

The Characterization of a Shared-leadership Approach to Ensemble Rehearsal

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Project Summary

The study of expertise in the field of education is meant to illuminate aspects of teaching that can inform both the training of pre-service teachers and the continued practice of novice and experienced practitioners (Berliner, 1986; Ericsson, 2005; Madsen & Standley, 1992). In music education research, scholars have observed expert conductors and described their methods of improving ensemble performance during rehearsals (e.g., Cox, 2019; Goolsby, 1996; Worthly, 2003, 2006; Yarbrough, 2002). However, this model cannot be applied ubiquitously, as the conductor-led method of rehearsing is not viable for all forms of music ensembles. In chamber groups, for example, musicians rehearse collaboratively, contributing their own ideas to the collective effort in order to improve performance. While we understand very little about the dynamics and mechanisms involved in collaborative rehearsing, a few studies suggest that a variety of social and musical benefits can be gained from shared leadership (Biasutti, 2013; Boerner & von Streit, 2005; Hogle, 2018). Choral educators and scholars have promoted the adoption of a collaborative approach to choral ensemble rehearsing (e.g., Freer, 2016; Hogle, 2018) and have suggested that activities such as peer-monitoring (e.g., Brandler & Peynircioglu, 2015; Kirrane et al., 2017) foster positive emotional and musical experiences for singers. But as of yet, we have no model for a shared leadership approach that can inform pedagogical practice. Models are often developed by studying experts in the field. To that end, we intend to describe the collaborative work of expert chamber musicians in order to begin characterizing a shared leadership approach that could be applied at all levels of music study.

Definition of the Project

This project is a descriptive case study of a professional chamber ensemble that is meant to characterize a shared leadership model of ensemble rehearsal.

Plan and Method

We selected the professional vocal chamber ensemble Cantus as the subject of our study, as the quality of their work is well known in the choral field. This award-winning ensemble performs nationally and internationally more than 60 times per year and has released multiple commercially available albums across its 25-year history. The ensemble is comprised of eight self-identified male vocalists who collaborate in equal measure to prepare music for public and recorded performance. At no time do they work with a conductor or artistic director.

We contacted the members of Cantus and described our research goal of creating a model for ensemble rehearsing that is grounded in shared leadership among musicians. Part of Cantus' published mission is to preserve and enhance music education in US primary and secondary schools. Given the alignment of our common interests, Cantus agreed to provide us with 120 hours of video- and audio-recorded footage from a complete rehearsal cycle.

The purpose of this descriptive case study is to observe the musician-led rehearsals of Cantus in order to more fully characterize effective collaborative methods. We will complete a content analysis of the provided footage in Summer 2021 and aim to characterize the following: (1) individuals' rehearsal behaviors that contribute to a shared leadership approach, (2) dynamics between singers, and (3) changes in performance across time. Illuminating the dynamics and mechanisms that create change in this context could inform rehearsal practices that foster cooperation among members of a group and engage all musicians fully and meaningfully in the process of preparing musical performances.

Please note: My co-author has submitted an exempt-status IRB application at her institution.

Statement of Impact on UT Students and Curriculum

Research informs teaching. My co-author and I aim to contribute important information about collaborative ensemble rehearsal methods that could have implications for pedagogical practice. For that reason, our work would be relevant to the UT teacher training curriculum and important for practicing teachers as well. In 2014, the National Association for Music Education published national standards for music education that require students in secondary schools to demonstrate the ability to communicate about music, create music, and evaluate music performance. These new standards have challenged many music teachers in secondary schools to rethink the traditional teacher-led model of ensemble rehearsing. For years, music students have contributed their performance skills during ensemble work, but have not been called upon to participate in decision-making and other critical thinking activities related to improving the overall performance of the group. Teachers may be more likely to adopt a shared leadership approach to rehearsing if they have access to a model that characterizes effective collaborative work.

Expected Results and Outcomes

Our observations of this expert chamber ensemble could suggest a model for collaborative rehearsal approaches that could be expanded upon and tested in future studies. We intend to continue this line of work, as we expect to develop additional questions from this process of observation. My co-author and I plan to present our findings at national and international conferences and prepare a manuscript for publication in a top-tier international journal.

Previous FRA/SRA Support

In Summer 2017, I was awarded a Creative Research Funding Grant from the College of Fine Arts in the amount of \$5,000. I used the funds to pay a graduate student for his participation in the analysis of data.

