Introduction

It is January 9, 2002. A rainy and warm Wednesday evening. At 5:30 pm it is fully dark. I pull my van up the the Steelworker's Hall, in Kingston's working class north end. The hall's custodian, Mary, meets me and we unlock the front doors. I take a brief look at the lobby, the main meeting room with its stage and stacking chairs, and the downstairs rooms where we will provide child care. This facility looks fine to me. It's way bigger than the hall we had booked a month earlier. When I get back to the van to start unloading, several of my friends who are helping with this project have arrived and are beginning to set up greeting tables in the lobby and chairs in the main room.

Leslie has assigned her son Jason to me as my GOfer, and we start to carry in my piano, speakers and amps, microphones, music stands, guitar and percussion equipment. Bruce arrives with the boxes of music and registration forms. Already, at 6:10 pm, potential choir members, hopeful 'participants' are starting to arrive.

I busy myself on the stage, about 100 feet from the lobby doors at the other end of the room. By about 6:30 pm it is getting hectic. Well wishers, friends and volunteers needing direction are interrupting my technical set up. 'We need more chairs to be set up.' 'Where do you want the altos to sit?' 'Has anyone seen our pianist?' 'How many copies of the music booklet are there?'

I send Jason out in his mom's car for masking tape, the piano sustain pedal I forgot, and more photocopies of the registration form. I can see that in the lobby my friends, the founding board or 'start up committee' as we have come to call ourselves, are *very* busy welcoming people, handing out music and registration forms, pens and pencils,and directing people to the soprano, alto, tenor and bass sections. Many people don't know what their voice range is and one woman comes up to me for a voice placement check. 'Just sit anywhere with the sopranos and if it feels too high, go try the altos,' I advise.

My God! There are people literally pouring in through the door. Bruce runs up to tell me that there is a traffic jam on Concession Street and that we need volunteers directing cars. A Community Access wheel-trans vehicle is having difficulty getting to the front doors.

I start walking around and working the crowd by jokingly telling them to practice solfege scales or to start learning their parts from the song booklet. There is a lot of laughter and excitement. I'd printed 180 booklets. At 6:50 pm we run out. Margo, our accompanist, arrives. She and I start to look at the music, tune the guitar and play a few of the accompaniments. I test the mic and CD player.

At 6:58 pm , I take a deep breath, ascend the podium and focus on the crowd. A hush falls in the room. I ask the crowd to turn to 'The Glory of Love' in the booklet, and to just sing along with me and Margo, in unison, to get the hang of the song and to see what the room sounds like. Margo begins to play. I lift my arms with a strong gesture and, at 7 pm, I see the crowd become a choir. The sound is huge and warm. People recognize the tune and join in quickly. 'You've got to give a little, Take a little, Let your poor heart break a little. That's the story of, That's the glory of love...' I try to cue a trickier entry and the whole thing crashes into laughter and anticipation. I show them how it goes and within a few minutes, the rhythm and notes are cleaned up - tighter and stronger. We are moving ahead—learning,

> singing, breathing and laughing and dreaming together.
>
> Open Voices Community Choir is born.
>
> Later that evening, after clean up, I sit down exhausted with the rest of the start up committee and we crack open a bottle of champagne to toast a huge success. Two hundred and twenty people came out for this inaugural evening!

This project is about the Open Voices Community Choir in Kingston, Ontario. I founded this choir, and launched it with a group of like minded friends in January of 2002. It has been hugely successful, performing to enthusiastic sell-out crowds, involving about 170 mixed ability singers aged 14 to 80 years, and achieving financial, membership, board and legal stability within a very short period. It is based on this evolving vision.

> Open Voices is premised on the belief that community singing can be a nurturing, empowering and healing force. We seek to create joy, peace and beauty for our members and for the greater Kingston community, by providing an opportunity to sing, and offering our music to others. Open Voices aims to be inclusive, accessible and representative of diversity. (see Appendix A,Open Voices concert program)

My own development as a musician and teacher, a summary description of Open Voices, and the research I conducted that informed my actions in starting Open Voices is covered in Chapter One.

In Chapter Two I discuss the phenomena of the inaugural evening for the choir and review a selection of writings that have helped me to understand the possible reasons that others would desire to participate in Open Voices.

Chapter Three is a presentation and analysis of data I collected from other choir leaders. This had a significant bearing on early decisions and choices in forming Open Voices.

I interviewed and collected data from choir participants. These are people I conducted at the Community in Song singing event held in September of 1999. Much of this participant data will support claims made in Chapter Two about the joy-creating, healing, focusing and empowering capabilities of community singing.

Some of this participant data demonstrates why certain facilitation, teaching and repertoire strategies I have adopted are effective.

In the final chapter, Chapter Five, I will summarize how the research I conducted informed my actions in starting Open Voices Community Choir. I will suggest avenues for further study and suggest implications that this research may have on my decisions as Open Voices matures and evolves.

Chapter One

Preparing the Way

Community choir hits wildly popular note

> *Build it and they will come.... and come...and come* - that is, if what you are building is a community choir appropriately names "Open Voices." "Open Voices" is aptly named for many reasons. It is *open* to adult men and women of all ages and varying means, regardless of musical talent or experience. It is the long-standing brain child (some claim that this is an 11-year-old dream in the making) of a handful of *open* -minded visionaries whose commitment and hard work have made a community choir within the Greater Kingston Area a reality. As one of those who came, I am *openly* grateful! (Joan Sherman, see Appendix B, PIC Press, May 2002)

Although this project is about the research and events leading to the inauguration of Open Voices Community Choir, readers should have a clear idea about what the choir is and does. The lead up I reflect on in this project will make more sense in the context of the current, living and prosperous reality of Open Voices.

What is Open Voices?

Open Voices is a choir organization with about 170 members, mostly from in and around Kingston, Ontario. The age range of members is from mid- teens to mid-eighties, with the largest representation by people in their 40's and 50's. The board selected Open Voices participants by lottery, after receiving 275 applications in January of 2002. Musical experience ranges from none to a lot, and the vocal quality and skill of individual members ranges from poor to excellent.

The choir rehearses on Wednesday nights in a church hall under the direction of myself, Andy Rush. Members pay dues on a self selected sliding scale of $60.00, $25.00 or Free per term. The year is divided into three terms—fall, winter and spring, and not all members sing each term. There is a board of directors and Open Voices is a registered, charitable not-for-profit organization. Letters patent are on file and we have a set of by laws.

Each term the choir rehearses towards a summative concert. We include a guest performer and I write arrangements of this performer's songs for the choir. So far, we have performed two sell-out concerts at McArthur Auditorium, Queen's University, featuring guests David Francey and Brent Titcomb.

Members attend occasional sectional rehearsals and each term I offer beginning theory and sight reading classes to members on occasional Saturday mornings. We have a logo, a vision statement, a developing member's handbook, and each term we publish and mail out a newsletter. There is a phone chain. We provide child care during rehearsals and we ensure that rehearsal and performance venues are accessible to members and audience. Open Voices members assume many roles and leadership responsibilities and this is helping to forward the vision.

We respond to requests to perform and the choir has done so for the annual general meeting of the Community Foundation of Greater Kingston, and for the Kingston Disarmament Committee's Hiroshima Remembrance Day on
August 6, 2002.

We employ Margo Smith as our accompanist and I, as the Artistic Director, am paid as well. All other board member, volunteer or support work is volunteer. Repertoire includes folk music, African freedom music, spirituals, rounds and chants, pop and jazz music, light classical and original Canadian acoustic music. The focus is on uplifting, positive, fun music. There can be a social action slant to the music. I do much of the arranging for the choir. Along with Margo and section leaders, I produce a practice CD each term that members can use at home to learn their parts.

We have a lending library of music theory software and videos about theory and

choral music singing technique. We will launch a web site in September of 2002. We are members of the Kingston Arts Council and Choirs Ontario. We have an operating budget in excess of $20,000 per year. Our first annual general meeting will be on September 11, 2002. There, we will present our audited financial statement, vote additional board members into place and directors will give short reports.

I started developing my own ideas for launching Open Voices after my interviews with Isabel Bernaus and the board of directors of her choir, Common Thread, in Toronto. On an August afternoon in 2001, I ran into my friend and long-time choir participant Leslie Saunders on Union Street, while cycling.

“Hey Andy! When are you going to get a choir going in Kingston! I just want you to know that I’ll help you do it. I’m in.”

I have been running weekend choir events in the fall at Camp Hyanto for seven years and Leslie is a keen participant. Leslie and three other long time Community In Song participants met in September of 2001 for a casual discussion about the possibilities, and to hear what I had in mind. Shortly afterwards, we began to have weekly meetings and to do the work necessary to launch in January of 2002.

Preparing Myself as a Person. Who Am I?

My Development as a Leader of Community Singing.

> I hate to tell you this Andy, but I feel that a little piece of Community in Song came to my house last week, and it was all you! You prepared music that you shared with us and led us through... You knew how good it can sound and you coached us to taste of it with you, and it was delicious. So my conclusion is, that a key ingredient is YOU... Your effort, your enthusiasm, your voice. (Linda Shantz, from a letter of June 6, 2000)

I began my musical training at an early age, taking piano lessons as a child, and listening to my father play the standards of Irving Berlin, Hoagie Carmichael and George Gershwin on the big old upright in the study. I was not a serious student, but I learned the basics of reading and I had a good ear, which made participation in school choirs enjoyable. I took alto sax in grade seven and eight, and oboe in grade nine. School talent show audiences greeted my performances of Strauss waltzes warmly.

During the summer of '68, I attended a Unitarian camp where many counsellors played guitar and sang the folk, pop and protest music of that time. I became aware of music as an agent of social change and empowerment, and as a vehicle for social interaction with peers, and girls!

When I got back from camp I dedicated myself to learning the basics of folk accompaniment on guitar and started learning songs. My first public performance was in Grade 9, at a coffee house at Ernestown Secondary School in Odessa, Ontario, where I now teach. I sang a few Leonard Cohen tunes. His low voice was appropriate to my baritone. And I sang a few tunes by Buffy St. Marie. I'd learned these off the records of my older brother and sisters. Through high, school I developed as a folk music performer and formed a singing duo with Alan Weekes. We had some success in local coffee houses and at high school music festivals. I participated in school musicals all of my four high school years.

During my Grade 12 year, I had the idea of applying for early admittance to Carleton University under their special admissions program. I was bored with school in Kingston and feeling 'alienated' at home. For about three months I practiced on piano

at a feverish pace, auditioning successfully with a teacher from the Queen's School of Music and preparing audition pieces for Carleton University. My parents were not supportive of this wild idea, and I dropped the plan, to spend the summer fifing in the Fort Henry Guard, and busking with Alan. I moved out of home and did not continue formal education, music or otherwise.

For the next four years, I abandoned music practice entirely, working as a religious novitiate, truck driver, dry wall installer and artisan crafts person. At about age 23, I began to play guitar again, working up enough repertoire to begin performing and entertaining in supper clubs, bars and coffee houses. I wrote a few songs and began to enjoy my music a lot.

At the age of twenty seven, after nine years of adventure and folly, I decided to go back to university, and to become a music teacher.

When I entered serious music study at Queen's in 1981 I was a widely experienced dilettante folk singer. I worked hard that first year, practicing piano and voice, and studying theory. In May of that year I wrote and performed the Royal Conservatory examinations that were requirements for music school. I remember first year theory class with Clifford Crawley. We were analyzing the four part chorale writing of Bach. At least that's what the class was about. I was trying to learn note names and draw treble clefs correctly!

Dr. Crawley became a real mentor to me through my four years in undergraduate music. His classes on music education were inspired, his sense of humour was acute and his musicianship was impeccable. I became a composition student of Dr. Crawley's and by fourth year was a comfortable arranger and composer of simple

pop and vocal jazz choral music.

I contend that is easiest to get into university music school as a male vocal student. You are so needed and so rare. That's what I did, and immediately found myself singing in the Queen's Chamber Singers. Our conductor was Rudi Schnitzler. His knowledge of repertoire was wonderful and his crotchety ways were charming. I became president of the group, arranging fund raising, buying performance outfits and risers and helping set up tours and festivals. I have large bags of bulk spices in my cupboard to this day!

I became involved as a counselor and vocal coach with the National Music Camp on Lake Couchecheing, and I became a wind surfing instructor. I was back to using the skills learned in high school as a camp counselor, sail training officer and outdoor education leader, as I prepared to become a teacher.

When I resettled in Kingston in 1977, my sister introduced me to a music festival called Blue Skies. It was run on the farm of guitar maker Oscar Graff, and organized by back to the landers and 'hippies' who were living in North Frontenac County. My regular involvement at Blue Skies as participant, sound engineer, stage manager, artistic director and for the past fourteen years Choir Director, has been pivotal in my development as a musician, and human. Blue Skies is a grass roots, cooperative, somewhat left wing event, with a focus on the environment, inclusiveness, holistic wellness and the creation of a natural high.

Here is how my Blue Skies involvement contributed to my choir directing career.

This is quoted from the 1998 Blue Skies Choir booklet. It was our tenth anniversary.

> When I was studying music at Queen's I formed an a Capella 'do wop' and jazz group called Sextet. I had been participating in vocal harmony workshops at Blue Skies for a few years (1981 to 1984) and in '85 and '86 Sextet came to Blue Skies

> to help me out. We had the idea of teaching something from our repertoire and actually handing out the choir music. I brought lots of copies of 'When I Fall In Love' with me. This allowed for more extended arrangements and more adventurous harmony than the usual rounds, chants and simple triadic arrangements of folk song choruses that were the usual fare at vocal harmony workshops. It was immediately apparent that there were some trained and serious choral musicians who were right up to this challenge. and that many other participants were keen and dedicated enough to give it a whack. Caroline Stewart, the artistic director, and I discussed the possibility of providing more than one rehearsal slot through the weekend, and getting a bit of main stage performance time on Sunday night. The Blue Skies Choir was born.
>
> The choir has been a profoundly moving and learning experience for me. We have had a lot of laughs and achieved some great choral moments. (see appendix C, from the 1998 Blue Skies Choir Booklet)

My favourite music during high school was the western swing of Dan Hicks and His Hot Licks, and the jazz interpretations of Ella Fitzgerald. This, along with my dad's interest in old standards, led me to join the Big Swing Band of Kingston as a guitarist and vocalist, and to form Sextet, a six member vocal jazz choral group that acted as one of my performance ensembles in my undergraduate studies. I began writing arrangements for Sextet to perform with the Big Swing Band, and took a lot of leadership at Sextet rehearsals in teaching the rather intricate and difficult harmonies. It was during my three years with Sextet that choral leadership and an intuitive ear for chord relationships became second nature to me.

During my year at teacher's college, Sextet continued to rehearse and perform. In the spring of 1986 we attended a jazz choir festival in Oshawa, Ontario. This experience opened a world of repertoire, pedagogy and excellence to me and introduced me to several teacher mentors who helped further my journey.

In 1986, I accepted my first full time teaching position at Holy Trinity Anglican School in Richmond Hill, Ontario. My students there were mostly very bright and well advantaged and my choirs and bands were excellent because of this. The

headmaster assigned a very accomplished accompanist, Elaine Pudwell, to the choir and she taught me the intricacies of the Anglican sung liturgy and steered me around the Red Hymn Book. I taught all grades, from three to OAC, vocal, general and instrumental music. Without kids at home, young and full of energy, I worked long and exciting hours to meet the challenges of this first teaching job. It was a total immersion for a developing music educator and I loved it.

That same year, 1986, I accepted a summer counseling position at the Bark Lake Leadership Centre, near Haliburton, Ontario. This was an Ontario Government run facility that for fifty years had been a mecca of leadership and outdoor education training for both high achieving high school students, Ontario camp counselors and adult learners from mixed professional backgrounds. Bark Lake was far more of a wilderness and adventure based camp experience that National Music Camp had been. Its curriculum was largely based on a risk/trust model developed by Karl Rohnke and Dick Prouty in their Project Adventure programs. (Prouty, 1988 and Rohnke, 1984) At first I taught high school age participants at Bark, but in 1989 I switched to teaching the adult outdoor leadership course. My mentor for leadership theory at Bark Lake became Thom Lambert. By watching and working with Thom, and through his patient explanations of leadership theory, I gained confidence in leading adults. We did a lot of folk music at Bark Lake. Most instructors there sang and played instruments. I started putting together impromptu choirs at Bark, using successful and easy to teach repertoire from the previous school year that I was very familiar with. Choir performances at the final camp fire became a tradition at Bark Lake. I taught courses at Bark Lake for 9 years, until it was shut down in 1995 in provincial cutbacks.

