being a shy Nordic. However, as previously discussed, this choir was quite a big group and the rehearsal area quite big as well so it might be possible that people were chatting or whispering without being noticed.

REHEARSAL 3

In the **third rehearsal**, Cum Sancto spiritu and Credo was on the agenda. I hadn’t given myself much time to prepare for this rehearsal due to other deadlines in my study, only using the time while travelling to London. As I refer to in my field notes, while I was listening to Cum Sancto on my laptop, trying to keep up with my music scores, ‘my face almost went pale.’ This part was extremely difficult where 2nd soprano was sometimes singing higher than 1st soprano and vice versa. I therefore decided to put the music scores aside and listen to it few times, just to let it flow in order to get the feeling for the part before trying to put an effort into learning my part. Bit by bit I managed to go through most of it but there were bars here which were impossible for me to locate

my part so I marked them in my music scores in order to pay extra attention during the rehearsal. Credo was somewhat easier, although there were some tough places as well.

Since I arrived a bit too early at the rehearsal venue, the door was locked but I managed to get an attention from a person inside who kindly let me in. Since I had some spare time, I found a piano and went through these difficult bits on the keyboard (then I realised how much I miss my piano back home).

I could easily feel that the warm-ups were good for my voice – I had not had a sore throat after rehearsal three weeks in a row, due to three reasons: Firstly, due to the efficiency of the warm ups – the conductor did not take too much time but used very effective methods and seemed to have a very good sense for what the voice needs and how it functions. Secondly it is the air condition and the steady temperature at the rehearsal venue. In the autumn semester I sang with a choir that rehearsed in an old church where it was both very cold at times and also quite humid and I ended up having a sore throat after every rehearsal. And thirdly, I was in a better shape vocally.

Like during last rehearsal, I sought support from my fellow soprano who had sung the *Mass in B Minor* number of times before. Getting the piece together was hard, but I could feel a big ‘yes’ at the end of the rehearsal – this rewarding feeling of achievement and my fellow singers singing next to me kept claiming that ‘this music is so beautiful.’

Although my aim was to be self-sufficient and not to rely on others, I admit that having her support was very helpful, especially when I was going off track and had to get back into the performance fairly quickly with her help. Peer-support of this kind was very helpful to me, demonstrating that teamwork of this kind is efficient whereas if one might fail on a bar or two, there’s definitely someone else who knows it. This kind of collective learning made the work of the musical director quite easier in the meantime. In fact, as strange as it might sound, I was quite relieved not to be in my usual role as the singer who knows the repertoire before anyone else within his/her part, as well as it was a relief to be just one of many strong sopranos, not the only strong soprano. In this way, it meant less pressure on me, I could enjoy it more and I didn’t have to worry about my voice being too strong or standing out – I could sing out loud as much as I could, without making a mess.

However, one thing that was concerning is that the choir was usually sitting in their chairs during most of the rehearsal but on occasions, the choir stood up in order to sing the choral all way through. I usually prefer standing because then it is both easier to

breathe and support the high notes. However, standing for whole two hours was not an option after a long day of work and the music scores were also quite heavy – something that could have affected the well-being of the choir.

REHEARSAL 4

The **fourth rehearsal** didn't occur until in the fortnight due to midterm. I had been busy handing in papers and attended this rehearsal completely unprepared. The night before the rehearsal, I had travelled to Manchester in order to see a football match and was unusually tired. To make things worse, I had forgot the rehearsal schedule and on my way from Manchester to London, I was not sure which choral was on the agenda. On my way on the bus, I went through several chorales, trying to hum lightly like I do at home. During this bus ride, I thought about the fact that I never sing much at home, especially when there are other people around me – even my husband and my children. The only time I sing is when I am 100% positive that no one can hear me and even then I get a bit shy hearing my voice alone (fortunately my daughter has not inherited this shyness as she sings all the time).

However, it turned out that the agenda for the rehearsal was Confiteor unum baptisma and the 1st part of Credo. What was unusual about this rehearsal's warm up was that the conductor took more time for warm-ups, probably due to the difficulty of the piece that we were going to deal with that night.