That award resulted in a journal article published in the top-tier journal in the field of music education. This paper was presented in an invited talk at a conference held by the National Association for Music Education, and also generated a research poster at the Texas Music Educators Association Clinic/Convention.

The results of this project led to a follow-up study that is being prepared for review with a nationally-distributed journal.

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Amy L. Simmons

Title: Senior Lecturer

Educational Background

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Degree</i>	<i>Date</i>
The University of Texas at Austin	Ph.D. Music and Human Learning	May 2007
The University of Texas at Austin	M.M. Music and Human Learning	May 2003
The University of Texas at Austin	B.M. Music Studies with Performance Certificate Teacher Certification, All-level Music (EC-12)	May 1997

University Experience

<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>	<i>Dates</i>
Senior Lecturer	The University of Texas at Austin	2016-present
Visiting Associate Professor	The University of Texas at Austin	2015-present
Associate Professor	Texas State University	2013-present
Assistant Professor	Texas State University	2010-2013
Assistant Professor	The University of Texas at San Antonio	2005-2010
Assistant Instructor	The University of Texas at Austin	2002-2005

Awards

- Butler School of Music Teaching Excellence Award (\$2,500), The University of Texas at Austin, 2020
- College Achievement Award for Scholarly/Creative Activities (\$1,000), Texas State University, 2014
- Presidential Distinction Award for Scholarly/Creative Activities (\$2,000), Texas State University, 2012

Funded Internal Grants, The University of Texas at Austin

- Creative Research Funding Grant from the College of Fine Arts, \$5,000, Summer 2017.

Administrative Service

- Polymathic Scholars Steering Committee, Member, Fall 2018-present
- Field Supervisor Trainer, UTeach Fine Arts Program, December 2019
- Field Experience Coordinator, UTeach Fine Arts - Music, 2016-present
- Academic Affairs Committee, Chair, 2019-present
- Search Committee, Music and Human Learning Position, 2019-2020
- Search Committee, Music and Human Learning Position, 2018-2019
- Search Committee Liaison, Director of Mariachi Ensembles/Lecturer in Ethnomusicology Position, Spring 2018
- Academic Affairs Committee, Member, 2017-2019
- Rainwater Innovation Grant Selection Committee, 2017 & 2018
- Music and Human Learning Committee, 2015-present

Total Publications: 11**Most Recent Refereed Journal Articles (Past 5 Years):**

- Parsons, J., & Simmons, A. L. (in press). Focus of attention verbalizations in beginning band: A multiple case study. *Journal of Research in Music Education*.
- Simmons, A. L., Allen, S. E., Cash, C. D., & Duke, R. A. (2019). Effects of early break intervals on musicians' and nonmusicians' skill learning. *Psychology of Music*, 47(1), 83-95.
- Parrott, S. M. & Simmons, A. L. (2016). The role of program notes in nonmusicians' enjoyment of choral music. *Texas Music Education Research*, 25-36.
- Duke, R. A., Allen, S. E., Cash, C. D., & Simmons, A. L. (2015). Practice Like a Pro. *Southwestern Musician*, 83(6), 33-37.
- Cash, C. D., Allen, S. E., Simmons, A. L., & Duke, R. A. (2014). Effects of model performances on music skill acquisition and overnight memory consolidation. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 62, 89-99.
- Simmons, A. L. (2012). Distributed practice and procedural memory consolidation in musicians' skill learning. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 59, 357-368.

Most Recent Papers Presented at Professional Meetings (Past 3 Years):International

