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BMPF7010: Work Based Learning Project

An exploration of the educational barriers to becoming a professional choral singer within the UK

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Project Proposal

Title

An exploration of the educational barriers to becoming a professional choral singer within the UK.

Context

I have worked as a professional choral singer for nearly twenty years, performing exclusively with UK-based ensembles. The British choral tradition has long been admired by other countries (Cooper, 1964), and unlike in many other countries, choral singers within the UK are expected to be highly proficient in sight-singing (MacDonald, 2014). Thanks to the tradition's roots in church liturgy, where new music would be performed almost daily, rehearsal time tends to be limited and, in my experience, is ordinarily reserved for interpretation rather than learning the notes. Whilst some postgraduate courses in ensemble singing have been initiated in recent years (e.g. University of York, nd), there is no formal university or conservatoire training for professional choral singers. Moreover, there is no requirement to have attended conservatoire to become a professional choral singer. In my experience, choral singers come from a variety of institutions, but there is a strong prevalence of ex-Cathedral choristers and Oxbridge-trained choral scholars (MacDonald, 2014), who need not have taken a degree in music. I studied Mathematics as an undergraduate, whilst taking up a choral scholarship at Cambridge University, and did not subsequently attend conservatoire. This means that my only relevant training was the musical education I received as a child, my training as a choral scholar at university, and ongoing private singing tuition. It seems that the necessary sight-singing proficiency is attained before reaching higher education, and thus, childhood musical experience is crucial. I have observed a very strong bias towards those educated at independent schools, and note that there are a number of reasons this could be the case. Wealth, parental interest, available opportunities, and social networking may all play a part. In this project I aim to investigate the reasons, and identify ways of redressing the bias.

Justification

Currently, only 6% of UK school children attend independent schools (Private Education Policy Forum, 2022). In my experience, privately-educated singers almost always form the

majority within professional choirs, which means the vast majority of school children are either not receiving a high level of choral education, or they are adequately educated but face other barriers to entering the profession. If it is the former, then most of the UK population is missing the chance to acquire a skill that is of historical and cultural significance (Cooper, 1964) and which has the capacity to improve physical and mental well-being (Clift & Hancox, 2010). If the latter, this is a serious case of discrimination, which urgently needs to be addressed. In either case, and it may well be a mixture of the two, the problem is a significant one. Thus, I consider it extremely important to establish the extent and cause of the imbalance.

There have been many studies into the benefits of singing (Barrett & Zhukov, 2022), and many projects to increase participation in choral singing, both in schools and the wider community, such as The 'Sing Up' National Singing Programme for primary schools in England' (Welch et al., 2009). The focus of the initiative, however, has tended to prioritise participation and accessibility over prior experience and the development of a specific set of skills. This is an extremely laudable aim, but a very different task from that of protecting the UK's highly valuable and historic tradition of classical choral singing. With my research project, I wish to focus on how the quality of this historic tradition can be maintained, whilst simultaneously widening access to the art. In other words, how can the necessary skills, awareness, and motivation be open to a far wider audience?

Intended impact

The aims and objectives of the study are:

1. To estimate the proportion of professional choral singers within the UK who attended state schools.
2. To identify the reasons for low representation of state-educated singers among professional choral singers in the UK.
3. To identify how the imbalance can be redressed.

Outlined intention

The aims of my study focus on documenting the underrepresentation of state-educated singers and identifying means for change. This fits well within the transformative paradigm, which frequently addresses underrepresentation (Creswell, 2014), and which prioritises social justice (Mertens, 2010) and aims to produce an action agenda for reform (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Transformative researchers often use a mixed methods approach (Creswell,

2014; Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012), since this allows them to develop a more complete picture of the social world they investigate (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). This is applicable to my own study, since only a mix of quantitative and qualitative data will establish the current situation and highlight widespread trends, whilst also allowing for a deeper understanding of the barriers faced by individuals.

My study will be inspired by the hermeneutic approach, where movements back and forth between parts of the experience and the whole can provide new meaning (Laverty, 2003). By regularly stepping back from individual methods to view the research project as a whole, I can use acquired data to inform my subsequent research. In this way, I can gain an initial understanding of the current situation, then use this understanding to decide which steps will best identify means for change. At each stage of the project, I will reflect on what information is needed, and how it can best be acquired. This means my research methods and their sequencing are subject to change, but I anticipate the project running as follows:

1. A narrative **literature review** to uncover any existing research on the educational background of professional choral singers, on factors that affect uptake of musical education, and on effective methods of teaching the skills required by the profession (e.g. sight-singing). Only UK-based research will be included as a default, but if research from outside the UK highlights effective interventions, then this will be considered too.
2. A **survey** of UK-based professional choral singers to establish their educational backgrounds, what motivated them to take up music, and how they learned the necessary skills. The survey will involve a questionnaire of multiple-choice questions, forming a bank of quantitative data to be analysed statistically.
3. In addition to the sample surveyed in (2), responses will be sought from the full population of one or more professional and/or amateur choirs within the UK, with each choir's responses kept as a separate data set. These data sets will be used to corroborate the data gathered in (2) and to compare professional to amateur choirs.
4. **Questionnaires, interviews and/or focus groups** to gather more detailed data on a sample of state-educated **singers** who complete the survey. This qualitative data will be analysed thematically. The exact research tools and their content will be decided after reviewing the survey data.

All activities will take place online. Figure 1 shows a proposed timescale.

Task	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
1. Project proposal									
2. Literature review									
3. Survey									
Design survey									
Survey open for completion									
Analyse survey results									
4. Further research methods									
Refine project plan									
Carry out interviews / questionnaires / focus groups									
Analyse data									
5. Project report									
Draft introduction and methodology									
Draft findings and conclusion									
Submit draft report for feedback then revise for final submission									
Plan project presentation									
Project presentation									

Figure 1: Gantt chart with proposed study timeline

Ethics and insider research

The project does not involve vulnerable participants and no significant ethical risks are foreseen. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, and participants within all methods will be anonymised. There is a risk that participants could be identified by details of their education and training, so as a default, no organisations will be named in the report. If it

is judged to be in the best interests of the report and the individual/organisation to disclose a name or any other identifying details, this will only be done with informed consent.

Data will be stored in a password-protected file in the researcher's cloud storage, will not be shared, and will be deleted after completion of the project. In accordance with the DPA2018, participants will have the right to ask to see what data is held relating to them, and this data will be deleted immediately if the participant requests this, in which case the data will not be used in the project.

I will be undertaking this project as an insider-researcher, and insider-research brings with it the risk that extra significance is attributed to the researcher's own opinions (Saidin & Yaacob, 2016). In the quantitative aspects of this study, this risk is minimal, but I will need to take care that my own opinions do not encourage leading questions or unduly influence the questions that I choose to ask participants. When undertaking qualitative research, I will code the data analytically using methods recommended by Saldaña (2016) to ensure that I am not unfairly attributing more significance to certain responses than others. The risk will also be mitigated by using triangulation of methods (Patton, 2002) to ensure validity.

There is a risk of bias since the state-educated minority may feel more motivated to respond to my survey. I will actively encourage singers of all backgrounds to respond in the interests of accuracy, and my full population surveys will help assess the extent of any bias; I do not, however, consider this particular risk to be significant cause for concern, since a bias towards state-educated singers will only understate their lack of representation.

Personal learning outcomes

1. To master basic statistical analysis in order to interpret quantitative data.
2. To successfully manage a sequential hermeneutic research project, planning and responding to the data at every stage so as to ensure a coherent and effective final report.
3. To identify ways that I can promote skilled choral singing to those within state education, either through my own teaching or through advocacy or further research.

Report

Introduction

The British choral tradition has a long and rich history rooted in church liturgy; since the foundation of cathedrals and monasteries more than a thousand years ago, boys have been used as choristers to sing the 'treble' voice part (Stewart, 2020). Trained intensively, often within a choir school, these choristers would achieve remarkably high standards at a very young age. Unlike in other countries, such as France, the tradition is still alive within the UK, and has blossomed into a broader choral tradition that is revered as world-class (Ashley, 2013; Dufour & Griffiths, 2019). The church still plays a huge role in the training and employment of singers, and professional choirs can be heard daily in more than 40 cathedrals and collegiate chapels (Ashley, 2013b).

The majority of choir schools in the UK are independent – 39 out of 44 according to Dong and Kokotsaki (2021) – and, after their intensive training, many choristers go on to receive music scholarships to independent secondary schools (Barrett & Zhukov, 2022). It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that in my work as a choral singer, I have found the profession to be dominated by the privately-educated. Over many years, I have observed that privately-educated singers consistently form the majority within professional choirs, even though they represent only 7% of the general population (Sutton Trust, 2019). This lack of representation by state-educated singers corresponds to a poor quality of music education provided by the state sector overall (Dufour & Griffiths, 2019). This matters for two reasons. First, it makes it difficult for the state-educated to work within a rich historical tradition. Second, it denies a large proportion of the population an experience that has a positive impact on cognitive development and wellbeing: a good music education aids aural perception and language skills, auditory memory, literacy skills and spatial abilities, and improves self-esteem, self-efficacy, motivation, mood and social cohesion (Bath et al, 2020); more specifically, the benefits of choral singing include focused attention and social support, with adolescent singers in particular benefiting from the social identity and musical confidence that comes from singing in a choir (Barrett & Zhukov, 2022).

Over the past two decades, a choir school education has become less popular, a change attributed to declining church attendance, increased school fees, and the unattractiveness of boarding at a young age; church attendance halved between 1930 and 2010, and this trend is predicted to continue, raising concerns for both recruitment of singers and the financial stability of a profession that relies strongly on the church (Dong & Kokotsaki, 2021). Whilst the unique tradition of church singing is valuable in and of itself, it also sustains a skill set

that is beneficial to a broader range of industries; from my own professional experience I know that many singers complement church singing with work as session singers, where excellent sight-singing and vocal control enable the production of soundtracks for films, adverts, contemporary albums and more. If the British choral tradition as a whole is to continue, it will need to gain cultural importance outside the church and find a new group of children to raise as prospective choral singers. What better place to do this than the institutions that reach 93% (Sutton Trust, 2019) of our population? Thus, solving the problem of underrepresentation could also be key to protecting the UK's ancient choral tradition.

In this project, I intend to address the underrepresentation of state-educated singers within professional choirs by assessing and documenting the problem, and investigating the challenges faced by state-educated singers together with the factors that help them succeed.

My aims and objectives are:

1. To estimate the proportion of professional choral singers within the UK who attended state schools.
2. To identify the reasons for low representation of state-educated singers among professional choral singers in the UK.
3. To identify how the imbalance can be redressed.

My personal learning outcomes are:

1. To master basic statistical analysis in order to interpret quantitative data.
2. To successfully manage a sequential hermeneutic research project, planning and responding to the data at every stage so as to ensure a coherent and effective final report.
3. To identify ways that I can promote traditional choral singing to those within state education, either through my own teaching or through advocacy and further research.

Literature review

I have undertaken a narrative literature review, using Google Scholar to source peer-reviewed articles. I used search terms relating to educational background, the British choral tradition, and professional choral singing, excluding any articles not in English. After establishing a bank of key articles, I used reference and citation searches to broaden my literature.

The Cathedral Choir Tradition:

As described above, the British choral tradition is rooted in the choirs of cathedrals and monasteries, which began using boy choristers more than a thousand years ago (Stewart, 2020). Boys usually start at the age of seven or eight, and stay until they are around thirteen, which roughly coincides with the time at which most boys lose their ability to sing treble (Ashley, 2013; Ashley, 2013b; Barrett & Zhukov, 2022; Williams, 2010). Even though the trebles in a choir will thus be extremely young, they are trained to an extremely high standard and work as professionals alongside their adult peers (Barrett & Zhukov, 2022). Traditionally choristers would board within a cathedral school, and Milton reported in 2010 that this was still the case for 40% of choristers; the remaining 60% attend choir school as a day pupil or are drawn from local schools (Milton, 2010). Boarding allows them to receive an intensive training, with the busiest choristers fitting in two daily rehearsals, church services six days a week, lessons and daily practice on two instruments, extra concerts and recordings, all in addition to their academic lessons, homework, and sporting fixtures (Stewart, 2020). The main musical assets gained through this education are strong sight-reading skills and a high level of vocal control (Barrett & Zhukov, 2022). These skills are learned through immersion within the choir's practice, with experienced choristers acting as role models for younger peers; probationers are sometimes expected to follow the score with their finger rather than singing – a technique used since mediaeval times – and it could be up to two years before they actually sing during services (Barrett & Zhukov, 2022). Sight-reading is not taught by any particular method, but by practice and necessity, since there is simply not enough time to rehearse music for daily services in detail; although this intensive training may appear demanding, sharing in the routine and repertoire of the church's calendar leads to a strong sense of community and identity, together with a life-long appreciation for music (Barrett & Zhukov, 2022). It also equips many choristers to gain scholarships to the most highly regarded independent secondary schools in the country (Barrett & Zhukov, 2022; Williams, 2010).

In the UK, boy choristers nearly always sing alongside adult professionals on the lower voice parts, so boys will leave the choir when they are no longer able to sing treble. This may be because the male adolescent voice is likely to be unsettled and to lack the polish of highly trained boy trebles and experienced adult professionals. The need for older boys to concentrate on academic study and exams may also play a part. Whilst this could lead to more polished choral performances and higher examination results for ex-choristers, it may have a negative impact on vocal development and engagement in adolescent males. The British system is not the norm in other countries with comparable traditions, such as Germany and the US (Ashley, 2013b). Williams (2010) describes the tradition in German

cathedrals, where choirs comprise boys up to the age of eighteen. Boys move to alto as their voice drops, then stop singing in the choir for up to two years during voice change. They continue, however, to have singing lessons and play an active part within the choir community, then resume singing on a lower voice part when ready. Whilst this may result in less mature lower voices, it means that boys are supported through voice change and encouraged through their vocal journey. Boy singers in the UK may sing treble for longer than is natural, in order to maintain their position within the choir. In Germany, however, there is no such loss of identity and only a pause in choral experience.

Whilst the cathedral choral tradition itself is ancient, there have been changes over the years, perhaps most significantly the introduction of female choristers. Bury St Edmunds Cathedral introduced girl choristers in 1958, followed by Leicester in 1974, but it was not until Salisbury admitted girls in 1991 that the pace of change began to increase (Stewart, 2020). Nearly thirty years later, Stewart (2020) reported that 39 out of 42 Anglican cathedrals have girl choristers, with boy choristers often singing fewer services per week than they previously did. There was a fear that the introduction of girls would damage the experience for boy choristers (Dong & Kokotsaki, 2021), but Stewart (2020) does not believe this to be the case, suggesting that boys benefit from a healthier rehearsal to performance ratio, and the quality of music making has not reduced. Additionally, there is no evidence that the introduction of girls has made it harder to recruit boys. Recruitment is, however, a concern, and research into the current state of cathedral choirs gives a mixed message. On the one hand, there are still numerous training opportunities for choristers – 44 choir schools plus 8 cathedrals drawing choristers from local schools (Dong & Kokotsaki, 2021) – and the introduction of girl choristers has doubled the number of children to whom this training is open. Competition in some of these schools is extremely high, with 15 applicants for every place (Dong & Kokotsaki, 2021). There are many bursaries available either from schools or from external organisations, intended to eliminate financial barriers that might otherwise prevent talented children from becoming choristers (Dong & Kokotsaki, 2021; Williams, 2010). On the other hand, many cathedrals are finding it hard to recruit choristers, with high school fees acting as a financial disincentive in spite of the help on offer; in reality, 97% of choristers are middle-class (Milton, 2010).

Another key reason for recruitment difficulties is declining church attendance, and this is a trend that is predicted to continue (Dong & Kokotsaki, 2021). With ever smaller congregations in churches, it will become increasingly difficult to fund choirs and to justify their existence. It is currently, however, difficult to find the same level of choral training outside of religious establishments, and choristers who move away from religion have reported difficulties in finding singing opportunities of the same standard (Barrett & Zhukov,

2021). There are, then, concerns as to the ongoing viability of the cathedral choir tradition, and a huge gap to be filled should current levels of choral provision fail to be maintained.

Musical education within British schools:

Dong and Kokotsaki (2021) reported that of the 44 choir schools in the UK, only 5 were state-funded. Even allowing for state-school recruits at the 8 cathedrals without choir schools, this shows that the vast majority of choristers will attend independent schools. Professional choral singers need not necessarily have been choristers, so the profession is theoretically open to all those state-school pupils who do not have access to a cathedral choir training. An important question for my research is, then, is whether state schools provide a choral education such that talented and motivated singers can both discover the joys of choral singing, and gain sufficient skill to access more specialised extra-curricular choral opportunities?

In 1962, American music educator Irvin Cooper visited the UK and commented that the singing in cathedrals and private schools was some of the finest in the world; he bemoaned, however, the lack of opportunity within state-funded schools (Ashley, 2013). Sadly, it appears that little has changed, in spite of numerous updates to government policies. Music education, and specifically singing, became a statutory requirement across Key Stages 1-3 when the National Curriculum was first introduced in 1992 (Bath et al., 2020; Savage, 2021). From 2007, the Labour government provided £40m for the National Singing Programme for Primary Schools (SingUp) and the subsequent Conservative government provided a further £4m at a time of unprecedented spending cuts (Ashley, 2013). The aim for this programme was for every school to have a music teacher committed to facilitating high-quality singing for all, and for children to experience high-quality singing on a daily basis (Welch et al., 2012). It included the Chorister Outreach Programme (COP), which sent 1,000 choristers from religious establishments into primary schools to act as role models, working with 60,000 children. COP was judged to be a huge success, with participants developmentally 3 years ahead of other children (Dong & Kokotsaki, 2021). In 2012, the National Plan for Music Education (NPME) was launched, with the aim of ensuring that children of all backgrounds and all areas of the country are able to sing, learn to play a musical instrument, and make music with others. The NPME introduced Music Education Hubs to build on the services previously provided by local authority music services (Bath et al., 2020).

In spite of these programmes, it is widely agreed that there has been a dramatic decline in the music education provided by state schools, in tandem with decreased funding for Hubs in comparison with the previous music services (Bath et al., 2020; Dufour & Griffiths, 2019). The decline in music in schools is often attributed to government policy promoting 'core'

subjects such as English and mathematics, particularly the introduction of the EBacc in 2010, which incentivises schools to prioritise these subjects (Dufour & Griffiths, 2019). Bath et al. (2020) report that 50% of primary schools are not meeting music curriculum requirements up to year 6, and statutory testing is a key reason for this. In secondary schools, more than 50% are not teaching music throughout Key Stage 3, with many schools making music optional from year 9, teaching music outside of core curriculum time, and/or offering music on rotation with other subjects (Bath et al., 2020; Savage, 2021). Staff numbers are declining, with single-person music departments now prevalent, and training has been cut back, with many universities closing their PGCE secondary music programmes; GCSE Music entries fell by 16.7% relative to cohort size between 2014 and 2018, and the number of schools and colleges offering A Level Music fell by 38% between 2016 and 2018 (Bath et al., 2020). Dufour and Griffiths (2019) reported that in some areas of England, particularly in the North, there was no A Level provision at all. This decline is not, however, mirrored in independent schools, which account for a disproportionately high number of A Level Music entries (Bath et al., 2020). Choral singing within schools shows a similar trend: Ashley (2013) investigated singing for boys in a number of independent and state-funded secondary schools, and whilst all the independent schools had choirs for all ages, most of the state schools had no Key Stage 3 boys singing at all, in spite of the National Curriculum requirement. Although it is mostly children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds who lose out (Dufour & Griffiths, 2019), there is no intrinsic link between demographic and musical ability: Welch et al. (2012) investigated schools with varied levels of singing provision, and found that the best results came from a mix of locations, ethnic backgrounds and genders, as did the worst. Children's competence in singing appears to be determined by school policy and leadership, as demonstrated by a longitudinal study which found better progress in a deprived school with high teacher expectation than in a more privileged school without such leadership (Welch et al., 2012). Similarly, Ashley (2013) found that the single most important factor in singing provision for boys was a charismatic and inspiring teacher with an unfailing belief in boys' ability to sing, together with a sensitivity to their vulnerabilities during voice change. It was difficult to separate transferrable strategies from the intangible qualities of exceptional teachers, but a few were found: single-sex singing opportunities for boys, at times that do not clash with sport; an absolute commitment to singing as a 'normal' activity for all; and the use of appropriate ranges for both unchanged and changing voices. Whilst independent schools often draw on the cathedral choir model, with younger boys singing as trebles, and changing voices taking up the lower parts, state schools are currently perpetuating the belief that 'boys don't sing' (Ashley, 2013).

Sight-reading:

Sight-reading, often called sight-singing when related to the voice, is the ability to convert music notation into sound on initial presentation of a score (McClung, 2001). MacDonald (2014) dispelled the myth that English choirs can sight-read, pointing out that this is only the case within the highly specialised cathedral choir tradition. In other words, being able to sight-read is the norm within the tradition, but not outside of it.

It has been demonstrated above that the musical education provided by state-funded schools tends to be poor, and will usually be inadequate for teaching sight-reading. We have also seen that cathedral choristers learn to sight-read by intensive immersion, after a competitive selection process. It might seem, then, that such a two-tier system is inevitable, but history tells us this is not the case. According to Grace (1943), primary music education at the beginning of the twentieth century included singing based on the solfège system – where each note of the scale is given its own unique syllable (Simon, 2013) – and sight-reading was a commonplace skill. Moreover, it was prevalent in working class communities including slums; 500+ singers, mostly factory workers, would be amassed from Working Girls' Clubs for London's 'St Cecilia Festival', singing classical masterpieces in up to 9 parts in prestigious venues such as the Royal Albert Hall (Grace, 1943). This shows that interest and ability in classical music is not intrinsically linked to demographics, and that musical literacy for all is an achievable goal. To support Grace's claim, more recent studies have demonstrated the positive impact of the solfège system on sight-reading ability (Amkraut, 2004; Guo & Chiu, 2024; Holmes, 2009). Sadly, Grace (1943) describes how education policy has failed to appreciate the importance of musical literacy, promoting instead the learning of songs by ear alone, and by the time he was writing, two generations of children had left school musically illiterate. This situation has continued to the present day.

Methods

I have undertaken this research within the transformative paradigm, which Mertens (2010) describes as 'a framework for researchers who place a priority on social justice'. It is often used in research to address underrepresentation (Creswell, 2014) and produce an action agenda for reform (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). It is thus well-suited to my aims of documenting the underrepresentation of state-educated individuals within professional choral singing and identifying how the imbalance can be redressed.

I used a mixed methods approach, which is common within the transformative paradigm (Creswell, 2014; Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012) since it allows researchers to develop a more

complete picture of the social world they investigate (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). In my own research, I first set out to establish the current situation and highlight widespread trends, which required quantitative data. I subsequently sought to develop a deeper understanding of the barriers faced by individuals, which required the increased subtlety of qualitative data.

My study was inspired by the hermeneutic approach, where movements back and forth between parts and the whole can provide new meaning (Laverty, 2003). I wanted to gain an initial understanding of the current situation, then use this understanding to decide which steps would best identify means for change, reflecting on my new understanding after each step. In actuality, my research became a two-part sequential mixed methods study: surveys, followed by a mixture of interviews, questionnaires and a focus group.

1) **Quantitative element:**

I undertook a **survey** of UK-based professional choral singers to establish their educational backgrounds. My aim was to attract as many responses as possible in order to increase the accuracy of my data. With this in mind, I limited the number and complexity of the questions, and included free text boxes for participants to qualify their answers if necessary. This meant that there was an opportunity for qualitative data to arise, but the main purpose of the free text boxes was to add detail to the quantitative data and ensure I was able to categorise data correctly. For example, participants from a mixed educational background could list the types of school they attended, which helped me categorise more effectively without confusing or discouraging participants with a complicated array of options. The end result was three compulsory multiple-choice questions and five optional multiple-choice questions, with free text boxes to add detail if necessary. Participants were also invited to leave their email address if happy to be contacted with further questions. This enabled me to clarify any details for quantitative analysis, and recruit participants for the qualitative phase.

The survey was built in Google Forms, and advertised using purposive and snowball sampling: I emailed 135 of my own contacts and posted on an Alto WhatsApp group with 126 members; my contacts posted on similar WhatsApp groups for Sopranos, Tenors and Basses; I also posted the survey on my Facebook profile, and several contacts shared it further. I would therefore conclude that the survey was advertised to at least 500 singers, many of whom were not known to me.

I analysed the data from this survey statistically, seeking correlations based on age, gender, education, and family background. I performed chi-squared tests of independence manually in Excel, which helped me gain an understanding of the method. In each case, the null hypothesis was that there was no association between the two variables. I looked up chi-squared values in a table of chi-square probabilities (Richland Community College, nd).