Now this time I was not prepared at all and had only listened to this choral couple of times. There were certain places I was not quite sure of, it turned out to be difficult to sight-read some of the bars and it was hard to realize where to breathe. I have one method that I used a lot in the rehearsals and it is to 'sing in my mind' over a difficult bar. The downside of that method of learning is that it occurs usually during the moments that the choir stops and listens to the advice and instructions of the conductor – leading to the fact that when I'm in that phase, it happens that I miss out some of the instructions of the conductor – and that happened to me number of times during this rehearsal. As being unprepared, I was experiencing pitch problems in the interaction between 1st and 2nd soprano in the 1st part of Credo, being sometimes 'completely lost and out in the blue.' Therefore my lesson after this rehearsal was to be more prepared next time – being unprepared is not an ideal situation while learning a challenging piece. Thus having listened to the chorales and study you part makes the rehearsal more

efficient – and fun. It's like attending a lecture without having read whatever is on the syllabus where the student has problems in putting things into perspective and is in many instances incapable to contribute in discussions – leading to certain frustration.

REHEARSAL 5

Despite my sincere intention of being more prepared for the **fifth rehearsal**, I was not as well prepared as I meant to be, due to lack of energy after having submitted large documents for annual monitoring, not being able to concentrate on any work of any significance and dealing with a touch of flu and cold as well. Therefore I felt insecure that my lack of preparation would affect my performance. Using my travel time to prepare, this rehearsal's agenda included Osanna and Sanctus – both extremely difficult – Osanna is an 8-part chorus (therefore with 2 choruses) and Sanctus quite tricky as well, since there are changes in tempo, style and texture. Therefore I got the feeling that one rehearsal would not be enough for both Osanna and Sanctus so in my preparation I emphasized more on Sanctus.

At the rehearsal venue, the heating system was not functioning and I was worried since my voice was not in its best shape – singing in a cold space is not an ideal situation for the voice. During the rehearsal I got mesmerized by the Sanctus. The MD claimed that he wanted this to be sung at his funeral, in the moment his coffin is carried in the church. I was still doing the same 'mistakes' of going through difficult bars in my head and missing out instructions from the conductor – I refer to it in my field notes that 'I must pull myself together and try to listen more to the conductor' (and just as I'm thinking about this, I missed an entry – typical). One thing that I was also thinking about a lot while practicing the Sanctus (where especially the 1st soprano needs to support the high notes) is that there was not much space to breathe in this choral (like many other Bach chorales). I found this odd considering that Bach wrote his choral music for choirs that he conducted himself and according to old historical documents and archives and he only had 16-20 singers in total and in order to deliver chorales like Sanctus, the singers need to have almost inhuman ability when it comes to breathing.

I also noticed that people used the rehearsals well to learn their parts and as the conductor was training one part, the rest of the choir (instead of chatting) read along – perhaps some of them were trying to sing their own part in their head while following the other voice (a method I use quite often to independently 'glue' my part into my

head). Chit-chat was a practically unknown phenomenon during this term and there might have been several reasons for that: Firstly the difficulty of the repertoire and the narrow time frame kept people focused on the music. Secondly, the choir consisted of a core of members who had sung with the choir for years and also many new members. These new members were located all over the group, especially those who were singing the *Mass in B Minor* for the first time, they were located next to people who already had sung the work before in order to benefit from the group support. Therefore the social bonding between members was not as strong as usual – it was more like a group meeting for the first time. I usually sat next to the same person who was experienced in singing the *Mass in B Minor* – this was very valuable for me as the rehearsal period was short and people needed to learn quickly.

As I suspected, Osanna was supposed to be on this rehearsal's agenda but the conductor decided to look at Crucifixus – this part didn't seem difficult but it turned out to be very hard to sing it in tune. Both the soprano parts were written for 2nd soprano but both soprano parts were singing it and it was quite low and hard to tune down after having sung the high notes of the Sanctus. I could, at this stage, feel that my throat was getting sore due to a combination of slight, previous cold, the high notes from the Sanctus and the cold conditions in the rehearsal venue.

REHEARSAL 6

It was rehearsal 6 and the concert was getting closer. During my usual preparation on the bus to London, I decided to listen to all 16 chorales in the *Mass in B Minor*. I realised that learning this work in 10 weeks was a bit tough – in order to do that, one must be a good sight-reader. As previously mentioned, I used a website where I could play my part individually but my internet connection has been dysfunctional so I hadn't been able to play these online sound files.