The Bark Lake and Blue Skies choirs were tremendous fun and encouraged me to

try offering a full weekend program of just singing, without any other festival or camp distractions. Greg Shantz, a close Bark friend, helped me set up the first Community in Song Weekend, which ran at Bark Lake in May of 1995. This was a success and I have continued to run weekend singing workshops at Camp Hyanto in Lyndhurst, Ontario, since that time. It was at the last Hyanto event, in September of 2001, that a group of Community in Song participants and I sat down to discuss a permanent community choir for Kingston. (see appendix D, Community in Song brochure)

Being a full time high school music teacher has been an asset in leading these mixed ability, adult, impromptu choirs. During the year, I get to try out a lot of repertoire with my students. It is usually the right mix of styles and difficulties. As I teach my school students, I learn the arrangements well myself, and develop strategies for negotiating the trickier bits. When I take my high school students to festivals or on tour, I get to hear other groups and see other directors in rehearsal and performance. Often I get to observe expert adjudicators comment on performances and work with my students. This resource provides me with a steady inflow of repertoire ideas, warm up exercises and teaching strategies.

The Blue Skies Choir idea has caught on and in the past five years, artistic directors have engaged me to start festival choirs at the Ottawa Folk Festival, The Haliburton School of the Arts and Owen Sound's Summerfolk Festival.

Looking back on this history of my development as a teacher and musician I can emphasize a few factors that I believe are critical, and that add to the current success of my work with Open Voices.

- A grass roots, inclusive, cooperative focus. These are the values of

Blue Skies and Bark Lake.

- Constant exposure to quality mentors, and continual opportunity for professional development. James Jordan discusses the value of positive mentor ship thoroughly in his book *The Musician's Soul* (2000).
  In my case, I believe there are many examples of what Jordan refers to as good or positive memises. I want to 'be like' the wonderful directors I have seen in action, because I want what they have in their choruses - beauty, love, creativity and joy.
- A willingness to take risks. This is the main lesson of Bark Lake, and it is relearned and explored every school year.
- An eclectic, folk based music background with a balance of music reading and learning-by-ear experiences.
- An interest in contemporary Canadian acoustic music

Preparing by Listening to Participants and other Choir Directors—The Research Design

This project began as a thesis, at one point titled "Facilitating Positive Transformation Through Community Singing." Through that thesis research, I collected a great deal of data. Listening to choir members and other choir directors influenced me directly as I formed Open Voices. I outline the research design here by including significant sections from the research proposal. Extended quotations from the 2000 research proposal I treat as other quoted text in this chapter.[1] They are in times font and inset. This represents my voice at that time of writing.

[1] The ethical permission granted by Queen's University to conduct this research was based on an executive proposal, put through very quickly in early September, 1999. The Community in Song event was planned and fully registered, so I moved right ahead to collect the data. The full proposal went to colloquium in January of 2000.

The following excerpts from the thesis proposal illustrate the frame of mind I was in at the time of writing. Although on a high of success and productivity in facilitating these singing events, I was experiencing some considerable self-doubt, and a need to slow down and listen. In 1999 I was in a state of anger, burn out and exhaustion, largely related to my high school teaching work. My experience in this choir work seemed to me to be what I ought to focus on and develop into my thesis during my graduate work. It was certainly the most unique and productive teaching experience I brought into graduate studies in 1999.

I felt that the strong accolades of Community in Song participants might add to arguments in support of music or arts experience and education. My participants might be able to contribute to our understanding of why singing heals, empowers, creates joy, energizes and focuses.

I had accumulated such a prodigious volume of experience leading these impromptu choir events that I felt I might have something to contribute to our knowledge of what makes them work, and how to approach running one successfully.

Beginning with the fall Community in Song of 1999, I would survey participants and later select some for longer interviews. I would seek out and interview some other choir leaders to see if they were having similar experiences to mine. Perhaps I could learn from them and, by this, make my work easier, more successful or more rewarding for me.

The proposal began with two juxtaposed texts: a very beautiful poem Selina Bishop sent to me unsolicited after the September 1999 Community in Song

event, and a critical and doubting journal entry I made after that same event

That We May All Be One

Visionary becomes vision becomes reality becomes
Paper becomes symbol becomes phrase becomes song becomes
Man becomes woman becomes child becomes
Voice becomes note becomes chord becomes music
Becomes

A whaler's lonely cry across a frozen sea
A vivid image of want in the presence of such plenty
An ancient tongue with a familiar dream
Angels dancing harmonically above us
Sing and listen, hush

Tree becomes timber becomes pillar becomes tribal drum
A brotherhood of workers march closer to death
Again
Hewers of wood and callers of hollers
Pillar supports cabin as rhythm supports music

"That we may all be one"
It says above the cabin door
Come we hear, in community of song
Singer, player, angel, whaler
Full one, empty one, lumberjack, beat
And for a blessed while
We are

Selina Bishop, 1999 (used with permission)

Journal Entry, November 16, 1999 -My Feelings about Community in Song
Community in Song weekends have never been satisfactory to me as a musician or artist. Two weeks ago was no different. There is not sufficient time to learn the music properly and no audience to hear it. There is no opportunity to experience the performance thrill and the thrill of full competence. The chorus is too extreme a mix of novices and experienced singers and there are always a few chorus members who are a bit odd or out of place, and they draw my attention. The recordings are always inadequate in both recording and performance quality.

I am usually exhausted, having spent the previous weeks worrying, arranging and copying music, making phone calls and making arrangements for the weekend. Sometimes I am also handling registration. I should be practicing the music ahead of time but, I never have the time.

During the event I am musically insecure. My ears and voice are fatigued and I get tired of the constant activity. So I find myself putting on the energy and smile and pouring out ideas and strategies to keep things moving along for the participants. If an event flopped, I feel I would be devastated.

I don't really get to know anyone because I'm too busy. I skirt around looking for

signs of approval while I prepare the next rehearsal or try to recover from the last one. I have the feeling of just barely hanging on to the edge of control and success.

I desperately need to be loved and respected, and I find that these needs preoccupy me and impinge on my ability to work. I hate myself for needing approval. I am jealous of other conductors who have great groups. I think I'm a lousy singer and only adequate musician. I worry about my wife and kids, who are being ignored while I focus on the singing event.

I have had some satisfaction from being the person who put the idea into action.
I do thoroughly enjoy working with wonderful musicians, Jack, Nicola, Tom, Ian, Margo.
I do love jamming.
I do enjoy the camp lifestyle.
I do enjoy the coffee houses, and the dance, and the closing, and singing in the church.
I like discovering and introducing repertoire.
I like some of the people a lot.
Very occasionally, there is a wonderful sound. (from my journal, October, 1999)

The next set of excerpts from the proposal outlines the type of information I was listening for, and how I planned to approach the research. It was this proposal that guided the participant and facilitator interviews, that in turn led to founding Open Voices.

Participants in these community oriented choral music activities often comment in formal program evaluations or casual retrospect that their participation has energized, healed, focused or liberated them in some way. (Graf et al, 1998) Some participants I work with are ten-year veterans for whom my choral music activities have become a significant aspect of their lives. There are frequent comments from Blue Skies Choir and Community in Song participants that our singing activity has had positive health, spiritual, family or workplace benefits that lasted for months or even years beyond the singing event itself. Although there is a predominantly positive response from people who participate in my singing activities, I have a need to examine more carefully what is really happening.

In contrast, my own response to these events is very mixed and full of self doubt, professional insecurity, tension and dissatisfaction. Although I often experience a euphoric high when things are going well, the novelty is wearing off. I am less willing to compromise my own health, artistic aspirations or family life for the sake of continuing to do these events. I perceive a high level of personal risk and cost.

<u>What This Research is About</u>

This proposed research is about what choral music participation does for people, and what it does for and to its facilitators. It is about listening to singers and conductors tell their stories. It is about taking time to explore the process I have

gone through in my journey of becoming a facilitator of community singing. I need to thoughtfully observe the practice of community singing to determine what elements in this practice might lead to the most positive experience for participants and myself while also yielding the best possible aesthetic result. I need to network with other facilitators to share ideas and techniques and to share vision and response. I need to study the work of mentor conductors and leaders.

I am at the point that I must resolve a number of issues connected with my own music leadership work, or learn to live with the tension.

The Dark Side

_____If music has the power to heal, energize, focus and free people, then music facilitators must find themselves in a position of awesome responsibility, expectation and potential risk. Jordan (1999) discusses in great detail the envy of beauty, the loneliness, the feelings of vulnerability and inadequacy that he has discovered in virtually all conductors he has worked with. These characteristics resonate strongly with the feelings I express in my above journal entry. Jordan emphasizes the need for conductors to reflect on their goals, motivation and spiritual centre. Jordan cautions against getting into the rut of doing, of constantly churning out performances and rehearsals and of performing the endless administrative, political and organizational tasks that apparently enable the music to happen, arguing that these mundane 'doings' will soon supersede the music. I identify strongly with this rhetoric. A key element in this research is my taking time to reflect on my own journey, and to listen to others speak of theirs.

The Outdoor and Experiential Education Connection

Much of my adult education teaching experience is in outdoor, experiential education, not music. As a leadership instructor at Bark Lake I took many teachers, doctors, administrators and other professionals through adventure experiences designed to move them outside their risk thresholds and into a personal growth zone. Typically, these were hiking, climbing, canoeing or ropes course activities. As I started to include choral music in my programing at Bark, I came to realize that participants were just as nervous about singing as they were about other more physically risky activity and that the problem solving and cooperation required for success in choral music were no different that that required to successfully scale a wall or ford a stream.

Shoel, Pretty and Radcliffe (1988) describe a model for personal growth and improvement of self concept in their book *Islands of Healing*. This model, which they call 'the adventure wave', outlines a progression through trust building, goal setting, challenge/stress, problem solving, peak experience, humour/fun and reflection. Their model has become the standard in Project Adventure and Outward Bound programming. It is directly parallel to the adventure wave that a group of singers progresses through in the effort to learn and perform choral music. (Dolloff, 1999). I have never before taken the time to reflect on or discuss our singing experiences with my participants.

One should note here that the research methods I proposed in the next section were only partially realized. I did not convene a summit meeting of facilitators, nor

have I edited or thoroughly analyzed the video and audio record of Community in Song, 1999. Again, from the 2000 research proposal.

Methods

It is my intention to analyze this singing phenomenon in five ways: (1) by collecting survey data from participants at the end of the Community in Song event held in Lyndhurst, Ontario this past October 1,2 and 3, (2) by using this survey information to select about ten participants for longer interviews to be held in February of 2000, (3) by interviewing other choral music facilitators, (4) by keeping my own journal of observations, questions and learnings as I engage in this research, and (5) by hosting a summit meeting of facilitators and participants in April, 2000. The event of October 1, 2 and 3 was audio and video taped.

Survey

There were 68 adult participants (28 men and 40 women) at Community in Song this October, ranging in age from 19 to 64 years of age, of which about 60% have attended previous Community in Song weekends. Their choral singing experience ranges from novice to professional on a fairly balanced continuum. Registrants were aware that I was engaging in the research. (see appendix E, Community in Song information letter) The weekend ran Friday evening to Sunday afternoon, and I surveyed participants just prior to the closing ceremonies on Sunday. (see appendix F, Community in Song participant survey) Participants signed a consent form on Friday if they wished to participate in the research. (see appendix G, Participant agreement to participate in research) They were provided with an information sheet about the research. (see appendix H, Letter about research) Answers to the survey offered a summative evaluation of the weekend and yielded general data about the success of the event, who the participants were, what worked and what didn't and what individual responses to the experience were.The survey asked directly for people who wished to participate in the research and felt that they had something to say and asked participants who had also attended previous events if they experienced beneficial effects on their professional or personal lives. I am looking for participants who demonstrate a commitment to this research through careful and insightful response to the survey questions. I will use the survey data to select about 10 participants for follow-up interviews, looking for a variety of age, gender and experience level participants.

Interviews With Other Choral Music Facilitators

The research and method described above focuses on adult choral music activity of which I am the facilitator and often a participant. I believe that the participants I end up interviewing will represent committed and thoughtful respondents, and I am sure that they will have had experiences at Community in Song on which we can reflect. However, I am aware that I, and we, are acting somewhat in isolation. An important element in this research is my observation of other facilitators at work, and my interviews with them about their strategies, successes and priorities. I am also interested in other facilitators descriptions of the personal journeys they are on. I would like to invite them to reflect on their goals, motivations and spiritual centre, as Dr. Jordan (2002) has suggested.

I have approached other choir leaders about the possibility of interviewing them in relation to this research (see appendix IV, Choral Music Facilitator's consent form). These are all highly successful choral directors in different genres of

music with very different styles of leadership.By comparing the Community in Song experience to the experience of other choral singing communities I hope to broaden my understanding of what makes choral music work and what keeps choral conductors happy and productive.

Interpreting Results

As an active participant and leader as well as a researcher, my contribution to the story, although subjective on some issues, is authoritative and experienced. It is important to recognize that I have two distinctive roles: one as a researcher and one as a participant and facilitator. When I am interviewing, reading, observing other groups and conductors, journaling, writing, and examining data, I am in the role of researcher. When I am conducting or organizing singing events I am in the role of participant/facilitator. My intense involvement in the field places me in a good position to have meaningful dialogue with interview candidates.

I hope that this research may provide tools for advocating the use of community singing as an agent for individual empowerment, personal growth, healing and other forms of positive transformation. My study will highlight facilitation strategies that are successful for producing positive, transformative results and should be useful for teachers, choir directors and experiential educators. My thesis will tell the story of my own journey as a developing choral music facilitator, in light of what I have learned through this research process.

Through the academic year of 1999/2000, I interviewed eight participants and six choir facilitators. Transcribing the interviews was an arduous process. I completed that work and began to analyze and interpret this information in July of 2001. It was in September of 2001 that I set Open Voices in motion. This was no coincidence. On January 9, 2002, two hundred and twenty people showed up for the inaugural rehearsal of Open Voices. There was excitement in the air. People were nervous, chatty and happy. The size of the crowd was much larger than we had been planning for through the fall of 2001. What had drawn these people to Open Voices?

Chapter 2

What Would Draw People to a Community Choir?

A Survey of Literature

I believe that three factors worked to attract this large group of people to try out Open Voices on January 9. Although we did not survey our choir members as to why they came, or what their personal goals for joining were, the large turn out may have been a response to our promotion, the newspaper article, or the reputation of the Blue Skies Choir and Community in Song events. The participants would likely express their reasons for coming in a variety of ways and it would be interesting to ask them. Unfortunately this is not within the scope of this particular project.

I suggest three overarching conditions that predisposed Kingstonians to try out Open Voices when we offered it. In this chapter I will identify and discuss these three factors, and discuss what other writers and researchers have said about them.

One factor is a current trend that sees people moving away from television, the Internet, and consumer/entertainment activity, toward actual social and human contact with others, in authentic situations.

People came for community.

A second factor is that we offered an opportunity for people to be creative and experience their musicality. They may have come to experience their own sense of artistry. In a culture where passive consumption of consumer targeted entertainment and goods tends to be the pervasive lifestyle, there may be a backlash of people who want to, or need to exercise their intuitive, creative and non-verbal selves.

People came to express creativity.

Thirdly, I believe that our offering of a musical experience, especially a choral or song based musical experience, was appealing. There may be unique qualities in music to heal, empower, calm, enliven, heighten awareness and intelligence, create human

bonding and possibly even touch the spirit. Certainly these kinds of claims have been made for music. Perhaps people came to Open Voices in the belief that there was potential to experience some, or all of the purported beneficial qualities of music.

People came for the music, and for its special qualities.