Following this, I contacted those who had indicated that they were happy to answer further questions, and enlisted their help seeking professional and amateur choirs to participate in separate surveys. These surveys consisted of a single question identifying type of school(s) attended, and the aim was to survey entire populations. Choirs were asked to send a link to all members, or all singers present at a session, ideally when singers were rehearsing together since this would elicit a higher response rate. I asked directors to inform me of the number of singers surveyed, so I could assess whether the full population was represented in my results. The surveys of professional choirs were intended to corroborate my open survey and/or highlight any potential bias. The surveys of amateur choirs were intended to offer a comparison between amateur and professional singers, to judge whether choral singers represent a certain demographic overall, or whether there are barriers to entering the profession. In the end, I only gained full responses from one professional choir, so I discounted the other choirs and left amateur choirs out of my research altogether.

2) **Qualitative element:**

Having established trends via statistical analysis, I sought to question why these trends might exist. I did this by identifying participants to offer more detailed data on their experiences. To start with, I found participants from atypical backgrounds by identifying those who met all of the following conditions: they were exclusively state-educated, they did not attend Oxbridge, and they had no classical musicians or appreciators of classical music within their close family or childhood influences. Following on from this, I read through the comments submitted in free text boxes, and selected participants who had attended Oxbridge and/or had some classical music connections, but who were exclusively state-educated and had written comments that were of particular interest. I also selected two participants who were not exclusively state-educated, but whose comments included details of strong state primary musical provision that could inform recommendations. I invited participants to join an online focus group, an online interview, or provide written or audio responses

to a questionnaire. This choice was offered both to avoid the scheduling difficulties likely to arise within a group of freelance musicians, and so participants could choose a method by which they would feel comfortable sharing personal experiences, since this was an ethical consideration (see below). It also gave me the benefits of three different methods. A focus group emphasises participants' viewpoints, since interactions between group members replace the traditional interaction between interviewer and interviewee (Berg, 2001), and can generate extra data as participants' memories are jogged by the experiences of others. Conversely, some participants can be reticent within a group discussion, especially since confidentiality is not assured (Patton, 2002), and there is limited time for each participant to speak so data may be less detailed than in a traditional interview (Berg, 2001). Questionnaires, meanwhile, limit the researcher's ability to probe the data, but give participants the freedom to reflect more fully, and are easier to arrange (Denscombe, 2003). Most participants were given three open-ended questions to answer. These were sent to focus group participants in advance, and facilitation was limited to ensuring all participants had their say and all three questions were addressed. The participants who opted for interview had been selected on the basis of their comments, so they were given more targeted questions. These questions were sent in advance, and were then used as the basis of semi-structured interviews.

Questionnaire responses were sent to me via email, and interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed. The data was then anonymised and combined into a single text document. I undertook thematic analysis, since this is an accessible and flexible means of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I used an inductive approach, since I wished to be guided by the experiences of the participants themselves.

Ethics

There were no significant ethical risks in this project, although it was important to establish a supportive environment because participants would in some cases be relating distressing experiences. Participants were assured of anonymity and made aware that they could contact me with concerns at any time. In order to uphold the assurance of anonymity, data was stored using unique identifiers rather than names or email addresses, and names of locations and/or institutions were removed. In a few cases, it was judged important to identify particular choirs or courses that frequently arose within the data, but these are well known national opportunities, and the inclusion of names will not lead to the identification of individuals.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants. The survey included a briefing at the start, followed by an obligatory tick box confirming eligibility and consent. Interview, questionnaire, and focus group participants were provided with a briefing and notified that joining the Zoom meeting or submitting answers signified their consent to take part in the project.

Data will be stored until completion of the project and then deleted. In accordance with DPA2018, participants have the right to ask to see what data is held relating to them, and this data will be deleted immediately if the participant requests it. No participants have enquired prior to completion of this report.

Within the context of this study, I am an insider-researcher, which offers me a unique insight into the world of professional choral singers that I am investigating. This is especially true given that I am a state-educated professional choral singer, thus falling within the minority group I wish to represent. Being an insider-researcher can aid both recruitment and the acquisition of rich and honest data, through existing contacts and rapport (Breen, 2007; Mercer, 2007), and this was certainly true in my case; I was able to use my professional contacts to garner responses, and I shared participants' experience of working as a state-educated choral singer. There was, however, a risk of attributing extra significance to my own opinions (Saidin & Yaacob, 2016), and thus I had a strong obligation to ensure my results were trustworthy. I took various steps to minimise the risk of researcher bias:

- 1) Ensuring the survey was advertised to a large number of singers through snowball sampling, not solely my personal contacts;
- 2) Applying strict criteria to the selection of participants for the qualitative element of this project, to avoid being influenced by personal knowledge of any participants;
- 3) Using open-ended questions, semi-structured interviews, and minimal facilitation, to give participants maximum freedom to express their own opinions;
- 4) Undertaking rigorous thematic analysis to ensure my findings represent the data faithfully, rather than picking out themes that represent my own point of view;
- 5) Documenting the process thoroughly to give optimum transparency.

I triangulated through use of a literature review in conjunction with mixed methods, also using multiple research tools. There was a strong risk of understating the minority position of state-educated singers, because those from atypical backgrounds were more likely to respond to a survey about accessibility. I sought full population surveys of choirs in an

attempt to assess this bias, although I was only partially successful because of limited take-up by choirs. The results I obtained suggest that my results may indeed be skewed towards state-educated singers, but this difference does not have a strong impact on my conclusions, since even the skewed results indicate serious underrepresentation.

Findings

Quantitative phase:

After an initial email to my own contacts, my survey attracted over 100 responses within 24 hours. After publicising more widely via a WhatsApp group the following week, this increased to over 200 responses. Such a high level of engagement suggests that lack of accessibility is widely acknowledged among choral singers, and there is a desire for positive change.

I closed the survey after one month, having received 251 responses. After reviewing these I found that two were duplicates, and 3 had insufficient UK-based education to be accurately categorised, leaving 247 responses for analysis. Although only the first three questions were compulsory, all participants completed the full survey.

As expected, state-educated participants were grossly underrepresented, as shown in figure 2. Roughly a third of singers were in each of the main categories (state-educated, privately educated, and a mixture) with just one home-educated singer.

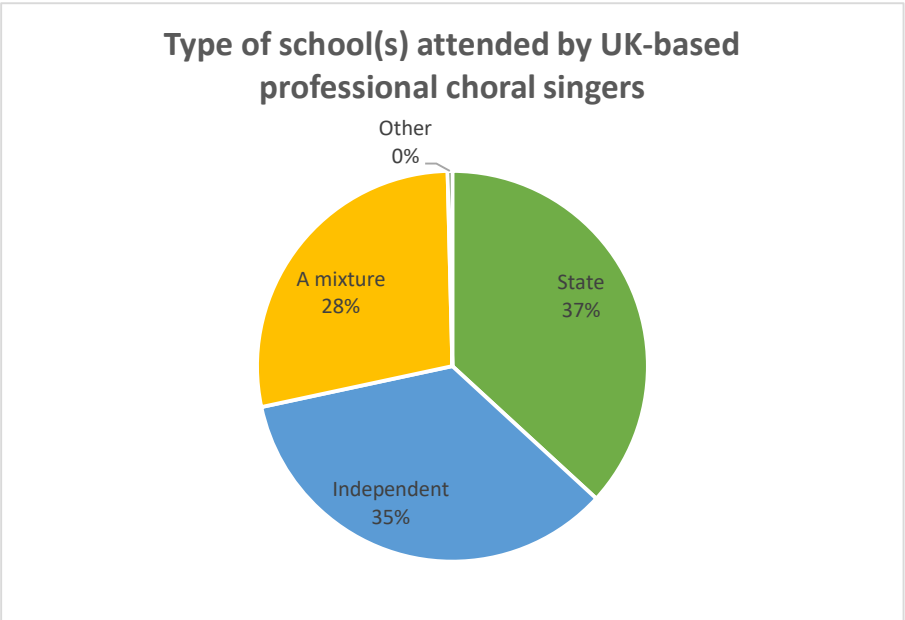


Figure 2: Type of school(s) attended by UK-based professional choral singers

Although state-educated singers make up the single largest category, the figure of 37% is drastically lower than the national figure of 93% (Sutton Trust, 2019). To see how choral singing compares with other professions, I recategorized the data in line with the government-commissioned report *Elitist Britain 2019* (Sutton Trust, 2019). This means categorising participants according to the type of school they attended for the majority of their secondary education, as detailed in the methodology section of the report (Sutton Trust, 2019, p98). Of the 68 singers previously categorised as 'a mixture', 15 were reallocated to 'state', 50 to 'independent' and only 3 gave insufficient information to recategorize (this information was not requested, but most respondents attending a mix of school types gave further information in the free text box). The 3 with insufficient information were excluded from this particular analysis, leaving 244 participants. Of these, more than half (56%) were classified as independently educated. When compared with professions considered by The Sutton Trust (2019), only three had a higher rate of private education: Senior Judges (65%), Permanent Secretaries (59%), and Lords (57%). The most closely aligned sector, Creative Industries, had a far lower rate (29%).

Another aspect investigated in *Elitist Britain 2019* (Sutton Trust, 2019) is studying at Oxford and Cambridge Universities (Oxbridge). Rates of Oxbridge attendance reported in my survey places choral singing below Senior Judges (71%), Cabinet (56%), and Permanent Secretaries (56%), and equal with Diplomats at **51%**. It is, however, important to note that The Sutton Trust (2019) only included those studying at Oxbridge for their bachelor's degree, whereas my survey did not specify degree type, and may include singers who studied at Oxbridge for a subsequent degree. Whilst I cannot, therefore, be certain of the place of choral singing in relation to other professions, Oxbridge graduates are clearly overrepresented in comparison with the general population (1% as identified by The Sutton Trust, 2019).

Combining these two aspects, The Sutton Trust (2019) looked at the common 'elite' educational pathway of private school followed by Oxbridge. Whilst it is likely my methodology results in higher levels of Oxbridge attendance than that used by The Sutton Trust, it is still striking that this pathway is more common in choral singing (33%) than in the amalgamation of all 'elite' professions they investigate (17%). Only Judges reported a higher level (52%), with Diplomats and Newspaper Columnists comparable.

Having collected data on respondents' age, I was now able to look at school type and Oxbridge attendance over time, to see if any trends were apparent. First looking at school type, I started with the 244 responses used above, then excluded the home-educated respondent, together with one who did not disclose their age, leaving n=242. Since the

number of respondents in the 60+ age band was very small, and showed similar proportions to the 50-59 age band, I grouped these together into one 50+ age band. The oldest age band (50+) showed the highest proportion of state-educated singers, followed by 30-39, then 18-29, and lastly 40-49 (see figure 3).

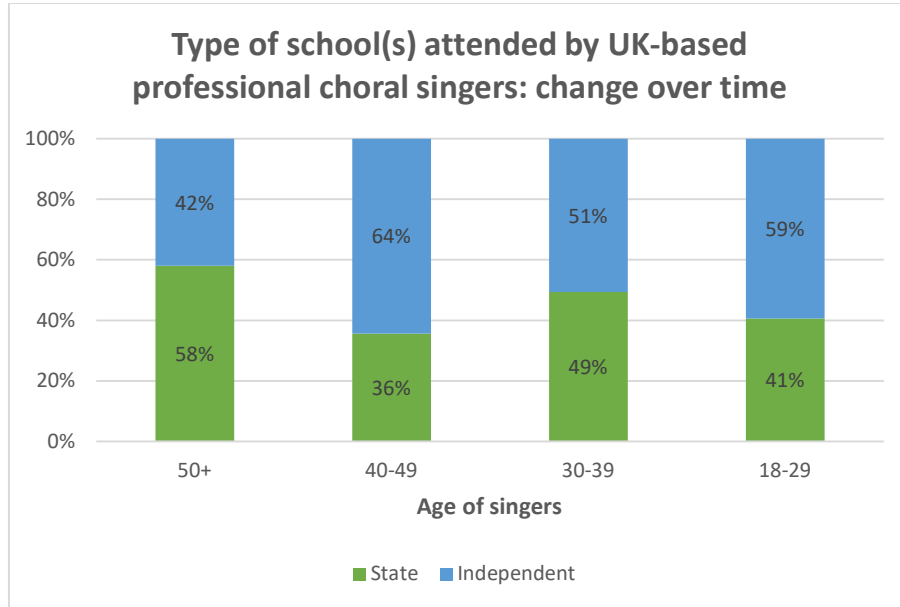


Figure 3: Type of school(s) attended by UK-based professional choral singers: change over time

I used a chi-squared test of independence to assess whether these differences are significant, and concluded that there is only weak evidence to suggest differences in school type by age ($\chi^2=7.6719$, $df=3$, $0.05 < p < 0.1$).

I analysed the data for Oxbridge study in a similar way, with $n=246$ (all 247 except the respondent with no age data). A chi-squared test showed no significant difference between age bands ($\chi^2=1.7009$, $df=3$, $0.1 < p < 0.9$), but it was interesting to note similar trends to school attendance by age, namely that the 30-39 and 50+ age bands showed lower proportions from an 'elite' background than the 18-29 and 40-49 bands (see figure 4).

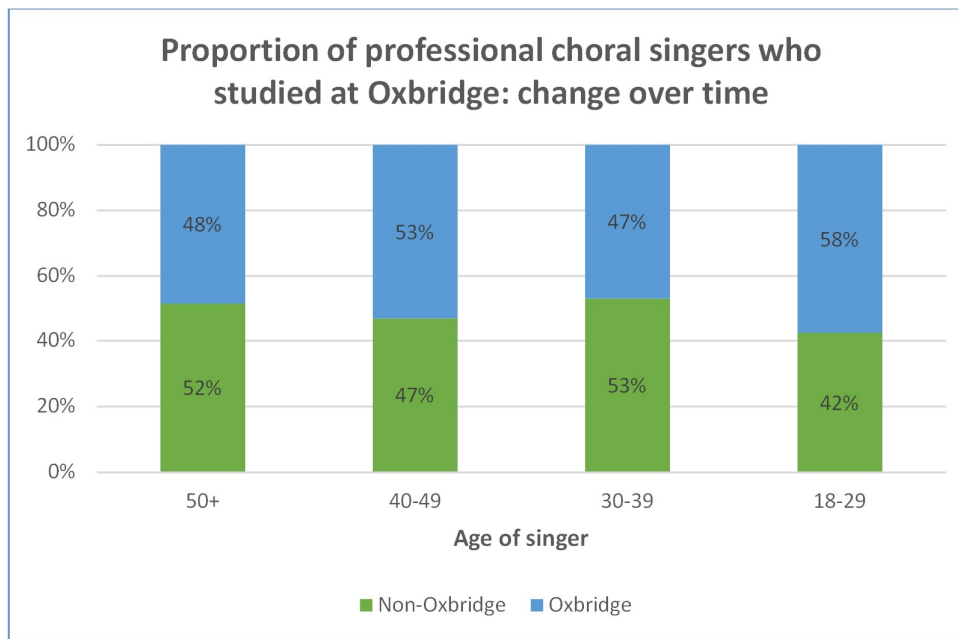


Figure 4: Proportion of professional choral singers who studied at Oxbridge: change over time

These differences may be anomalies in my data, but there is a strong chance that the higher proportion of state-educated in the 50+ age band reflects a real trend. This age range had wider access to grammar schools, with around 25% of state secondary pupils in England attending grammar school in the mid-1960s, compared with under 5% since the late 1970s (Bolton, 2013). A higher quality of musical education may have been available to those who met the standards for entry to selective state schools, and although the state-educated proportion was higher, the proportion attending non-selective schools may have been even lower.

Having established that choral singing can be classed as an 'elite' profession, and the situation does not appear to be improving, I used chi-squared tests of independence to assess whether there are differences based on gender. First, I wanted to assess whether those educated as male were less likely to be state-educated. This seemed a plausible hypothesis based on Ashley's (2013) evidence that singing provision in state schools is particularly poor for boys. I started with the 244 respondents classified in line with The Sutton Trust (2019) methodology, and adjusted respondents' gender classification to reflect their gender during school years. I excluded the home-schooled singer, together with one non-binary singer who gave insufficient detail to be classified within a binary framework, leaving 242. The data demonstrated a significant difference in the type of school attended based on gender ($\chi^2=8.5045$, $df=1$, $p<0.005$). Girls were slightly more likely to have attended state rather than private school, whereas boys were significantly less likely (see figure 5).

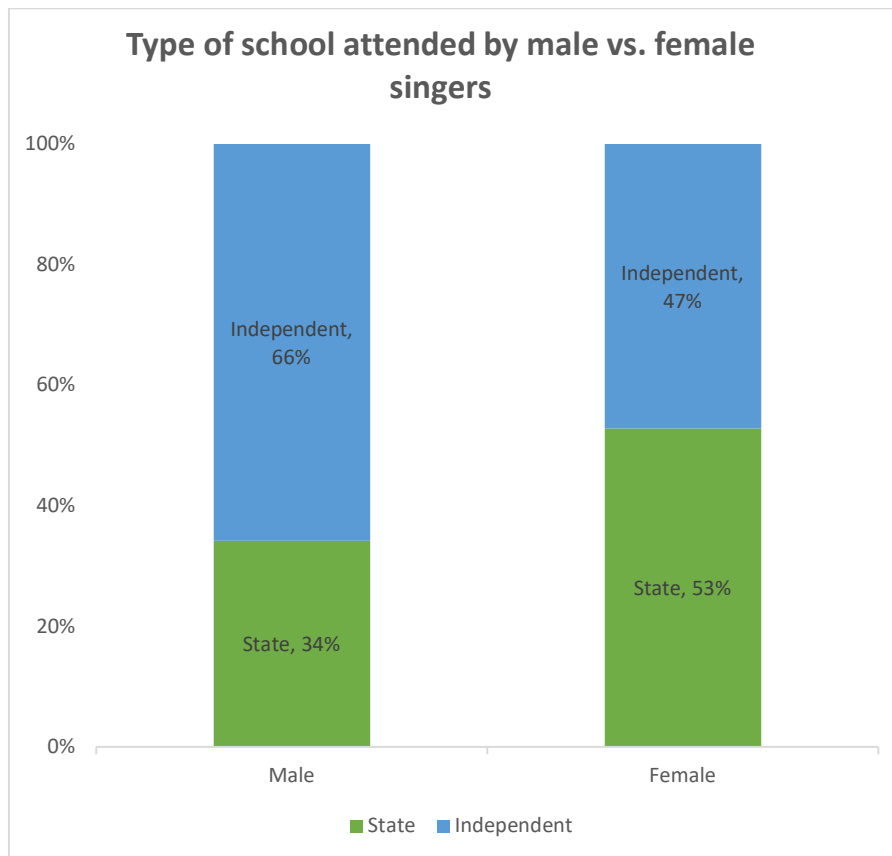


Figure 5: Type of school attended by male vs. female singers

I also assessed whether boys were more likely to have been choristers than girls. 36% of singers trained as choristers overall, which is lower than I had expected and shows that there are many ways of becoming a professional singer without undergoing this rather unusual education. There are big differences, however, in the opportunities that have historically been available to girls versus boys (Stewart, 2020), so it seems apt to consider them separately. I included all respondents except the one non-binary singer I had been unable to classify ($n=246$). The data demonstrated a significant gender difference in the proportion of singers who had trained as a chorister ($\chi^2=10.9476$, $df=1$, $p<0.005$). To see how this has changed over time, I calculated the proportion of male and female singers who were choristers in each age band. I excluded the respondent with no age data, leaving $n=245$. I grouped the 50-59 and 60+ age bands together, since sample sizes in this age group were small, and proportions were almost exactly the same for each age group.

As expected, given the limited opportunities for girl choristers even in the 1990s (Stewart, 2020), the proportion of female choristers has increased over time (see table 1). The proportion of male choristers stayed consistent until the youngest age group (18-29), when it

dropped significantly. This drop could be an anomaly within my sample – sample size is small within these groupings – since research shows no evidence that the introduction of girl choristers has affected the recruitment of boys (Stewart, 2020).

Proportion of male and female singers who were choristers			
	Female singers	Male singers	All singers
18-29	38%	36%	37%
30-39	30%	50%	41%
40-49	24%	50%	34%
50+	0%	47%	23%
Total	26%	46%	36%

Table 1: Proportion of male and female singers who were choristers

In addition to asking participants about their education, I asked whether their family and close friends in childhood included professional musicians, keen amateur musicians, and/or appreciators of classical music. This led to the striking result that 42% of singers had at least one professional musician amongst their childhood family and friends. 21% had family and friends who were keen amateur musicians, 21% had family and friends who were keen appreciators of classical music, and only 16% came from a background with no classical music. Because of the vague level of connection specified (any family member or close friend), it is difficult to compare this to other professions, but it appears to show an insular industry.

I was interested to know whether family connections and/or studying at Oxbridge were mitigating factors that helped state-educated singers succeed within the profession: perhaps state-educated singers comprise those who had the background to succeed regardless of school type, or perhaps an Oxbridge education could make up for a lack of expertise and connections prior to university. I used chi-squared tests of independence to analyse differences within family connections and Oxbridge study based on type of school attended. There was a significant difference in Oxbridge attendance based on school type, ($\chi^2=3.8757$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$), but in the opposite direction to that which I expected: those attending state school were *less* likely to have studied at Oxford or Cambridge. This could be because of less encouragement and admissions support at state schools, and is perhaps not so unexpected given that only 67% of Oxbridge entrants are from state schools (Bolton, 2021).

Similarly, there was a significant difference in family experience based on school type ($\chi^2=16.1568$, $df=3$, $p<0.01$), in the opposite direction to that which I expected: those attending state school were *less* likely to have classical musicians among their childhood

family and friends. It is not simply the case that independent schools provide a better level of music education, so their pupils are more likely to become professional singers; it also seems that musical parents seek a private education for their children, perhaps because they do not feel that local state schools offer adequate musical opportunities. So, although professional choral singers tend to be privately educated, it is not safe to assume they are from economically privileged backgrounds. This is supported by the high number of respondents who mentioned receiving bursaries or scholarships, even though this information was not specifically requested. Of the 149 respondents who attended private school at some point, 21% voluntarily indicated that they received financial support. Some participants even explicitly stated that they could not have attended private school without financial support:

“ALL of my music education after primary school was made possible by scholarships and charity”

“Would not have been able to attend independent schools without such generous financial help!”.

With this in mind, I investigated whether any trends were evident within the group of respondents receiving a mixture of state- and privately-funded education. The majority (73%) started in the state system but moved to private school during or after primary school. This could be because parents consider state education to be better at primary than secondary level, and/or they consider a high quality of education to be more important at secondary level. In light of the evidence above, it also seems plausible that the move to independent schools is driven by the financial support available at private secondary schools. In fact, the proportion mentioning a bursary or scholarship rose to 30% for those who left state education during or after primary school. A number of participants mentioned receiving Government support via the Music and Dance scheme, which supports gifted musicians to attend a specialist school; pupils must be 8 or older to receive government-assisted places at any of the 4 specialist music schools covered by this scheme (Gov.UK, nd). Additionally, since 39 out of 44 choir schools are independent (Dong & Kokotsaki, 2021), some pupils will have moved to private cathedral schools in order to train as a chorister, with one respondent specifically commenting:

“left state education to become a chorister”.

Having trained as chorister, singers may have been awarded music scholarships to independent secondary schools rather than returning to state education. This is a plausible hypothesis, since 31% of choristers attended a mix of school types, but only 19% of these went to a state secondary school. In other words, 25% of choristers began their education in

the state system but subsequently went to an independent secondary school. This accounts for 9% of all the singers I surveyed.

A much smaller number of singers were in state education up to GCSE, then moved to independent schools for A level. Of these 7, 3 mentioned that their state school was unable to offer the musical education they needed. One even said that:

“no state school in the county offered Music A Level”.

One (male) singer also mentioned that he only began singing after moving to an independent school for sixth form, further supporting the evidence that singing at state schools is particularly poor for boys.

There were 7 singers who moved from independent to state education at secondary level. Of these, 5 moved to a grammar school, and 1 to a state-funded cathedral choir school, with only 1 attending a comprehensive. This suggests that a small number of singers lived in areas where high-performing state secondary schools were available, and they might have stayed in the private sector were these options not available. This may also explain the 3 singers who moved from independent to state-funded education at sixth form. These situations are unusual, and it is clear that the overwhelming majority of those receiving a mixed education begin in the state sector and move to independent schools later on. Not all cases will be driven by a lack of high-quality state music provision, but at least some in my sample were.