- “Characterizing the Practice of Artist-teachers and Their Students.” (Simmons, McKeeman, & Yankeelov) International Society for Music Education Conference, Helsinki, August 2020. (Conference cancelled due to Covid-19)
- “Defining Features of Music Practice by Artist-level Performers and Their Students.” (Simmons, Allen, Cash, Hamilton, & Duke) The Neurosciences and Music VII: Connecting with music across the lifespan, Aarhus, June 2020. (Conference cancelled due to Covid-19)
- “Shared variance in contextual auditory discrimination ability and accuracy of instrumental music performance.” (Duke, Allen, Hamilton, Cash, & Simmons) Society for Music Perception and Cognition, New York, August 2019.
- “Effects of verbal corrections on singers' perceptions and performance.” (Cox & Simmons) International Symposium on Performance Science, Melbourne, July 2019.
- Symposium: Optimizing performance skills in music practice: Relationships among goal-setting, performance, and perception* (Duke, Hamilton, Simmons, Allen, Cash). Three papers, on which I was first author or co-author.
- How effective practice based on expressive goals embodies the strategic arrangement of practice episodes that occasion optimal prediction errors* (Duke, Hamilton, Simmons, Allen, Cash).
- Skill acquisition by artist-teachers and their advanced students* (Simmons).
- Musicians' ability to detect pitch, timing, and loudness differences in artist-level performances* (Hamilton, Simmons, Allen, & Duke).
- International Symposium on Performance Science, Melbourne, Australia, July 2019.
- Symposium: The contributors to musical expertise* (Allen, Cash, Hamilton, Simmons, Parsons, Hicken, & Duke). Five papers, on three of which I was co-author or senior author.
- Perception of timing, pitch, and loudness differences in artist-level performances* (Hamilton, Duke, Simmons, & Allen).
- A model of music learning and practice* (Allen, Cash, Simmons, Hamilton, & Duke).
- Does sleep do what we thought it did?* (Simmons & Parsons). The 23rd Clifford K. Madsen International Symposium on Research in Music Behavior, Estes Park, CO, March 2019.

“Relationship between music performance skill and auditory discriminations of timing, pitch, and loudness differences in recordings of artist-level performances.” (Hamilton, Simmons, Allen, Cash, & Duke) International Conference on Music Perception and Cognition, Montreal, July 2018.

National

“‘Make It Better’: Developing Musicians' Plans for Practice.” (Duke, Allen, Hamilton, Simmons, & Cash) National Association for Music Education, Orlando, November 2020. (Conference cancelled due to Covid-19)

“A 25-year Snapshot of Choral Music Education Research.” (Cox & Simmons) National Association for Music Education, Orlando, November 2020. (Conference cancelled due to Covid-19)

“Tell it like it is: Exploring the effects of negative feedback in vocal instruction.” Symposium on Research in Choral Singing, Atlanta, May 2020.

“The Nature of Expertise: A Case Study of an Acclaimed Choral Conductor.” (Cox & Simmons) Symposium on Research in Choral Singing, Evanston, September 2018.

“Focus of Attention and Performance in the Beginning Band Classroom.” (Simmons & Parsons) National Association for Music Education, Atlanta, March 2018.

“Expertise in Music Learning: Implications for Developing Musicians.” (Simmons, Allen, Hamilton, Cash, & Duke) National Association for Music Education, Atlanta, March 2018.

“Characterizing Expertise in Professional Choral Rehearsals.” (Simmons & Cox) National Association for Music Education, Atlanta, March 2018.

“Assessing Differences in Contextual Auditory Discrimination Skills Among Musicians At Varying Levels of Expertise.” (Hamilton, Allen, Simmons, Cash, & Duke) American String Teachers Association, Atlanta, March 2018.

State

“Make it Better”: Developing Musicians’ Plans for Practice. (Simmons, Allen, Hamilton, Cash, & Duke) Texas Music Educators Association, San Antonio, February 2020.

“Defining Features of Music Practice by Artist-level Performers and Their Students.” (Simmons, McKeeman, & Yankeelov) Texas Music Educators Association, San Antonio, February 2020.

“What Constitutes Learning? A Comparison of Two Methods of Analysis.” (Simmons & Parsons) Texas Music Educators Association, San Antonio, February 2019.

“At the Intersection of Choice and Growth: A Professional Development Program for In-service Teachers.” (Batislaong & Simmons) Texas Music Educators Association, San Antonio, February 2019.

“Effects of Teacher Verbalizations on Singers’ Perceptions and Performance.” (Cox & Simmons) Texas Music Educators Association, San Antonio, February 2019.

“Trends in Choral Music Education Research.” (Cox & Simmons) Texas Music Educators Association, San Antonio, February 2018.

“What's Going on Out There? Focus of Attention in Beginning Band Classrooms.” (Parsons & Simmons) Texas Music Educators Association, San Antonio, February 2018.

“Maybe Sleep Doesn’t Do What We Thought It Did.” (Simmons, Allen, Cash, Heinsen, & Duke) Texas Music Educators Association, San Antonio, February 2018.