Community

Community has been defined as “A number of people having common ties or interests and living in the same place, and subject to the same laws... ownership together; sharing together.” (Thorndike & Barnhart, 1972, p.196) Sarason (1992) discusses the common values and commitment to other group members that are the preliminary conditions for initiating a community. Peck (1987) quotes John Winthrop, the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630, as he sets a framework for his discussion of community in *The Different Drum*. “We must delight in each other, make each other’s conditions our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labour and suffer together, always having before our eyes our community as members of the same body.” (Winthrop, in Peck, 1987. p.36)

These definitions emphasize joy, connection, intention, commonality of values and purpose, effort and compassion among people. Each Wednesday night, as our members began to arrive for rehearsal, and as we practiced and experienced singing together, Winthrop’s qualities seemed to me to be very much in evidence. We were rejoicing, laughing, sometimes crying. When a song started to really work well, there was a cheer when it was done. We were definitely labouring together to make the music, and in a larger sense, this contributed to making a community and developing a sense of belonging. The high volunteerism, near perfect attendance,

and excellent rehearsal focus were all, I believe, and expression of each member's commitment to making the choir healthy and secure. Later, when I examine singing as a bodily experience, Winthrop's reference to our common body resonates strongly, even though he is referring to Christ. We were creating a common body of sound, using our own embodied instruments. Choral musicians seem to be willing to sacrifice individual vocal uniqueness and expression to the creation of a unified group sound.

In his keynote address to Ontario music educators assembled in Waterloo, Ontario on November 9, 2001, Dr. James Jordan, a renowned American choral conductor and music educator, discussed responses to the World Trade Center bombing of September 11, 2001. Dr. Jordan's daughter attends a public school in Princeton, New Jersey. Five of her classmates' parents were killed that day, and did not come home on the night of September 11. The audience of Ontario music teachers was struck by the direct impact this event had had on Dr. Jordan and listened intently.

> In some ways, this tragic event might symbolize the closing of a post modern era of multiplicity and individualism. People need to come together in community, to share common experience on a human level. We see this in the huge return to church, return to social action, and return to group social activity following 9-11. We are experiencing today a high interest and enrollment in community choirs, bands, theater projects, unseen for the past twenty or thirty years. Our culture will heal itself from this tragic event by telling its stories and sharing its lives, in human, community contexts. (Jordan, 2001)

Of course it is hopeful for music teachers to hear of a possible surge of interest in their work, but for me, and what I am trying to say here, the more important result of hearing Dr. Jordan's words was the creation of community that happened at that moment in time, in Waterloo, Ontario. We grieved together and I sensed a common commitment to participate in the healing process. Dr. Jordan's presence with us was possibly the closest contact with the World Trade Center tragedy some of us had. The large turnout for Open Voices on January 9 may have been partly a response

to the 9-11 phenomenon, as well as a more general response expressing people's need to return to community.

Robert Putnam's (2000) expansive book *Bowling Alone* is a treatise on political and social involvement in America in this century. He provides statistical evidence and analysis of declining involvement and membership in civic organizations, political and church organizations, service clubs and unions. Putnam (2002) claims that this trend is eroding social capital, which he defines as "Connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them." (p.19) Social capital is as important as physical capital—the means for production, and human capital— the skills and education for production, if a society is to maintain a healthy democracy and quality of life across its socioeconomic spectrum.

Putnam's idea is that both individual well being *and* healthy democracy are more possible in a culture that has a high social capital quotient.

> Researchers in such fields as education, urban poverty, unemployment, the control of crime and drug abuse, and even health have discovered that successful outcomes are more likely in civically engaged communities. Social interaction through membership in clubs, leagues, unions, associations, fraternal organizations and churches facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. (Putnam, 1995, p.66)

Putnam (2000) suggests four principal reasons for the decline in social capital we are currently experiencing: (1) the movement of women into the labour force, (2) increased job and residential mobility, (3) the technological transformation of leisure, and (4) the absence for two generations of a culture-wide bonding event like World War II. These are listed as primary causes for individual disengagement from social or civic involvement.

I believe that many of the people who have expressed interest in Open Voices have done so because of a perceived need for community. Putnam pointed out that disengagement from civic and social activity was most prevalent the age demographic we have come to know as “baby boomers” and “genXers.” These also appear to be the age groups that have shown the most interest in Open Voices.

Moon Joyce (1996) asks us to “Turn off the Radio and Sing for Our Lives.” (p.1) Perhaps Open Voices members are people who have recognized the need to do just this. I will explore this theme and review what some participants said about community in later chapters.

I feel that people are joining groups like Open Voices for three reasons: community, creativity and music. Other writers recognize the intertwined and interdependent nature of these elements. Wayne Bowman describes music as both an aural/physical phenomenon and a social one.

> Making or taking music together creates and sustains a sense of unconditional collective presence in the world, a process in which the insularity of self hood is transformed into a domain of shared concern. Musical experience invokes and nurtures oneness, a shared world, unencumbered by contingencies of time and space. This experience is a special kind of experiential common ground which, owing to the special character of sound, brings and binds together as few other experiences do. Singing voices merge into a sonorous unity that is profoundly centering, both individually and collectively. Collaborating in its creation and enactment forges collectivity into community. (Bowman, cited in Dolloff, 1993a, p.55)

It has been difficult for me to divide the popular interest in Open Voices into constituent parts. When writing about the healing or community building potential of

music, many authors tend to speak "holistically."[2] In the first part of this chapter, I have tried to isolate the social and community aspect of our members' needs. Members expressed their commitment to the community ideal through high volunteerism, excellent attendance, general helpfulness both in little things as well as substantial aspects of running the choir, and through financial and other types of practical and material support. It may be that they are there for the music, or the physical singing itself, and that they therefore desire to support the community so that the singing can continue. On the other

hand, they may be there primarily for community, with the music serving as a vehicle. In my opinion, both needs are interconnected and interdependent. We can't have a good choir without a good community, and one route to a good community is to sing together.

Creativity

> Social systems that disdain or discount beauty, form, mystery, meaning, value and quality—whether in art or in life—are depriving their members of human requirements as fundamental as those for food, warmth and shelter. (Dissanayake, 1995, p. 184)

In the preface to her book *Homo Aestheticus*, Dissanayake (1995) constructs an argument that what she describes as a "species-centered" approach will support the statement above more effectively that a cultural-centred or individual-centred approach. From an anthropological and ethological perspective she develops her theory that art making, "making special" as she calls it, is an evolved human trait, observable in all cultures.

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[2] The word "holistic" as it is being applied to healing arts, wellness arts and creative arts experience suggests a stepping back, to take in the whole picture, and an openness about choices to be made when viewing that picture. That is the meaning I intend here.

Dissanayake (1995) explains three measures that anthropologists would use to test a species trait and prove that it had evolved through natural selection. First, it feels good. “What we choose—what makes us feel good—is generally what has survival value for human evolution.” (p. 31) Second, it takes some time investment. The animal being studied for naturally selected traits exhibits the behavior for a significant percentage of the time. Finally, it is universal. All animals throughout the species exhibit the behavior. Under these criteria, she argues that doing art is an evolved, species-wide trait.

I like the emphasis Dissanayake puts on feeling good. It seems to me that the sensation of pleasure exists to guide the species and each individual toward survival enhancing behaviors. Choir participants frequently discuss the pleasure they get from singing. I will take a look at some of this data in Chapter 4.

> All over the world people enjoy making music, singing, dancing, reciting or listening to poetry recited, telling or hearing tales told, performing or watching performances, making beautiful things and so forth. These activities unite participants with one another, performers with their audience, the community as a whole. They facilitate a mood in which attention is focused, aroused, moved, manipulated, satisfied. Whether ritual or entertainment, the arts enjoin people to participate, join the flow, get in the groove, feel good. (Dissanayake, 1995, p. 24)

The possibility is that every human being is an artist, not through education or culture or family, but because it is a species trait, a integral part of our human animal make up. Ian Cross (2002) supports this point when he demonstrates playing a bone flute, dating from 36,000 years ago and found in Germany. Cross argues that the human mind itself may have evolved its associative and flexible characteristics through music.

> About as early as we find humans, we find musical humans. Which might suggest that being human and being musical relate pretty closely, one to another. Now that's pretty odd, because a lot of people have suggested that music is something completely useless. If it's completely useless, why on earth do we do it? And why on earth 36,000 years ago in a pretty hostile environment under immense pressures to

survive, why did we find time for music? (Cross, cited in Montagnia, 2002)

Dissanayake (1995) points out that recent sociological and cultural studies are based on comparatively recent recorded history. We study a time period of perhaps the last 50,000 to 75,000 years of human development because this is as far back as an anthropological record exists. As an animal, developing through the process of natural selection, the time span we should consider is really three to four million years, most of it pre-literate, where humans lived in small groups of around 25, in the Africa savanna. An urge or desire to return to what some would consider our natural or native state might explain some recent interest in Wican practices, magic, Gaia and earth/native-based practices and experiences. Some of what the Open Voices offers—singing, chanting, ritual, and a focus on groundedness— may appeal to each member's desire to return to a more natural, even prehistoric state. Examining primitive or natural cultures may be our attempt to see ourselves in nature, or as natural animals.

When looking at basic human/animal survival traits, anthropologists have tended to focus on negative characteristics, like aggression, homicide, war and deceit. Dissanayake (1995) argues that society should pay some attention to bonding, cooperation and harmony enhancing behaviors. Creative and artistic behaviors should take importance as survival traits as well.

The ability of the human animal to distinguish difference, or extraordinary circumstance evolved into a habit of 'making special'. Dissanayake has coined 'making special' as a 'pan-arts' word. People made things special by making them non-ordinary, making them compelling, formalizing them, stylizing them through the use of symbols and reinforcing the object's or the performance's values by framing them in social

occasions. The things made special could include sculptures, visual art pieces, every day tools and objects, songs and chants, poetry, recitation, stories - the whole gamut of what we now call the 'arts.' Natural selection yielded the human species that naturally made things special, through collecting, adorning, and bracketing in time. Pattern, repetition, continuity, clarity, dexterity, elaboration, variation , contrast, balance and proportion are techniques employed in all arts disciplines, and have sensory appeal across the arts.

Dissanayake's list of means by which evolving humans made things special is very resonant with music-making. Rhythm and beat are based on pattern and repetition. Humans collect melodies and offer them in social occasions. The audience assesses and applauds the dexterity of the player. Musicians develop themes through a balancing of contrast and consonance, accent and resolution.

Much debate about the value of the arts, and interpretation of art objects and performances in this century has focused on works of art that were not clearly representational, that is, not realistic reflections of natural or human form. Nay sayers would argue that only representational art has value, and certainly a theory of a human/artist evolving in prehistoric times would tend to suggest that these early artists would not engage in theoretical or rhetorical artistic challenges like the painting *Voice of Fire,* or Picasso's *The Guitarist*. Dissanayake (1995) argues that the art making activities are gratifying in themselves, even though representational meaning may be secondary or even absent. Many artistic actions are repetitive and rhythmical. I think of practicing scales or whittling a stick in this context. This sort of repetition does not represent anything but it is a shaping and manipulating, and a temporal experience. It is skill practice an artist will usually undertake in order to render more effectively the more meaningful creations he/she wants to communicate through or share. At choir rehearsal warm up activities, vocal games and breathing

appear to satisfy some aesthetic needs, although they are not works of art in themselves.

Many vocal chanting or circle drumming activities are also non-representational. Robert Gass (1991), an important chant music facilitator, would argue that the non-verbal, text less nature of much chant music is exactly what gives it appeal and healing power. Participants are free from text or symbolic meaning and free to construct their own meaning from the experience.

Dissanayake (1995) outlines three key problems for understanding where art comes from and why. This part of her argument is important in that it highlights the wide variation in what different cultures around the world define or accept as art or art making: (1) individuals and cultures vary concerning what they value and revere, (2) there is an inherent tension between the natural world and the cultural or human made world, and (3) humans, more than any other species, are attracted to the unusual and extraordinary, so that we go out of our way not just to experience the unusual, but even to fabricate it deliberately. Natural human attraction to the unusual and extra-ordinary may also account for some of the interest in Open Voices.

Dissanayake articulates the theory that display, attention getting, novelty-seeking and communication might be early aesthetic tendencies. These behaviours are displayed by many animals in addition to the human species, but natural selection may have rewarded development of these characteristics more for humans as intellect, memory and prediction improved. Of course a tantalizing possibility is that the cognitive intelligence of the human species developed as a *result* of the artistic activity. There is nothing in the theory of natural selection that would discount this possibility.

Which came first, the artist, or the intellectual? We may never know and it is not critical to this study. What is critical is to respect that these faculties of creativity, art-making and intelligence are interrelated and interdependent, and that they are natural to the human condition.

Dissanayake speaks more about the relationship between different types of art-making activities. “Separating poetry, song and dance into individual arts, as I do in this chapter, is probably misleading: reconstructing the phylogenetic origins of music (and language) should probably take into account the close association and frequent inseparability of tone, rhythm and gesture. In human evolution, song and bodily movement of some kind were inseparable.” (1995, p.117) Perhaps this is one reason Open Voices has moved to a larger rehearsal space. We need space to incorporate dance and movement activity into our music experience.

In many ways, Dissanayake’s (1995) work is a very good criticism of post- modern thought. She urges us to examine her pre-modern species-centric view that honours the right brain, and rejects super literate, word and text-based thought and analysis as being the *only* way of viewing our current social, personal and human condition.

The modernist movement attempted to split things up in order to understand them. The separation of body/mind /spirit is a paradigm which guided the understanding of European old masters art, classical dance and music and, in the past century, has led to artistic movements that emphasized specific building blocks with each artistic form. Cubism breaks image into shape and volume, Impressionism breaks image into light and colour, and in music, twelve tone serialism removes tonal and rhythmic centre, placing equal value on each of the twelve semitones. Serialism in music is a

sort of chromatic democracy—fair to each note, no autocratic leader. More recently there has been a rejection of Eurocentric emphasis in examining high art, symphonic and classical music, classical and modern dance, in favour of a world view that celebrates non-Western cultures and their art forms. This view celebrates the folk art and craft people the world over produce and appreciate. Meanwhile, post-modern philosophers have reduced not only art, but all reality, to a discussion of signs and symbols, referents, and texts. In this current confusion of overlapping modernist, and post-modern views, some people's response may be to return to a simpler, participation-based and intimate relationship with their own creative and art making nature.

> Acquaintance with the arts in other times and places reminds us that they have been overwhelmingly integral to people's lives. Far from being peripheral, dysfunctional, trivial, or illusory, the arts have been part of human beings' most serious and vital concerns. If they are not so today, we should perhaps look for the reason not simply in some flawed metaphysical status of the concept of art, but rather in the way we live. (Dissanayake, 1992, p. 185)

Both Dissanayake and James Jordan point to a post-post modern era, as yet unnamed. In this new era, perhaps spurred by the events of 9-11, and after post-modernism's ambiguity has exhausted or frustrated a critical mass of our cultures' human members, we see individuals needing to meet in community to share creative, aesthetic and narrative experience. If it truly is human nature to create and appreciate beauty, there must be a need for it in a culture that has focused more and more on passive, individual consumerism.

> In modern society, where working to earn money in order to consume perpetually novel goods and experiences has become for many the purpose of life, these more ancient satisfactions (the arts) are perhaps less evident than in pre-modern or traditional societies. However, few would claim that even in our own lives they could be easily or lightly altogether forsworn. (Dissanayake, 1995. p.32)

Dissanayake (1995) poses an interesting observation. Based on her thesis, and the general theory of natural selection, the human animal has evolved as an artist, through natural selection in which adversary, hardship and suffering were daily realities which

removed weak links, not possessing these characteristics, from the genetic pool. Whether people are as well equipped to thrive under conditions of unprecedented leisure, comfort and plenty is a question that our present circumstances are testing. Dissanayake does not feel that the answer to this question is promising. I would suggest that participation in creative arts activities is a necessary response to living in contemporary society which, as we are currently experiencing it, does not allow us to utilize our genetically evolved attributes

Choral Music

> Our age of mechanization leads down a road ending with man himself as a machine; only the spirit of singing can save us from this fate.
>
> Zoltan Kodaly (1966)

In this section, I discuss some specific observations about music, and more specifically choral music. People may have been attracted to Open Voices because they felt a need to honour what Ken Agan, of the Nordhoff Robbins Center for Music Therapy at New York University calls the “inner music child.”