Another question I asked participants is whether they received individual instrumental tuition for at least three years (intended to designate those who played an instrument as a child rather than those who briefly tried it out). I expected 100% of participants to qualify, which they did. This suggests that, at least within our current educational system, nobody will become a professional singer without learning to play an instrument, which is important to note because instrumental tuition is expensive and requires a significant investment from parents to acquire an instrument, supervise or at least encourage practice, and offer transport to musical activities. The profession is, therefore, limited to those whose parents can afford the time and money, or source alternative funding.

Another prevalent characteristic was having been a university choral scholar (or similar – some participants studied at conservatoire rather than university). This was reported by 74% of respondents, but it is, of course, not known to what extent interested singers sought out institutions with choral scholarships, and to what extent choral scholarships in higher education encouraged singers to enter the profession.

To end this quantitative phase of my research, I considered the extent to which my sample is likely to be a representative one. Since respondents were self-selecting, there is a strong chance those who care more about accessibility within the industry, likely including those from atypical backgrounds, were more likely to complete the survey. I attempted to assess this bias by gaining data on school type from several professional choirs in full, but this proved trickier than recruiting individual participants, and I only received full data from one choir (size not given for reasons of confidentiality). Although this is too small a sample to draw firm conclusions, the data supports my suspicion that underrepresentation is more extreme than previously shown; half of the singers were privately educated, quarter were state educated, and the remaining quarter were mixed (see figure 6).

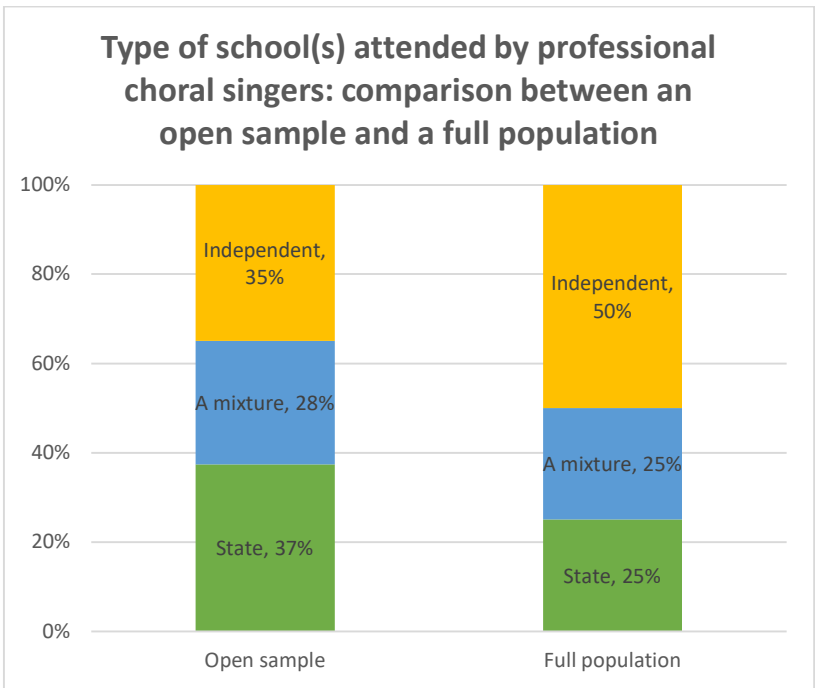


Figure 6: Type of school(s) attended by professional choral singers: comparison between open sample and full population

Qualitative phase:

Having discovered that state-educated musicians were more likely to come from atypical backgrounds overall, I wanted to discover more about these singers' paths into professional music. I ascertained that there were 14 participants who were exclusively state-educated, did not study at Oxbridge, and did not report having musicians or appreciators of classical music among their family or close friends growing up. Of these 14, 9 were willing to be contacted with further questions, so I asked if they would undertake a focus group meeting, interview or questionnaire. I received 6 responses.

I knew from the text submissions in my survey that there were voices of interest outside of this group, so I widened my sample to include:

- a) Those who met the other two criteria but studied at Oxbridge, since their atypical starting points were still of interest;
- b) State-educated singers who had some appreciation of classical music within their family and friends, but whose comments indicated that they faced social or cultural challenges;
- c) Singers who mentioned strong state music provision, since I was interested in good practice as well as challenges experienced.

This resulted in me contacting 11 more singers, of whom 7 responded. 3 singers were only offered the option of an interview or questionnaire, since their comments prompted targeted questions. Of the 13 participants, 4 attended an online focus group meeting, 2 attended online interviews, and 7 sent written responses.

The overall picture portrayed by these responses is one of luck, and a lot of determination, parental support, and catching up. Participants discovered their love of music through a variety of experiences, including live accompaniment at ballet lessons, church music, playing a relative's piano, and school music. Some participants felt a strong musical instinct from a very young age, but others only experienced it after musical opportunities were presented, showing that opportunities to experience and participate in live music are essential for uncovering musical talent. Most participants said parental support had been crucial; even though many parents had no interest in classical music, they provided financial assistance, emotional support, and transport, all of which take up a considerable amount of time. There is a sense, then, that these singers were able to succeed in spite of atypical backgrounds because of the support offered by their parents.

It was also the singers' own determination that led to success, with participants describing it as *"bloody mindedness"* (Participants A & G), and one stating that they simply *"refused to give up"* (Participant J). Looking back, participants can see this determination was necessary because they had to work so much harder than those who received a thorough musical education:

"I did it all myself when I decided I'd go to [OXBRIDGE]. I went to [LOCATION] library and I got CDs out, like, how many I could per week and paid the 55p to rent it out for the week and I copied it onto my minidisc and then I bloody well listened to the entire classical Canon. So that I could apply to [OXBRIDGE]. I mean, I just can't believe it. Now, I send a link to my [pupils] on YouTube and they don't even watch it."

(Participant A)

Many participants mentioned feeling that tasks were not beyond their capabilities, but were more challenging to them because of their limited experience in comparison to other singers. Those who trained as choristers would have had singing lessons, instrumental lessons, daily rehearsals and performances from the age of 7 or 8, building up a wealth of experience and knowledge. Most participants in my study, conversely, started singing lessons aged 14 or older, with 2 receiving no tuition until adulthood. There was, therefore, no inherent lack of ability, but an extreme mismatch in acquired knowledge and experience. This is particularly true with regards to sight-reading, where participants learned on the job just as choristers would, but in many cases a full decade later and alongside peers who already had excellent sight-reading skills, which could be a distressing and humiliating experience.

To highlight more detailed aspects of participants' experiences, I now discuss the roles played by key institutions in their musical lives, followed by the key challenges they experienced in their paths to becoming professional singers (see Appendix 9 for a theme diagram).

Key institutions:

School

School is crucial, since it is the only institution that can reach (almost) every child. Most participants in my study came from families with no interest in classical music, so school was often key to igniting their interest; in many cases, it was the first place they experienced live classical music. Primary music provision seems to have been reasonable overall, although it varied between participants. Features mentioned included whole-class recorder tuition (6 participants), singing hymns in assembly (3 participants, although one sang with backing track rather than live piano accompaniment), and instrumental demonstrations by peripatetic teachers (4 participants). This last was key for several participants, and was usually followed by free or low-cost tuition; it ensured all pupils had exposure to live music and the opportunity to learn, regardless of family experience and financial situation:

"I come from not a musical family ... I don't think I had ever really felt a pull to music, until one day one of the peripatetic teachers came in, had a chat with our classroom teacher and said, there's an opportunity for people to play the violin or the cello. Can you raise your hands if you're interested? And I just knew that I really, really was. I was really desperate to get this opportunity, and I thought, what will I do if they don't pick me? I don't know where it came from." (Participant K)

Secondary provision was more varied, with many participants gaining formative musical experiences outside school by this stage. There was notably better provision in grammar

schools (4 participants), with two participants switching to grammar school for sixth form and noting the increased quality and quantity of musical activities. Many participants mentioned the limited opportunities available to them in comparison to what is on offer at independent schools. In particular, the lack of, or insecure, A Level Music provision was a problem (4 participants). Some participants mentioned a negative culture within school, where classical music was not viewed as an acceptable pastime:

“There wasn’t a proper choir as such at school, I didn’t properly know what classical singing was, and had I suddenly started trying to do what I thought classical singing was, I’d have been even more ostracised at school than I already was by spending so much time playing [INSTRUMENT].” (Participant J)

In line with the findings of my literature review, the single factor that seemed to make most difference within schools was having an exceptional teacher (Ashley, 2013; Welch et al., 2012). Many teachers were credited, from the primary school singing enthusiast, who was by no means a classical music expert but noticed and nurtured Participant A’s interest and talent, to the several secondary music teachers who went above and beyond what was expected of them. One participant said:

“My state school also had a strong and passionate head of music who encouraged me tirelessly. Through him, I found a good singing teacher, auditioned for the National Youth Choir ... and also auditioned for Junior Departments. He also advocated within the school for them to run A Level Music for me, because I was the only pupil who chose it and so they wanted to cancel the course (if they had done this, I would never have gone to [UNIVERSITY] on a choral scholarship to study Music!!) so his intervention was incredible. My parents would never have known these extracurricular things even existed so he was amazing in signposting me to them.

Essentially, I think for children who show musical promise without lots of family knowledge the system at present really requires teachers to step up and share their knowledge and I was so so lucky that I ended up with teachers who did that, rather than just the bare minimum!” (Participant M)

One participant mentioned singing ‘The Three Kings’ by Cornelius at primary school, with teachers taking the solo line and tenor and bass parts – to have adequate talent within a state primary school to staff this piece seems remarkable! One headteacher was also a church music director, and sustained an orchestra in a primary school with only 56 pupils.

Finally, one participant received lessons from a truly inspirational teacher based on the Kodaly Method, a system using solfege, rhythm syllables, and hand signs to teach musical literacy through singing (Bowyer, 2015), and Dalcroze Eurhythmics, which uses body movement to teach music (Juntunen, M.-L. & Hyvönen, 2004). This seems to have offered a modern-day equivalent to the education referred to by Grace (1943):

“Solfege hand signals meant we learned to sing in harmony following the signals of his two hands, which helped us to understand the degrees of the scale, and which brought consonance or dissonance ... The ear training I had was incredibly rigorous. Through the Kodaly method and solfege, music was lifted away from the page and I learned to visualise intervals and rhythms, and to trust my ear. When I look back, I'm amazed by the complexity of what he would ask us to do ... my understanding of harmony was grounded in visual and aural understanding, and not confined by specific key signatures or a piano keyboard. I gained musical confidence and a deep love of music as being something which was primarily physical, but also mindful and enjoyable ... Everyone could and would sing confidently. It was a shock to get to secondary school and discover that not everyone sang at school happily.”

(Participant H)

Sadly, this experience is the exception rather than the norm, but it offers a vision of what can be achieved with few resources other than a well-trained teacher.

County music services / Hubs

Many of my participants used their local authority music services (prior to 2012) or Hubs, which were often crucial to these participants' musical development. Firstly, participants reported that county music services or Hubs provided the peripatetic teachers that gave instrument demonstrations and the subsequent tuition in schools, as well as specialist class music tuition in the case of Participant H (see Schools section). Further than that, they provided a broader range and higher quality of music education for those talented musicians whose needs were not met at school. Participant C only began singing after joining instrumental groups through the local Hub and befriending instrumentalists who sang in the Hub choir, which provided free vocal tuition to all members. Participant K benefited from a wealth of county music opportunities, including orchestras and chamber music coaching. Teachers were generous with their expertise, often playing alongside students, connecting students with opportunities, and helping students earn money from music and prove its worth as a viable profession. This led to high standards of music and representation from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds, and took place within a fairly deprived area of the UK not widely associated with cultural opportunity. This combination of high standards

and open access makes it an example of excellent provision, and shows what is at stake if local music services are not adequately funded.

“I can’t really fault the classroom music tuition, but I would say that for me it was the county wide stuff that was more transformative.” (Participant K)

Saturday music schools

Participants had a very mixed experience of attending Saturday music schools. For one participant, who described it as *“my dream”*, and *“the best day of the week”* (Participant L), it provided a wealth of new opportunities, including singing lessons, with all costs covered by a bursary. For another participant, however, it was a less positive experience:

“I did find it a deeply alienating experience in relation to my state education. I genuinely only remember one other student there who was a state school singer ... Loads of the other singers knew each other from school ... I never felt that I fitted into that space at all.” (Participant M)

Another participant mentioned attending a Saturday music school only briefly, because there was no obvious role for someone who was not primarily an instrumentalist (they were given a triangle to play). Similarly, a participant who now teaches university choral scholars has observed that junior music colleges, whilst providing a high level of musical education in certain specific areas, do not provide a training in choral church repertoire.

It seems, then, that Saturday music schools can provide a transformative experience for young musicians, particularly instrumentalists, who lack these opportunities elsewhere, but in the main they do not provide an education that is specifically relevant to choral singers, and they can also be uncomfortable environments for those from atypical backgrounds.

Higher education

5 participants studied at Oxbridge, 4 studied at other universities, and 4 studied at conservatoires. Most participants managed to access guidance regarding their choice of institution, and challenges relating to higher education were not frequently mentioned. One participant, however, found it a distressing experience to receive an Oxbridge choral scholarship then be rejected at academic interview (with no support provided by school), and was also disappointed that offers from conservatoires were not acceptable because there was a requirement to focus on one instrument only. Given the dominance of Oxbridge graduates within the profession, it seems likely there is a shortage of higher education courses for musicians who are interested in choral singing but do not wish to focus on academic music. Participants who attended Oxbridge often felt that it had lessened the

impact of falling outside the musical 'network' earlier on in their education, and thus alternative courses would need to ensure they could provide an equivalent level of support.

Church

Given the church's central role within the British choral tradition, it is not surprising that church was frequently mentioned by participants. Several participants recounted the transformative experience of hearing live choral music in church for the first time:

"I remember going to church the Christmas I was 6, and I'd never heard voices singing in harmony, and I remember the minute it started, I stopped scribbling in the bottom of the pew and I needed to get into the aisle and listen to what was going on."
(Participant G)

"I just remember going in and experiencing mass and hearing the choir ... it was unbelievable, I'd never experienced anything like it. It was the most magical thing and I think if I hadn't experienced that moment, I would not have known what it was that you could be a part of. And it was a really inspirational, amazing moment."
(Participant A)

For some participants, a church choir provided the choral education that was absent from school, together with an environment in which their singing was socially acceptable:

"There was very little music at the school I went to but I was singing at my local church choir ... It was usual for broken voices to sing countertenor for a while before moving to tenor and bass but I just stayed there. I suppose it normalised something which would have been completely abnormal at my school and more generally in society." (Participant D)

The financial stability provided by church jobs is particularly important to singers from less privileged backgrounds, and many participants felt they were only able to enter and remain in the profession because of paid church positions; they would otherwise have had to seek non-musical paid work, which would have left limited time for singing and restricted their progress. One participant described how a church job at university shaped their career:

"We were doing interesting polyphony that possibly hasn't been performed for 500 years, and that's where I really fell into this line of work. It was a total accident, that I should end up doing polyphony as a career, because I happened to have this Sunday morning job ..." (Participant C)

Several participants mentioned learning to sight-read through a church job or scholarship, learning on the job in a similar way to choristers, but in early adulthood instead of childhood.

"I was dreadful at sight reading, absolutely dreadful ... After three years of [OXBRIDGE CHAPEL], ... and three years of [CHURCH JOB], then I felt like I was almost bulletproof." (Participant A)

It was very striking, however, that for participants who were not familiar with church settings, the church formed another culture of elitism, akin to that of the private school system. Those singers who started singing in church either as a university choral scholar or as a professional singer found themselves in an unfamiliar world, where everyone else seemed to know the repertoire and routines already.

"I went to [UNIVERSITY] as a choral scholar, had an amazing time, but it was a baptism of fire, didn't know any of the sort of church protocols, psalms. Didn't get it. Didn't know most of the hymn tunes that people assumed you would have known." (Participant L)

"I do remember starting at university on my choral scholarship and never having read a psalm ... Things like that were a bit stressful and again just make you feel a bit daft." (Participant M)

In some cases, feeling out of place in the church came across more strongly than feeling out of place as a state-educated singer.

*"they had opinions as to whether they liked Tallis better than Leighton, and I hadn't even heard of these ... I came from quite a musical family. My dad was really into orchestral music, so he played Sibelius symphonies in the evening, and I would listen to them from my room, and we were not a non-musical family, but this kind of music, this kind of world, I'd never done it, I had never done it before in my life." (Participant E, who **did** attend a private secondary school, but not church)*

"I found trying to break into the London depping scene really really difficult. It seemed like everyone had been a cathedral chorister/privately educated as a child and had cliquy church-choir lingo/banter etc that I didn't understand. Things that they would consider basic: terms like 'introit', 'anthem' 'psalm', when to kneel or bow, or how to read chant on a 4-line stave, were utterly alien to me, even though I was and am a very good sight reader." (Participant F)

Some were made to feel ignorant for their lack of experience, and sometimes publicly humiliated:

"Each church had a different way or order of doing things, and I was actively made to feel ignorant for not knowing them, even though there was no way I could have. After

a year or two I stopped actively looking for church depping work because it was too depressing, and instead stuck to places I already knew, or places that came with guarantees of friendliness ... It's been 10 years since opera overtook choral in my life, but the recollections of those early years in the profession are still painful."

(Participant F)

"I found people in the world of choral singing were incredibly impatient with my inability to sight-sing fluently. My director of music at [CATHEDRAL] was reasonably unpleasant about this, reasonably publicly, reasonably frequently. I found people tended to equate my deficiencies with sight-singing with a combination of laziness and general stupidity ... I used to go home from services and rehearsals humiliated and in bits." (Participant J)

This culture is able to exist because of the lack of a formal training route. Church singing is learned through experience rather than as the subject of a degree or diploma, and knowledge tends to be assumed rather than actively taught. An example of this is singing from neumes – an ancient notation used for plainchant (Levy, 1987) – which is a skill most church singers need but have never been formally taught:

Participant C: *"no one has ever actually sat down and taught me how to read neumes. I've had bits of information fed to me, and, for the whole 12 members of the back row at [CATHEDRAL], half of which are students, half of which are professional lay clerks, none of us have ever been taught how to read neumes, which is quite a large part of some of this repertoire."*

Participant A: *"It's like it's a secret language that nobody teaches. If you don't know it, then there's something wrong with you, maybe. If you go and sing at [CATHEDRAL] and you don't know how to do it, oh, how come you don't know how to do that?"*

This suggests there is a need for church-specific training, especially for young professional singers who do not come from a church background. In recent years, there has been a rise in church 'choral scholarships' which purport to do this job, but further research would be needed to establish whether these actually fulfil singers' needs, or whether they are simply a response to the church's declining financial position and a desire to maintain high-quality music at a lower cost.

Other extra-curricular music

Throughout this report I have removed names and locations to protect anonymity, but there are two organisations that are both significant enough to name, and common enough that naming them does not compromise singers' confidentiality: National Youth Choir (NYC), and

Eton Choral Courses (ECC). ECC are now known as Rodolfus Choral Courses, but were ECC at the time participants attended.

Both these institutions were mentioned as extremely important experiences for participants. For many singers who did not train as a chorister or experience high-quality singing at school, NYC filled the gap:

“From the age of 12-21 I attended 2 National Youth Choir courses per year ... This was pretty formative for me - I wasn't a chorister and this kind of rigour really contributed to me becoming a professional” (Participant M)

“I would say NYC was the main factor in my becoming a pro chorister. I experienced world-class choral music, and learned to sight sing.” (Participant F)

“At uni I switched to first study singing by my finals - mainly due to my enthusiasm developed through NYC.” (Participant N)

There is also evidence that NYC encouraged access to those from atypical backgrounds: one participant applied after a leaflet was sent to their (state) school music teacher, and another received scholarships covering half the course fees. NYC also helped provide an alternative network for those outside the private-school system:

“I was definitely lucky to have contacts through NYC - when I moved to London ... I was fortunate to make contact with some old singing friends.” (Participant N)

Conversely, this is the creation of another network that promotes its members at the expense of others; just as participants felt like outsiders because other musicians all knew each other from school and passed on work to each other, one participant mentioned the same effect with extra-curricular singing activities such as NYC.

ECC provided a much briefer experience in participants' lives, but one which was none the less formative:

“I worked all summer so I could afford to go on an Eton Choral course, and that moment was incredible. That was the first time I was really working with people that were really good, and who really loved what I did, and having amazing teachers, and you know, that's when I learned to sing psalms ... That's when I started to be able to sight read ... That Eton Choral course was just life changing for me, and made me realise this is what I wanted to do.” (Participant G)

Although it gave participants the training and musical environment that they might have previously missed, ECC could also be an uncomfortable experience for state-school singers:

“I remember feeling particularly out of place on the Eton choral courses I did as a teenager. One interesting instance of class dynamics (I am very middle class) was that when someone once asked me what school I went to and I answered ‘a state school in [LOCATION]’ they said ‘oh’ and walked away. Those courses were like being dropped straight into a very public school world that I had absolutely no idea how to navigate. But I did learn a lot.” (Participant D)

These experiences are historic, and do not offer a current account of the benefits and drawbacks of specific institutions such as NYC and ECC. What they do, instead, is to show how important these experiences are, and how important it is to make them accessible and comfortable experiences for singers from underrepresented backgrounds.

Key challenges:

Financial

The financial help received by participants was significant, including free/subsidised tuition, charitable grants to cover instrument hire, and scholarships to courses. In many cases, participants reported musical experiences that were only possible because of this help; Participant C, for example, was only able to continue both vocal and instrumental tuition because one was funded as part of A level music, and Participant L was only able to attend Saturday music school because of a full bursary.

But not all participants were aware of the support available:

“I did have to stop having piano lessons because they couldn't afford for me to have piano and voice lessons, and we never looked into funding, really” (Participant G)

Gathering information and applying for funding can also involve a large time commitment, a burden that not all parents will be able to afford if they are working hard to make ends meet.

“My mum in particular spent hours on the computer looking for funding options”
(Participant L)

It is extremely important, therefore, that information on financial support is easily accessible and that the application process is unduly onerous.

Once embarking on a career, paid jobs within the church were invaluable for singers who needed financial security. Participants from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, however, are more likely to suffer from unmanageable workloads as they combine the need to earn a living with the need to catch up musically. Perhaps most significantly, they have no safety net of savings or family support:

“as a working class person one can only afford so many failures. There's no-one to pay your rent if you have a difficult month. There's no-one to get you a well-paid job to do in between contracts: you HAVE to earn your crust at all times.” (Participant J)

Career support

Given that choral singing has no formal training route, it is difficult for those without experience of the choral world to know how to succeed in the profession. The first challenge many singers face is scepticism that singing is a viable career option:

“my parents were incredibly supportive and loved my singing and, you know, wanted me to do well at it, but they didn't see it as a profession that you could go into.”
(Participant G)

“my parents, they were very supportive emotionally ... but their question was always, is it going to pay the bills when you're older, if you choose to pursue this?”
(Participant K)

“My parents were cautious about supporting me pursuing an actual career as a singer: my mum's point was 'I think the people that have careers as singers started when they were really really young’” (Participant J)

They then need to know what steps to take to enhance their career prospects, and this is difficult for singers who have limited contacts within the musical world:

“It was incredibly hard because nobody could tell you how to be a musician, how to be a singer ... I did it all a little bit late because I feel like from 16 to 20 I had years out of understanding what my path could look like.” (Participant A)

Several participants mentioned that they had no idea how important keyboard skills were:

“just before I started to apply to uni was when I realised that you needed to be able to play the piano, to do a music degree at the places I wanted to go to. And so I went from nothing to grade 5 in about a year and a half and I remember it being so stressful, and just that feeling of: why did no one tell me that this was an important instrument to play?” (Participant L)

“I had no idea I'd need it at [OXBRIDGE], I thought I'd be a singer so I didn't need to play piano ... a lot of the jobs now I think, if I wanted to leave being an opera singer, I might not be able to do. Like being director of music in a school, I couldn't do that because I don't play piano. Now I think I'd like to be a conductor, but a lot of

conducting jobs you need to be able to play the piano, or transpose at the piano, or basically be an organist, which is so restricting.” (Participant A)

Overall, there was a lack of available knowledge to support their career paths, and what they did receive was usually thanks to the luck of having a particularly knowledgeable and helpful teacher.

Career support was discussed in the focus group, and it was agreed that this is an area in which change could be achievable and affordable. Building up a database of potential mentors and speakers, and making this accessible to career services within state secondary schools, could make a difference to any singers who are struggling to find their way.

Cultural

Most participants reported feeling uncomfortable or out of place at some point in their responses. In some cases, this was because classical music, or singing in particular, was not considered normal within their childhood environment:

“Being in the choir at primary school was, at that age and at that time, in a relatively working class part of the Midlands, boys didn't really do that ... I think there were two or three other boys in the school maybe who did choir, so I didn't want to do it.”