However, as I suspected that Osanna was on the agenda, I studied it and to my surprise, it wasn't as hard as I thought it would be. At this point I had been listening to the chorales while working on my computer and my sub-conscious slowly 'digesting' the whole thing. This rehearsal, my fellow soprano whom I usually sat next to was not at the rehearsal – therefore I had to rely more on myself to get through the rehearsal. Osanna is divided into two choirs who echo each other on occasions - I was insecure in 2-3 places where I couldn't get the entry properly and had minor pitch problems

although I could feel that I was getting better in that matter, probably due to practice – and the *Mass in B Minor* is a good option for practicing one's pitch. Still I had problems following the instructions of the conductor as I got at one moment completely lost and couldn't locate myself within the music scores. As I refer to in my field notes, 'I do not know exactly how to deal with this, even though I really want to improve myself in this matter.' Going through *Confiteor* and *Et Resurrexit*, there were no special problems, although the conductor just went on through it all, despite of some pitch problems and couple of parts being lost at times – causing the choir to giggle afterwards and in the end we sang first *Kyrie* – I had never sang it before but managed to get through it mostly (actually my favourite part of the *Mass* along with *Gloria*).

Now there were only three weeks to concert day - at this very moment, the time pressure was becoming more and more evident. Thus choir members were focused – I had to 'rely on myself' this time and I could feel that it did me good.

REHEARSAL 7

In rehearsal 7, the agenda was to go through *Gloria* and *Sanctus*. In my preparation, I marked the difficult bars in my music scores and I noticed that these 'difficult bars' were getting fewer every week and I am tempted to conclude from this 'fact' that I was getting into a better shape music wise and my pitch was getting better every week as well as my sight-seeing.

We started the rehearsal by singing *Credo in unum deum* and the choir went through this piece all in one, purely sight-reading it. I noticed that there were few places that I needed to review better. Singing *Sanctus* again second week in a row was of course easier this week and the tough places were not many this time and at this stage (and the heating system in the rehearsal venue was back in order, thankfully).

In this rehearsal we were reviewing and revisiting other chorales that we had previously rehearsed (*Gloria*, first *Kyrie*, *Sanctus*, *Gratias agimus tibi*, *Cum Sancto Spiritu* – the last one was still a bit tough for me personally). The sound of the choir was improving, especially when we were allowed to stand while singing, since it is always easier to reach the high notes in that position than when you're sitting.

I noticed for the first time this term that people were chatting a bit and people seemed more relaxed due to the fact that we weren't singing these chorales for the first time this term. I sensed that people were realising that things were coming together and

there was more confidence in the choir's performance now than it was last week – seeing the rewarding result of a hard work, spending a lot of time and effort which was starting to pay off – as I refer to in my field notes; 'I can say for myself that I am starting to get the kick out of knowing some of the chorales pretty well – that everything is coming together – I usually like to work hard and experience the fruit of my hard work – then I feel like I've achieved something.' Although there is only one week to concert day, I could not sense any special stress or pressure – I have experienced in choirs that I've sung with that there is this one disaster rehearsal week or two before concert, where everyone gets stressed, people start to panic and make mistakes they haven't made before.

REHEARSAL 8

Rehearsal 8 – it was concert week and this week I was based in a cheap (but clean) London hotel close to Victoria station after having spent few days in the beautiful and historical Oxford. This week was also very busy as I was finishing the interviews. The agenda for this rehearsal was Credo – I was lacking preparation going across town meeting people for interviews and somehow I got very absent minded and as I was on my way on the train to the rehearsal venue, I discovered that I forgot my music scores.

This rehearsal was all about reviewing and going through most of the chorales since next rehearsal would be the dress rehearsal. At this moment I was beginning to be able to sing the chorales and got the feeling that I was getting it together. Some chorales, like Credo and Patrem Omnipotem, I had had difficulties with some of the bars but in this rehearsal I could sing it all, even though I hadn't prepared myself for it especially. In my field notes I refer to this experience 'like writing an essay or a paper – if you put it away in the drawer for a certain time (a week or longer), clear it out of your head and then review it again – then suddenly (almost) all falls into place.'

This reminded me of one of my previous conductors who at the end of rehearsals introduced briefly new songs that were meant to be on next rehearsal's agenda and the week after, it always went unusually well to rehearse and learn the new song that was briefly introduced the week before. Even though this rehearsal went well and everything seemed to be coming together, I was a bit nervous to think that the concert would be next Saturday.

One joke I didn't understand is that the conductor kindly asked the tenors to be careful with the drinks in the interval – everyone laughed but I didn't get the joke until afterwards. Since the concert venue was St Mildred's church in Addiscombe, I never would have guessed that they were serving wine in the concert interval, since serving alcohol is not done in churches in my home country, unless it is a part of the holy sacrament.