> We reach for this inner core, this inner music child that is the sort of healthy person that exists inside of each disabled person. And we feed that music child, and help that music child become the center of a new personality, a new self.” (Agan, cited in Montagnia, 2002)

My search for meaning, and information about the beneficial effects of singing began with my own experience as a facilitator, then as a researcher, listening to participants and other choir directors. There is a large and varied body of writing on this subject.

Friends of mine participate in drumming circles in Perth, Ontario and Picton, Ontario. Each Wednesday night, I ride my bicycle past an impromptu drum and chant circle that gathers at Richardson Beach. I am aware of several song circles that meet

weekly in Kingston. I believe that participation in this type of easy access, low tech musical activity is increasing rapidly. “Mozart Effect” (Campbell, 1997) recorded materials fill the new age CD racks and there are a number of music books on the personal growth shelves in bookstores. This may be evidence of a current interest in music’s potential for healing, increasing intelligence, empowering, and creating community. Demonstrating the beneficial effects of music in some sort of quantitative way has been a quest for music educators and advocates looking to enhance their pleas for funding and recognition. Some studies, like those of Dr. Francis Rausher (1993), have contributed scholarly data to the conversation while spiritual/emotional materials like Dr. James Jordan’s (1999) *The Musician’s Soul,* or Robert Gass (1999) *Chanting —Discovering Spirit in Sound* contribute eloquently to the poetic side of this discussion.

Willingham and Bartel (2001) discuss the Harvard University Project Zero meta-analysis of research into the academic outcomes of arts education. This study shows that, so far, there is little conclusive evidence that “music makes us smarter”. These studies tend to define “smarter” in terms of numeracy and literacy, looking for a causal relationship. This poses a dilemma: “If the arts find a place in our schools on the hope of improved academic performance, the arts will lose status if academic improvement does not occur, or if research actually finds the arts ineffective in developing numeracy and literacy.” (Willingham and Bartel, 2001)

Willingham and Bartel (2001) urge us to take a wider view, considering art on its own terms, rather that gauging its value only by its ability to enhance performance in other non-art domains. If we consider the corollary requirement — that literacy and numeracy education must demonstrate improvement in creativity, imagination and aesthetic sensibility, or be relegated to the status often awarded music, as

unimportant or a frill—we can see the problems with attempts to use these measures to support the value of arts education and experience. Using one domain's criteria for assessment of another domain is not an effective strategy. Gardiner's (1983) seven intelligences have been widely accepted as forming part of each person's intellect. Dissanayake (1992) has suggested that our artistic nature is genetically programmed and inevitable since the emergence of human self-awareness. If this is the case, researching and documenting spin off effects of music or arts education into other fields is a moot activity.

Eisner (1998) and Winner and Hetland (2002) have analyzed a wide array of research that attempts to prove that music experience increases literacy, numeracy and special awareness, and found much of it to be inconclusive, emerging or faulty. Eisner states "Problems begin to emerge when the values for which the arts are prized in schools are located primarily in someone's version of the basics, when those basics have little or nothing to do with the arts." (Eisner, 1998, p.12)

Originally I thought that my study of community singing might contribute to our understanding of what people might be getting out of their experience, and perhaps why. The research model I adopted, primarily of listening to participants discuss their experience, while giving me valuable information and informing my actions as I developed Open Voices, would not add conclusive data to this discussion.

This debate is far reaching and complicated and is not within the scope of this project. Instead I prefer to focus on the attributes of music that I believe drew people to our initial January 9 rehearsal. As stated in the Open Voices vision statement, we offer nurturing, empowerment and healing, joy, peace, renewed energy and an experience of beauty. The poster says "Recharge." (see appendix F, Open

Voices promotion hand out) We now need to look at the *discharged* state that the Kingstonians attending on January 9 may have perceived themselves to be in. We also need to focus on the good feeling, joy and fun that participants have reported experiencing.

Here are some of the words of Canadian poet Michael Hurley, written in response to the Open Voices concert of June 14, 2002.

> ....Glorious Taken-By-Surprise Tickled Pink - Self Delighting Us!
> here and now
> opening
> all voices present
> & accounted for
> voices hearts spirit treasure-chests
> wide wide open
> & giving the gift outright together.
>
> TESTIFY!
> Put yer hands on the choir K-Town
> & H-E-A-L!
> What a wonderful world!
> Whudda Rush!
>
> By this point in 'The Program'
> nobody has to reread the Vision Statement
> in the concert notes
> You *is* the VISION, honey!
> It don't get much cleared, dearer & nearer than this!
> The bird is on the wing.
> Set the controls for the Heart of the Sun!
> Warp factor whudever, Mr. Rush.
> Take me home
> Bring Back the Love
> Let's Get Together
>
> Micheal Hurley, 2002

Hurley's words articulate many of the themes that other writers would elaborate: healing, an adrenaline rush, getting together with people, opening, being in the "here and now", going home, and love.

The *Ideas* program broadcast on CBC Radio on June 6, 2002, and hosted by

Hella Montagnia (2002), is called *Body, Mind and Music.*[3] It gives an overview of the theory behind the healing powers of music for both able-bodied and disabled persons from the perspective of several eloquent music therapists and musicologists. As I transcribed this program, I felt it offered some compelling information and placed much of the discussion about the possible positive effects of singing under the rubric of 'healing.' I began to view all humans, and therefore all Open Voices choir members, on some sort of continuum of health and wellness. Montagnia's guests discuss the power of music to move any person in a positive, healing direction along a continuum, regardless of their condition, toward wholeness and wellness.

A number of Open Voices participants are very high functioning, high profile, successful persons, yet I suspect that they are still drawn to an experience that they feel may move them along their own personal healing journey. There are also several physically disabled or ill choir members. One individual identified herself as being terminally ill, and not likely to make it to our scheduled performance. She was concerned that she might use up the spot of a person on the waiting list that would make it to the concert! I have heard from each of these people that their experience in Open Voices had definite and tangible health and wellness benefits for them.

Montagnia (2002) begins by framing her documentary in an anthropological context, as Ellen Dissanayake does. Sound clips juxtapose a lone flute melody with a cacophonous electronic cello solo.

> This hybrid instrument is called a hyper-cello. And the hyper-cello lineage begins with that bone pipe. What connects them is not simply that both are musical

[3] Many of Montagnia's guests on this Ideas broadcast will be quoted, from my transcript of the radio program.

> instruments. The mind that created that bone pipe is the same mind that designed the hyper- cello with its complex inputs and outputs: the flexible, associative, human mind. Dr. Ian Cross, of the University of Cambridge thinks those qualities of mind stem from music. Cross suggested right from that very first prehistoric time, that music has shaped humans into community. It has given us a flexibility of mind which defines our species." (Montagnia, 2002)

Cross (cited in Montagnia, 2002) argues that the importance of music is that it developed emerging human social, imaginative and interaction skills without posing any risk. Musical activity enabled humans to develop cooperative skills in a non-threatening situation. Cross also points out that in music, each person can be experiencing their own interpretation or perception of the event, yet this does not compromise the integrity of the activity.

> So music provides a sort of play space for rehearsing inter-individual interaction and for acquiring social skills, and it does seem from the archeological record that one thing that homo sapiens has, as an advance on our predecessors, was a greater capacity for social interaction. (Cross, in Montagnia, 2002)

Ian Cross is committed to the inherent musical nature of humans, and that through music, we learn social and personal skills that are imperative for physical, social and emotional/spiritual survival. This argument supports Dissanayake's theories. The emphasis he puts on interpersonal skill development achieved through music is good justification for keeping it in school music programs as well as promoting it as a vehicle for increasing social capital.

Noel Bird, a music therapist working with marginalized homeless youth in Vancouver, reflects on this social skill enhancing quality of music as well.

> Some of the other goals are the interpersonal skills, the cooperation, working together on something, working with conflict, learning to negotiate, compromising... all of those basic social skills. Listening. The arts give beauty and something spiritual to our lives, so that in their day or in their week they have something to look forward to, where they know they are going to be doing something really creative and positive, and that they are going to be on a natural high. Giving them some time

> on some alternatives. (Bird, cited in Montagnia, 2002)

I am confident in my assertion that the majority of high functioning Open Voices members look forward to our choir rehearsals for some of the same reasons as Bird's street kids. They enjoy cooperation, focus on problem solving, listening, beauty and creativity. [4]

Caroline Kenny is a music therapist and author of *The Mythic Artery.* Here is her interpretation of what I am trying to set up as a wellness continuum.

> A person is whole and complete already. So it's not a sickness model; it's a wellness model. Our goal in music therapy is to elaborate the beauty. And that's very much a native belief too. A person is not un-whole or incomplete if they have a sickness. It's just that they are on a journey and they have another aspect to experience. So the music for me is inside a person already. It's not an external, and the goal of the therapist is to reveal that beauty and that music that's already in there in the musical interaction. (Kenny, cited in Montagnia, 2002)

Diane Austin is a therapist who employs musical improvisation, according to the model of Nordhoff /Robbins, in her work. Her comments speak of the embodied nature of singing.

> The voice is so personal. We carry it with us. In order to sing you have to really inhale and exhale with more depth. And what happens, to sustain the notes, you breathe deeper. Especially if you are holding a line or sustaining a long line. So right there you've got the notes, and the breathing, and the breathing brings you into your body. The body... all the feelings are stored there. So is just seems like a direct channel, a direct route to the emotional life and the inner psychic life." (Austen, cited in Montagnia, 2002)

A majority of participants in Clift and Hancox's survey about the perceived benefits of singing stated they felt increased control over, and improved breathing. These

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[4] Participant responses I have collected will support this claim in Chapter 4.

respondents also reported that singing made them feel more positive, feel happier, raised their mood and they just felt good. (Clift and Hancox, 2001) In addition, Open Voices wheel-chair bound members have told me that our rehearsals have beneficial effects for their breathing and pain management.

Perhaps Austin's comments speak to a special quality of choral music. Breath and the act of breathing are fundamental aspects of meditation and contemplation. In his handbook for compassionate living *Peace is Every Step,* Thick Nhat Hahn reminds us to "Breathe, you are alive!..."

> Breathing in, I calm my body.
> Breathing out, I smile.
> Dwelling in the present moment,
> I know this is a wonderful moment. (Hahn, 1991, p. 10)

I have used this mantra to great effect at the beginning of rehearsal, to focus our group on breath, the present, and the positive. When a group engages in this mantra in unison, the effect can be powerful.

Austen does an improvisational exercise with Hella Montagnia and the recording of this session was part of the *Ideas* broadcast. Montagnia's response to this short guided improvisation speaks powerfully of the embodied, temporal and emotional nature of vocal improvisation.

> It's very lovely. It feels wonderful! I wasn't thinking about finding the next right note, or what my next question might be. There was nothing to think about except to flow completely into the experience. And the penny dropped. This is what music therapy is about. Be here. Participate in the music. Feel your feelings. And 'What was that little secret deep inside that just wiggled a bit?' I could sense the potential for change and I could see the appeal for people in many different circumstances. (Montagnia, 2002)

Austen points out that Montagnia's wonderful experience with vocal improvisation was achieved in only a few seconds. She believes that her use of a simple, repeated chord pattern creates a rocking, stable, consistent and dependable

environment for the client. Often, the client will regress to memories or emotions from before their infant or early childhood security was disrupted.

Cross (cited in Montagnia, 2002) also speaks to the embodied element in musical interaction. He describes music as a communion system rather than a communication system. “That is something that allows people to share the same sort of body state. It might well be that that was one of the origins, one of the original purposes or functions of music to enable the sharing of breath cycle, to share the degree of arousal.”

Moon Joyce (1996) states “In many dramatic ways, singing takes us into our bodies and puts us in touch with our emotions. (p. 6) Stubley (1999) refers to the musical experience as an inner dance, a blending of sound and sight, mind and body, form and feeling, and she quotes Clifton (Clifton, cited in Stubley, 1983) who writes “Music is not only in our body; it is our body.”

Drawing parallels between characteristics of music and soul, Willingham (2000) points to timelessness, healing, transcendence, emotion, and creativity. Music can work with words and symbols, or without them. It occurs in time, yet places listeners in a timeless “now.”

In this overlapping and interwoven discussion, I am suggesting that the benefits of choral singing may derive from temporal immediacy, the embodied nature of the voice, the potential for each individual to experience the music in their own way,without compromising the collective goals, and the collective focus on the task that creates community.

Paul Nordhoff and Clive Robbins did pioneering work as music therapists in England in the 1950's. Improvisational work with autistic, emotionally disturbed and psychotic children yielded remarkable results, guided by Robbins' gentle and intuitive manner with the clients, and Nordhoff's demanding, challenging improvisational leadership on the piano. Nordhoff and Robbins tape recorded every session they conducted and documented every nuance of response to therapy for each client they worked with. One eight year old girl, Audrey, was particularly responsive and moved quickly from severe paranoid schizophrenia to relative normality. The success of Audrey and the remarkable recorded record of her progress helped gain public recognition for the power of music therapy.

> One of the things Audrey teaches is the importance of music as a means of cognition. As a multi-layered way of human knowing. That music is a statement of the human mind—of the human—I'm going to say the word *soul*, the human life of feeling, with that individuality inside it. It's a statement of the human condition. And many of our faculties are involved. I mean if you think, awareness, memory, they are all functioning in music, and when you are active in music, you are so attentive to the moment. And within the awareness you have cognition. You know the form of what's happening. You have feeling which is shaped with the flow of the music and then you have the volition, you have the capacity to participate. And if you look at the way these entities are all integrated, coordinated in the now, in the flow of experience, you can see what a potent thing music therapy can be. (Robbins, cited in Montagnia, 2002)

Robbins emphasizes that music involves the intellectual, emotional and social person in an immediate, temporal experience. He emphasizes the multi-layered quality of music.

In this third section of Chapter 2, I have examined a variety of attributes of music and discussed how these attributes might contribute to the healing, empowering, joy enhancing, "recharging" and energizing potential of music. A number of voices have contributed to my discussion. Several themes have emerged: the embodied nature of the voice, the temporal nature of the music making experience, and the ability to participate with individual emotion and meaning without compromising the group

aesthetic. I suggest that these are some of the qualities of music that have brought people to Open Voices.

It is likely true that I possessed some of this knowledge prior to my reading, and prior to initiating Open Voices in Kingston. In subsequent chapters, I will review what other choir directors and choir participants have told me about their choral singing experiences. In that light, this Chapter serves to corroborate and expand upon what I claim to have learned through experience as a choral music facilitator and through my interview research.

Chapter 3

Listening to Facilitators

In my quest to understand my own responses to my choral music experience, and to gain insight into other leaders practice, I interviewed choral music facilitators. Three of these contacts had significant impact on me and choices I made in setting up Open Voices. [5]

Martin Meader is the director of several community choirs in Perth, Australia. He is the producer and screen writer behind the major motion picture “Paradise Road” (see appendix J, Paradise Road) about the empowering and life affirming effect that the formation of a choir has for women in a Second World War POW camp. In this capacity, he has gained international notoriety as a promoter and facilitator of community singing. I attended a weekend workshop with Martin in October, 1999. He travels extensively, giving workshops aimed at bringing shy, novice or frightened singers into the choral music experience.

Isabel Bernaus is the conductor of the Common Thread Choir in Toronto. She is from Catelonia, Spain, and I met her when she attended Community in Song VI, in 1999, to observe my work and meet me. I reciprocated by spending a day with her in Toronto observing Common Thread in rehearsal, meeting with her board of

[5] The facilitators I quote in this chapter, as well as the four peopel quoted in the Chapter 4 focus group interview have agreed in writing to allow me to use their real names in this project. These people were sent copies of the chapters where their voices were used, as well as the abstract and the table of contents of the project. Bark Lake is a real place.

directors and interviewing her. Isabel was a class mate of mine at Westminster Choir College in July, 2001.

Marie Anderson is the conductor of five choirs in Cobourg, Ontario, including La Jeunesse which is nationally recognized for excellence. Marie has known me for twenty years and has seen me perform many times in my role as folk singer and leader of my group Sextet. She is a voice teacher and performer and was my first voice teacher as I prepared for undergraduate studies in music in 1981.

Martin Meader

A member of the Ottawa Folk Festival Choir called me in September of 1999 to tell me of Martin Meader. Martin was doing pick up choral work, similar to mine, working with mixed ability adults with a lot of focus on community, inclusiveness and fun. He would be in Ottawa in October, and I could meet with him.