(Participant A)

In other cases, it was feeling out of place in the unfamiliar and private-school dominated musical environment, occasionally as a result of overt discrimination:

“The people who ran the chamber choir and the choral scholars had a feeling of privilege about them that turned me away from pursuing it further.” (Participant B)

“The physical and vocal sensibilities of opera and choral singing are things which are not particularly abnormal for middle class people who have been to selective or private schools, but which are totally foreign to many of us from rougher state comps. Even just socially; the humour, the things everybody does, affinities with wine and 'brunch' etc are things that we're all expected to have in common but we absolutely don't and, in my experience, working class people can sometimes feel a bit outcast in the world of classical singing and classical singers.” (Participant J)

“... teasing I received about my accent and lack of education ...” (Participant J)

“there is still a pretty strong sense of highbrow vs lowbrow value judgements, which do land with people who aren't as familiar with 'highbrow' musical culture quite differently (and can be alienating).” (Participant M)

In some cases, the conflict between these two cultures left singers feeling out of place in both worlds:

“It was a difficult balance because at my school I was different because my parents could afford for me to have private music lessons but then I felt like one of the few token state school kids at music college.” (Participant D)

The dominant feature of the culture within the musical world seems to be a feeling that everyone knows everyone else. One participant commented on how this even extended up a generation:

“I also am always struck by everyone’s parents knowing each other, either as school mums or through having been at Oxbridge together, and so they come to concerts and all chat to each other - my parents came to some stuff but were usually left feeling out of place themselves.” (Participant M)

Whilst this can be an unpleasant experience in and of itself, it can also make it harder for those ‘outside’ the network to gain work, with judgments seeming to be made based on external factors rather than actual merit:

“I think the power of the network is also so surprising at first - people saying ‘have you ever worked with them’ before they want to book you for something, or just booking friends from school chapel choir if they have a gap for a concert. I couldn’t believe these people hadn’t had to even audition when I was sending tens of cold emails every day to try and get on lists.” (Participant M)

“I naively believed that ultimately if/when I reached a professional level, it would be in a space where people’s success was based on their musical ability alone. The questions about what school you went to would stop. But then it just changed to ‘who’s your teacher?’ or ‘where else do you sing?’” (Participant L)

Some participants, however, were less bothered by the private-school network than others:

“Nobody’s heard of my school, but that didn’t bother me ... I think it probably bothered them more than me, you know? I didn’t understand the network thing.” (Participant G)

“I had no idea about this network, and so because I was unaware of it, it didn’t affect my own psychology.” (Participant A)

Participant G was also keen to point out that a network can be a positive thing, and that singers benefit from building a supportive network:

“a network, wherever it comes from and however you build it, is the thing that supports you to continue to have a career because somebody's heard you somewhere, somebody liked you somewhere else, you know, you get on well with somebody else, and that is particularly important as a musician ... it's really an important element and therefore shouldn't be necessarily considered a bad thing. As long as those of us that don't have the ready-made network know how to create something equivalent.”

The challenge, then, is not to destroy networks, but to create ones that support those from underrepresented backgrounds. A large part of this culture shift involves the normalisation of classical music, to reclaim it from the elite world where it currently sits. One example of this in action was the outstanding local music scene experienced by Participant K (described under County Music), where students from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds played alongside teachers, and classical music was a normal part of life:

“it wasn't presented to us as difficult, and it wasn't presented to us that it was unusual for this quite motley group of kids from a big range of socioeconomic backgrounds actually. There was never a sense that we were doing something that was beyond our capabilities or not for us, you know ... we were brought up not to be scared of anything musically.” (Participant K)

Although this culture existed in an instrumental and educational setting, it shows that elitism within classical music is not a necessity, and is an example of what commitment and good funding can achieve.

Conclusions and recommendations

My aims in this project were to estimate the proportion of professional choral singers within the UK who attended state schools, to identify the reasons for low representation of state-educated singers, and to identify how the imbalance can be redressed.

My data showed that 56% of the singers surveyed were privately educated, making choral singing one of the most elite professions there is. There are, unfortunately, no signs of this changing.

My research highlighted a number of reasons for this underrepresentation, but most significant are the profession's roots in church music and the dominance of independent choir schools, together with an elite culture and social network within independent schools

that is self-perpetuating, particularly when taken in combination with declining music provision within the state sector and a lack of exposure to classical music.

There are many specific recommendations arising from my research, which are listed in Appendix 7. But the primary action needed to redress the imbalance is for state-funded music provision to improve. Classical music, and singing throughout the entirety of childhood and adolescence, regardless of gender, needs to become a normal part of life. There are many examples of how state-funded music provision helped my participants, most notably the invitation for all children to receive free or subsidised instrumental tuition, and in an ideal world these opportunities would be maintained nationwide in perpetuity. It has to be acknowledged, however, that this is extremely expensive and that it is a hard policy to fight for when public finances are stretched. Thankfully, there appears to be a far cheaper way that all school children can be given the chance to discover musical interest and talent, learn to sing confidently, and gain the musical literacy that would provide the foundations for a career in choral singing: the solfege system. This requires a single teacher and no other essential resources, so it is no more expensive than the existing provision in many primary schools. In the deeply elitist world of classical music, singers have a unique opportunity to make a difference. The difficulty is the 'lost generations' as described by Grace (1943), with a current skill deficit amongst teachers. Thus, there needs to be an initial investment in training, but the model appears effective and economic in the long-term.

My personal learning outcomes were to master basic statistical analysis in order to interpret quantitative data, to successfully manage a sequential hermeneutic research project, and to identify ways that I can promote skilled choral singing to those within state education. I now feel confident using the chi-squared testing that was relevant to my nominal data, and I consider my hermeneutic research to have led to a valuable output. In the end I used fewer stages of research than anticipated, but recognising that this was the best way to proceed was an important part of my reflection. Regarding the promotion of choral singing, I have identified that there is a need for career support within state schools, and this could be provided via a database of willing mentors and speakers. Moreover, this research has consolidated my existing belief that every child should receive a musical education based on solfege singing. In practice, I can support this cause by undertaking further training and by providing solfege education in schools, and through using my research to advocate the need to increase solfege provision and improved singing in state schools.

The limitations of my study are that it likely understates the underrepresentation of state-educated singers because of responder bias, particularly since I had very limited success testing full populations; and that the research will have been influenced by my own position

as an insider researcher. These are not, however, serious limitations because of the rigorous approach taken and the overwhelming evidence that action is needed to address elitism within the world of professional choral singing.

Further areas to research include:

- The feasibility, efficacy and cost-effectiveness of offering a solfege-based training to all primary school pupils;
- How best to collate and disseminate the necessary information on opportunities, funding and career path;
- The current state of training opportunities for church singers, and how this can be improved.

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Appendix 1: Ethics form

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

RESEARCH STUDENTS

This form is to be completed by the student within **SIX** months for full-time students and **TWELVE** months for part time students, after the commencement of the research degree or following progression to Part Two of your course.

Once complete, submit this form via the ***MyTSD Doctoral College Portal*** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

This document is also available in Welsh.

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk , with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the "principal researcher".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity.
Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:					
2	Tick all boxes that apply:		Member of staff:	☐	Honorary research fellow:	☐
	Undergraduate Student	☐	Taught Postgraduate Student	☒	Postgraduate Research Student	☐

3	Institute/Academic Discipline/Centre:	WAPPAR
4	Campus:	Carmarthen
5	E-mail address:	eleanorclarke@cantab.net
6	Contact Telephone Number:	07752025446
For students:		
7	Student Number:	2016640
8	Programme of Study:	MA Professional Practice (Voice Pedagogy)
9	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Louise Emanuel/Julie Crossman/Debbie Winter

SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

1	Has the research activity received approval in principle? (please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)	YES	☒	NO	☐
				Date	
2	If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known): Approval in principle must be obtained from the relevant source prior to seeking ethical approval	Research Degrees Committee	☐		
Institute Research Committee		☐			
Other (write in) WAPPAR Ethics Board Representative		☒			

SECTION C: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

	Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, location-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines. You may add rows to this table if needed.	
1	UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice	☒
2	UWTSD Research Data Management Policy	☒
3	<i>[List any other relevant documents here]</i>	☐

SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity

If there are external collaborators then you should gain consent from the contact persons to share their personal data with the university. If there are no external collaborators then leave this section blank and continue to section E.

1	Institution	
2	Contact person name	
3	Contact person e-mail address	
4	Is your research externally funded?	YES ☐ NO ☐
5	Are you in receipt of a KESS scholarship?	YES ☐ NO ☐
6	Are you specifically employed to undertake this research in either a paid or voluntary capacity?	Voluntary YES ☐ NO ☐
7		Employed YES ☐ NO ☐
8	Is the research being undertaken within an existing UWTSD Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (APLP)?	If YES then the permission question below does not need to be answered. YES ☐ NO ☐
9	Has permission to undertake the research has been provided by the partner organisation?	(If YES attach copy) If NO the application cannot continue YES ☐ NO ☐

Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation

10	Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system?	YES ☐ NO ☐
	If Yes, please attach a copy of any final approval (or interim approval) from the organisation (this may be a copy of an email if appropriate).	

SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	Educational barriers to becoming a professional choral singer in the UK		
2	Proposed start date:	6 th January 2025	Proposed end date:	22 nd August 2025
	Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words per section) Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the points below: <i>Purpose of Research Activity</i> <i>Proposed Research Question</i> <i>Aims of Research Activity</i> <i>Objectives of Research Activity</i> Demonstrate, briefly, how <u>Existing Research</u> has informed the proposed activity and explain <i>What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge</i> <i>How it addresses an area of importance.</i>			
3	Purpose of Research Activity The researcher has worked extensively as a professional choral singer within the UK and observed that state-educated singers generally appear to make up a small minority of any choir (usually significantly less than 50%, which is far from representative of the 94% who are state-educated in the British population at large. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to document the educational background of professional choral singers in the UK, and further to identify the necessary skills for entering the profession, ascertain where and how professional choral singers gain these skills, and identify barriers to entry together with ways to improve accessibility. (this box should expand as you type)			
4	Research Question What proportion of professional choral singers in the UK attended state-funded schools, and how can this proportion be increased? (this box should expand as you type)			
5	Aims of Research Activity 4. To estimate the proportion of professional choral singers within the UK who attended state schools. 5. To identify the reasons for low representation of state-educated singers among professional choral singers in the UK. 6. To identify how the imbalance can be redressed.			

	(this box should expand as you type)
6	Objectives of Research Activity 1. To survey UK-based professional choral singers and ascertain the proportion who attended state schools. 2. To discover who/what motivated these singers to become choral singers, and where and how they learned the necessary skills for the job. 3. To identify ways in which educational systems can be adapted so that higher numbers of state-school pupils learn the necessary skills and achieve a greater awareness of choral music. (this box should expand as you type)
	Proposed methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a brief summary of all the methods that may be used in the research activity, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. You do not need to justify the methods here, but should instead describe how you intend to collect the data necessary for you to complete your project.
7	5. A narrative literature review to uncover any existing research on the educational background of professional choral singers, on factors that affect uptake of musical education, and on effective methods of teaching the skills required by the profession (e.g. sight-singing). Only UK-based research will be included as a default, but if research from outside the UK highlights effective interventions, then this will be considered too. 6. A survey of UK-based professional choral singers to establish their educational backgrounds, what motivated them to take up music, and how they learned the necessary skills. The survey will contain multiple-choice questions, forming a bank of quantitative data to be analysed statistically. 7. In addition to the sample surveyed in (2), responses will be sought from the full population of one or more professional and/or amateur choirs within the UK, with each choir's responses kept as a separate data set. These data sets will be used to corroborate the data gathered in (2) and to compare professional to amateur choirs. 8. Questionnaires, interviews and/or focus groups to gather more detailed data on a sample of state-educated singers who complete the survey. This qualitative data will be analysed thematically. 9. Gather and statistically analyse quantitative data on available choral education from websites, to establish whether opportunities are equally available to those in state and independent education, and to identify any other barriers to participation. 10. Case study of institutions which are currently providing an effective musical education for aspiring choral singers, to establish the key to their success and how this success can be replicated more broadly. This will include questionnaires, interviews and/or observations, gathering data which will be analysed thematically.

	(this box should expand as you type)
	Location of research activity Identify all locations where research activity will take place.
8	At the researcher's home in London. Online via Zoom. At schools or rehearsal venues chosen for interview and/or observation. (this box should expand as you type)
	Research activity outside of the UK If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licenses or permissions required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural and/or legal sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants. If you live in the country where you will do the research then please state this.
9	 (this box should expand as you type)

10	Use of documentation not in the public domain: Are any documents NOT publicly available?	NO	☒
		YES	☐
11	If Yes, please provide details here of how you will gain access to specific documentation that is not in the public domain and that this is in accordance with the current data protection law of the country in question and that of England and Wales. (this box should expand as you type)		

	Does your research relate to one or more of the seven aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?	YES	NO
12	A prosperous Wales	☐	☒

13	A resilient Wales	☐	☒
14	A healthier Wales	☐	☒
15	A more equal Wales	☐	☒
16	A Wales of cohesive communities	☐	☒
17	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	☐	☒
18	A globally responsible Wales	☐	☒
19	If YES to any of the above, please give details:		
	(this box should expand as you type)		

SECTION F: Scope of Research Activity

	Will the research activity include:	YES	NO
1	Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?	☒	☐
2	Use of interviews?	☒	☐
3	Use of focus groups?	☒	☐
4	Use of participant diaries?	☐	☒
5	Use of video or audio recording?	☒	☐
6	Use of computer-generated log files?	☐	☒
7	Participant observation with their knowledge?	☒	☐
8	Participant observation without their knowledge?	☐	☒
9	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	☒
10	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	☐	☒
11	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	☒
12	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	☒
13	Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	☒
14	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	☒
15	Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	☒
16	Procedures that may have a negative impact on the environment?	☐	☒
17	Other primary data collection methods. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) below.	☒	☐
	Details of any other primary data collection method:		

	(this box should expand as you type)		
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If NO to every question, then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and **may** be exempt from **some** of the following sections (please refer to Guidance Notes).

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION G: Intended Participants

If there are no participants then do not complete this section, but go directly to section H.

	Who are the intended participants:	YES	NO
1	Students or staff at the University?	☐	☒
2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	☒	☐
3	Vulnerable adults?	☐	☒
4	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	☐	☒
5	Prisoners?	☐	☒
6	Young offenders?	☐	☒
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	☒
8	People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	☒
9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.		
	Details of any other participant groups: (this box should expand as you type)	☐	☒

Participant numbers and source Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?		
10	How many participants are expected?	Survey: c.100 Focus groups c.5 Questionnaires: c.10 Interviews: c.5 Observation: c.3 (this box should expand as you type)

11	Who will the participants be?	UK-based adults who are professional choral singers. UK-based adults who work as music teachers and/or choral directors. UK-based adults who sing to a high standard in amateur choirs. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
12	How will you identify the participants?	Participants for the survey will initially be recruited from the researcher's professional contacts. These contacts will be invited to send the survey on to their own contacts, with the aim of recruiting a snowball sample. The survey will also be advertised on relevant social media groups. Participants for questionnaires, focus groups, interviews and observations will be participants from the initial survey, or teachers/directors identified through the results of this survey. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
13	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	☒	☐	☐
14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	☒	☐	☐
15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	☒	☐	☐
16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	☐	☐	☒
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	☒	☐	☐
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	☒	☐	☐
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	☒	☐	☐
20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	☒	☐	☐
21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☒	☐	☐
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>			

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
24	Will participants be paid?	☐	☒	☐
25	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	☐	☒	☐
26	Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?	☐	☒	☐

27	Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	☐	☒	☐
28	If YES to any question, please provide full details			
	(this box should expand as you type)			

SECTION H: Anticipated Risks

	Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them.		
	If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.		
1	Full risk assessment completed and appended?	Yes ☐ No ☒	☐ ☒
2	Risks to participants For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information		
	Risk to participants: There is a risk of participants being identified by details of their education and/or career. There is a risk participants may feel misrepresented in the report.	How you will mitigate the risk to participants: As a default, no names of individuals or organisations will be included in the report, and thus there will be no details that could lead to identification. If it is judged to be in the best interests of the report and the organisation to disclose a name, this will only be done with informed consent. Most participants will not be represented individually, only within a statistical result, so there is no risk of misrepresentation. Those who are represented individually will be given the chance to check content before the report is finalised. They will also be anonymised.	
3	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should		

	make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities	
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
4	Risks to the investigator For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest	
	Risk to the investigator: The researcher is open to accusations of misrepresenting participants and/or adopting participants' ideas within the research report. The researcher may not recruit enough participants. The survey attracts too many responses, resulting in too much data to analyse in the given timeframe.	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator:</i> Most participants will not be represented individually, so there is no risk of misrepresentation. Those who are represented individually will be given the chance to check content before the report is finalised. A record of consent for use of the data will be obtained. If insufficient survey responses are received, it will not be possible to generalise and it will therefore be impossible to document the state of the choral profession numerically. It will still, however, be possible to learn valuable lessons from a small number of respondents, who will act as case studies. Additionally, the researcher will mitigate this risk by making the survey as simple as possible to complete, whilst still collecting the necessary information. The survey will primarily provide quantitative data, so extra responses will require negligible extra time to analyse. In an extreme case, the survey will be closed to further responses. If the research is biased, it is likely that a higher than representative number of responses will be received from state-educated singers, since these are the singers who are most likely to appreciate the importance of the research project. This means the biggest risk is that the proportion of choral singers who attended state-schools will be over-estimated, and therefore

	Survey results may be biased, leading to complaints against the researcher.	the lack of state-school representation will be understated. To mitigate this risk, however, the researcher aims to survey all members of at least one professional choir, so see if this provides similar results. Potential bias will also be considered and discussed within the report.
5	University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Risk to the University: There is a risk of adverse publicity if the researcher does not complete the study in line with the University's standards.	How you will mitigate the risk to the University: The researcher will adhere to the UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice and the UWTSD Research Data Management Policy . The researcher will also indicate that this is an independent project, with the researcher fully responsible for all aspects of research design.
6	Environmental risks For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment: None. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to environment: N/A. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

	Disclosure and Barring Service			
	If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.	YES	NO	N/A
7	Does your research require you to hold a current DBS Certificate?	☐	☐	☒

8	If YES, please give the certificate number. If the certificate number is not available please write "Pending"; in this case any ethical approval will be subject to providing the appropriate certificate number.	
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SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

1	Feedback What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when? Participants will be provided with the researcher's email address and told they may request further details on the research and/or a copy of the final report at any time. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
2	Informed consent Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation. The survey will include an initial screen giving details of what is involved and informing participants that by clicking on the NEXT button they are providing consent. Questionnaires will start with a consent sheet given full details of what is involved and requesting the participant's signature as proof of consent. Participants for interviews and observations will receive a consent sheet in advance, giving full details of what is involved and requesting the participant's signature as proof of consent. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
3	Confidentiality / Anonymity Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case. It will not be necessary for any survey participants to give their name. They will be invited to do so only if they are willing to be contacted with further questions. Data stored for analysis will not include these names. No participants will be named in the research report. They will be assigned a unique identifier, and their name will not be attached to any data. If there is a risk that an individual may be identified

	through other facts about their education and/or profession, this will be discussed with the individual and the report will be discussed and/or adapted until both participant and researcher are satisfied that the risk is minimal. No organisations will be identified in the report unless this is judged to be in the interests of both the organisation and the aims of the project. If this is the case, informed consent will be received from the organisation after viewing the content of the report. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
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SECTION J: Data Protection and Storage

	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 “GDPR” and the Data Protection Act 2018 “DPA”)?	YES	NO
1	“Personal data” means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (‘data subject’). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person. Any video or audio recordings of participants is considered to be personal data.	☒	☐
	If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
2	Email addresses will be used to contact participants for questionnaires, interviews and observations. Survey participants will also be invited to provide an email address if they are willing to answer further questions. Audio recordings of interviews will be made in order to transcribe the interviews, and will then be deleted after the end of the project. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
	Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)?	YES	NO
3	“Special category data” means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects’ – (a) racial or ethnic origin, (b) political opinions, (c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature, (d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992), (e) physical or mental health or condition, (f) sexual life,	☐	☒

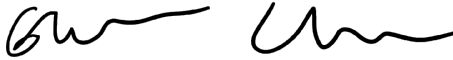
	(g) genetics, (h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes),		
	If YES, provide a description of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
4	 <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

	Will data from the research activity (collected data, drafts of the thesis, or materials for publication) be stored in any of the following ways?	YES	NO
5	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☐	☒
6	University computers?	☐	☒
7	Private company computers?	☐	☒
8	Home or other personal computers?	☐	☒
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☒	☐
10	"Cloud" storage or websites?	☒	☐
11	Other – specify:	☐	☒
12	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation: All data will be kept in password-protected cloud storage which will not be shared. All participants will be given a unique identifier to ensure confidentiality and this list will be kept securely in the password protected folder. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

Data Protection			
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	YES	NO
13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☒	☐
14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?	☐	☒
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	☒
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?	☐	☒
17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	☒	☐
18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	☒
19	Use of data management system?	☐	☒
20	Data archiving?	☐	☒

21	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and any international equivalents, where appropriate):		
	Surveys will be completed on Google Forms, and questionnaires will be emailed from participants to the researcher. This data will then be transferred to password-protected files in cloud storage. Email addresses will be used to contact participants for questionnaires, interviews and observations. Survey participants will also be invited to provide an email address if they are willing to answer further questions. These email addresses will not be stored along with the main data, since participants will be assigned a unique identifier to ensure confidentiality, and this list will be kept securely in the password protected folder. All data will be anonymised. The data will be stored until completion of the project and then deleted. In accordance with the DPA2018, participants will have the right to ask to see what data is held relating to them, and this data will be deleted immediately if the participant requests this, in which case the data will not be used in the project. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
22	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:		
	The researcher. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
23	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:		
	The researcher. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
24	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.		
	All data will be kept in password protected cloud storage, and will not be shared. Data will be stored until completion of the project and then deleted. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
25	Please indicate if your data will be stored in the UWTSD Research Data Repository (see https://researchdata.uwtsd.ac.uk/). If so please explain. <i>(Most relevant to academic staff)</i>		
	No <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
26	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	YES	☒
27	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	YES	☒

SECTION K: Declaration

	The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants. In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/		
1	Signature of applicant:		Date: 18/12/2024

For STUDENT Submissions:

2	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Laura James	Date: 23.1.2025
3	Signature:	<i>Laura James</i>	

For STAFF Submissions:

4	Academic Director/ Assistant Dean:		Date:
5	Signature:		

Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

☒	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
☒	I have completed ALL RELEVANT sections of the form in full.
☒	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
☐	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (where appropriate)
☐	I have attached a full risk assessment (where appropriate) ONLY TICK IF YOU HAVE ATTACHED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT
☒	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.
☒	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Academic Director.

RESEARCH STUDENTS ONLY

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk , with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

Appendix 2: Employer letter of consent

Eleanor Clarke
2 Rycott Path, London SE22 0AA

7th January 2025

Dear UWTSD,

RE: *Educational barriers to becoming a professional choral singer in the UK*

I confirm that I approve of the research proposed into educational barriers within professional choral singing, to be carried out by Eleanor Clarke between January and August 2025.

Kind Regards,|



Eleanor Clarke

Appendix 3: Survey

8/18/25, 11:03 PM

Survey of the educational backgrounds of professional choral singers within the UK.

Survey of the educational backgrounds of professional choral singers within the UK.

This survey is open to anyone who has worked as an adult professional choral singer within the UK, and who was also educated within the UK (you do not need to be working as a choral singer right now, or have worked full-time as a singer). There are four compulsory questions (marked by an asterisk), which can be completed in less than a minute. Any extra information you are willing to provide, however, will be greatly appreciated.

You can complete the survey anonymously, or you can choose to give contact details if you are willing to answer further questions. Either way, all data will be processed anonymously and no individuals will be identified within the research report. Participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

Many thanks for contributing to this study. It will form part of my MA run by The Voice Study Centre and University of Wales Trinity Saint David. If you would like further information at any point, please email eleanorclarke@cantab.net.

* Indicates required question

1. I confirm that I have worked as an adult professional choral singer within the UK, * was educated within the UK, and consent to participating in this study.

Tick all that apply.

☐ Yes

2. Which type of school did you attend (age 5-18)? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ State-funded
- ☐ Independent
- ☐ A mixture
- ☐ Other (please specify below)

3. Please add more detail if relevant. For example, you could indicate the type of state school you attended, whether your school was single-sex or co-ed, and/or the age range at which you received state vs. independent education.