DRESS REHEARSAL

It was Saturday 27th of March, concert day. I had discovered at the last rehearsal that there were number of places that I needed to review and learn better, in order to get through the concert without making too many mistakes. As I was in my hotel room, I hummed with the online source one octave lower. Thankfully I was offered to stay Friday and Saturday at one of my fellow soprano's house who was so nice to offer me her guestroom. She had a piano in her living room and together we went through some of the chorales, me playing our part on the piano. That helped a lot and as I've referred to earlier, playing my part on the piano is for me the most effective way to learn. When I was younger, I learned to play the organ and piano and had a good pitch-memory, e.g. I could remember every single tone on the keyboard and could therefore sight-read very easily. This ability of mine seems to have faded as I grew older (I stopped learning the piano when I went to secondary school) – however, playing my part on the piano helps me so much more to memorize the tones – it's like I refresh and resurrect my former 'pitch-memory.'

The dress rehearsal took place at the concert venue. St Mildred's church is average in size (not big, not very small), with space for 2-300 people at one time – more traditional than St Matthew's church which is quite modern. This time we were rehearsing with the orchestra for the first time. People were beaming with excitement, though a little nervous but moderately so. I spoke to number of people who claimed their excitement – this was the day that we had been heading at and working hard to achieve for all these weeks.

The setup was ready and it was a nice surprise that the chairs for the choir were quite comfortable. In the *B Minor Mass* there are quite many solo parts, so the choir did not have to stand throughout the performance. At first, I placed myself at the end of my row (that is usually a place I prefer – to be at the end and preferably in the back) but

since I'm first soprano, we were placed at the front and the seconds at the back (strange). However, I decided to replace myself and saw a vacant seat next to my fellow soprano who I usually sat next to. This however became somewhat strange – the setup at the concert venue was different from the rehearsal setup and therefore I was hearing voices behind me that I did not recognize.

Since this was the only rehearsal with the orchestra, the pressure on the conductor was growing – to make everything come together and coordinate the flow between the choir and the orchestra. Now there was a bit of a situation with the orchestra. Somehow they were both missing a trumpet player and a double bass player. Fortunately the conductor used his professional network and managed to get a trumpet player on the spot (there is no Bach passion without a trumpet) but he solved the double-base problem to ask William, our accompanist to play the base line on the foot pedals of the church organ – so the problem was solved successfully.

In this rehearsal, we had to go through all the chorales in order, except we kept the 2nd Kyrie until last and didn't go through *Dona Nobis Pacem* as it is the same music as in *Gratias Agimus Tibi*. The orchestra did well – the musicians are quite young but the sound was good and the acoustics in the church fitted well to the sound of the whole 'gathering.' The dress rehearsal was like any moment of truth – a vital step in the rehearsal process since the tempo must be coordinated by the conductor and the orchestra and the choir must follow the same path when it comes to tempo, lights and shades in the performance.

The tenors seemed to be a bit nervous at times – they were experiencing problems with the tempo, especially in *Gloria* and *Cum Sancto spiritu* and this was also the case with us sopranos. This is not unusual, since we have to follow 10 instrumentalists instead of just William, our accompanist. There were other issues that needed further attention, like in *Qui tollis peccata mundi* and the first *Credo*, the choir was singing criss-cross all the time.

As I was singing, I could so easily feel how tired I became by simply holding my music scores, especially in my back and in my shoulders. I made a decision at that time not to wear high heeled shoes – instead just wear my black sneakers (no one would notice it anyway). I remembered how much my high heels hurt me and my back in my Christmas concert, plus I was standing on a cold and hard stone floor. However, it must be taken into account that my body condition was not at its best at the time.

This rehearsal was a good venue to sort out possible pits and mistakes and due to my previous experience I was quite convinced that we would do better in concert.

THE CONCERT

Since there was a period of 3 and a half hours between the end of the dress rehearsal until the concert started, me and my hostess went home in order to relax and have a typical cup of nice English tea. My throat was a bit sore after the rehearsal so I decided to rest my voice and not to speak too much. I didn't look at the music – I did it on purpose since I wanted to clear my head and relax instead.

So this was it – there was time to ‘deliver the product itself’ that we had been working on for the last 10 weeks which was about to pay off. We came to the church at 7pm, half an hour before concert. All the women were dressed in black shirts and trousers or skirts or black dresses, the men in black suit and white shirts with a red tie. People were excited and one woman claimed that a moderate doze of stress would be good – not too much though but enough to keep us focused. Some kept asking me whether I would stay on with the choir but I was mainly asked about the volcanic eruption in Fimmvörðuháls at the time, whether it would have any influence on the Icelanders, especially those who lived nearby³⁴.