Martin was from Australia which interested me, having met another Australian, Heather Buchanan, at Westminster Choir College the previous July. She had introduced us to “Past Life Melodies” (Morton, 1997), which was one of the most effective and popular songs at Community in Song VI. This, in turn, led me to the mortonmusic.com web site and a wealth of new choral repertoire suggestions and resources. I was developing an Australian connection.

I attended Martin’s “Sing From the Heart Workshop” (see appendix K, Sing From the Heart brochure) at Ashbury College in Ottawa, in October of 1999. He was a gregarious and energetic man, not unlike our image of the Australian cinema character Crocodile Dundee. The workshop was held in a beautifully appointed private school

auditorium with a fine grand piano. Martin worked closely with a Russian piano accompanist named Anush and it was clear to me that from the first notes of the workshop that they had presented this material, in this sequence, many times before. The promotion for this program had really emphasized that this was for people who were shy of singing, considered themselves tone deaf, or had been somehow silenced.

Here is what Ron Corbett had to saying the Ottawa Citizen, October 2, 1999.

> The first principle of singing, when you think back on it, was to bring people together. It was a communal activity. Today, singing is a professional activity. You hear the word "singer" and the mind registers it as an occupation. The original intent has been completely forgotten. Perhaps that's why tomorrow's Sing From The Heart Workshop at the Cartier Hotel[6] has sparked so much interest around the city.
>
> Many will arrive tomorrow with the same hope. Cancer patients looking for solace. Elderly people trying to remember and evoke a time long forgotten, before television and computers, when people never thought of singing for fame and money.

Corbett continues later with the story of 60 year old Betty Jo Barker's story.

> "When I was younger I joined a couple of choirs but I always ended up accompanying them on the piano. It wasn't that the choir masters told me not to sing, it wasn't that obvious. Let's just say they were always happier when I was playing the piano."
>
> She can't sing, that's the plain truth of the matter. Around music her entire life and "the greatest instrument there is," the one instrument everyone is born with, is the one she could never master. Maybe that will change tomorrow. She's honestly hopeful.
>
> Of all the workshop participants I've spoken with, 12-year-old Elena Blain-Ely had the story I liked the best.
>
> Elena was born in Romania and spent the first four years of her life in an orphanage. When she and her brother were adopted they had rarely, if ever, been outside the front doors of that institution.
>
> "Everything frightened Elena at first," says her mother, Patricia Ely. "The sound of a car frightened her, people on the street frightened her. Even the wind frightened her."
>
> Today Elena is a beautiful, outgoing girl with a smile that absolutely dazzles you.

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[6] Martin Meader did two workshops in Ottawa in 1999. I attended the second one, at Ashbury College. Corbett is writing about Martin's first workshop, at the Cartier Hotel.

> She is in Grade 6 at Audrey Moodie Public School, in a special class for students with learning difficulties. I asked her why she wanted to attend the workshop.
>
> "Singing," she told me in between sips of an ice-cream float, "is practically my favourite thing to do. When I sing I feel happy. I feel rejoice. I never feel put down."
>
> This from a 12-year-old child. Some people, it seems, have never forgotten first principles. (Ron Corbett, see appendix L, *Ottawa Citizen* article)

It appeared to me when I looked around the hall at Ashbury College, that "Sing From The Heart Workshop" participants were far more diverse that those attending my workshops. This is how the workshop had been promoted:

> "Sing From The Heart" community workshops are primarily for non-singers although singers are welcome. The workshops are geared for:
>
> • People who have been told they cannot sing and not to give up their day job.
> • People who were kicked out of school choirs.
> • People who just love to "sing from the heart."
> (see appendix K, Sing From the Heart brochure)

Contrast this to descriptions from the brochure for my own Community in Song VI, 1999 brochure:

> Sight reading is an asset for this weekend. Novices will find the pace and difficulty of the music to be occasionally frustrating.

I was very curious to see how Martin managed with these 50 individuals. He used a great deal of humour and some very simple musical games and kids' songs to warm us up. The group was loosely divided into sopranos, altos and men, but for much of the day, the singing was in unison or rounds, where sectioning of the group would make little difference.

There were many participants who showed evidence of fitting the criteria of Martin's brochure. Downward cast faces, shuffling, no effort to use the sheet music examples and nervous, covered singing indicated to me that there were more very weak singers than I would get in a festival choir or even what have come to be called

‘beginner’ Community in Song events. Around me in the men’s section there were several singers with weak intonation and narrow range, what some might call tone deaf or monotone singers.

There were also many experienced music teachers, choir members and singers in the group as well, who were there for reasons similar to mine: to learn from Martin and to sing for the love of it.

This mix of experienced singers and novices is a necessary ingredient to success in my choir events. When Corbett describes the good old days of community singing, this was probably the model. Children learned the songs from their parents and older siblings. The music was passed from the experienced singer to the learner in a natural, cultural musical apprenticeship. It was natural that a singing group would include masters and apprentices. Contrast that scenario to today’s singing culture, where practicing groups are mostly intended for masters. Music is prepared for a non-participating audience. There are few training opportunities for adult novice choral musicians. This master/apprentice relationship existed in Martin’s workshop too, and was one factor helping the process along.

There was a lot of laughter in this workshop, and lot of encouragement. “If you're feeling shy about it, just close your eyes,” quipped Martin at one point. “That way, no one can see you!”

The singing quality did improve markedly through the day and individuals began to sing with great enthusiasm as repertoire started to settle in and Martin’s activities began to break the ice by reducing inhibition and assuring all that *any* voice was acceptable.

I was reminded of Sister Grace Allen at the Omega Institute, who in 1992 coached me to sing, “Loud and strong and wrong. You won’t stay wrong for long, child!” I have used this phrase of encouragement many times since.

The success of Martin’s workshop was driven, in my opinion, largely by Martin’s larger than life persona and energy, by his wonderful, audacious joking and wit, and by his presentation of varied games, rounds and songs. My notes and tape from that workshop include a number of warm up activity ideas I have since adopted. I have never been able to tell a joke though, so my attempt to imitate that part of Martin’s success flopped royally!

Martin and Anush had a carefully rehearsed, fast paced sequence of activities and were able to complement each other beautifully, with little spoken direction to each other. The ovation for Mr. Meader at the end of this day’s singing was enthusiastic and heartfelt. I am convinced that everyone had a good time, and that many achieved what they had come there for.

Two weeks later, I returned to Ottawa to interview Martin. I was curious about his background and his philosophy. We shared repertoire, giving each other copies of our favourite songs, and we shared stories about our leadership experiences.

Martin told me of his own mentor. Here is some of our October, 1999 interview.

> He is a wonderful man, Tony Backhouse. He conducted the big choir. All the people from the different faculties had to be in the big choir. And I was a jazz musician on saxophone, so I had to go and sing classical music. He was the dean of the conservatory in Perth, The Conservatory of Western Australia.
>
> His approach is what inspired me. It’s that he played. He joked and he played. He knew his material and boy, here’s a guy that was a genius. He had a hundred people in that choir and within two weeks he knew all their names. That’s the kind of man he was. I’d see him walking around the park, power walking. Such energy. He never

stops. And he was a great guy. Wicked sense of humour.

I asked Martin what he felt contributed to his own success as a facilitator.

> We always work from arrangements. We don't work from ear. They are holding music. At first people found that difficult. But I have come across other choirs that don't work from arrangements. They work from ear and they are pretty tacky. Most people can't memorize. If you read the music it goes into the brain and creates a schema in the brain. So that's our first thing. And we always choose uplifting songs. We don't choose negative songs, and that attracts people. And we always try to choose interesting arrangements so that each part has something interesting to do. It doesn't always work. Fiona, who arranges for us, now writes good bass lines. She's doing a Beatles' song now called "I Call Your Name." Keep all the sections happy. I found that if you have a really strong bass section, it's just a great foundation for a choir. If you don't, it's a weak choir. I really crack the whip with them.

Despite his witty, energetic and forward presentation, Martin has a soft spot. He is appealing and encouraging to people who need a safe space to try their voices. He discussed with me humility and control of vanity, and the need to be hardnosed, even asking someone to leave the choir when they were clearly at odds with either himself, or the goals of the group.

> It's very exhilarating. I just get pleasure from seeing the pleasure and appreciation on other people's faces. I try to empower the choir. I try to make myself redundant if I can.

Perhaps the most powerful story Martin told me was about a woman participant in one of his community choirs, at home in Australia.

> The whole thing is empowering and uplifting.
>
> We had this one woman, see. April. You could tell she was having it rough at home. Came out to the choir, the Monday night choir mind: anybody, beginners, shy singers and such. You could tell she had no voice. All afraid and shy she was, sort of self depreciating and scared too.
>
> Well, she got onto it right away. Came back and after a few weeks, you could see she really was opening up to the singing, and bantering with her section mates. Really brightening up. It didn't take a lot of coaching to get her to breath and sing out and listen, and that's all it takes for this choir. Well, after a few months of this, she starts looking a bit scared again and lets on to me how her husband is going to come in and put a stop to this slogging choir bullshit giving his missus airs.
>
> He shows up at rehearsal, busts in while we're in the middle of a song and I have to tell you, we were sounding good! He was taken right off guard by that. I goes

> up and tells him he'll have to sit tight and listen 'til break and I say it with some conductor's authority put on. He sits down and starts giving his missus the evil eye, "Just wait 'til I get you home" sort of thing. But listening too, and you could tell, he was right off guard seeing his April in a choir and obviously happy about it, surrounded by a bunch of other women and men. But she was intimidated. We all were. You could hear the determination in the chorus. The only thing we had to fight this one with was the music and by God, we poured it on for him.
>
> By break time he's having second thoughts. One of the brawny men in the group goes up an' outright tells him there's no watching allowed. If he wants to stay he has to get in with the lads and sing, or he can leave. And, "We are all friends of April's," and, "We all take care of each other in this choir."
>
> Well, if he didn't take up the challenge. Now I don't care if it was the dare, or to threaten his girl, or what he was trying to prove, but that man could sing. By the end of the night he had sung with us for about an hour and he just left with her without saying a word.
>
> Well, you know, he came back the next week. They have both been coming. He hasn't said much and has a huge chip, only whittled away a tiny bit, but I have to believe things are better at home. And April hasn't said much either, but they go and come together, and even go out with some of the other members for a pint and some laughs after the odd rehearsal.
>
> That's the power of it. The evil and hurt in the world can be dissolved by beauty. There's no more to it than that. Anyone can sing in a choir and make something beautiful. Such a simple truth. It makes you wonder that the whole world isn't in a choir.

Through his experiences Martin Meader has developed excellent skills for leading singing and he is deeply committed to the cause. Yet he doesn't have a great voice and he is not particularly humble. He gets the job done with a lot of humour and energy. He jollies people along and is very accepting of any voice and level of participation.

My meeting with Martin Meader in the first of my facilitator interviews confirmed for me that my own choral work was valid. His stories about participants, and his movie "Paradise Road" affirm the healing power of music. Martin's methods, especially his emphasis on easy uplifting repertoire and his use of written arrangements even with novice singers, are similar to mine. Martin had great success with his weekly community choirs in Perth, Australia and this got me thinking about having a choir in

Kingston.

Common Thread and Isabel Bernaus

In the week preceding the September, 1999 Community in Song event, Eve Goldberg of Toronto called me. She is a founding board member of the Common Thread Choir of Toronto and a long time promoter and facilitator of folk music. Eve told me that she had just hired Isabel Bernaus, from Catelonia, Spain, as Common Thread's first artistic director and conductor. Eve arranged for Isabel to attend Community in Song VI.

Isabel came to the event to observe me and to get ideas about facilitating this type of choral activity. Later that fall, I went to Toronto to meet with the founding board of Common Thread, to interview Isabel as a participant/facilitator and to observe Common Thread in rehearsal. I had two profound experiences that day, the 'Circle', and a choir member's story, which I recorded in my journal at the time.

The Circle

> Common Thread's rehearsal ended about ten minutes ago. The clean up crew are stacking chairs and sweeping the floor. They have to get the hall back into day care centre mode for tomorrow morning. As people are lingering about and chatting, a circle starts to form, with people putting their arms around each other's shoulders and gently rocking back and forth. Black, white, able, disabled, Chinese, Jewish, man, woman. The diversity of Toronto that this choir is founded on is visible and palpable.
>
> With no apparent leader, the swaying group breaks into song, simple unison at first, growing into full and precise harmony. As clean up jobs are finished up, brooms are put away and the circle is opened to include all in the room.
>
> A gentle hug or handshake and the group disperses into the night.
>
> Isabel and I glance at each other in deep knowing. There is a power and healing energy here. As leaders of community singing, what we do is very important. We have a gift and a responsibility. (from my my journal entries, December 9, 1999)

Augustine's story was partly related to me by Eve Goldberg, one of the founding directors of the Common Thread. I was at the rehearsal where Augustine sang his goodbye. Here is my rendition of the story.

Augustine's Story

Eve usually stops at Wong's Variety on her way home to pick up fresh vegetables, milk and eggs, or a dessert for supper. The produce man there is a kindly Korean gentleman, about 50 years old. He is always singing when Eve is in the shop, either what she takes to be Korean folk tunes, for Eve has since learned that Augustine is Korean, or he sings Broadway show tunes: "Oh What a Beautiful Morning" or "Climb Every Mountain."

One particular afternoon Eve was putting up Common Thread posters, and had saved the last one to put up at Wong's because she wanted the choir promoted in *her* neighborhood and on the off chance that Augustine might take an interest. She jokingly pointed the poster out to him. He grinned and shuffled a bit, embarrassed at the attention she had given to his singing.

Well, Augustine did come out to the very first Common Thread rehearsal. He has been a wonderful member, sincere and gracious, with a deep and rich baritone voice. His Common Thread friends have discovered that he is very involved in the Toronto Korean writing community as the leader of a collective of writers and poets. This poetry group meets weekly to support each other by reading, listening and encouraging.
This interest of Augustine's will cause him to miss three Common Thread rehearsals after Christmas and according to their constitution, he must withdraw from the group. He asked for some time during announcements tonight to explain this. In his broken and proud English, he explained that he had absolutely no hard feelings, and that singing with the group for the fall had been a profoundly moving experience for him. He offered a signed edition of his recently published poetry to Common Thread director Isabel, and then asked if he might sing to us.

He strolled as a broken hearted warrior, into the middle of our circle. He paused, took time and breath, then sang from his heart, a Korean lullaby. When his song was over, he strode out, leaving Common Thread in his considered way. There were no dry eyes.

Augustine Huh left us with a vivid image of a choice, wisely and carefully made, and acted on. And he left each of us a copy of a poem.

When night falls before
The watchful eye of the moon.
The heart falls with the autumn leaves.

The heart and mind,
Once closed by fear,
Are now opened by love.

(from my journal entries, December 9, 1999)

Common Thread is a community choir that is providing members with a profound sense of belonging and commitment. It is about community, inclusiveness and social

action as much as it is about music. But in Common Thread, the social agenda and the musical agenda are intertwined. This wonderful weave is an expression of the vision of the founding directors Eve Goldberg and Ellen Long, and of Artistic Director Isabel Bernaus. My meeting with these people was a pivotal moment, eventually resulting in the founding of Open Voices.

What did I learn from the Common Thread founders? Here are excerpts from my December 8th,1999 journal entry, made on returning to Kingston from Toronto.

> I met today with Isabel Bernaus and went with her to a meeting of her board of directors, and then to a pot luck supper and rehearsal with her choir "Common Thread."
>
> This was a very strong experience for me. The founding vision, the operating principles, the detailed organizational groundwork before launch, the inclusive and diverse membership, the repertoire, Isabel's musical leadership - the whole thing is an inspiration.
>
> The choir performed its first public concert a week ago and it went very well. The group has only been together since September and some members are complete novices. They have gone through the forming • norming • storming • performing • warming wave and have arrived tonight in a state of euphoria and love.
>
> They love Isabel and they say so, and she is absolutely confident, humble and group focused in her response to this.
>
> A repertoire committee offers Isabel a *lot* of ideas about song choices. The board has hired professional arrangers to create versions of songs that Common Thread wants to do. They call the songwriters to get permission and they pay for legal use of all music.
>
> The choir is organized so that virtually every member has a meaningful job to do besides singing. Publicity, stage management, wheel chair access, book keeping, sweeping the floors - you name it. Everyone seemed totally committed to the well being of the group, its leaders and every member. This is an extension of the multicultural, social action, humanistic and inclusive vision of the founders.
>
> The group in non-auditioned and there was enough interest in chorus membership that after the third start up rehearsal in September a lottery was held to select 70 members from the 150 applicants. A founding board member did not 'win' the lottery; therefore does not sing with the ensemble, but is tirelessly working for the group and hoping for membership next year! Amazing! (from my journal entry, December 8, 1999)

This was the experience I described to my four friends at Camp Hyanto in September of 2001 when I collected them together to suggest that it was time to create our own Kingston choir.