4. What is your gender? (This will be used to determine whether gender influences educational opportunities and norms.) *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Woman
- ☐ Man
- ☐ Transgender woman
- ☐ Transgender man
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Prefer not to say

5. Please give more detail if relevant (for example, if you were educated as a different gender to your current gender).

6. What is your age? (This will be used to assess trends over time.) *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 18-29
☐ 30-39
☐ 40-49
☐ 50-59
☐ 60+
☐ Prefer not to say

7. Were you a chorister in a cathedral or similar establishment? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes, at a choir school
☐ Yes, but I did not attend a choir school
☐ No
☐ Unsure

8. Please give more details if relevant.

9. Did you receive private instrumental tuition for at least 3 years of your childhood?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

10. Were you a university choral scholar (or similar)?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

11. Did you study at Oxford or Cambridge Universities?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

12. Which of the following were present amongst your close family and friends when you were growing up?

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Professional classical musician (including music teachers)
☐ Keen amateur classical musician
☐ Keen appreciator of classical music

13. Please give more detail relating to the previous few questions if relevant.

14. If you are willing to be contacted with further questions, please give your email address here:

Appendix 4: Participant briefings

Educational barriers to becoming a professional choral singer within the United Kingdom: participant briefing

What is the study about?

In my work as a choral singer, I have noticed that there is a very high proportion of privately educated singers, when compared with the 6% who attend private schools within the UK as a whole. There also seems to be a high proportion educated at Oxford or Cambridge Universities, when compared with the 1% attending these Universities overall. This study aims to document the educational background of professional choral singers within the UK, and to investigate how this career choice can be made more accessible to all.

What does the study involve?

Following on from an initial survey, I will contact respondents whose comments I wish to explore in more depth. Meetings are expected to last around 30 minutes, and will be recorded for transcription. Participants' names will not be used in the transcription, so identities will be kept confidential.

Participants are free to withdraw at any time and for any reason, and further information on the study can be requested at any time.

Participants will be sent a Zoom link to join the meeting, and clicking on the link will be treated as consent to participate in the study. This is the statement that will be included on the invitation:

Consent statement

By clicking on the link to join the meeting, you agree with the following:

- I have received information on the study and understand what participation involves;
- I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I can withdraw at any time and for any reason;
- I understand that the meeting will be recorded and transcribed, but my identity will not be disclosed within the transcription or any part of the study;
- I understand that I may request further details of the study, including a copy of the final report, at any time;
- I consent to participating in this study.

Educational barriers to becoming a professional choral singer within the United Kingdom: group participant briefing

What is the study about?

In my work as a choral singer, I have noticed that there is a very high proportion of privately educated singers, when compared with the 6% who attend private schools within the UK as a whole. There also seems to be a high proportion educated at Oxford or Cambridge Universities, when compared with the 1% attending these Universities overall. This study aims to document the educational background of professional choral singers within the UK, and to investigate how this career choice can be made more accessible to all.

What does the study involve?

Following on from an initial survey, respondents from less conventional backgrounds will be invited to discuss their route into professional choral singing, either individually or in groups. The primary questions addressed will be:

1. What were the key factors in your route to becoming a professional choral singer? For example: school music, musical activities outside school, parental support (whether financial, helping with practice, providing transport, encouragement etc), events attended, any particular teachers or other individuals.
2. How did you learn to sight-sing?
3. Did you experience any difficulties in entering the world of professional singing, or ever feel out of place because of your educational background?

Meetings are expected to last 40 minutes to an hour, and will be recorded for transcription. Participants' names will not be used in the transcription, so identities will be kept confidential. In order for confidentiality to be assured, all participants will agree not to disclose information provided by other participants.

Participants are free to withdraw at any time and for any reason, and further information on the study can be requested at any time.

Participants will be sent a Zoom link to join the meeting, and clicking on the link will be treated as consent to participate in the study. This is the statement that will be included on the invitation:

Consent statement

By clicking on the link to join the meeting, you agree with the following:

- I have received information on the study and understand what participation involves;
- I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I can withdraw at any time and for any reason;
- I understand that the meeting will be recorded and transcribed, but my identity will not be disclosed within the transcription or any part of the study;
- I agree to keep the disclosures of other participants confidential;
- I understand that I may request further details of the study, including a copy of the final report, at any time;

I consent to participating in this study.

Appendix 5: Questions for participants

Questions given to all standard participants to answer in focus group meeting or as a written questionnaire:

- 1. What were the key factors in your route to becoming a professional choral singer? For example: school music, musical activities outside school, parental support (whether financial, helping with practice, providing transport, encouragement etc), events attended, any particular teachers or other individuals.*
- 2. How did you learn to sight-sing?*
- 3. Did you experience any difficulties in entering the world of professional singing, or ever feel out of place because of your educational background?*

Questions about primary provision given to Participant E prior to interview:

- 1. Could you describe your primary school musical activities in more detail?*
- 2. What impact did your primary school musical education have on your future career?*
- 3. If you feel able to judge after all these years: what level of musical aptitude did most children reach during their time at your primary school? (This may be difficult to answer, but any insight you can give is useful e.g. roughly what proportion of your class were playing instruments, could read music etc.).*
- 4. Could you say more about the gulf in skills and experience you felt on arriving at [OXBRIDGE]?*
- 5. Could you say more about the differences you observe between state-educated and privately-educated choral scholars that you teach?*

Questions about primary provision given to participant H:

- 1. What musical activities did you do at primary school? (e.g. class music lessons, group singing, instrument demonstrations)*
- 2. Could you describe the content of your music lessons? (as detailed or brief as you like!)*
- 3. What did you personally gain from your music lessons at primary school?*
- 4. What was the general level of musicianship achieved by pupils attending your primary school? (e.g. could everyone read music? Sing confidently?)*

Questions about county music provision given to Participant K prior to interview:

- 1. More detail on the activities that were available to you;*
- 2. Who all of these opportunities were for (this may be clear from the last answer - essentially, I'm keen to understand which were opportunities for talented musicians, and which were opportunities for anybody to try out classical music);*
- 3. What impact these opportunities had on you and your route into professional music?*

Appendix 6: Qualitative data set

Focus group:

A: Well, I feel like I personally could go on for half an hour so I'll start very sketchy and then we can fill in as everyone's had their chance, I suppose, otherwise I might give you too much information. So I went to a primary school where the Year 4 teacher, at primary school, was really hot on running a choir and the choir being really active and everyone doing hymn practise on a Friday, and singing in assembly. And I remember when I was in reception the library corridor went past the hall and I remember hearing all the classes doing hymn practise, and looking forward to doing hymn practise, cos oh that's so cool, the music, even when I was like 5. So I think I always had that that kind of love of singing and music and not at that point realising it was unusual, maybe. Or maybe it's not unusual for kids, maybe that's just our preconception. Anyway, so when I was in her class, when I was in year 4, so much later, I really enjoyed singing hymns in assembly, from junior praise, and she heard this, and then she got my mum in for a meeting after school, to say, he should be in the choir, and me being quite resistant to it. And she also, I mean, they told me she wanted me to be a chorister, they talked about me going to be a chorister, mum was not interested in that, but kind of being in the choir at primary school was, at that age, and at that time, in a relatively working class part of the Midlands, boys didn't really do that, so they, I think there were two or three other boys in the school, maybe who did choir so I didn't want to do it. So it took some persuasion, but then I really loved it, obviously. So it didn't take much persuasion. So it was a primary school teacher, who wasn't, she did the music leading and she did a lot of music and she ran kind of what I'd now call an old ladies choir, and that didn't do classical stuff. It was more kind of medleys from the musicals and old wartime songs, that kind of thing. So she was active musically and I think had done some music at university, but she was not what you might think of as a hotshot musician. And then I went to secondary school, which had a lot of active music, but again, it was kind of choirs in a kind of singing songs from the shows, more kind of medleys and that kind of thing. And then they encouraged me to have some singing lessons, which I did about age 14, and then to go to [] Conservatoire Junior School on a Saturday. And then from there, well, I did A levels. I went somewhere else because there was, there was no A levels at my school. And there was more music there and the head of music, by this point I wanted to be a singer, but one of the music teachers there had been to [] and suggested that actually going to Music College would not be as good as going to [] to do choral music at [], so he kind of persuaded me to do that. And basically, when I got to [], I still couldn't sight read, but I'd done two years doing Sunday mornings at [] Catholic Cathedral, and that was because, that was with the idea of wanting to do [], and getting some choral experience. So that was my kind of choral experience. Did two years of that. Is that enough for?

I: Now. Yeah. That's really, really helpful. Just out of interest, was it a Church of England primary school?

A: No. But the head teacher was, was a practising Methodist.

I: Ah, that's really interesting because you don't expect singing hymns to be something you do in a standard primary school.

A: Yeah. I mean, there's a lot of religion in assembly. There were lots of Bible stories in assemblies. It was quite a big school, it was 2 form-entry, so it's 450 kids in the school. So there was a lower school and upper school. I think historically there'd been a middle school and a Junior School. An infant school and a Junior School in the old days. And he was very charismatic. I think it came out much

later that he's not very good manager of, you know, money and that kind of thing, but a really charismatic man. Kind of active in his church and I think supported the idea of music and this woman, this woman who died very recently, the Junior School woman was super inspirational, actually, in her own way. And when I went to visit her later, I realised she didn't really know about, you know, classical music or opera or, you know, she'd heard of some operas. It wasn't like she was really into music in that way. Just she was really into singing. We did amazing stuff at primary school, actually, if I look back.

I: How did you manage voice change without any kind of expert input?

A: I think I'm super lucky. My pre-voice-change voice was quite, I don't know, I mean, I don't know now, I was, but even at that age, so at that age I did, it was, it was obviously kind of stand out, in that not you know, it was, it was loud and I think it was not trebly, I think it was quite aggressive, I think if I heard it now, I'd probably find it quite offensive. It probably, you know those countertenors that make a really bladey noise, I reckon it was probably like that. I think I sounded like a woman. Aged 10. And so I did a lot of solos and I used to, she had a choir that I used to go and do solos for, I kind of had a couple of spots in their concerts. So I had a lot of experience quite early of being in the spotlight. Why did I get into this? What was the question?

I: Ohh, just about voice change.

A: So then, so I think I was really lucky in a way that I it happened really early, and my bass voice came before the soprano treble voice went, so I carried on singing, in whatever that was, falsetto or the same, basically the same voice, it felt the same. And then just one day I had a solo and I did it an octave lower and everyone was kind of oh, there it is. So it happened kind of naturally and quickly. I think the costs of that were, I think I overused the falsetto or whatever it was, but then I totally lost it as an adult, I couldn't sing in falsetto for years. It's come back now and I kind of worked at it in my 30s. But I couldn't do anything, and I think, I never had any help with managing the top, which is true of most choral singers anyway. If I go, you know if you go to Oxford and Cambridge now, most of the Baritones and tenors don't know what to do between a middle C and an F, so maybe that's not unusual, but I didn't have any help with that, and fixed that again in my 30s as well.

I: Just one more question for you as well. Instruments. When did you start playing instruments?

A: So this woman wanted me to do an instrument. Just thought I should. And because I was quite, I think, because I was quite loud and fat then, they thought I should do horn. So I tried the horn. I just hated it. I absolutely hated it. It was smelly. It was heavy. I could only play 3 notes. Why would I want to do this when I can sing? So, I didn't get on well with that. Then aged about 10 or 11, I did a bit of piano, then was very much discouraged at home on piano. Because my dad kind of hated it all. Let's not make it a therapy session, but he was jealous of the music teacher who was kind of really quite present in our lives, in that we'd do a lot of for her and we talked about her. Mum was kind of supportive in some ways, very supportive in some ways. Isn't supportive now in that she's not interested. But was really supportive in kind of taking me to stuff etc. But Dad was kind of unsupportive. So there was a piano, we got a piano in the house, but only because we didn't have to pay for it, and then he would complain if I practised at home. So I didn't really practise. So I gave up for a bit and then I took it up again a bit. And then I gave it up a bit. And then I took it up a bit. So I was never really consistent in learning piano. So my piano playing is pretty awful now, I get by. But no other instruments, and it was kind of, yeah, it was not encouraged. But singing was something I could do out of the house and didn't really need to practise very much. I didn't really practise. I didn't, yeah, I basically didn't practise at all until I was in my 20s.

C: Thank you. I'm feeling a lot of similarities already between your story and mine, I think, so, from the very beginning. I grew up in [], which had a really very well established music hub through the Council. So the primary school that I went to, we had like a school wide recorder initiative maybe from like year 2 or year 3, something like that. So I was in the recorder club. And then in year 4, year 3 or 4, the Peripatetic Council musicians came round and did, like a demo of all the instruments. So then we could have a trial lesson and then if we were accepted on that instrument, we'd have a go. So I started with the cello because I thought that's a cool instrument, I'll give that a go. And I was dreadful. I was really very bad, but I was persistent and my parents were very patient. They're not musicians in any way, they have no interest in classical music, but they love pop music. I grew up on a very strict musical diet of heart radio and Depeche Mode, so I've got, like, the 80s nailed. But I had no kind of historical music knowledge, even like The Beatles wasn't played in our house. It was 80s onwards. So anyway, I started on the cello, wasn't very good, but my parents were very supportive of letting me have a go and after about a year or 18 months of me scraping away, my mum said to the music teachers through the council, she's really keen, but she's not making any progress on the cello. She really wanted to play the flute. Can she have a go on that? So by the time I got round to Year 5 or whatever, I then switched over to flute and I was very successful at that. And I wasn't doing any special singing at that point, it was just, you know, I was singing in assemblies and stuff, but I don't even know if I was in the school choir. I don't if there was a school choir in my first primary school, which was a non religious state school. In Year 5, I moved to a Catholic primary school, because my parents wanted to send me to the Catholic High School and you had a better chance of getting in if you were in a Catholic school and you had to do sign up Sundays as well. So you had to be like, going to church to sign the thing to say we are a church going family. So when I moved to the Catholic primary school, they also had these peripatetic teachers from the Council. Which is when I moved over to flute and then the same teacher that was at my Catholic primary school was teaching at my high school, so I followed the teacher up to high school, carried on learning, and when I was about 12, I think probably in year 8, I joined [] Youth concert band and there were several after-school activities that were like for the whole town rather than like for a school. So I started to make friends that were from other schools that were also enjoying music and, having played in the bands and orchestras for a while I then had made friends with a group of girls who were singing in the youth choir, [] youth Cantores, and I thought, I'll give that a go, maybe at the age of 14. At that point, when you joined the choir, you automatically had singing lessons. So I only started having singing lessons when I was about 14 or 15, but I could already read music, I was already musical. So I kind of, I caught up quite quickly with that because I discovered through this process of having already played, then transferring that reading knowledge onto singing, I realised that I could sight read with relative ease, so I kind of progressed quite quickly.

I then moved from my high school to a different sixth form because there was a sixth form attached to my school, but it was a very small sixth form where they were threatening to not run music A level because there weren't enough of us signing up for it. So the three or four of us that were there all decided that we would kind of leave together and go to [] sixth form college, which is a massive sixth form College of about 3000 students with a big arts department and they had, they were running music A level, music technology, drama, theatre studies, another B.Tech drama. There was a B.Tech popular music course. There was just loads going on there. So I went over and did music A level and music technology and drama and theatre studies as my a level courses. I carried on singing in this girls choir. I then went to [] Conservatoire for my undergraduate as a singer. And I was singing at Catholic Cathedral in [] for the, I didn't sing anywhere in my first year extracurricular to the university experience, but for my second, third, and fourth year, I was singing at the Catholic Cathedral, which gave me a wealth of experience of singing polyphony. One of the basses in that

choir was doing a PhD on a particular group of North Italian Renaissance composers, so we just sang his inscriptions all the time. Which was great, it meant we were singing music, we did all the standard Rep as well, but it meant that we were doing interesting polyphony that possibly hasn't been performed for 500 years, and that's where I really fell into this line of work. It was a total accident, that I should end up doing polyphony as a career, because I happened to have this Sunday morning job at []. That gave me the love of this particular performance style, and I fell into being a lay clerk because when I was at [] on a day off, I did a day trip to Lichfield because it was something to do. I went to evensong, which was something I didn't have any experience of because I grew up in a kind of Catholic family and then I was singing in Catholic Church, so I didn't have any understanding of evensong, the closest thing I'd had to a CofE experience was watching carols at kings. And there was a woman on the back row and it was a real light bulb moment of ohh, this is a thing that I can also do and I realised then that that was the work that I really wanted to pursue and have since fallen into that line of work. So when I graduated in 2020, the ideal time to graduate with an arts degree, I had a scholar year lined up already at [] Cathedral, and at the end of that year there happened to be a vacancy to stay on as an alto lay clerk for a bit. So I was at [] Cathedral for two and a bit years and then a brief hiatus, and now I'm at [] Cathedral. As an alto lay clerk as well.

I: Oh, thank you so much. When you sang at [], was that a paid thing that you did for money?

C: Yes, it was, I think it was like £30 on a Sunday morning, but it was one Sunday morning a week plus the Christmas services which I thought was really exciting because it meant that, you know, you got to stick around and do midnight mass and that kind of thing. It was a real kind of like, we were banded together and it was a really fun friendly experience as well as being like a small paid thing. I should say as well, when I went to [] Conservatoire, I received a scholarship of £4500 a year which you could either have as cash in your pocket or money off your fees. So I took it as cash in my pocket, obviously, because it meant then I wouldn't have to get a part time job to support my studies. I didn't, you know, I would have to get a job at Tesco or whatever. It meant that I was able to commit completely to my studies and then the [] Sunday morning job was a kind of bonus. Bit of money in my pocket, which meant again that I wasn't having to pursue alternative work that might take away from the time that I could commit to my studies, and I was learning while I was doing it.

I: Absolutely. And if female lay clerks hadn't yet been a thing, do you think you still would have ended up doing something vaguely similar, or do you think that might have just been the end of it?

C: It's very difficult to say, I think I probably might have ended up still doing a scholar year and then I might have had that light bulb moment thereafter. But I mean, if there weren't women in the church of England, certainly, and there are women in, you know, I was singing in Catholic Church at University, but in terms of kind of more permanent positions. I'm not sure that I would have ended up being able to do music full time, because I would have had to do something else alongside and then I likely would have fallen by the wayside.

A: Can I just share something, which is, just cause it's such a similar experience in some ways, which is, when I went to [], I was sixth form, but it was because somebody had suggested going to [], and the image of [] was so appealing and the recordings were amazing and I thought, oh, that's really appealing. But I remember the first time going to [] after I'd spoken to [], and I'd only just seen a notice up at the Conservatoire, and it was only because I was there on a Saturday that I'd seen that, it was really all very fortuitous, but I just remember going in and experiencing mass and hearing the choir from the, because they're up in the gallery, and it's quite a massive building, it was unbelievable, I'd never experienced anything like it. It was the most magical thing and I think if I hadn't experienced that moment, I would not have known what it was that you could be a part of.

And it was a really inspirational, amazing moment. And it was so lucky that I'd, through various things, had seen the sign from [] and thought, oh maybe I could do that, just the sign up at the Conservatoire.

C: It's transformational.

A: It's just that amazing moment that a state school kid wouldn't ordinarily have got. I feel so fortunate, though, to have had that little, I mean many moments of inspiration and help from teachers, but yet another moment of inspiration, which was really just a chance. Luck.

L: Yeah, I've been taking a few notes because I thought I'll forget everything that I was going to say. And so yeah, there's no musicians in my family at all. Uh, so definitely the odd one out. We, just cos people have mentioned, like, hymn singing at school, like, we sang hymns in assembly. With a CD backing track, and so, cos I was thinking was there any singing at primary school? Yes, there was, but there were no visible musicians. There was no teacher that played the piano for us and things like that. And then, similar to [], there were some demos at school for cello, viola and violin, and I thought the violin and viola were too squeaky, so I decided to do cello, and also at the time a lot of my friends had opted to do cello, so we started off in a group of like 7 or 8 of us, with the [] Music service teacher, and gradually all my friends dropped out. Don't know, they just didn't wanna practise or whatever. And then it just became this one to one lesson with my cello teacher, who took me all the way through to grade 8 when I was in year 11 or sixth form, something like that. And we're still in touch now, which is lovely. So yeah, I started cello when I was 9 and that was all through [] music service. And it was just that letter going round to parents and my parents showed it to me, I wasn't bothered at first, I just don't think I had the confidence to try it and then I obviously went back to my mum and dad at some point and said, have you still got that letter? So then, I think when I must have been about grade 5 or 6, there was like a [] young musician of the year competition that I entered and I was waiting to go on stage and my mum overheard another competitor and her parents talking about something called the [] Music Academy. So while I was going for a warm up or something, my mum went and spoke to her mum, said what's all this? And it turned out it was like, you know, the junior royal northern, but for []. So we contacted the Director of the Music Academy, auditioned, went there when I was about 14-15, and it was like, game changing. It was my dream. Like, every Saturday, 9:00 to 5:00, it was the best day of the week and did, you know, there was choir, they offered me singing lessons quite soon after I joined, I could start piano if I wanted, chamber music, you know, they took us on trips and things. And I think I joined like the girls' choir as an alto, just because I don't think anyone knew where to put me, and then I started one to one lessons and the teacher started me on Grade 5 because obviously I'd been playing cello for a while by then. So yeah, 1 to 1 singing lessons, and I guess I enjoyed the fact that I felt I could progress more quickly as a singer because of the background knowledge of being a cellist. And then I was starting to think about university, so I applied to Oxbridge and it was still at the time where you did the choral trials first and then you had to do your interviews and stuff. So I had that horrible experience, I'm glad they don't do it now, of getting the Oxbridge place, I think it was at [], but then when I went for the interview, because at my secondary school there was no prep for Oxbridge unless you were doing medicine, and I remember going into the interview and I just had no idea what they expected of me, it was quite, it was alienating and I knew then that I was going to get rejected and I think it was harder because you'd already been told you were good enough to sing, but you weren't good enough to go academically. So that was tough. And then, what was I going to say, I also applied to music college as a cellist because I thought I just want to see what happens and, go both ways, so I got a couple of offers to do that, but they were very much like if you come as a cellist, you gotta stop singing. Because we want you to focus on your one instrument and I wasn't

keen on that because I felt like I'd only just started the ball rolling with the voice. And so I ended up going to [], went for an audition there, [] told me my sight reading wasn't good enough. So I was like, I'll work on it, I'll work on it, I promise. And it's no wonder my sight singing wasn't good enough because I've never done that kind of stuff. And so I went to [] as a choral scholar, had an amazing time, but it was a baptism of fire, didn't know any of the sort of church protocols, psalms. Didn't get it. Didn't know most of the hymn tunes that people assumed you would have known. So yeah, looking back now, I'm surprised that I have stuck with choral singing because there felt like there've been quite a lot of barriers to entry, I would say, or to get on. But yeah, that sounded quite negative, but it's just, it's been challenging to get to the point, I would say, that I'm at right now.

I: When you started going to the [] music school, was that an affordable option? I mean, you may not know?

L: My dad had been made redundant, and so I was on full bursary to go, and I remember at the time, then, specifically when my dad then got a new job, we had to go and speak to the director because it was coming to the point where we were, you know, we had money, but it was, it was going to be a stretch, and my mom was like, I don't think Lindsey can keep coming, so they kept me on a full bursary.

I: Basically you were getting 9 to 5 music tuition for free. Nothing. That's amazing.