However, not being too distracted due to the volcanic eruption, we were like children right before Christmas. I took the decision of mainly enjoying this event and not worry to worry about whether I would be able to deliver everything tone-perfect – this was, as I have referred to earlier, relatively new to me as I didn't have to be the one who knew every tone and others relying on my knowledge and my performance. I was also quite relieved not to be ‘the best’ in my voice part – e.g. I was among singers who are better than me. Thus I didn't have to be in the spotlight.

Behind the altar was a space where we could change and leave our stuff – even though I brought my fancy high heels, I decided to wear my comfortable black sneakers while singing because if a singer is not comfortable, it might affect the performance and the state of the voice, especially if the singer is a bit nervous as well.

The whole choir walked into the stage and the first part, Kyrie, is sung by the choir. In this movement, the choir starts immediately along with the orchestra – William

³⁴ Only couple of weeks later it started to erupt in Eyjafjallajökull glacier, affecting air traffic in Europe for almost one month and having impact on the locals who lived near the volcano, including many members of my family

the accompanist played the harmony of the first tone to ensure that we started off from the right place. Getting the entry of the first movement right was crucial for the whole concert – this time we succeeded and the first Kyrie went very well – everything clicked and as far as I was concerned, we did better than in the rehearsal. The second Kyrie had some flat notes, the Gloria was cheerful and Et in terra pax as well and the conductor looked pleased. One funny incident occurred in Cum Sancto – the conductor almost fell off his stool he was standing on and lost his stick that flew towards the tenors – making us almost laugh. Cum Sancto has a very quick / fast tempo and somehow it is like the conductor got a tiny little bit carried away (who would not?). Like David claimed in his interview, the conductor was himself not too keen on using sticks while conducting – perhaps that’s the reason why.

Although, immediately I felt a bit tired in my back and legs but I tried to imagine the pain flowing from my body and I started to feel better. Soon, all my focus was on the music and the pain went away, somehow. It was good to be able to sit down between movements and listen to the soloist – now the downside of sitting with the choir was that the soloists turned their back on us so it was a bit difficult to hear their singing properly. However, I much prefer to be on stage than in the audience, especially during a choral concert.

During the intervals, the choir served drinks and juice – in a church (strange for me whereas this would not be allowed in my country) – this is what the conductor was referring to earlier in the week that the choir should go easy on the drinks. Common topics of discussions were my research, the eruption but thankfully no one asked about the financial situation in Iceland so I used the opportunity to mingle whereas these kinds of intervals are a great opportunity to get to know the people. Unfortunately, since this choir is quite big, it was impossible for me to get to know every person and after 8 weeks of participation I was still seeing new faces.

After the interval, the most difficult parts were left – Credo, Sanctus and Osanna. These parts I didn’t consider myself to know particularly well, especially Et Resurrexit, the latter part of Sanctus and some parts of Osanna. The tenors were supposed to start the 2nd Credo and I was a little bit nervous on their behalf, since they had difficulties with the tempo in the dress rehearsal. However my concerns were unnecessary – there were no tempo problems in Credo – Et incarnates set and Crucifixus were good although I personally made one stupid mistake in Crucifixus that I hadn’t done before but fortunately it didn’t affect the performance in whole. Confiteor

was a bit strange at times but I do not think anybody noticed and the bridge over to Et expect was more successful than in any of the rehearsals. Sanctus was a success but Osanna for the second time was not very convincing from my point of view. Now the last movement – Dona nobis pacem – was a real blast and I can recall how much thrill I got out of it, especially the last tone we sang with a full throttle.

On the whole it was a very enjoyable experience – however there are always mixed feelings when you deliver a performance like this – you’ve put lots of effort and time working towards this performance – the performance itself takes two hours with interval and then suddenly it’s over. However, people were beaming, greeting each other, tired but very happy. In Iceland I’m used to post-concert parties to celebrate but this time, people were tired after a long day and no such event had been organized – however, me and my hostess visited a couple who lived nearby where we were offered a glass of wine (juice for me) and a chocolate cake. My voice was completely wasted and I could hardly talk. It took me well over two hours to be able to fall asleep, even though I was extremely tired. I had to get up early to catch a flight to Iceland the morning after.

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