The Common Thread founders had thought the project through clearly before launch. Eva and Ellen both had long experience in folk music and song circle activities and both founders worked professionally for somewhat left wing, grass-roots social service agencies. They are gifted organizers with a clear vision. They build structures into the choir to ease access for disabled people, shy singers, novice musicians and socio-economically disadvantaged people. Organization allows each member to take on appropriate and meaningful extra-musical tasks for the choir.

I found it interesting that all of this vision and structure, the venue, promotion and budget, the name—the whole thing—was in place for months before the founders interviewed for an artistic director.

All of this organization and planning was driven by a belief in the power of music. Here are excerpts from our dinner conversation on the day of my visit. In the following interview excerpt, I have run the voices of Isabel Bernaus and her two Common Thread board members together into one body of text. This provides a clearer expression of meaning I took from the interview. The conversation transcript of the interview, taken over dinner in a loud restaurant, is quite convoluted! I have put a bullet beside each new voice to help get the feel of the conversation.

> • There is something about music. When you sing with another person, it is a very intimate experience. It is about harmony. One shy woman came up to me after singing and was just gushing. She felt like someone who had just reentered the universe or connected with a moment of magical, organic unity.
>
> • For just a moment in our crazy lives, we are on the same song sheet. It has to do with people searching for spiritual depth. And searching for community and culture and connection.
>
> • All voices welcome. There is a whole book in just that one statement.

> • I think there is something about society, that for the most part we feel we have become so separated from the notion that we can make music or be creators of art in all different ways. We are surrounded by art that is done by professionals, who appear to do it perfectly, and we consume it. We go out and buy it or listen to it, but there's no way we could ever sound like Celine Dion, because she is perfect in every way. There are billions of dollars spent on every record to make sure that she sounds that way! This all makes culture and art seem like something that is completely unattainable for the ordinary person who sings in the shower. Which means that there is a huge void in people, like a hole in the soul. So when these community choirs start up, people just suck it up like that (slurping noise)! Because it is a hunger.
>
> • The thing about music and art being a community activity is also important. The idea of music and art being something we do when we get together. I mean, what do we do now? Sit in front of a TV or a movie screen.
>
> • People are struck by the idea that you could get together with a group of people and just make music, and who cares how good it is? It's that act of making it together that is fun and creates something positive in every one's life for three hours or whatever. People think, "I never thought I could do this. I don't need to go out and spend lots of money or be a perfect musician in order to just have fun doing it with my neighbor or my sister or even a total stranger."
>
> • Many people who have taken an interest in fighting for social justice are very tired because they are fighting a huge uphill battle and things are being dismantled around them. I was thinking personally, I'm tired of writing letters to politicians. I'm tired of faxing. I want to have fun! I want to say, "This is not right and there's a better way for people to live together," and I want to have fun saying that. So there is a larger purpose as well. People are very inspired by that. (from the transcript of the December 8, 1999 interview with Ellen Long and Eve Goldberg)

This conversation over dinner influenced all of my actions in forming Open Voices. In contrast to earlier Blue Skies or Community in Song activities, Open Voices rose out of a vision. My *first step* in founding the choir was to recruit a board of directors who shared that vision, and whom I trusted to work hard, be smart and stay committed to the vision. This has made all the difference. I am not alone, or exhausted, or unhappy, and I am able to focus on what I do best, trusting others to do their part. Together we have created something far bigger and better than I could have achieved on my own.

Similarly, when there are challenges or unpleasant jobs to undertake, we share these and support each other. In the words of an old hymn, "I'll never walk alone."

Marie Anderson

I have known Marie Anderson for over twenty years. I bumped into her again at Westminster Choir College, in the summer of 1999. This led to a renewed friendship and my working on some arranging and guest coaching for her choirs. I learned that Marie was very engaged in the personal and wellness aspects of being a choral conductor. The dashboard of her car was littered with self improvement audio cassettes featuring a variety of speakers. When we discussed some of my feelings of inadequacy, self doubt or pain in connection with my conducting work, she assured me that she too had all those feelings.

My day in Cobourg began with attending a choir rehearsal, which was followed by dinner with the La Jeunesse Choir board of directors. Afterwards, Marie and I retired to her home for our conversation.

Marie Anderson gave me the book *Peace is Every Step* (Hahn, 1990) at the beginning of our interview and explained to me that she took some time every day for herself, whether in quiet meditation, through a variety of mostly unstructured techniques, or by reading and listening.

Marie told me that she had been thinking about this interview, and that she felt she knew me well. She told me that all I needed to learn about to resolve my self doubt, self abuse and insecurity issues could be resolved by reading *The Wisdom of the Enneagram* (Riso and Hudson, 1999) and she handed me a copy. Marie said, "Read the book, Andy. Just read the book! It's scary it's so true. I know you. Just read the book!"

In my studies with Dr. Anatt Kaidar at Westminster earlier that year, she had encouraged me to learn about my personality in respect to voice care issues and potential vocal disorders. Dr. Kaidar's research, demonstrating a correlation between personality type and vocal disorders was based on the personality classification system of C. Robert Cloninger (1986). I found Anat Kaidar's and Marie Anderson's advice forcing me to look inwards for some of the answers to problems that had propelled me into this research.

Marie's reflections on maintaining spiritual health as a conductor were largely centred on meditation, reflection and seeking quiet. I found this approach resonated with the advice of Dr. James Jordan. Both Marie and I have studied with Dr. Jordan and read his books.

> One must make time for stillness in one's life, quiet yourself and explore your center. (pp.118)
>
> First and foremost, you will love yourself and your gifts, recognizing and accepting your musical weaknesses with love. (pp.116)
>
> The conductor must choose the correct mimetic path. He must go to the place that is loving, caring, selfless, self - emptying, helping and trusting. (pp.111)
>
> You become less so that the choir can become more. (pp.120)
>
> Choose love over anger; helping instead of hurting; loving oneself instead of engaging in self-mutilation; exhibiting on all occasions profound human care and love. (pp.129) James Jordan, *The Musician's Soul*, 1999

I remember my session of Buddhist meditation in early mornings at the Omega Institute for Holistic Studies in 1992. "Contemplate loving kindness" were the instructions from our Tibetan meditation leader each morning. That was it. No instructions on sitting, breathing, technique. Just, "Contemplate loving kindness." Both Marie Anderson and James Jordan speak to me of simple meditation practices, and the necessity of taking time for quiet each day.

The occasions in my current schedule of teaching work and family life, where I am able to reflect quietly are few indeed. This is a path I will have to work on.
Marie opened me to possibilities for self care, and support from others. Her active seeking of help from her board of directors, her accompanist, other conductors and self help books and tapes earned my respect and suggested to me that I could benefit from a similar pursuit.

Conclusions

Listening to other choir directors proved to be a valuable experience for me. I came to understand that many of the frustrations and concerns I was having, were also being wrestled with by other directors. Isabel Bernaus showed me a number of external structural strategies for dealing with some of these issues, and Marie Anderson helped me to begin to deal with them as an inward journey. In Martin Meader, I saw a reflection of myself, and of the work I was doing. This was very affirming, and encouraging.

Chapter 4

Listening to Participants

More than anything in the world, singing makes me come alive and awakens me to the wonder and the tragedy, the joy and the loss, the fullness of life. It's something to weep and laugh about.

Doing this really opens me up. I feel warmhearted and full of love—and that does last.

I feel a surge of creativity and spirit. My body feels good and I take a lot of breath.

When I'm really into the music, it's effortless. Like channeling, time melts. You lose awareness of yourself. The first thing is to make a sound that makes people feel beautiful. Don't try to make a beautiful sound— make people feel beautiful and the sound will take care of itself. (Participant survey comments, Community in Song VI, 1999)

Some Unseen Magic is at Work

I collected 60 surveys from Community in Song participants in September, 1999. I went on to interview eight of these participants and transcribe the interviews. In addition, I am in receipt of an almost constant flow of e-mails, letters and event evaluations from community singing enthusiasts who know that I am engaged in this work. Early in the analysis process, I was overwhelmed by data. As I transcribed and reviewed these interviews, I evolved several systems for sorting the data. In this chapter, I will present a small portion of what I heard from participants and explain how this information worked on me. In Chapter Five, you will see more clearly how I put this understanding into action with Open Voices.

People often want to talk about their personal singing experiences. Usually these are quite positive and deal with healing, joy, fun, community, focus and other subjective experience. That kind of information I put onto the 'music advocacy, evidence that music is a healing and good thing' pile. The comments at the beginning of this chapter are from that pile. These are participant comments that cause me to reflect. Sometimes I chastise myself for what I hear, sometimes I laugh and sometimes I feel satisfaction and enthusiasm. These 'reflective ties' are ones that would cause me to change inside, were I to meditate on them with good intent.

Occasionally participants will discuss the way the activity is presented, or my facilitation techniques. I consider this information and put it into the 'what am I doing to help these events be successful?' or 'what doesn't work that I need to change?' pile.

Some data is valuable because by considering it, I might change my own attitudes or frame of mind. Other data is valuable because it gives me ideas I could put into action, helping me to create a sort of "things to do" list for facilitating or improving these events. I place a lot of this data into a future context and am expecting that I will try new techniques, stop certain approaches or continue successful practices as a result. For a while I was calling items in this pile 'action ties.' I adopted the word 'tie' from music terminology. A tie is a line connecting two notes, increasing their value. I'll illustrate how this works for me by looking at this poem by Micheal Hurley, which he offered to me after the performance of the Blue Skies Choir in 1999.

> The Blue Skies Choir Experience
> Gord sporting a rose
> A red, red rose
> under blue skies
> lettin' that little light shine
> in concert with 100 other glowing voices
> illuminating hill and forest,
> swamp and meadow

in a community of song
bright as a smile
and stretching like Robbie's magic wand
from those soulful bass boys
through festive queens of the slipstream
swirling in acres of swaying
4 - part harmony
'til it spills over
the standing-room-only stage
like communion wine
blessing the multitudes
gathered in God's
musical playground.

Hear 'em sing!
A hunkered-down host
of undercover angelic freed spirits
a' bringin' in the sheaves
harvested in fullness
from fields of plenty!
A Clarendon campfire choir extraordinaire
swimming laps in a sea
of toe-tappin' humanity
until everybody's surfin'
waves pouring forth from
a traditionally classical religious world jazz folk corucopia!

Massaging and opening ears minds and hearts
a funky granola choir
rollicking as the children's parade
mellow as midnight moonlight
gracefully rocking a cradle of song
from atop a wooden cloud
floating serene in the centre
of a cascading rhythm of children & clowns,
mystics & mayhem
looking refreshed and energetic
as if their honey-combed voices
had just sipped deep
from the well of joyous contentment
or of the scented silence
rising from The Tipi in the woods...

An enchanting bouquet of singers
happily lost in the forest
weavers of wonder
spinning a golden thread of sound
round and round a whirling
dervish of a day
so delighted with itself
that the very cosmos seems to sport
a wild red rose
rising like incense
from a country garden

that comes merrily into bloom
the first weekend in August
and lasts well into
forever

Micheal Hurley, 1999

Reading this poem takes me back through 26 years of attendance at Blue Skies festivals and 14 years of directing the choir there. My Blue Skies experience is a major contributor to who I am and what I believe in today.

I can learn a lot about participants' experience from this poem. Participants are having fun and the joy and beauty and fun of it spill over into the audience. There is a funky, rag tag, angelic and sacred aura around the singers— some sort of magic. Unseen agents are at work. From the viewpoint of the poet, this is an opening experience for mind and heart, and ears. The singers are delighted with themselves. This feeling lasts, in Hurley's words, "well into forever."

Here is how a Community in Song VI participant put another observation down on a survey form:

> I have a scientific friend who builds phones for Nortel. She explained to me that sound waves don't ever stop. They go and they go and they go. She said that they find their way through cracks in building and continue on. Nice to think of the sounds we made this weekend and carrying on and never stopping. Let's hope they carry the joy and peace that was expressed at their inception. (participant survey, Community in Song VI, 1999)

There is a consistency in these two responses about good vibes lasting forever. If people keep commenting on this type of experience, does it start to contribute to a kind of proof or validation?

On Saturday afternoon at Community in Song VI, we split the participants into two groups. The men went off with me to the dining hall basement to work on a rollicking Great Big Sea song called "The Chemical Worker's Song." This song is a very

'manly' and in your face kind of music. Meanwhile, the women stayed upstairs and worked on James Gordon's "Frobisher Bay," an ethereal ballad about sailors getting frozen in the Arctic and thinking of their families as they froze to death.

When the women were ready to perform, they came down to the basement, humming quietly, and they surrounded the men, who just sat down on the old carpet in the middle of the room. The women sang this beautiful song openly and lovingly, and the men received it with grace. It was a magic moment. We all knew it and there were many tears and some grins. Selina Bishop's poem "That We May All Be One," on page 16 of this project, refers to this moment.

After that singing session one participant told me how that had been the most positive experience with men she had ever had, and how this had allowed her to process some grief resulting from an assault years earlier. Apparently, many of the women had found it moving to have been able to give this gift to such a group of sensitive, peaceful and listening guys.

From another participant interview...

> The whole thing of dividing the men and the women. To stand around those guys and to sing to them and to see them crying. To see all these big men feeling the music that way. I felt so blessed by all these gentle men around me. Because there's too many big fat jerks around! But to know that there's these guys... It makes you feel hopeful for the human race. (participant interview, Community in Song VI, 1999)

Again, here are three pieces of data that speak about gentle men, vulnerability, hope and an easement of fear. Promotion for Open Voices claims participation could empower singers. This sort of data backs that claim.

<u>So Here I Am Singing. Amazing!</u>

Sometimes interviews get into deeply personal experience. I find that to be quite moving. Part of my purpose for engaging in this research was to slow down and listen to what was happening for other people. Elizabeth has been a member of the Blue Skies Choir since its inception, and has attended all Community in Song events. I wondered if her comments would confirm or contradict my own forming notions of what is important about my work with choral singing. I recall that our interview was lengthy and that Elizabeth had prepared handwritten notes. I remember her sympathetic response to some of the issues I describe at the beginning of the research proposal.

Before her interview I reviewed Elizabeth's survey response to the weekend, collected on October 3, 1999. All quoted text in this section of this chapter is the voice of Elizabeth.

> I am the granddaughter of a man who was so poor that he sang for money for his family. Fortunately he had perfect pitch, a beautiful voice and a pure love of vocal music. His son, my father, loves music, plays sax and keyboard, but can't sing a note.
>
> I loved singing with my grandfather as a small child and when I started school I adored assemblies because we sang, and I loved it when the visiting music teacher came. I could hear a song once and remember it. By Grade 3, I was offering to sing the song, first to the class to learn it, because I'd remember new pieces from hearing the upper years sing them. Unfortunately, in Grade 3, there was an auditioned choir, and I, because I have a poor quality of voice, was not selected. I stopped singing and although I pursued other musical instruments I felt ashamed of my voice, never singing after that.
>
> Then, at the age of 36, a lucky chance, my love of my grandfather and his ghostly presence, and a lucky encounter with a friend led me to one of your song nights in Kingston. So here I am singing. Amazing!

When I read this survey response after the September, 1999 singing event, I was profoundly moved by Elizabeth's story of her grandfather and the effect that his love of singing had had on her. I reflected on my own grandmother, a piano teacher in Sault St. Marie, who as a child would sit quietly watching the organist on Sunday

mornings, and who then constructed a silent keyboard out of cardboard and clothes pins, so that she could practice the melodies and chords that she was enthralled with at church. I recall my father, who retired to the study many of the days of my childhood life, to play on our piano the old melodies, like “Deep Purple” and “Stardust” that he would have danced to as a young man.