G: OK, so I think, I mean again, no musicians in my family, no, you know, a love of music, like, my mum is now in, you know, sings with the local Choral Society, but not really, you know, we didn't listen to music at home or anything like that. But I had my first solo, as the fairy, probably quite a hefty fairy, on quite a hefty Christmas tree at the age of, it would have been the Christmas I turned 4, and so I could clearly hold a tune, and I clearly loved doing it. And I find that really interesting looking at my kids now, because the performance thing is the thing that makes a difference. My kids are singing all the time, but they don't wanna stand up and perform. And I must have, like, wanted to do that, which I found really interesting now that I've got kids of my own. And then, I was really lucky because I went to a primary of 56 children where the head was also the organist and choir leader at my local church. She had an orchestra in a primary school of 56! You know, that was 56 from reception to year 6. So I was playing music, we all played the recorder. As soon as I could, I joined the church choir. I remember going to church the Christmas I was 6, and I'd never heard voices singing in harmony, and I remember the minute it started, I stopped scribbling in the bottom of the pew and I needed to get into the aisle and listen to what was going on. And I didn't understand what I was hearing, but I still have a really strong memory of that moment. So I was very lucky to be sort of doing music and I was in my church choir, which was like 8 tin pot singers, you know, including four of us from the primary school singing the top line. And I then went to secondary school. I started learning piano at 9, which was quite late, but it meant that I was then reading music. I went to secondary school, was a grammar school and again it had a really strong choral tradition, so even though that was just like the grammar school in the town, the guy loved choral music and he did all shows and stuff. But choral music was his thing and he had the acapella choir, so I got into that year 7 which is unheard of, and we used to spend our holidays going into cathedrals and singing church music, which was amazing, and I loved doing it, but it never helped my musicianship skills because we were so drilled. It was just, we absolutely knew what the next note was because we just repeated it, repeated it. The rehearsal process was painful, I have to say, at school. But through school I started having singing lessons when I was about 15, again quite late. Because my parents didn't really know how to sort of help me, you know, get better or do more. I mean, I had my piano lessons and I started learning the bassoon at some point during school because they needed a bassoonist. And I could sort of, it was obviously in me to do this stuff, but

then how do you take the next steps? And it really messed up my A levels because, I did GCSE music but there was no sort of idea that you should really do A level music, because how is it going to help you? And it's interesting because now I'm in careers, I'm careers lead in a school, and it's really interesting to have come full circle and now be in a situation where it's like, you know, parents need to be educated, to understand the value of doing creative art subjects beyond GCSE, and even at GCSE, it's amazing how many will try and narrow the field for their young people at GCSE options, because they don't understand the enormous value of the skills that you learn within those lessons, within those subjects, that take you into business, take you anywhere at all, whether it's obvious, like presentation skills, but also, I mean, there's so many things that those subjects support you to do. I messed up my A level choices because I decided to do Physics, maths, chemistry and biology, none of which I was any good at. I got good GCSEs across the board, but I was doing sciences and I'm not a scientist. I never would be. I thought medicine was for me and I hated it. And it was a really tough couple of years and I did really badly and that really limited my options, you know, for a few years after I left school. So how did I then make the step into being a musician? It was incredibly hard because nobody could tell you how to be a musician, how to be a singer. Nobody was interested in doing that either. Even my family, who were incredibly supportive, my parents were incredibly supportive and loved my singing and, you know, wanted me to do well at it, but they didn't see it as a profession that you could go into. And then there was also my Gran, who was a huge and slightly negative influence at times who, she was trying to be sensible by saying, you know, if you just want to be a singer, there's no point going to university and spending all that money studying music, you know, and that again was lack of understanding, lack of knowledge. So I went, I had a number of gap years before I finally went to university to study music and of course that was the point where I was able to hone my skills and develop my skills as a singer, but it was, I did it all a little bit late because I feel like from 16 to 20 I had years out of understanding what my path could look like. Then once you're in a situation where you're surrounded by other musicians, and that was the first time I've been in that situation, where I was surrounded by the musicians and teachers, who knew how you could take the next step and you know, that I could really start to develop, and it was when I was at university and I was at [] and I was able to join, you know, all the choirs. I was at [], I was at [] and I was doing all the [] music stuff. And that's where you make those connections that mean that you know, you have some foundation to begin a career once you leave education. So I think that was my very, I don't know how I stayed on track really, to actually keep on being a musician. I think I was lucky that people liked my singing, so somehow or other people kept asking me to do things here and there and that was the only thing that allowed me to keep making the connections that meant I could build something. I think the other really, really big, important moment for me was once I finished my A levels, I worked all summer so I could afford to go on to an Eton Choral course, and that moment was incredible. That was the first time I was really working with people that were really good, and who really loved what I did, and having amazing teachers, and you know, that's when I learned to sing psalms, because Ralph was so mad about psalms, and I never, I hated psalms up to that point. That's when I started to be able to sight read, but I've never really been confident about sight reading. So, you know, that was something that you mentioned and it was, it's more that my skill was once I'd heard it once, I could more or less get it right the second time. It wasn't so much being able to sight read, obviously my sight reading got a lot better over time, but it wasn't a skill that I ever again knew how to develop. That Eton Choral course was just life changing for me, and made me realise this is what I wanted to do, and then I went on to be a member of the Rodolphus choir which, you know gave me lots more of those opportunities. So that was my journey, very round about frustrating journey.

I: Did you choose [] because of the singing that was in []? Or was that chance?

G: No, that was a big part of it. I love the city. It was also because, you know, I basically, I did music A level in the end, but I started it the Christmas before in, in the January before, in my second year of A levels. So I only got a B. So, you know I did it in six months. I mean, I don't know why I didn't, anyway. So yes, it was a big part of it, and I didn't know I could be involved in the way I ended up being involved, but I was really fortunate to, you know, to be able to access all of that. Life changing.

I: When you said the first time you performed as a fairy, was that at school?

G: It was in my kindergarten.

I: And then when you mentioned going to church and hearing that music, was that because your family went to church? Was that through school?

G: Yeah. Was family. So it was just that, you know, we didn't go very often. We did once we were in the choir, but we'd go at Christmas and Easter, so.

I: Thank you so much. [], you wanted to say something.

L: Yeah, it was just about the piano lessons that, when, I just remembered that like before, just before I started to apply to uni was when I realised that you needed to be able to play the piano, to do a music degree at the places I wanted to go to. And so I went from nothing to grade 5 in about a year and a half and I remember it being so stressful and just that feeling of why did no one tell me that this was an important instrument to play, and even now with, you know, it's my biggest, like musical, it's not a regret cos I didn't know, but it's one of those things I'm like, God, if someone in the family had just played or something. And then you know, because even now my I would love to accompany my students, but I don't have that skill.

C: I second that completely. I had exactly the same experience when I was at sixth form, and I knew that I wanted to go on and do music. There were a group of us, actually, that all went off to conservatoires at the same time, there were maybe 5 or 6 of us in our year that got into the conservatoire and we all kind of realised at the same time that none of us played the piano. And we really ought to be able to play the piano, for harmonic understanding, and, I knew that I wanted to be able to accompany myself if possible, or at least be able to learn my music independently, you know. So I had the same thing. I went through to grade 5 in about a year. And I can't play the piano now, I struggle with the coordination aspect, but I just regurgitated some exam pieces and now I have grade 5 piano. But I feel exactly the same: it's not a regret because I didn't know any better, but I am very sad that I can't play the piano. I do try, but for me it feels like a real block to, I don't teach because I don't enjoy it, but also I can't accompany, and I feel that that's a big blocker in that line of work.

L: Yeah, the job I have now, when I, and I've been at this school for eight years now, I applied to the then Director of Music, I gave him a list of all my experiences because they wanted a teacher who was a choral specialist as well. And the only thing on the list I could not fulfil was the piano. And I wrote an e-mail to him and I've still got the e-mail, he was like, just be bold and apply, you never know what might happen. And I got the job, and now, but that is, again, my colleagues have to come into my lesson to play piano if we're doing like choir stuff. And I hate that I can't do it myself, but yeah. Other skills, I guess.

A: I have almost exactly the same in that my piano isn't good enough. It's all right, it's slightly ahead of what you two have described, because I had to have lessons because I'd gone to the Conservatoire Junior School, but it sounds very much like the [] school and similarly, I didn't get a bursary from there, but I got, an independent charity paid for me to go because otherwise I don't

think I'd have gone, but they made me have a second study. So for four years I had piano lessons, but still by the time I went to [] I was Grade 5. And it's got a bit better since. I had no idea I'd need it at [], I thought I'd be a singer so I didn't need to play piano. I do play in the teaching now, so I've got better just from having to, but I couldn't do a lot of the, a lot of the jobs now I think, if I wanted to leave being an opera singer, I might not be able to do. Like being director of music in a school, I couldn't do that because I don't play piano. Now I think I'd like to be a conductor, but a lot of conducting jobs you need to be able to play the piano, or transpose at the piano, or basically be an organist, which is so restricting.

G: Isn't it? It's a route in as a rep and accompanist, into conducting. It's a route that many people take.

A: Yeah, but you know, a lot of us choral singers know a lot about singing and music and choirs, but we're not in a position to say: yeah, I could lead that choir, because you haven't got keyboard skills so don't people don't think of those people. I mean it's changed. That is changing. Yeah, but it's very recently that's been changing. I couldn't be a director of music at a church because I don't play the piano. I don't play hymns well enough.

G: I've never taught, but my husband's experience, I just wondered if it was worth mentioning, because he never learned to play the piano. He was at [] and then went to [] as a singer, as a baritone. And so when he left and needed to find some work to do, he somehow managed to get a teaching job at a great school in [], even though he couldn't play the piano. And that was because the attitude of the Director of music was that his skills lay in knowing how to sing well and that's what she wanted. And he was so lucky that that was the attitude that was taken and that therefore he was supported to be able to teach with, you know, using recordings and that sort of thing, and his piano skills, because he's now been doing it 10 years, have developed because he was allowed to go into that situation, and he's now able to accompany things he never thought he would ever have the skill to do, but it took that attitude of recognising his skills because he was a singer and he's going to therefore teach singing that was valuable to that director of music and I think it's really important that, you know, being a great musician, being a great teacher shouldn't have to rely completely on it. It would be great if schools could facilitate support for teachers that are bringing their key skills, not the fact that they can do everything.

I: And for those of you that that did struggle with the sight reading later on, was it simply practising, or was there anything that actually helped you do that? Any specific methods, any practise or was it just doing the job and getting better?

G: For me, I think so, yeah. Or knowing what the rep is in advance. If I'm one to a part.

I: Is there anything else that people want to mention? I mean anything about the barriers, about difficulties? You know, anything, feeling out of place, out of your depth? I don't know if any of you had the similar experience going on an Eton choral course that I was just suddenly amazed people were asking what school I went to, and to me, that was a really bizarre question. Well, you wouldn't know my school. I had no idea there was this whole network.

G: But I think, yeah, nobody's heard of my school, but that didn't bother me. Umm, I think it probably bothered them more than me, you know? I didn't understand the network thing. It wasn't relevant. Nobody at my school, really, you know... I sang in a choir at school and I like, that, you know, we had no sort of musical standing as a school, as such, other than I was getting a lot out of that experience within the school that I was in. So I don't feel that that held me back. Once, you know, that the other people's perceptions of the school I went to held me back. I don't think that

did. I think it was, it was literally just the support to actually know how to access, umm, a career in the first place and not, and that, you know, some certain schools do lend themselves to sort of choral traditions and things more than mine did, perhaps, that made a difference. You know, they used to sing in churches and chapels in their schools. We didn't have that.

A: I think when I went to, when I got to [], I didn't really, like you said, I had no idea that it was such a thing. I had no idea about this network, and so because I was unaware of it, it didn't affect my own psychology. Hmm, I think it did affect the skills I had. I didn't have the skills or the ability to learn. Well, you know, that I would say took me a long, long time to gain the skills. And I think it might have affected people's perception, or being asked to do stuff. There were things that happened outside of college choir that seemed that were often people that knew each other from beforehand, maybe from Eton Choral courses actually, as much as from school. But I didn't hear about Eton Choral courses till I got to []. I had done NYC, but that was very much not a []-y thing at that time. It was almost discouraged to go to [] if you were in NYC. I was an odd one out. One other thing I want to say about the skills. So I think [], in many ways a dreadful person to be working with young people, because he was a bit of a bully and had his own ways that were not necessarily great, but also incredibly, um, in some ways quite discouraging, but in other ways incredibly encouraging, he's just a very complex man. But incredibly didactic. So I had none of the skills required. I was dreadful at sight reading, absolutely dreadful, and learned about it through my own bloody hard work, and his didactic nature. Then I had one year at [] which, if I'd had four years at [], I probably wouldn't have had the teaching because it was just expected that you could do it at []. But because I had some of that didactic, having been taught about it from [], then I was able to practise that at [] for a year, but still following other people because I didn't have the confidence, and then I did three years at [], where I just bloody well had to do it, because there was only me. Yeah. And if it went wrong, it wasn't the end of the world because it wasn't, like, a great choir.

G: Of all the choirs, though, of all the places with all that contemporary stuff, that's baptism of fire.

A: It's after three years of [], a year of [], and three years of [], then I felt like I was almost bulletproof.

G: That should be everybody who can't sight-read's course into being able to sight read, just tell them to do what you did. That would be perfect for everybody.

A: I know I'm the same age as G, but I think it sounds like the two of you are younger but, I think it's such a long time ago discussing this stuff. It's almost like a different person. And when I look at that person now, compared to all the people I teach, I just can't believe that that person did that stuff. It's just unbelievable how, I mean, and I think it sounds like maybe you three did the same. But there was just bloody mindedness. Because otherwise I did it all myself when I decided I'd go to []. I went to [] library and I got CDs out, like, how many I could per week and paid the 55p to rent it out for the week and I copied it onto my minidisc and then I bloody well listened to the entire classical Canon. So that I could apply to []. I mean, I just can't believe it. Now, I send a link to my kids on YouTube and they don't even watch it. It's just, I can't believe that there was such an unbelievably geeky teenager as me that wanted, that did that, and it's almost like he's a different person so I can say that and I don't feel like I'm bragging. It's not like, I don't know, it's like, I don't know what to say. But I did get a lot of, just, moments of inspiration from certain people. I didn't get the kind of, what you get in the, I work in, now, in private schools like, see what the push that people get in, the skills they get. I didn't get any of that. But I did just get moments of encouragement, which was super helpful, and a lot of luck and money at the right time from a charity and little things.

G: I think there's an element for me that the only reason I was able to sort of, carry on, is that, considering how poor my sight reading was initially, well, first of all, there was a bit of naivety from my perspective. You know, just, you know, bloody mindedness in a different way. I just wanted to sing. So I'd say yes to everything. And I think I was lucky that for whatever reason, I think again, not wanting to sound cocky, but, just the reality was, I think my voice was good enough that people forgave me and some of the other stuff that I was less, you know, good at it. So perhaps then I was very lucky for that, that people wanted my voice in the mix. And they were prepared to, like, give me a bit of grace if I couldn't get... But some people didn't, you know, like [] I adored, and we were great friends, but he didn't often ask me to come and sight read stuff, which was fine. You know, I had my people there and I think also going back to the point that you made about, you know the sort of 'which school did you go to?' it is really important to recognise that a network, how a network can support you and, when you start out and you don't have a clue about that, know people, young people, I didn't, and I suspect you're all the same, but a network, wherever it comes from and however you build it, is the thing that supports you to continue to have a career because somebody's heard you somewhere, somebody liked you somewhere else, you know, you get on well with somebody else, and that is particularly important as a musician. I think it's relevant now with what I do, it's obviously relevant to every career that wants to be built, but particularly in music, you know, it's really an important element and therefore shouldn't be necessarily considered a bad thing. As long as those of us that don't have the ready-made network know how to create something equivalent.

C: I've got a couple of points about reading, and sight reading. As I explained earlier, I realised that I could sight read because I think I was imposing my instrumental reading knowledge on to when I learned how to sing later on. I also have perfect pitch, which obviously is a very helpful tool in that respect. And when I went to university, I thought I had pretty bullet proof sight reading, and we had aural skills lessons, my teacher was a composition teacher called [], and she taught us how to break down audio into chunks, so we would do rhythmic dictation exercises of, you know, like a crotchet at a time, should break down the crotchet in any way that you possibly could, and we would dictate the rhythm and then the same with pitch where she would play us a tone row and we had to write it down and then we would be combining those things together and the class would stand around the piano and she'd hand us a Bach chorale or, you know, an SATB piece, and she'd say read it, and now read it all backwards and now transpose it up a third, and now sing one of the other voice parts backwards, and just like doing it on the spot, those kinds of drills were incredibly helpful. They were terrifying, but, and we'd go round the class and we'd write a tone row, and we'd have to sing it out, everyone would add one note and we'd sing it all together. Doing those kinds of exercises was incredibly helpful for building one's ear. And I think because I'm now so used to reading, I have quite a poor aural memory. I'm very bad at singing something back to you. I can read it totally fine, but if you sang me a line, I wouldn't be able to sing the whole thing back to you because I'm so used to doing it from the page. It's yeah, just the way that different people build their skill sets, I suppose. And one of the other things about reading is, working in the church, no one has ever taught me how to read neumes. I learned it backwards because at Saint Chad's we sang Congregational plainchant. We would sing the Salve Regina, and all these kinds of things, and it was in a little booklet that was written out in neumes. So I learned it and then transposed that knowledge onto the lines. And I have since had people explain to me, you know, you do that one first, you know, you go down, up or then you hold this one as a long and then you go down. But no one has ever actually sat down and taught me how to read neumes. I've had bits of information fed to me, and, for the whole 12 members of the back row of [], half of which are students, half of which are professional lay clerks, none of us have ever been taught how to read neumes, which is quite a large part of some of this repertoire.

A: It's like it's a secret language that nobody teaches. If you don't know it, then there's something wrong with you, maybe. If you go and sing at [] and you don't know how to do it, oh, how come you don't know to do that?

But one other thing is that I really struggle memorising, because I read. And sometimes, so I have to memorise all the time, in my main job now I'm memorising all the time, and once it's there, it's there forever. But getting it in takes me a while, and sometimes I'm actually, it's always like I have a photograph of the page in my head rather than actually having memorised, then half reading it from memory.

I: I'm aware we should really finish. Does anyone have anything to say they haven't already said, about their parents, really, and how they were involved, whether there were any circumstances that meant they could do this. For example, my mum didn't work. She was able to cart my cello around. Some of you have already mentioned the things that I mentioned about financial help, but if there's anything else that comes to mind.

C: I made a couple of notes as I went along cause I realised, you know, as you give the story, you realise bits you've missed out. And I will now call up my notes app. So when I started my music lessons, which were council peripatetic music lessons, it was £30 a term including instrument hire, because it was subsidised by the Council. I was the very tail end of council subsidy. So when I started music lessons, that would have been when I was in year 4, so I was 8, which makes it 2006. And then by the time I was finishing my music lessons in year 13, it was, I think £180 a term plus instrument hire. At this point I owned my own flute because my parents had clocked that this was something I was gonna do professionally, or at least seriously, so my parents very kindly bought me a flute, which I think it was about £500. Because it was something that, well, it was an investment that they would, they would see a return on basically. But the price had gone up so much in that time. And at this point I was having two lots of lessons because I was having singing lessons and instrumental lessons. I understand that I could only afford to do that because the sixth form which I had moved to would cover your primary instrument lessons. So my parents were only paying for my second set of lessons and therefore I could afford to do both. But the cost had increased so much because of that particular wave of horrendous cuts to arts funding at the Council level. Yeah, it was such a severe increase. I know that some of my friends stopped because they couldn't afford to do it any more.

G: I was just going to say that I think that it was only possible for me to pursue this because of how supportive my parents were. I did have to stop having piano lessons because they couldn't afford for me to have piano and voice lessons, and we never looked into funding, really, I mean, I got funding, I got a grant to do the choral course. So that was a partial funding, but the rest of it was literally a summer job. I worked in a café, that was the only way I could go and I self funded all the way through. I self funded my university. I self funded my postgraduate as well. That was the only way that I could do it. You know, because my parents were quite a lot older, so my dad was retired by the time I was going to university or anything like that. And, he was in the forces. He was in the army all his life. So my mum didn't really work because for a lot of the time she was being posted around to different places. But I think what they did do was time and, you know, taking me to endless rehearsals, picking me up from this, that and the other, making sure that, you know, they came to my concerts, they made sure that I could go on the school trips to the cathedrals and that sort of thing. So, without that investment of their time and their determination at really antisocial hours and lots of after school stuff and, you know, not so much weekends because I wasn't part of a music school. And I think that was because I was never an instrumentalist, I was only ever, I played the piano and then I started singing. When I started singing, you know, I was in a music school for a very short amount of time. They gave me a triangle in it because that was, so, but I didn't ever have an

instrument that was at a decent level to be able to do that sort of thing. So yeah, absolutely dependent on the fact that my parents were prepared to support me all they could, but not, they couldn't do the financial side, but the other things made the difference.

L: I'll just very quickly echo the thing of parents taking to rehearsals, that's the same for me and my mum in particular spent hours on the computer looking for funding options and stuff. My cello was through Benslow and stuff like that. You know, I got a lot of financial help from charities because my mum looked for it, and like I said, we found out about [] Music Academy because my mum overheard someone and said ohh, can you tell me about that? So in particular, my mum's sort of determination, and especially after my dad was made redundant several times in a row, she became more determined that, well []'s already put so much time into this and we're not going to cut this off now, just because of what's happening, you know, with my dad. So yeah. So parent involvement is crucial, yeah.

G: I think the biggest support is career support. Like pathway support, you know, and that's sort of from year 9. But honestly, like, I was not expecting, so I sang for 20 years, I'm really not really singing anymore, because I do this career lead role in a school which happened because of COVID and ended up getting a job and then it sort of mushroomed into, it's now leading the department, but it's just made me realise more and more, you know, it's really, really critical that students have good advice and don't limit themselves because of what they think. Students are very good at understanding that: if I start, I want to study business because I want to work in business. That's not how it works. So you know, so how do musicians say I want to study music because I want, because I want to get into music. That they can't. That's the only reason that they think it's worth doing, yeah.

So if you do end up, this ends up developing into like, financial support to make sure people can access things, then that could, that sort of mentoring, I think would be really an incredible addition to any support that, you know, I'm not sure where this is going to lead for you, but...

A: Depending on the amount of people that involved, I think that wouldn't be very expensive in that that kind of thing, which may not need very much contact compared to teaching, people would do, people like us would do almost for nothing. I would do that for nothing. I can't teach for nothing because you have to be an individual once a week, half an hour.

G: I would say it's not so difficult to set up, like, a database or a website that could link students with professionals, and particularly for schools as well, you know, to be able to go a website like that because obviously the safeguarding issues if they're under 18, you just need to be a bit careful about but you know to be able to go to a website like that and be able to get speakers, to be able to get interesting people. You know, there are some out there, but not necessarily that are great for musicians. There's some creative industry ones but, you know, I think that's something probably, perhaps all of us would potentially sign up to be involved with to support, help the younger generation.

A: The thing the thing that's missing now that many of us have described it, though, I personally didn't, is local music.

It's. Yeah. Well, see, it's middle class, middle class parents who think it's important, who haven't got that much disposable income, spending it all on music lessons. Their kids, they're the only people learning music now, and it's almost all musicians. It's almost all musicians who are getting their kids to do music because they have how, how valuable they know it was for themselves.

I: Yeah, but that was one thing that was really striking to me. Half of the people who replied had professional musicians in their family or friends growing up.

L: It only need it one person in your family as well, but, and what was said about networks? Yeah, you know, it's huge. It just needs one person, one name. And how often do I go and sing now, or do any other kind of freelance music work and someone will drop in something. And I'm like, ohh, that's why you knew about this when you were a baby and you.

G: I wish I could have been a chorister. I wish I could have done some opera stuff, you know. Imagine, like, some of the things that some of my friends' kids are now doing in incredible places because, you know, when I look back, I just think it's such a shame, there were so many things I could have, like I probably could have done, if I just had, if they'd just known to push me in that direction or apply for this or that or the other, yeah.

Written comments from L:

Thanks for hosting that Zoom session. As I expected, it was quite therapeutic because I simply don't spend much time at all with people from a similar background to myself, whether it be when I'm choral singing or when I'm teaching in the private school that I mentioned on the call.

Even now in my thirties, I have something of an identity crisis because I feel like a traitor. I'm a former state school kid who now helps private school kids to get even further ahead. But the reason I work in a private school is because the salary means I can afford to only work there 3 days per week, leaving me with time to do freelance work (such as state school singing workshops) and practise on the other days. If state school salaries matched private school salaries, I would choose to work in a state school and have impact there.

Aside from the fact that I just loved making music, I think the reason why I stuck with it despite the barriers is because my parents and I naively believed that ultimately if/when I reached a professional level, it would be in a space where people's success was based on their musical ability alone. The questions about what school you went to would stop. But then it just changed to 'who's your teacher?' or 'where else do you sing?'.

I think that if there were to be any kind of mentorship programme for keen state school musicians that emerged in the future, it would need to offer a fine balance of ambition and realism. It's important to offer opportunities to all children, but it is also so damaging to sell children pipe dreams about how the world currently is.

Sorry that this sounds so melodramatic. It's just something that I see playing out all the time! It's to the point now where if I ever have kids, I think I'll be relieved if they decide to do something other than music as their career. Can you see why this music teacher feels so conflicted?!

Interview K:

I: Can you just give me an idea of the sorts of things that that were on offer for you?

K: Sure I mean, the short answer is pretty much everything. By the time I went to university, and my same cohort went to Music college, we were kind of ready to work as musicians on every level and in pretty much any context. So some of the opportunities that we had, in addition to obviously wonderful county youth orchestra, and chamber orchestra drawn from that, there was brilliant

chamber music coaching. I'll tell you a little about that, because that started off as a bunch of county youth orchestra friends busking to earn pocket money so that we didn't have to get a Saturday job in retail or something. We started off, we would busk in [] Town Centre, where we were spotted by one of the County music service teachers, who was just out shopping. They said, great to see you doing this, are you just in it to make pocket money, or would you be interested in pursuing, you know, core quartet repertoire and taking it a bit more seriously, as well as doing the busking stuff. So they got the members of the [] Quartet, who had links to the local area. They came and worked with us. There were a couple of half term sort of weekend courses where we took crazy repertoire. We took things like Bartok and late Beethoven, because we didn't know what was difficult at that stage, and a wonderful thing was that we were never told: this music isn't for you, or you're not ready for this music. People would just, the coaches and teachers would just take what we brought and say, well, okay, let's have a go. Let's see where you're at, and we really made a little business out of that string quartet. We were earning pretty serious money actually for teenagers in the mid-nineties, through busking, through the busking we would pick up normally a handful of wedding gigs which paid pretty well, obviously, corporate events, I remember us doing a mobile phone launch for Samsung in the early days of mobiles, and we were quartet in residence at one of the Northeast's first Vegan restaurants, and that all just came from the busking work that we did. And, as I say, on the side of that, we also got really top-quality training from the Brodskys on the core repertoire and started doing recitals. So that was the chamber music. Another really big element of it was, I was exposed to really hardcore contemporary music from being 15 or 16, and that came from, there was a larger regional orchestra that doesn't exist anymore, it was called the [], and [] actually put up a lot of the money for that, he was actively involved right towards the end of his life, he would come along and sit in rehearsals and kind of offer feedback, and just, you know, pipe up now and again. So that was a group that was drawn from county youth orchestras right across the northeast, [], all the rest of it, and that was ten days in the summer where we did really difficult stuff. The program would normally be, half of it would be like a Mahler Symphony, or Strauss tone poem or something. But half of the program was always given over to new music, so Turnage, he was quite young then, we did some of his work, George Benjamin, who actually conducted one of the courses, not one that I was on, some of his music, Birtwistle, pretty much any one of that sort of camp of British composers that you care to name. And again there was never a sense that this was, it wasn't presented to us as difficult, and it wasn't presented to us that it was unusual for this group of quite motley group of kids from a big range of socioeconomic backgrounds actually. There was never a sense that we were doing something that was beyond our capabilities or not for us, you know, we just want to get, we were brought up not to be scared of anything musically, I think, is what I'm trying to say. There were opportunities to do pit work, whether that was in opera, which was an absolute life changer for me, was having a summer job playing in the pit for Madame Butterfly when I was 15 or 16, opened my ears up to a whole genre of music that's primarily where I work now, is in that area. Shows, you know, your Rodgers and Hammersteins, Gilbert and Sullivans, the good players from county youth orchestras were always channelled towards that. And I think an important thing to mention there is that all of the people involved in mentoring all of us, and you know, particularly the kids from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, there was always an awareness that we needed to be making money as much as we could, as young as we could as musicians. There was the sense that, I mean, certainly my parents, they were very supportive emotionally, not from a musical family, they were keen for me to pursue all of this, but their question was always, is it going to pay the bills when you're older, if you choose to pursue this? And I think the people that looked after and shaped our careers from the county music service, they knew that that was the case for a lot of us kids, and they kind of gave us opportunities not just to develop as musicians, but to prove that we could pay our way, you know, through doing these things, which was super important.

I: And was that primarily through the music service?

K: Yeah, pretty much. I mean, you mentioned there about opportunities, whether they were for kids that showed particular talents and passion for doing this stuff, I would say that was the case for the most part. I feel like everybody involved the peris, the people that conducted the county music ensembles, they were all very alert to the kids that had a real drive to really take this seriously and do something with it, and they would look out, they would suggest us to fixers in the local area so that we could get the experience, and also earn a few quid from doing it. Yeah, it was kind of like a little Systema, as the best way that I can describe it, although it was, you know, long before that terminology came into parlance.

I: And what was the music like in your school?

K: That's a lot more basic. Again, I think, we, you know, we weren't a rich, we were not quite an inner city, but we were a state school with not a huge budget in quite a deprived area. I remember there was lots going on at all levels in my school. There wasn't anything, it's gonna sound awful, there wasn't anything that particularly was satisfying to me as a kid that was, you know, really had their eyes on playing Tippett in the holidays and things like that. But we did, we had a half decent school orchestra. We had recorder groups. We had I think, 2 or 3 different levels of choir, one of which was non auditioned, and one of which was for the kids again that were a little bit more serious about it. I can't really fault the classroom music tuition, but I would say that for me it was the county wide stuff that was more transformative.

I: Yeah, it sounds if your music was wasn't completely terrible.

K: No, not at all. I mean they had, we, my school, used to put on, especially the bringing together of music and drama, they were very strong on that actually, now I think about it. They would do a big show like a Joseph or an Oliver, or whatever, at a proper theatre, a big theatre in town every year, actually. And they would involve as many kids as they could, like, regardless really of levels of talent and things like that, they would find a way, whether they were helping backstage, or like, doing supernumerary parts, or just speaking parts, or whatever. That was a really great thing that they did, I think, and that was all school based.

I: This is, you know, slightly separate to what I planned on asking you, but because you said that you couldn't fault the classroom music, I'm interested, as far as you remember. I, you know, accept it's difficult to remember all these things, how the classroom music worked with a wide range of abilities, because my experience at school was that classroom music, I mean, certainly up to GCSE, did nothing for someone who was playing a couple of instruments and could read music. I don't think it really did anything for the other people who couldn't read music because the teachers didn't do anything that could bridge that gap. So I'm interested to know, you know, whether the people who weren't studying musical instruments were given something they could gain from.

K: I would say yes, actually. I mean, it was obviously a slightly different story after GCSE options, where I think there were maybe 9 or 10 of us doing GCSE music, all of whom were, you know, pretty competent, I'd say, a sort of base level of grade 4 or 5, something like that in various instruments. But really, even before that, and I think music was a subject where we weren't streamed by ability, music, art, and possibly PE that kind of thing. It was kind of very much a mixed bag. We had a great classroom music teacher, whose background was Music theatre, and I guess what we would now call contemporary commercial music. And he did do it, yeah, it wasn't stretching for me, but I was getting my kicks elsewhere by even, you know, before GCSE. But he did as I remember it, find a way to incorporate the kids that maybe had interest in pop and things like that. It was very much not

core classical repertoire or nothing. It was kind of quite a Broad Church in our classroom from years 7 to 9. I get the feeling talking to other people that that teacher was quite unusual. But again, he was someone that realized early on that I was probably going to work in music in some way or another, and he found opportunities for me to play chamber music with some of the teachers and things like that, and just generally to stretch me, he would have really good conversations, saying to me, you know, have you heard this 20th century composer, I think you would enjoy this. So there was care taken over, for want of a better word, gifted and talented, but also not just leaving everybody else to do their own thing and press the demonstration button on a keyboard.

I: What prompted you to start playing in the first place?

K: It's going to sound really sentimental. I did really feel like it was some sort of calling. I was 8, and it came from nowhere. So, I come from not a musical family, the Welsh side of my family apparently I had a great grandfather on that side who used to play in working men's clubs in the valleys and things like that, he was a pianist and sort of singer songwriter, but there was nothing more recent than that. I don't think I had ever really felt a pull to music, until one day one of the Peri teachers came in, had a chat with our classroom teacher and said, there's an opportunity for people to play the violin or the cello. Can you raise your hands if you're interested? And I just knew that I really really was. I was really desperate to get this opportunity, and I thought, what will I do if they don't pick me, I don't know where it came from. But we did all the aural tests, and they got a few more of us back to hold an instrument to see how we physically interacted. And it was just obviously a thing that I was meant to do. So I think for about maybe the first 3 months, maybe not quite as long as that we had groups of 6, we had a peri, this was all state funded obviously, and we rented our instruments well, the school rented our instruments for us. We had lessons in groups of 6 on a weekly basis, just come out of lessons and have half an hour. And the teacher pulled me out and said that he would teach me separately, when he realized that there was something special there with me, that I was really passionate about it. I don't remember there ever being a discussion about who would pay for that, or whether there was budget to cover that. Maybe there wasn't, you know, they just didn't tell an 8 year old girl this, but certainly my parents weren't involved in that, it was always just presented as, we're going to teach you separately, so that you can progress quicker, and that happened right through till I was 18.

I: Wow! This seems to be a recurring theme of the peris going in and playing their instruments, and people getting to start that way and getting those funded lessons. That's yeah, really interesting, because I don't know if that happens at all now. But it's hard to imagine.

K: It certainly doesn't happen locally to where I live now, which is in []. I have a day job in the music industry, and my CEO's wife is a peri teacher around here, in fact, she's about to stop doing that and pursue playing because her children have flown the nest, and she wants to get back into that. But I was telling her this story just over drinks a couple of weeks ago, she said that wouldn't happen here now. I can't envisage that happening in the current climate here.

I: The only other thing is about parental support? Were there things that they had to do? Whether it was time wise, ferrying around....

K: Well again, yeah, I think this is very important actually, because, I mean, my parents are absolutely brilliant. They've been completely supportive of me, emotionally, right through, embarking on a career path that was completely foreign to them, and I think at certain points they've had a certain amount of anxiety about whether it would pay the bills, like I said. From a practical point of view, my parents didn't drive, neither of them, well, they still don't drive, and a lot

of the opportunities, especially as I was working more and more as a musician before kids my age had their first cars, you know, there were often opportunities that were in quite far flung places. We went as far as places like [], and places like that. I remember that the transport was always taken care of by other people who were involved. The county music service would arrange lift shares for me. I remember my mum in particular, feeling really guilty that she couldn't drive, and that they couldn't get me there physically, and I remember her always saying we don't want to impose on people, so you know, don't ever ask for a lift yourself. But I was always just told, do you want to do this gig? If you do, this person will be your transport. That will be sorted out. No question about it, and everything worked perfectly, even on some occasions teachers at my school who had children who were going to be doing the same events, workshops, and things like that, they would come and find me at playtime, or whatever, and say, are we going to drive you with our daughter? By the way? So that practical logistical level was also, there were people looking out. They knew that I was in a car free family, and they made sure that I never felt like I was being an imposition. Most importantly, it never felt like charity, which was lovely.

I: Just back to the focus on making money and needing to make ends meet. I mean, do you think that that work that you were getting, and that other musicians were getting, still exists but is taken by, you know, adult professionals now, does it not exist anymore? You obviously may not know, but I'm just interested to know whether you think that's changed.

K: I think I mean, what does strike me looking back on that now is, I think this was very much in the days before payment and exposure, you know, and things will look good on your CV. We were always offered proper fees, even as kids. I mean, we were good, you know, we would be a decent wedding ensemble, and we would do a good job in a high end restaurant and things like that playing background music. But we were never asked to play just for exposure. I mean, for instance, the restaurant contract that we had, I think we were paid something like 50 pounds each per evening of work, which you know that was quite a bit of money in the late nineties, and we got a really nice dinner after our shift as well. So I think a lot of those opportunities now are this, it will look good on your CV thing, which, that wasn't the mentality, as I remember it back in those days. We never had, I mean, we ended up, we had also a good sense of how to run a business, I think, by the time we went to university, because we'd had, you know, a rate card, this is what we charge for weddings, this is the repertoire that we can offer, this is how we handle transport fees and things like that. We really learned all of those, you know, business skills, if you like. There is one example of someone who was not from my county music service, but from the same region, and a slightly older contemporary of mine, who has obviously gone on to have a completely stellar career as a freelancer, and that's [], I think, who, [] and I have spoken a lot about the fact that we come from the same sort of socioeconomic background and musical ecosystem. And I think it's, I think he would say as well that you know, growing up with that emphasis on learning it almost as a trade has enabled him to become, you know, not just a great musician, but also a very savvy businessman and a good fundraiser, you know. Yeah, he knows that arts funding is, you know, really, really thinly spread at the moment, and he's very good at thinking of ways outside the box to make the projects happen that he wants to happen, and I think part of that comes from the same mentality I just described, you know, that you need to pay your way with it.

I remember my father saying to me when I think he'd come in from, my dad was still working, he worked on the docks, basically, when I was growing up, I remember him coming back from a shift and seeing us counting all the money that we got from busking, and he said, you know I used to worry about you lot finding work, you know, whether it was sustainable, and he said, but I guess people are always going to need musicians. And I think that was, you know, literally seeing the cash

that we pulled in was, that was a big thing in terms of him supporting us even more with it. But yeah, we were always, we were definitely always learning. I always felt like we had a great balance between doing the gigs to pay the bills and then doing that really deep work on the contemporary music. And again, I have friends that went on, a lot of people of my generation, and from that area they're in principal chairs and major orchestras and things now. Other people have gone on to have freelance careers in non-classical music, and they all kind of say the same thing, that we learned how to market ourselves and how to, you know, negotiate fees and stuff like that, way before we went to Music college. And that definitely is, I think, a silver lining to coming from this sort of a background.

I: Were you learning that simply by having to do it?

K: Pretty much, yeah. We kind of yeah, we learned through doing. I remember there were people, I had the same peri teacher from being 11 through to being 18, and actually his stepson was the second violinist in our quartet, so he would help and sort of give us tips and say, no, you need to be charging X amount for a wedding and X amount if they want you back for the evening, doing things like that. We were also, I should say, we were very integrated into the extremely active scene for adult amateurs in our county as well. That was a really brilliant thing, and that there were 3 levels of orchestra in [], as it then was, one of which did huge things like Strauss tone poems, and Bruckner symphonies and things like that. There was one which was a little bit more low key, and it was accessible for anyone that could maybe manage a Mozart symphony or something like that. And the top tier, there were lots of musical, lots of the peri teachers and things like that from the area played alongside with us. We did buddy up as desk partners a bit like el sistema, really. And I think we did pick up a lot just from chatting in the breaks about business skills and how the industry works, just from sort of sharing space and time with those guys who were pros, were always very, very generous in advice and opportunities and recommendations for us. Yeah, it was great, really was.

Interview E:

I: Can you tell me a bit more what you said about your primary music experience?

E: Yeah, I mean, I was thinking about this because I was trying to remember my primary. A very long time ago, but certainly back then, so we're talking, I mean, I went to secondary school in 88. So we're talking sort of early eighties, and my primary school was a typical state primary school. I mean, it was considered quite good, but it was just our local state primary. And I do remember we all did recorder classes together as a whole year group, and I think that might have been part of the curriculum back then, I don't know, but certainly.

I: I wasn't aware of it in my time, which was the late eighties early nineties. I don't remember that being around.

E: Yeah, I mean, I think it was pretty commonplace sort of 5 years before you. Everybody did recorder, and we all learned recorder therefore we all learned basic notation. And we all played recorder in class. And then, on top of that, my primary school had, one of the teachers did some recorder groups as well. So we had recorder ensembles, and there was a kind of elite recorder ensemble and a quite good recorder ensemble. There were various things of that kind. And I do actually remember that really clearly, because I remember sitting there at this recorder ensemble refusing to play a note because he was doing some modern piece with clashes, and I didn't like it. So I refused to play anything except the last note, I remember that really clearly.

Later on at primary school they gave us, I don't know, I don't know whether everybody did this, but there was certainly an option to have violin lessons. I mean the group lessons. I think what probably happened was that they had a peripatetic come in who gave a trial, everybody had a violin lesson, and then, if you liked it you, you could continue. And they were group lessons until the end of school, and because of that I carried on playing the violin for quite a lot longer, because she was peripatetic so she used to come around to our houses. And then I mean, various things I do remember is that we did sing hymns, so I think we must have had daily assembly, and I mean they were, it was common praise back then, it was sort of, okay, so a mixture of good hymns and slightly more modern hymns.

I: And did you have live accompaniment for that? You know a piano rather than.

E: Yes, we would have had a piano, no recordings, absolutely. And also, I mean, this was where I first came across that amazing Cornelius piece about the 3 Kings. Lovely tenor solo, yeah, because we had one of the teachers there, he was a folk singer, but he had this beautiful natural tenor voice, and then we sang the chorale part. That is what 4, 8 parts. Teachers on the tenor and bass parts, but the kids were definitely singing the top parts.

I: That's not easy for your average children.

E: I think we potentially underestimate what kids can do. But that was the kind of stuff we were doing at school, and I remember doing that one because I remember it was such a beautiful piece. But also, interesting about that piece as well is the pitch of it. So I mean my daughter went to a local prep school near us, and they did the typical kind of music you do at prep schools, which is the sort of school shows written for kids and everything's written, all the pitches are written really, really, really low, and they're just growling out these notes all the time, and we were up on the Ds and Es and Fs and Gs, and that was just how we sang.

I: Can I ask you one more question about the group violin lessons? When you say group is this sort of, you know, 4 people, that sort of size?

E: I remember a room with an arc of people, must have been about 12-15.

I: Oh, right. So it was bigger.

E: Yeah, I mean, that could have been maybe the initial session, because I just remember we were all playing very out of tune, but that is stuck in my mind, and then, after that, I don't, to be honest, I don't remember. I don't think it was one to one at the school, because I think the school were paying for it.

E: But we became, then for me it became one to one later. So I'm assuming that there would have been everybody in the first session, and then a massive drop off of people.

I: And do you know you, of course you may not know, because this may have been your parents' domain, whether you had to pay when you moved to one to one?

E: Yes. So when she came to our house afterwards, that was.

I: I'm also just interested to know about the gap in experience or skills you felt when you arrived as a choral scholar.

E: Well, you see the difficulty with this, obviously I did go to a private school. I went to private school with a really rubbish music department, but it was a private school, and I think even then, when I got to [], I remember, so it was under []'s time, and I remember [] saying to the girl next to me, after I

think I'd been there for about 2 terms, just: is she actually singing anything. I didn't know, I remember the massive shock of, all the repertoire was new, I mean, at my school we had done the Cantique de Jean Racine, and a whole load of John Rutter, and that was it. So I'd never, ever before sung something like Tallis where your note is not the tune. It's not the melody with an accompaniment, it's all this kind of wonderful lines going over each other. This was totally totally new to me. The idea of having to do fourths and fifths and pitch, and do notes that are in a harmony rather than the melody, the easy bit, you know. Really, really different, and I don't remember a feeling of struggling, I don't remember feeling that I couldn't do it. I do remember that I was definitely on the back foot with that, and that [] had noticed, and it took me a year to get used to being able to read and understand that music which I didn't have any experience of. And I remember that very clearly, because I do remember [] then saying to me, you know [] was asking me if you were singing at all, and she was very supportive. Yeah, so that was massive. I also remember quite clearly being really resentful, when I got into my second year, of my new first year colleagues who came in, and they knew all the music, and they had opinions as to whether they liked Tallis better than Leighton, and I hadn't even heard of these. I did actually, I mean, I came from quite a musical family. My, my dad was really into orchestral music, so he played Sibelius symphonies in the evening, and I would listen to them from my room, and we were, we were not a non-musical family, but this kind of music, this kind of world, I'd never done it, I had never done it before in my life.

I: Did you sing in a in a church choir at all? No.

E: And the way that it works, I mean, even just like what comes after what in the service, obviously you learn it quite quickly. But the fact that the music is well, as I said before, it's not just simply melody and accompaniment, it's much more complicated than that, and I don't think you come across anything like that, or having to pitch a semitone away from somebody else, because you've got a wonderful scrunchy chord somewhere, you know. It's just you, wouldn't. I never had to do anything that was vaguely mentally taxing in school music.

I: And is it the same gap that you are seeing with the choral scholars, where you said you noticed the gap between the State school ones?

E: Yeah, I think so. I mean, I don't know where all, what schools all of them went to. So I might be saying something about somebody who was actually at a private school. But I have noticed certainly over the last 2 years, I've had quite a few people come in who have never done this before and actually quite a few who've never had singing lessons before. This is all, the whole of it, totally new. And I had one a couple of years ago, I had a student who'd gone to state school all the way through because her parents were teachers, and they believed that, but she'd gone to private A level school because her state school wasn't offering music, and she wanted to do music, so she'd had to change and I haven't come across anyone with such imposter syndrome as this girl. Now, maybe that's just her. Maybe she'd have done that, even if she'd gone to Rugby and been part of their choral program and knew everything already. But I she really, there was a massive lack of confidence, and she was extremely musical, I don't think she'd have had any trouble with the sight reading. She'd been doing the royal schools of church music courses. I don't know if they still run. She'd done those. And she'd also done, actually she'd done Saturday morning Junior college. But that's not even that, I mean, okay, that's a lovely thing, and it costs £3,000 a term. But that wasn't again, it wasn't the choral music, it wasn't church music. They didn't do that repertoire, and so I think she felt a massive sense of imposter syndrome, and I've certainly had, I had one this year who turned up and said, I've never done any of this before, and she lasted a term in the choir. It's really sad. She didn't tell me why she left. She just went, and suddenly I wasn't teaching her anymore. I don't know why, but I'm, on a

massive assumption, I think it was all too much too quickly, and she couldn't get her head around it now. I don't know what kind of school she went to, but she definitely hadn't done any of this before.

Nowadays it's going to be the ones at the top rather than the ones in the middle. Yeah, I mean, I was reading a book called *Born to Rule*. Have you come across that? It's about the way, essentially, that they're looking at the who's who list. So they're looking at people who are wealthy, have a lot of capital, not just money, but also cultural and life capital, and how they describe themselves. And they said that one of the really interesting things was that nowadays people who are sort of in positions of wealth and power no longer list their hobbies in Who's Who as going to classical music concerts, or singing in choirs, or it's all hobbies which they consider fit them into a sort of more ordinary lifestyle, like going to football, spending time with my family, that kind of thing that essentially means that they are, that essentially to suggest that they have got where they got through their own abilities.

But the thing that really caught my eye was that I have noticed I mean, I teach in quite a lot of these, you know, yr9 to 13 boarding schools, and the classical music in those has disappeared so much. I find it very difficult. I only teach classical because I've been doing it for so many years. Now I'm like, no, this is what I do. I'm going to teach this. And I have very few students at quite a lot of schools, which is nice, because it means that I get to teach what I want to teach, but it has been noticeable. The number of schools that now have a pop singing teacher and a classical singing teacher, musical theatre singer. And the musical theatre and pop singing teachers are doing roaring trade, and the classical ones, I mean it's all ex choristers, which is lovely, of course, for me, it means my work is very lovely, but to find people that actually want to come in and have the classical training and do the classical stuff and sing in the chapel choir, if there is one, it's fewer and fewer. I mean, they're having real trouble at [] with that teenage year group of people actually do sing in the chapel choir at all, let alone considering going on to do choral scholarships, and that's in an old elite boarding school.

I: Have you been aware of any attempts to help those sorts of choral scholars who don't have the experience when they come?

E: In []? No. I haven't spoken to [] about it. But no, I think you just turn up and do it. I know there is concern, I can't give you any direct quotes, but I know there is concern about the... because now they do the whole system the other way around so you have to get your academic place before your choral award. The pool of people they're choosing from quite often is a lot less. And that certainly the drive towards having more very deserving state school kids means that there are fewer people to choose from to sing in the in the choirs, and I know that there's a difficulty there with trying to get the kind of broad spectrum of students that the university wants and needs to show that it's trying to encourage it, and also maintain the high level of choral music. So there's definitely concern amongst the choir masters. Whether or not they're doing anything about it I'm not really sure. I mean, I think they all have these lovely outreach schemes where you can come and sing with the choir for an evening, which is lovely, but I don't think somebody who is at a state school who doesn't know anything about choral music (a) will even know this is a listing, because it gets advertised all over [], where I am at the moment, but I don't think, I'm pretty certain it's not advertised in the State School down the road, I mean, maybe it is, but I don't know, but would they think this is something I might go to, because it's totally... And of course the choristers, so I mean choristerships are fab, I mean, both my kids are with, [] was at [], and my daughter's now at [], and obviously with that you get the massive chorister reduction in fees plus top up bursary if necessary, and a lot of them use those choristerships to then get the music scholarships and the bursaries to the schools where they're going to be able to do at least some more of that music. So it's a kind of, it's a self-fulfilling circle.

I find it also, I've been watching the development of [] choir quite a lot which is a girls choir they set up, and a lot of the girls I teach, now they've come into [] in year 9, having been in the State system for the first 2 years of secondary education, and then swapped over with a massive great music scholarship to [], because they have this choral training from [] that means... it's very savvy on the part of their parents, but, so something like that training is not in any way helping the State school system.

I mean my husband had the same problem, so I mean he's 5 years older than me. But he went to [] school in [], which was a failing state secondary, and in order to do music he had to get together with a group of friends and go to somewhere else to have some music lessons.

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You know I still feel even now, and yes, I did go to private school, but I still feel even now a certain level of resentment towards my students, who come in so confident and so full of knowledge and experience, and it feels to me sometimes as if they don't realize what a gift they've been given, and of course there's no reason why they should, I mean I don't blame them. It's just, you know.