I have known Elizabeth as a participant at the Blue Skies Music Festival Choir and at Community In Song events for almost 14 years. I would describe her as quiet and serious. I remember her as being frustrated with the pace of our learning songs and her persistent effort to work with her section to get the parts successfully. She concentrates hard.

Elizabeth’s experience in failing a choir audition in Grade 3 saddens and angers me. In my conversations with Martin Meader last October, he referred to his many choir participants who had been similarly silenced at early ages and thus “lost their voice”. (Meader, 1999) Martin’s response to these individuals is to offer them a choral music experience that is totally accepting and inclusive. When I asked Martin what the key to success was in his community choir, he replied without hesitation, “Simple, uplifting repertoire.” He has found that experienced singers will continue to participate if the lyrics and values of the experience are meaningful to them, even when the music itself is not challenging. They stay for other reasons.

I am convinced that singing in tune is a learned skill that virtually anyone can improve on with time and instruction. Tone deafness, the inability to discern pitch differences, is a physiological improbability in 99.9% of society. When I encounter a student with a monotone or wildly off pitch singing style, I know that patience, practice and perseverance will move this person into the acceptable tolerances for choral music participation. Often, discovering the person’s comfortable singing range is a key to

beginning accurate pitch.

Rena Upitis (1990) recounts an experience of teaching an adolescent boy to sing a song for a musical production of “Mary Poppins.” She describes how patiently working with the student brought him closer and closer to accurate pitch, and she describes a sequence of learning for this student in which he focused on and learned the intricate rhythms quickly and accurately before learning the pitches. If you gave up on this student while he was in the rhythm learning mode, you would not get to the pitch learning, which Upitis addressed at the appropriate point in the sequence for this student, and then he could learn just fine.

Many times I have had singers recount to me stories of misinformed, wrongly motivated or unskilled music teachers telling them as young children to mouth the words or to stand in the back and not sing, because their voices were unpleasant or out of tune. When Elizabeth referred to her own voice as being unpleasant and of limited range in our interview, I could hear her Grade 3 teacher’s putdown still resonating, and that motivated me to work harder to give Elizabeth back a voice she would perceive as beautiful and accepted.

Elizabeth places high value on the inclusiveness and accepting atmosphere at Community in Song events.

Another theme presents itself early in the interview with Elizabeth:

> What would I tell someone about Community in Song? Come! Next time, you've got to come! There is so little time in our lives to spend in a focused, absorbed way. Picture being at a meeting where you have to sit for two to three hours at a stretch. Only this time, this time, instead of tapping you fingers in tedium, you are suddenly stunned to hear that it’s time to break for lunch. And you don’t really want to. It wasn’t your finger you were tapping, it was your foot, and not in boredom, but to a beat. And with that same foot, over break, you are tapping away again over a stubborn rhythm, wanting to get every subtlety of it. Imagine being lost in the intimacy of one bar, of four beats of music. Asking to do it again, and then imagine,

> just imagine being torn about going for a massage because you'll miss that piece. There are few, very few things in life, like say... the birth of your child that you put ahead of a massage. I think, for me, that's what is so special. I never get a chance to get so absorbed in a task. The tasks that go into making a piece of music aren't tedious. They are absorbing and challenging and compelling. I am so deprived of having those in my regular life.
>
> Just for the focus, just to be totally removed from your own normal life. To work for a group. I come from a place inside of me that is so hungry for the experience of being in a place where you can be really focused and absorbed at at task.

For Elizabeth, it is clear that a principal element in her singing experience is that it allows her to focus intently on a task. This is a similar experience to meditation. There is value in stopping busy thinking and quieting the mind. Nhat Hahn (1993) urges us to "turn off the cassette player" of our mind and to "close the windows" to outside influence for a period of rest and peace. (p.39)

Open Voices is about working hard in a focused way, toward a worthwhile goal. I have acquired the skills to facilitate choral singing, so it is through this medium that I attempt to create community and help people to experience a time of focus and meditation.

Elizabeth's interview is about 75 minutes long and is the first participant interview I conducted as part of my thesis research. Through my work on this project, I have been mulling over my own issues related to my choral music experiences. Listening to Elizabeth is a wonderful opportunity to take a fresh look at this. Her description of the event itself highlights elements of it that a newcomer or potential participant would want to know about.

> From the minute you walk in, it seems very earnest, and striving. Whether you are just trying to make sense of a piece, and then you get it. And then you're on to the next part of what you want to get right. And it's just so neat for me to hear the good singers, and to be sitting beside a good singer who will lean over and show you where you are in the music. The anxiety of a whole group's depending on you not to screw up, and you so dependent on everyone else to create a whole that you will

> never hear, being married to your own part.
>
> And those other little bits that twine around you and that you know are out there. Striving to get a difficult interval, find a note, to sit where you can see the conductor, where you can hear the strong singer you lean on. To joke with someone who shares your sense of humour, or to show the learner beside you how to find the repeats. To borrow a pencil, find a sip of water, mop up spilled water, find a highlighter. Striving to hear the tenor part that leads you to your own, now striving for the phrasing, the exact breath and rhythm, for another run through, to get bar 14 right. Once more. Once more!
>
> Picture doing the same thing over and over and over and asking to do it again. It's the intensity of the individuality which is part of the intensity of the group production. To be part of something where you are so individual in how you put yourself into it but so interdependent on how the final product comes out. It's just so exciting for me.
>
> And yet it doesn't really matter (if we get the music correct)!

Unlike Elizabeth, I am extremely dispersed, rather than focused during rehearsal. My attention has a fairly broad field as I try to listen to and diagnose musical difficulties. The trick is to isolate an improvable and get right to work on it. I do a lot of teaching along the way and I explain my techniques in the hope that choir leaders or experienced musicians in the group will enjoy learning these teaching skills, as well as the music. We need these experienced voices so desperately. I will often decide to not correct something if I determine that it is too difficult or that the the energy level or flow direction of the group would not yield fairly instant gratification. I often use word processing terms like 'cut,' 'paste' and 'copy' when describing to the choir how we are going to put the bits of a song together to make a performance.

Community in Song weekends are about singing in harmony and being in harmony with others. For some, it is purely a musical experience and for others it is a musical metaphor that facilitates other types of harmony and feelings of unity, oneness and solidarity. For me it is both. My job is to create harmony musically. When I see an extra musical result, demonstrated by the choir through high spirits, inter-participant display of affection and highly cooperative and supportive camp living I am thrilled,

but my job is to facilitate the music. I feel exactly like Elizabeth when I am anxious not to screw up, and I feel the same dependence on the group in creating a whole sound that I could not possibly produce on my own.

Approaching the end of the interview, Elizabeth referred to her notes where she had written a summary of final comments to me. She told me that she really wanted me to listen to these final comments. This felt like her 'charge to the jury' and I took these comments very seriously.

- Please continue to develop leadership in others.
- I really like the diversity of the repertoire too.
- I really enjoyed the sectionals rehearsals.
- Continue the inclusiveness.

Here are my reflections on Elizabeth's final four points.

My use of other facilitators to spell me off and add variety has proven to be very successful. It is a strategy I have thought might help prevent my own burn out, but it has become more than that. Each facilitator brings something fresh and different to the group. New jokes, new warm up routines, new repertoire and a new voice. It allows me to join the group and become 'one of the boys' in the bass section.

Elizabeth, along with many other participants, comments positively on the variety and quality of repertoire at Community in Song. I have identified this as one of the real keys to success. If the participants don't like the songs, we have a problem. Unlike church choirs, barbershop groups, musical theatre companies or symphony choruses, our repertoire is extremely varied, focusing mostly on short works of three to five minutes in length and representing the sort of balance you would find at an

adjudicated choral music festival. Almost always I will include songs from vocal jazz, spirituals, African freedom traditions, folk music, world music, and standard repertoire from the Classical and Renaissance period. Much of the repertoire I or others have custom arranged for the event, based on my knowledge of vocal ranges, ability and taste.

Over the years we have developed a common base of repertoire and are able to sing for up to 45 minutes, without music, in four part harmony. Newcomers want to learn this common repertoire and each weekend we spend some time on the old chestnuts as well as new material. The simpler repertoire is easier to memorize and when singers lift off the page and start to focus on me, each other, the sound and their own hearts, rather than note learning, magic happens.

Finding and preparing the songs is a huge task. I always have my ears up for engaging, easy songs. I sift through every stack of choral music I can find in stores, churches and classrooms. I listen at performances for songs I could arrange to this purpose. When I meet another choir director, I'm always keen to ask, "What are you singing that's really working, and easy?" In a normal teaching year I will have a certain exposure to new repertoire. In a good year I'll discover two or three real winners that fit Martin Meader's "uplifting,easy" criteria. Some years I do not discover new material that I am thrilled with and that puts a lot of pressure on me.

Some of Elizabeth's comments had to do with the pacing of the weekend. She liked the sessions where we split the participants into self-selected, like-ability smaller groups and into men's or ladies' choruses. We broke up into groups and worked at our perceived skill level. She really enjoyed the Community in Song VI Saturday evening coffee house where participants of any skill level entertained each other.

For me, pacing the weekend in such a way as to keep the music moving forward and keeping participants interested and willing to pour out the considerable energy required to learn a high volume of music quickly is a part of my planning focus. I have also learned that I need to allow for participant input into these alternate activities, and to allow for spontaneity and 'other ownership' of creation in the event.

Inclusiveness is a constant struggle for me. I want to be open to anyone, yet I want to be able to tackle more difficult music, or do a greater quantity of music. The brochure for Community in Song VI said, "Sight reading skill and some musical experience are an asset to these weekends. Persons with little or no sight leading ability will occasionally find the pace of rehearsal and difficulty of the music to be frustrating." (see appendix D, Community in Song brochure) Elizabeth cited this line from the brochure as something she found to be a negative element. I included that line in hope that complete novices would either self select themselves out, or refrain from complaint or frustration when they got overwhelmed on the weekend. This was hardly inclusive on my part.

The interview with Elizabeth provides me with much to reflect on about my own facilitation and leadership strategies, and it allows me a personal insight into her singing world that I never would have experienced, had I not asked her, then listened.

Inspired to love music by her grandfather, silenced by an incompetent music teacher in Grade 3, and rediscovering music and her own singing voice as an adult participant in choral music, Elizabeth is one of the regulars in our choir. She is not a soloist or a conspicuously highly skilled musician.

I have a narrow range, uninspiring tonal quality and make lots of mistakes and could

> never do an audition but I love to sing! I do think I contribute, even if it's just to affirm the talents of others. In particular continue with some performance aspect and continue to demand or strive for a moment of perfection.
>
> Everybody's feeling that (insecure, incompetent, striving, tired) so again, it's a great leveler. We're all the same, no matter how knowledgeable or talented or how much leadership we have. Whether we're just little sheep going along with the crowd, trying to learn what we can from them, we all have the same human responses. It was affirming to me to know that you felt the same things I did! Like, "He's got as weak an ego as I do!" We're all just human beings and it doesn't matter how talented we are. We all need that kind of direct, sincere approval.
>
> What makes the weekend work is everybody's openness to everybody else. It's sort of like a level playing field, nobody's there as a prima dona. It's not even part of the culture, which is unusual in creative personality types. It's either a group of people that doesn't have egos in that way, or if they do, they park them at the door.

After knowing Elizabeth for fourteen years I have finally taken the time to listen to her point of view, and I am profoundly moved. It is interesting to note that since this interview our friendship and working relationship has expanded. She is no longer just a face in the choir, but human, vulnerable and beautiful person. I will endeavor to take this sort of time to listen to other participants, so that, just like the velveteen rabbit, more of my choir members will 'become real' to me.

That's how Elizabeth sees things, and how her point of view inspired me. Now I'll discuss a contrasting interview.

Sign up, Show up, Shut up, Look up and SING!

I choose to annotate in detail a focus group interview I conducted in Haliburton, Ontario in June of 2000. The four participants in this interview are special to me because I know them through my Bark Lake outdoor education experiences. [7]

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[7] These four persons have given written permission for me to use their real names in this project, and Bark Lake was a real place.

These people were important to me during the years I developed confidence in leading adult learners and encouraging risk taking. I worked with these four people at Bark Lake from 1986 to 1995. We have hiked, canoed, camp fired and sung together for a long time. Much of what I know about leadership and facilitating groups comes from this Bark Lake experience.

In my excerpts from this focus group interview, I have not indicated whose voice we are hearing. That would get quite confusing. This interview dealt with facilitation techniques and attitudes, and with the interplay between process and product — a common theme for arts educators.

> • We sung stuff that was kind of hard to do and we did it. It's kind of similar to other outdoor things I do, only a bit more group oriented. I had the response— 'Wow, we did that! Wow, I did that!'
>
> • I really liked the challenge. I really liked "Past Life Melodies", something so totally different that you could do with your voice..... I remember being very moved singing "Al Shlosha." It was a simple song to sing. Part of it was that young girl sang so clearly. A contrast between a single small voice and then the large adult group. At Community in Song, there is usually one song that kind of grabs me right here (in the heart). It seemed very pure and virginal when she was singing.
>
> • For me , having lost touch with the Bark Lake thing, where I was a part of this really strong community of people, I guess, for me, this is one of the only experiences I do that is similar to that. It's so graphic. A choir is so graphic. It's a group of people coming together and building something. You are building the choir, or you are building the song. You are solving a puzzle. It's no different than a group initiatives task in an Outward Bound course. It's a really neat model because it's not nearly as difficult as building a barn.

I have to wonder if comunity singing is easier than building a barn. It wouldn't be to supposedly tone deaf barn builders.

I remember Thom teaching me about risk and trust at Bark Lake. Thom's teaching, based on the Project Adventure model, suggests that people must go outside their risk threshold if they are going to enter the zone of personal growth and trust.

Individuals perceive different activities as unsafe. There is emotional, physical and intellectual risk. Certainly, many people find singing to be an unsafe activity for them. I suspect that that's part of the 'high' of the karioke singing experience.

A participant's experience could be very risky if his or her choir section was unbalanced in ability or dynamic. I have put more thought into balancing sections lately, encouraging participants to admit if they are beginners, confident, unsure or leaders, and then arranging the section so that each supporting or leading role works to the benefit of the section and the choir sound. Choosing the difficulty of repertoire also enters into this process. One skill I continue to develop is that of editing music on the fly, cutting out tough parts, repeating easy parts and shortening the arrangement if we are grinding.

> • It's a large group to put through an experience like this. Huge. But we used to do it all the time at Bark with 150 people, and at Wanaketa with 500. But it's not as intimate.

This suggests that the personal growth experience at Community in Song is *not* unique. We used to do it all the time at Bark, with outdoor education activities. There is also an implication here that intimacy is a desirable feature if personal growth is the goal.

> • I believe a lot of the energy comes from the group too. It's funny when people say 'Oh wow Andy, you made it such a good weekend.' Well, we *all* make it a good weekend because it is a community. I remember the very first Community in Song you did at Bark Lake in 1995. What really blew me away, cause that's the first time I'd ever been part of anything like that, I'd look across and see people that I'd never talk to, didn't know their names, yet here we were doing this thing together. I thought, "It's just like a real community." I mean you have these connections. You are working together to create something with people you may not have any direct interaction with. We created this community that allowed people to experiment and grow and learn from each other. We were all working together to create this thing.

This is a good definition of what a community is: 'People working together to create

something.'

> • I get such a high from the weekend, but honestly, I don't rub elbows with a lot of people there. There are a few people like Leslie that I want to see each year, and a few others. I focus on the music and that's very cool. It is the MUSIC, when we pull something together, that blows me away. I'm high on it for a couple of weeks afterwards.
>
> • I think that's a difference between this and a lot of other group building experience, The in between time is not as important. When I watch the participants, there is not a lot of mixing. People retreat to known groups of people at meal times. This is quite often the opposite of if you went on , like an Outward Bound course.What you are doing together is so obvious and so focused and so measurable. It is not important for me to do the group building on any really any other level. In the weekend thing, I probably didn't learn four people's names besides the ones I already knew. I wasn't there to get to know people. I was there to sing.

This is a strong argument against the value of these singing weekends for creating community. The difference with Open Voices is that it is an ongoing activity, and that members are from Kingston. We see each other on the street. If a performance is a success, we can celebrate that, after the fact.

> • But I'm the same as Linda, I notice a huge difference in my life afterwards. I'm more tolerant, way less cynical and less abrupt. Afterwards, I'm far more thinking outside of my own space. I'm just there to make music with people. I probably eat with this group right here, (laugh). And in between songs, I retreat to people I know. I see other folks do this. There are a couple of first timers that were really looking for a connection and, in a way there is not really time to offer that as much as they do in a typical outdoor camp based experience.
>
> Andy is not a facilitator; he is a coach. Our goal is incredibly focused. The coaching thing - you drive it. We want to be better at singing these songs. It's not like you are a facilitator and asking, "How would you like to get to know each other?" and "How would you like to sing these songs? What are your goals?" Oh God!, can you imagine (laugh)! I love the fact that you never ask that. Like, "How do you feel about that song now?"
>
> It's like... Sign up, Show Up, Shut Up, Look Up and SING! (laughter)
>
> So I show up to sing and you tell me to sing and I sing. There might be ways of combining it. Combining coached activity and facilitated experience. Things like coffee house and small ensembles.
>
> A facilitator doesn't need anything from the group that they are working with. That's what allows you to facilitate, as opposed to drive.You are there for the group to take advantage of when the group is ready to take advantage of you. Andy, you need something from us on that weekend. There is a guy coming with a tape recorder on

> Sunday! This is not facilitating. It's like what teaching in Ontario Schools is like these days. At the end of Grade 3 year, you have to pass a test. It suddenly becomes a lot less touchy feely. We've got to get it right. There is a performance thing to it.

This section of the interview is fascinating to me. I am sure that I am perceived as a sort of benevolent dictator during our rehearsals, and this confirms that. The four people in this focus group are very high functioning and action-oriented. For them this approach works. There are frequently more needy and fragile individuals in the choir who might need more facilitation and less coaching.

> • That approach isn't touchy feely, but you got 65 evaluations and several are covered in tears! Definitely, I find that very interesting. Your approach isn't touchy feely, so where does it come from? Where do the tears come from? That's the question...
>
> • My feeling is that your approach is, "This is what we are doing here, and we have got to do this." but your *mannerisms* are the touchy feely thing about your leadership.
>
> • You are very human. When you're pissed off, you let us know. And when you have a tear at the corner of your eye, you wipe it away. When you are up there you are being yourself and when you want a result, you let us know that you want results. And when we can just play with a song you say, 'Ok let's just do this.' It's painfully obvious (laugh), that it matters that we have a good experience to you. It's not only that it matters that we sound good on Sunday, but also it obviously matters that we have a good experience on the way. Both the process and the product matter to you. Maybe somebody's toes are going to get stepped on here and there . The overall driving thing is that you want people to experience that and that's where the mentor role has come in.
>
> It's like you say, 'I have touched this thing in the past and I can help you touch it. And sometimes *I* am going to tell you to shut up and listen because that's the best way for us all to get there.'
>
> • The technique is not touchy feely, but the intent is incredibly heartfelt and comes from someplace besides a technical achievement.

The next part of the interview has to do with context, or framing. Thom had taught me earlier that participants will get very different results from an activity depending on what you tell them it's for. In Open Voices, or at Community in Song events, I am telling people very directly that they are there for joy, fun, laughter, hard work,

healing, peace and beauty. Participants are predisposed to achieve these things. That is probably why we are open to some of the "magic" when an opportunity presents itself.

> • A lot of it is the infrastructure. It's like at Bark Lake, your participants have invested a lot of time and energy to get there and they have just decided that they are going to have a good time! Simple things like calling it Community in Song, as opposed to The Hyanto Performance Choir... You'd be signing up for a completely different thing there. Doing pot luck meals. You get a certain cultural group of people when you say, 'We're going to do vegetarian pot luck and, trust me, it will work.' You get people that either trust or have been part of millions of pot lucks and it works. Having it at a camp as opposed to a resort.... so you end up largely with a group of people that will make it work. You could probably wake us up Saturday night at 2 am and beat us with a stick and we would still have a great time on Sunday! Good experiment (laugh)!

Next we looked at some of my self doubt and self criticism.

> • Andy, when you are critical of yourself, saying "I could have done this better or done that better....' that's why you're good at this, Andy !
>
> When you say you are not satisfied with the music, what *are* you satisfied about? It never occurs to me to judge the quality of the music. I am there because I know that a few times during the weekend the universe will open up. The "Frobisher Bay" thing was incredibly profound because after it was over, I looked at Sue differently and thought 'Oh My god!' I looked at people I knew differently.
>
> • We are out of context, away from our comfort zone.Everybody is taking a risk. We are out past the edge in the zone where things can happen.You know enough about the choir to pick the right repertoire. I'm not surprised you are exhausted. You can't go along for the ride.
>
> • If there was one thing that I would do to improve on Community in Song, that would be to get it back down to a smaller size, because if there is one thing about my personality, I will coast if I can.

Some of the problem with the size of the Community in Song group are the limitations of the rehearsal space. We can't move around, switch sections, dance or move to mixed ensemble easily. This has also been a problem with Open Voices, who are running with 120 members now, in a very large church hall.

> • That first Bark Lake Community in Song we stalled on "Lonesome Road" and had to talk about it and agree to keep bearing down, and we made a cut. We moved the bar lower. We moved the platform closer. There was a bit of group process. There was a buzz to the first weekend because we wondered if it would work. After that we assumed it would always work. There is always a good edge the first time

you do an activity.

• I'm thinking about the metaphor of persons finding their voice. In the groups I sing with here in Haliburton, that's important. As people learn to sing they not only find their musical voice, they find their spiritual voice.

• About your negative journal entry, the fact that you are sharing that journal entry with everybody, that's one of the things that makes you an excellent educator and facilitator/coach. You will admit things like, 'I need people to love me,' and 'I want attention.' and as far as I am concerned, that just de-escalates all of that. There is nothing unusual about these feelings. They are not unique. How you deal with them is really important.

About a week after this interview, I received the letter from Linda that I quote on page 7. I'll quote the letter again, and then show my response. The interview was still resonating strongly within me, "going on forever" perhaps, when I wrote the reply. It offers an effective summary to this chapter.

I hate to tell you this Andy, but I feel that a little piece of Community in Song came to my house last week, and it was all you! You prepared music that you shared with us and led us through... You knew how good it can sound and you coached us to taste of it with you, and it was delicious. So my conclusion is, that a key ingredient is YOU... Your effort, your enthusiasm, your voice. (Linda Shantz, from a letter of June 6, 2000)

My reply...

Thank you for that lovely thought, Linda!

I do not think that a conclusion of my work will be that anyone can reproduce the Community in Song experience. I have developed skills over a long period of time which I use in leading these events. And I have developed as a person in a certain way that motivates me to want to do it and to be prepared to take the risk.

Certainly my Bark Lake experience was a key element in my adult life. It gave me leadership confidence in working with adults. Thom was a very good model to me and some of the concepts he taught me about risk and trust became a part of what I believe, and I think I model these beliefs unconsciously at this stage. The whole Bark experience was one that recharged me and made me feel very special—like I had a real gift.

Do you remember my first efforts at forming choirs at Bark Lake? They precede Community in Song by years and they were a real part of my deciding to do this. I'll never forget dancing around the food service island in the new dining hall with about fifteen people, singing 'Freedom is Coming' for all we were worth and thinking to myself, 'I did this! I can do this! This is good!"

Chapter 5

Putting What I Heard Into Action

Reflections on Open Voices

It is August, 2002. I have posted a large, 3' x 4' display on the wall of my office, called "Reflections on Open Voices." I worked on this display a month ago, gluing on all sorts of memorabilia, documentation and history from this first 10 months of my choir onto it, in random placement. It's not all of what I had to reflect on, just what was

available at the time. I have taped this display up on my wall, ON TOP of my display from a year ago, which was called “Healing of the Heart” and began with the question “What’s wrong with Andy?” (see appendix M, a reproduction of the Reflections on Open Voices wall display)

There are photographs of grinning choir members, copies of music we performed which I arranged or wrote, shots of our guest artists signing autographs and beaming, a copy of the painting of myself in an energized conducting pose, presented to me by the term one choir, copies of our corporate seal, sheets of notes from board meetings, concert programs, our home practice CD, the vision statement, a copy in glorious colour of Micheal Hurley’s wonderful “Exuberance is Beauty” poem, photos of dozens of kids, up on stage with us performing the “Rainforest Song”, scenes of the choir lining up and wheeling or walking in to perform, with candle lanterns lit, and the lyrics of our lawyer’s song, “Open Voices.” (see appendix K, Reflections of Open Voices)

> Let’s open our eyes and make the right choices,
> Let’s open our hearts, and open our voices.
> (Gord McDiarmid, 2001, used with permission)

What a celebration it is, and what a huge contrast to the artifact it now covers.
In 1999, I was full of self doubt about my leadership ability, and frustrated with much of the community singing work I was engaged in. Today, in 2002, I am the proud artistic director of Open Voices, a community choir I founded, in my town, and I love it! In this chapter, I will summarize some of what I learned and put into practice through this research, and I will outline some next steps that would help people interested in the community choir movement.

<u>Vision, Support and Organization</u>

The meetings with Isabel Bernaus and the Common Thread board of directors were pivotal. I observed how important it was to operate from a vision. When the choir members, conductor and board of directors are working toward a vision the focus is off the conductor, and the other leaders as individual personalities. Ego can be a problem for conductors. I felt that in Common Thread, Isabel, board members, choir members, sponsors, et al, were subservient to the vision. All persons involved were on the same side.

When I ran into Leslie Saunders on the street in the summer of 2001, it was clear to me after a short discussion that she and I shared a common vision for a choir in Kingston. I had been thinking it over for about a year. A few phone calls to other friends confirmed to me that a group of us had the commitment to work on this together. The fact that I am not solely responsible for forwarding the vision of Open Voices, and the reality that the work, creative input and fantastic rewards gained through membership are all shared, has made a huge difference to me.
The next step for me was to convene our first meeting, during the September 2001 Community in Song event at Camp Hyanto. I began this informal meeting be telling the four interested board members what I had seen at Common Thread. My vision was not identical, but there was significant crossover. The fact that I had a clear idea of what I had in mind set a very strong foundation for meetings and decisions through that fall of planning Open Voices.

Deciding on a name, choosing additional board members with desired skill sets, writing our letters patent in preparation for incorporation and application for charitable status, choosing a venue for rehearsals, designing a logo—all of this work and decision making seemed to happen smoothly when we kept our forming vision

statement on the table in front of us.

The programs for the first two concerts, the vision statement I tabled in October of 2001, a promotional handout, and the orientation sheet for prospective members on January 9, 2002, all demonstrate a unified commitment to a set of ideals and operating principles. (see appendix N-Q)

I have found that by having set up Open Voices to serve its vision, not me, I am better supported by it than in any other activity I am involved with. I could expand this and should start to delegate music arranging, and the production of practice CDs. I know the board would be completely on side. In the spring of 2005, I will take two terms off Open Voices to travel with my family. I am confident that we will be able to find artistic direction to fill in for me. Again, I serve a vision—any other like minded conductor could do the same.

I am Not Alone

By observing Martin Meader, Isabel Bernaus, Marie Anderson and other directors at work with their ensembles I came to realize that many of my rehearsal technique and personal energy management problems were very common. Learning about and acknowledging personality traits that predispose me to certain types of responses like self doubt, self abuse, unsatisfied perfectionism and constant derisive internal monologue has indeed helped to defuse these counterproductive traits. Some small attention I have given to meditation and reflection, and opening myself to others about these annoying characteristics has also helped get them under control.

This is good work

My interviews with participants, and my reading of literature on the subjects of art, creativity, community and music as a healing force have reaffirmed for me the validity of my work in this field. Community choral music making is not the only path to personal growth, healing, peace and joy, but for many, many people I have worked with and discussed this with, it is clearly *a* path.

My research model was not designed to prove music's beneficial effects, but listening to my participants has certainly motivated me to keep on with this work. I believe what they are telling me!

Future Steps

A number of directions I could have been pursued in this project, I have not taken. It is worthy to note them because they demonstrate the wide scope of this field and the need for further work.

Facilitation Techniques

By observing Martin Meader work with non-singers and shy singers, Isabel Bernaus work with a similar, yet more cohesive ensemble, and then Marie Anderson work with one of the top youth choruses in Canada, I could observe different approaches and emphasis. Community choral leadership, aimed at mixed ability and experienced adults, requires a certain approach. Through my experience and through some of that research, I am well positioned to speak about this approach,

but it is not for this project.

Arranging music to make it work

Likewise, arranging music, both in advance, and on the fly in rehearsals, is a skill that community choir directors are especially adept at. We are less attached to the printed music, and very willing to simplify, shorten, or transpose the music we are working on to make for effective performances of what the choir can do well.

Handbook

The Open voices board has discussed the need for a choir handbook that would include contact information, attendance policy, the vision statement and operating principles, a short history, and other information that might help a member feel they were part of the group and knew their responsibilities. We have copies of handbooks from Common Thread, and other choirs, and are developing our own.

Conductors' Summit

I found in my interviews with facilitators that virtually all of us had similar self doubt and self criticism issues. Equally, we all had wonderful strategies for dealing with this, as well as repertoire ideas, conducting tricks and organizational strategies to teach each other. The research design for this project included a conductors' summit. This never came to fruition, but I am convinced that it would be beneficial for me as well as other directors.

Networking

Through this research, I became aware of several other community choir organizations. There is strong interest from the directors I talked to about setting up a network of like minded organizations for the purpose of sharing repertoire, legal and grant application documentation, handbook designs, and perhaps having a conference of festival of community choirs.

Improvisation

The interview with Nicola Oddy, my viewing of the "Sing" video (Weaver, 2001) from the Gettin' Higher Choir, and my listening to Hela Montagnia's *Body, Mind and Music* on CBC's *Ideas* were all about improvisation. Nordhoff/Robbin's work with Audrey was based on improvisation. I feel that I must develop both strategies, and personal willingness to employ improvisation into Open Voices rehearsals and even performances. This will put me well outside my risk threshold and therefore will be good for me, according to Thom Lambert.

Professional Development

The overall quantity of my community choral work over the past three or four years has been way out the top. I have continued to conduct at many summer festivals, while teaching at the Queen's Faculty of Education and conducting my own workshops. I think that this workaholism was partly a personality trait run amuck, stemming from insecurity and a desire to be loved and respected.

Since Open Voices has started up, I have gained a lot of security and feel a lot of love. This is largely due to the fact that this choir is part of my Kingston community, and that it is ongoing, something that festival choirs and weekend workshops are not. I am finding it possible to say no to offers out of town, and I am feeling less compelled to develop this passion 'all over the place.' My next year looks much clearer and less busy than the last several. This might allow me to undertake some professional development I've been hoping to do. Taking courses at Hollyhock in B.C., at the Northern Harmony in Vermont, or again at Westminster Choir College in Princeton would all benefit me and Open Voices. Open Voices even wants to pay for this PD! What a change from going it alone in Community in Song or at folk festivals!

This Research as an Educational Model

As a student in education, it is important to view the journey I have undertaken as one of learning. What can my journey teach about transformation, renewal and risk/trust that would be applicable to other learners, regardless of subject or circumstance? Much of what this project teaches has nothing to do with choral community singing, or even to do with my personal angst. It's about how a person of my personality type approached solving a dilemma by learning about the problem, and applying some of what was learned to change the situation.

Taking time to listen carefully is critical to learning. As a choir leader, I am constantly emphasizing the importance of listening to my choir members. Focused ability to listen is the most important attribute of a good or developing musician. Likewise, it was important for me to listen carefully to the melody I was trying to play as a choir leader. It is certain that I model myself after, and want to be like, many of the

excellent conductors I know or have seen work. This positive memesis is acceptable, but can not occur if I don't take the time or set up a circumstance in which I can really hear these people.

Learning is demonstrated through action. Reporting on this research was foundering while I wrestled with the volume of data and my personal response to the data. The project started to move forward for me only when I put what I was learning into action through Open Voices. It became the test experiment and the results were very positive. This outward reality of Open Voices must in some ways be a reflection of an inward change in myself, and of choices I made as a result of this research.

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Open Voices
The Genesis of a Community Choir

List of Appendices