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So I mean at [], they all knew each other already, because they'd been at NYC, and they'd been at Rods, and they'd been at this, that, and the other, they'd done all these things which I hadn't done because I didn't know they existed, let alone couldn't afford to do them. And then, beyond that, those connections, those groups, still remain. There's all the Eton boys helping each other out with conducting gigs, and all the singers who knew each other from NYC. They're all the ones who ended up, all of the people I sang with in [], pretty much, they all knew each other already, because they'd all done NYC together. So it wasn't so much, actually, I went to [], and therefore I get a leg up, although obviously it was a leg up, but it was what happened before that, feeding through into my experience at [] and then continuing on after that.

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Well the music director at [] keeps asking me if I have any bright ideas as to what we can do to get more people singing in the chapel choir at this elite boarding school, and without, I think, without classical music or church music becoming something that isn't considered elitist or foreign or weird, because it's religious, or any of those barriers, without it just being something that people just hear every day and... it's really hard. I don't know. And I think if classical music starts to lose its cachet amongst, well, amongst aspirational parents, let's say, or even people who went through that system, and for whom it was handed on a plate. And then that sort of trickles down as being the kind of the aspiration of more normal people who don't have these things. If that's going, then there's actually really nobody left to support it in any way. And I think it's really scary, actually.

Yes, I mean, I think the choristerships, they certainly remain the kind of place where musical parents send their kids in order that they can have a really good education. That's obviously what we did with ours, because they, we couldn't have gone to the amazing schools that currently at and with, of course, also the music, obviously they're having that musical education. And for my son, it's actually part of his life, it's part of his identity, and he definitely wants to carry on doing it forever and ever. I'm not sure what my daughter will do. But you know it, it meant so much to him to have this, and there's no way I could have done that for him without him being a chorister at one of those foundations. And us having a massive amount off the fees to be able to send him there. I mean, it's great for us, obviously, but...

Questionnaire H:

We had a music teacher from [] Music Service come into the school every week for a day. He had lots of percussion instruments, a guitar and recorders. There was a weekly music lesson with each class (two year groups per class). He also ran a recorder group and a guitar group for those who were more advanced. [] was an Englishman married to a lovely lady from the West Indies, and his music was heavily influenced by West Indian culture and musical learning techniques. A lot of learning was done by ear, but he also taught every child to read music. He taught using the Kodaly Method, Solfege and Dalcroze Eurythmics. We would play games where he would show solfege signs and we would sing the relevant notes to create a melody. He would allocate notes or hand signs to the four corners of the room, play on his guitar and would have to run to the corresponding corner of the room - having identified the note on the scale we were hearing. He would play a rhythmic on a drum, and ask us to clap the rhythm back. As we clapped the rhythm back he played a new rhythm at the same time, for us to clap back next. So we would be clapping one rhythm and learning the next.

Solfege hand signals meant we learned to sing in harmony following the signals of his two hands, which helped us to understand the degrees of the scale, and which brought consonance or dissonance.

Every child participated in the class music sessions which included recorder playing for everybody, and class singing of songs and music games. We sang in several parts at once, even at a young age. Everything was done with solfege hand signs. The children with more advanced skills also then had the opportunity to leave class lessons to play in a recorder choir (with descant, treble, tenor and bass recorders) or to play in his guitar group.

We also had a visiting peri violin teacher in school.

Alongside this he also ran a council-funded music centre on a weekday evening, repeating much of the same teaching, and where there was also a violin group, which utilised the Suzuki Method for group string learning.

Finally each class accessed group singing through a subscription to a system which sent out music booklets and recorded content, so that we could sing along with tapes each week.

I also had private piano lessons.

The ear training I had was incredibly rigorous. Through the Kodaly method and solfege music was lifted away from the page and I learned to visualise intervals and rhythms, and to trust my ear. When I look back I'm amazed by the complexity of what he would ask us to do, and assume that we could do. That training meant I never remotely struggled with aural tests in AB exams as I got older. It also meant that my understanding of harmony was grounded in visual and aural understanding, and not confined by specific key signatures or a piano keyboard. I gained musical confidence and a deep love of music as being something which was primarily physical, but also mindful and enjoyable.

Most people had at least a basic understanding of music notation thanks to the recorder playing. Everyone could and would sing confidently. It was a shock to get to secondary school and discover that not everyone sang at school happily.

Questionnaire B:

1) My parents noticed I had some natural musical instincts when I was young (for context, I am autistic). My primary school (state C.O.E.) didn't really encourage it beyond noticing something beyond expectations; for example, they got me to do a solo from *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* because they were rehearsing it with the class and spotted that I was the only pupil who had actually seen the film and knew the songs, so they turned it into a solo opportunity. I started piano lessons when I was 8 (a bit later than my peers) and started composing short pieces when I was 10, the teachers reacted as if it were something extraordinary when I showed them but I fully thought it was something everyone could do.

My family is catholic and we attended church every Sunday. We moved somewhere in [] where the church had a small amateur choir (2 sops, 2 altos, 1 tenor, 1 bass). The organist (who was also my piano teacher) noticed that I was a strong singer and encouraged me to join the choir as a treble - this was a very alien concept to me, but I soon adapted and started singing with them. Sunday masses included 4 hymns, basic congregational mass settings and a monthly anthem (usually from the *Oxford Flexible Anthems* book). My favourite time of year was Christmas as we got to sing lots of carols (mainly from the *Carols for Choirs* books and various other bits). I never had singing lessons in my childhood, the nearest cathedral with professional choral singing was 30 miles away so I never attended these, and I saw myself more of a pianist rather than a singer. I was only told that I had perfect pitch when I was 15.

When my voice broke, I moved to tenor. At this time I moved from a state secondary school with limited choral groups to a grammar school for my A-Levels. The grammar school had a huge variety of different things, and I got stuck in to all the choral groups (the Gospel choir and the Chamber choir) performing at all their concerts and services. I helped out with these, and my music teacher encouraged me to go further as a composer - I arranged a Stevie Wonder song for the gospel choir, I composed for the clarinet quintet, and I even ran a small choral quartet. I was awarded a music prize at the end of year 13.

Going to university [], I applied for their auditioned chamber choir (I didn't think I was good enough to go for their choral scholarships, or I didn't hear about them until too late). However I didn't know what counted as a solo piece (not a solo singer yet) so I sung the soprano line an octave down of a motet that I knew. I didn't get in and felt like I had no place in choral music as a result. The people who ran the chamber choir and the choral scholars had a feeling of privilege about them that turned me away from pursuing it further. During my first year, I had given up on piano professionally (I got a distinction at Grade 7 but it didn't feel fun anymore).

For my second and third years at university, I chose a solo performance course which focussed on classical singing - which granted me singing lessons for the first time. My teacher noticed that I was a good sight-singer and focussed on building up my technique; we worked really well together as I worked towards a recital of a brief history of western music (Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic and Modern). As part of the course I had to join an ensemble so I decided to join the university's unauditioned chorus group - there I was introduced to familiar choral rep in full (Faure's Requiem, Haydn masses, Bernstein Chichester Psalms etc.). I graduated with a Bachelors in joint honours Mathematics and Music.

For my masters year (Advanced Musical Studies, for solo performance I wanted to focus solely on 20th/21st-century rep as I wanted to push myself in pitching and sight-singing. My recital consisted of Cage, Berg and Gerald Barry, which really pushed my development as a soloist. I also spotted that

I was good at sight-singing in the university chorus (I auditioned for the chamber choir again but I still did not get in). I also started giving charity recitals outside of university which featured my own compositions and song cycles.

After graduating, I struggled to find work as a music graduate in the education sector. I felt like I wasn't given enough guidance on how to build up a portfolio as a performer or a composer. I was working at a supermarket whilst doing composing and performing for free/experience. After six months, I decided to join Teach First as a maths teacher, where they placed back in my home county of [].

Whilst training/working to be a teacher, I joined the local choral society. The rehearsals mostly consisted of note-bashing for all the parts, which I found quite boring as I could sight-sing them. They were a lovely group and I sang several concerts with them (again, familiar rep that I was doing for the first time), and they premiered some of my choral works (they even granted me a paid commission on one occasion). I also managed to find paid singing work as a cantor for a tiny Anglican-Catholic church in a nearby village. On one Sunday, the substitute organist asked if they could pass my details onto someone nearby who was putting on a professional group for some local gigs. This was my first time working with a professional choir and where I was paid for my work. They even passed my details onto other choir leaders in case they needed an emergency tenor/bass. As the 4 years went on, I started to have aspirations of wanting to join more professional groups - but they were few and far between in [], and I couldn't fit a lay clerkship with [] in with my full-time teaching work. My partner and I decided to try and move to [] so that we could both do more of what we loved.

I easily found a teaching job in [], but applying for lay clerkships was tricky. I auditioned for [] and [], where they both found my voice was at the level of expectation but I didn't have enough experience. This really made me lose confidence in myself as it was the experience that I wanted. I applied for the [] lay clerkship as a last resort; the audition went well but the clerkship was offered to someone else; however the director offered me a Graduate Choral Scholarship in its place which I happily accepted.

Since being in [], working with [] and depping for several other choirs has been a life-changer. This has only happened to me when I was 27.

2) I'm not 100% sure how I learnt to sight-sing. It may have started when I became a tenor at my local church; with someone to guide me before I picked it up. This combined with my perfect pitch allowed me to anticipate certain passages. During my first year at university, I was a fan of following miniature scores of orchestral works and humming along to certain lines as I listened to recordings. My time at the university chorus may also have helped. It's a mixture of things that I can't pinpoint - I just know that I never learnt in the professional way.

3) I feel that whenever I go a rehearsal, there's an element that everyone is familiar with all the pieces (whether it's a Magnificat or Nunc Dimittis or anthem) already, but I'm singing it for the first time so I don't have that confidence that everyone else has. I sing it all correctly 99% of the time but I feel I lack that connection that students in a university choir have. But this feeling is not there if we're all learning something no-one has seen/heard before, I feel that my pitch gives me an advantage.

I'm a very self-critical person, so naturally I always feel out of place with a professional choir in terms of their familiarity with famous repertoire, but I don't feel like I don't belong there. I've just taken a longer and different path to get there.

Questionnaire F:

1. What were the key factors in your route to becoming a professional choral singer? For example: school music, musical activities outside school, parental support (whether financial, helping with practice, providing transport, encouragement etc), events attended, any particular teachers or other individuals.

In chronological order:

- Context: No history of professional or semi-professional music making in any of my known family members. Attended state-funded CofE primary and secondary schools. 2nd of 4 children. Father a chartered surveyor whose company went bankrupt in the early 1990s after the birth of his youngest child. He then began his own building software company. Mother a part-time social worker for the local authority.
- I'd been learning piano with a local teacher since the age of 7, (parents noticed I could play melodies by ear on my grandad's piano). Joined village children's choir around the same time. Piano teacher noticed my voice around age 12 and offered singing lessons. Did grades 5, 7, and 8 with that teacher between the ages of 14 and 17. Joined school choir, performed in annual school production etc
- Auditioned for county youth choir aged 15 - someone on the audition panel was also on the panel for the National Youth Choirs and admitted me to the Training Choir without further audition. By my mid-teens, (early 2000s) my parents were not as financially restricted as when we were growing up in the 90s, and they could afford the course fees. Moved up through the choirs, and eventually joined the semi-pro chamber choir (then called Laudibus). I would say NYC was the main factor in my becoming a pro chorister. I experienced world-class choral music, and learned to sight sing.
- I spoke to my A Level music teacher about how I wanted to be a singer, but I wasn't interested in academic music. He mentioned the existence of conservatoires, something which I'd never heard of. Threw in some applications last minute, and got into RNCM.
- Had a less than ideal time at college, moved down to London with my then-boyfriend after undergraduate graduation, and tried to get bits and bobs of choral singing work alongside teaching to make ends meet while I continued working on my operatic technique. I'm now more known as an opera singer than a chorister, but that doesn't mean I don't still love doing it!

2. How did you learn to sight-sing? See above!

3. Did you experience any difficulties in entering the world of professional singing, or ever feel out of place because of your educational background?

I found trying to break into the London depping scene really really difficult. It seemed like everyone had been a cathedral chorister/privately educated as a child and had cliquey church-choir lingo/banter etc that I didn't understand. Things that they would consider basic; terms like 'introit', 'anthem' 'psalm', when to kneel or bow, or how to read chant on a 4-line stave, were utterly alien to me, even though I was and am a very good sight reader. Each church had a different way or order of doing things, and I was actively made to feel ignorant for not knowing them, even though there was no way I could have. After a year or 2 I stopped actively looking for church depping work because it was too depressing, and instead stuck to places I already knew, or places that came with guarantees of friendliness and chill. I was much more at home in session work or with chamber choirs like [], [] or [], but I never managed to break into the upper echelons of that world – [], [] etc, and I partly attribute that to feeling like I didn't 'belong' and therefore wasn't well known in the industry.

I'm very glad I had opera and teaching as other strings to my bow, because had it not been for them I would have stopped singing professionally altogether. It's been 10 years since opera overtook choral in my life, but the recollections of those early years in the profession are still painful.

Questionnaire J:

1. What were the key factors in your route to becoming a professional choral singer? For example: school music, musical activities outside school, parental support (whether financial, helping with practice, providing transport, encouragement etc), events attended, any particular teachers or other individuals.

- I played trombone growing up to a reasonably high standard (grade 8, principal of county youth orchestra, wind and jazz orchestras, played with NYJO and got into music college to study jazz trombone) and I was an actor (had a place to study acting).
- I had always really wanted to sing but, was often told it wasn't my thing; that trombone was more what I should focus on. I also came from foster care in my early years, and, I think resultantly, was always a hesitant person, which meant, as a working class boy at a very working class school in the south east, it wasn't easy to put myself 'out there' as a classical singer. There wasn't a proper choir as such at school, I didnt properly know what classical singing was, and had I suddenly started trying to do what I thought classical singing was, I'd have been even more ostracised at school than I already was by spending so much time playing jazz trombone.
- I gained back a modicum of social acceptability by playing guitar, bass or drums in a number of rock and metal bands, and this led to me coming to singing through that sort of stuff. I was slightly too generally hesitant to be a great rock singer; those people always seemed to approach singing with a degree of adventurous abandon that I just didnt have.

- When I went to sixth form at a girls grammar school, I had access to a classical singing teacher and instinctively leapt at the chance to have singing lessons with her because I loved the idea of being able to do that. That teacher was amazing, and taught me about opera (something I knew nothing of before that). Opera seemed somewhat more honest, more legitimate. More genuinely passionate and all encompassing than modern musical theatre, which had often left me a bit cold as, as a working class English boy, there was little to relate to in it. This meant I got to sing occasionally with the (girls) choir when they needed a tenor/baritone/general male voice.
- I also sang/acted in the school musical in year 12 and as soon as I did, I knew that was what I wanted to do.
- My parents were cautious about supporting me pursuing an actual career as a singer: my mum's point was 'I think the people that have careers as singers started when they were really really young'.
- In retrospect, I think this was because she didn't want me to have to face failure at a difficult thing, and because it seemed like such a foreign world - it wasn't something we'd had any exposure to. I was incredibly persistent, though, and pretty much just refused to give up until I had become a singer and, after a couple of years, my parents became slightly more assured about my chances. It was easier from that point.
- I got a job in a nursery as an Early Years Practitioner for some broadly reliable income, and this basically funded singing lessons until I applied and was accepted for choral scholarships at [] cathedral and [].
- I didn't know anyone who had done a choral scholarship but I needed to be able to afford to live and discovered that if I did a choral scholarship in a cathedral, I would get a house for a year and £3000 of wages. I took the second choral scholarship to give me a further £1500 which, supplemented by other bits and bobs of musical work, was basically enough to live on at that point. During my year as a choral scholar I was offered places at music colleges and chose to go and study at [] for the following year.

2. How did you learn to sight-sing?

Basically, I could already read music reasonably well because of playing trombone but, when I started the choral scholarships at [] Cathedral and [] when I was 18, painfully aware that sight-singing is considerably more difficult than sight-reading without text, I felt like I was starting from scratch. Everyone around me had sung in choirs as children, often in church and cathedral settings, so they were very good already. I felt like I literally couldn't read music at all, all of a sudden. I would always take music home to prepare it but, because of the volume of music I had over the course of a week, juggling two choral scholarships a week and doing other stuff on the side, this wasn't really enough.

I found people in the world of choral singing were incredibly impatient with my inability to sight-sing fluently. My director of music at [] was reasonably unpleasant about this, reasonably publicly, reasonably frequently. I found people tended to equate my deficiencies with sight-singing with a

combination of laziness and general stupidity, which meant singing in general became a fairly distressing experience, albeit one that I was willing to endure (a lot of the time), because of how passionate I was about wanting to be a singer. I used to go home from services and rehearsals humiliated and in bits. The teasing I received about my accent and lack of education would normally have been something I could cope with, but on top of the continual failure to do any of the job properly, it all felt like considerably too much to cope with.

One week in (I think) the last term of my choral scholarship in both places, something finally and miraculously clicked and the preparation of music for each service got significantly quicker and my reading accuracy a lot greater. After that, it quickly became something I could basically just do, and it has been like this ever since.

I tended to find people I worked with and for took my mistakes and inexperience as a personal attack and often got very angry with me. Although I appreciate pressure can be a really good thing, I have to say I don't think a lot of those experiences really helped, but they did make singing a lot harder for me longer term. On the upside, though, the more I did it the better I got. I still find I make daft mistakes now if I get nervous, which isn't infrequent, but I can at least put these right straight away. When I'm relaxed, I'm fine.

3. Did you experience any difficulties in entering the world of professional singing, or ever feel out of place because of your educational background?

In a word, yes. There is quite a lot in the world of classical singing in terms of elements of educational deficit (languages, history), but one is expected just to know because everyone else seems to. Add to which, learning things like received pronunciation are not things which are universally accessible. The physical and vocal sensibilities of opera and choral singing are things which are not particularly abnormal for middle class people who have been to selective or private schools, but which are totally foreign to many of us from rougher state comps. Even just socially; the humour, the things everybody does, affinities with wine and 'brunch' etc are things that we're all expected to have in common but we absolutely don't and, in my experience, working class people can sometimes feel a bit outcast in the world of classical singing and classical singers.

More abstractly, there is a confidence that middle class/privately educated people seem to have in expressing themselves, emotionally or vocally, which always felt totally alien to me and a voice in one's head that says 'shut up and stop making that ridiculous noise, you're embarrassing yourself!'.

Thankfully, I think a lot of the old-fashioned out-and-out snobbery has started to fall away now, but when I was a choral scholar and at music college there was definitely a reasonably overt sense of judgement about my level of education compared with that of my peers. I started out feeling like an

idiot and then, after a few years of that, had spent so long trying to make up for that that I began being thought of as a know-it-all. I have sometimes felt it's difficult to win in this game...!

The most obvious point, of course, so much so that it almost goes without saying, is that as a working class person one can only afford so many failures. There's no-one to pay your rent if you have a difficult months. There's no-one to get you a well-paid job to do in between contracts: you HAVE to earn your crust at all times. This can be a good thing, necessity being the mother of invention, but it stops being as enjoyable when the pressure is always that high and, as with most young singers, you're only just earning enough.

Questionnaire M:

1. What were the key factors in your route to becoming a professional choral singer? For example: school music, musical activities outside school, parental support (whether financial, helping with practice, providing transport, encouragement etc), events attended, any particular teachers or other individuals.

My parents were incredibly supportive in terms of seeking financial support (almost all of my extracurricular music was funded through bursaries and scholarships, and my mum worked extra hours cleaning for my piano and clarinet teachers to pay for my lessons). My parents had 4 children and we almost always needed driving somewhere, but my activities did require a huge commitment from them - when I started attending the RCM Junior Department on Saturdays on a full scholarship someone had to drive me to a rural [] train station at 4:45am each week! I also received bursaries from the local authority for peripatetic lessons at school, and Benslow Trust gave me a clarinet for a five year period which was transformative. My clarinet and piano teachers were wonderful, kind and supportive and we are still friends to this day. My state school also had a strong and passionate head of music who encouraged me tirelessly. Through him, I found a good singing teacher, auditioned for the National Youth Choir (my singing teacher also taught at a local private school, and saved me a space on the minibus to audition day) and also auditioned for Junior Departments. He also advocated within the school for them to run A Level Music for me, because I was the only pupil who chose it and so they wanted to cancel the course (if they had done this, I would never have gone to [] on a choral scholarship to study Music!!) so his intervention was incredible. My parents would never have known these extracurricular things even existed so he was amazing in signposting me to them. From the age of 12-21 I attended 2 National Youth Choir courses per year, often on half scholarship from the organisation and then my mum applied to numerous local trusts and charities to make up the rest of the costs. This was pretty formative for me - I wasn't a chorister and this kind of rigour really contributed to me becoming a professional (although I do think it was a bit problematic in other ways). While RCMJD was probably very important for me in terms of my musical development, and my readiness to be in highly competitive musical spaces, I did find it a deeply alienating experience in relation to my state education. I genuinely only remember one other student there who was a state school singer (and she is now one of my closest friends). I couldn't afford a second clarinet in the right key to allow me to play in the Symphony Orchestra, so RCM leant me one from their attic but it was in bad condition and very difficult to make a nice sound with. I later found out other pupils had several clarinets each which they didn't want to share with other pupils despite requests from the college.

Loads of the other singers knew each other from school, most of the students came from private schools in SW London as far as I could tell, as well as St Pauls and Westminster. I never felt that I fitted into that space at all.

Essentially I think for children who show musical promise without lots of family knowledge the system at present really requires teachers to step up and share their knowledge and I was so so lucky that I ended up with teachers who did that, rather than just the bare minimum!

2. How did you learn to sight-sing?

I actually never really struggled with sight singing, I don't really remember why. I had learned to read music from a very young age because I started the piano aged 6, so I was very aware of the notes on the page by the time I started having singing lessons. I think I had a good ear (I think I do probably have relative pitch, but I played the clarinet so I was often a tone out when asked to sing notes on the spot!) and so my ability to find notes wasn't too hard. My dad plays the guitar and loves music, so we sang all the time together at home - mostly pop and rock songs but I would often pick them out on the piano while he played guitar and so I understood the relationship between notes and chords from that. My piano teacher focused a lot on aural skills which also helped me enormously with sight singing - I had a really good sense of intervals etc. By the time I started NYC I could already sight sing pretty well (I remember them commenting on it at my first audition for girls choir), and the aural sessions on those courses probably continued that development. I then also did Grade 5 and 6 theory which helped with understanding other elements of written music and literacy more generally.

I do remember starting at university on my choral scholarship and never having read a psalm, for example! Things like that were a bit stressful and again just make you feel a bit daft. But I still consider sight reading one of my professional strengths and I actually enjoy it - I think because I already played other instruments by the time I started classical singing I was lucky to have a head start.

3. Did you experience any difficulties in entering the world of professional singing, or ever feel out of place because of your educational background?

In short - yes. I think it is really really important to recognise that the whole environment of professional choral singing is absolutely alien if you didn't go to private school. Sitting rehearsing for hours on end, spending lots of time in church and being expected to be familiar with it (particularly weird if you go to a non faith secondary school), and the fact that absolutely everyone knows each other from school is hard. That was lessened a bit for me by having gone to [] and been in NYC - I had lots of good friends from those spaces and therefore a bit of a network - but the familiarity with the systems and structures themselves from almost everyone was startling to me when I went professional. A good example of this is how everyone seems to know which music director is moving to which choir from which private school chapel/Oxbridge college. I'd never paid attention to stuff like that before and suddenly felt professional pressure to know.

I think the power of the network is also so surprising at first - people saying 'have you ever worked with them' before they want to book you for something, or just booking friends from school chapel choir if they have a gap for a concert. I couldn't believe these people hadn't had to even audition when I was sending tens of cold emails every day to try and get on lists. I had some pretty awful

audition experiences based on a lack of familiarity with the system - one where I was told I wasn't musical because I couldn't read chant (?) and another where a director of music said I just didn't have a nice voice and he was sorry no one had told me earlier at school (??). I wasn't used to responding to that kind of thing and it takes people a while to bounce back - the confidence knocks hit deeper if you haven't been in these horrible environments since the age of 5 (and i do want to reiterate, I don't think anyone should be becoming familiar with that kind of competitive cruelty towards young people at all!).

The working environment is also hard - I came from a big unionist family and the lack of solidarity and the intense competition is weird. As an adult I've reflected that this is likely related to the highly traditional roots of the industry (ie in church and elitist classical music contexts) and I do think there is still a pretty strong sense of highbrow vs lowbrow value judgements, which do land with people who aren't as familiar with 'highbrow' musical culture quite differently (and can be alienating). I also am always struck by everyone's parents knowing each other, either as school mums or through having been at Oxbridge together, and so they come to concerts and all chat to each other - my parents came to some stuff but were usually left feeling out of place themselves.

I have definitely struggled with feeling out of place, and I have a lot of concerns about the state of the industry and the lack of high level interest in meaningful, lasting change. The focus on excellence when presented with innovative ideas about how to actually practically improve access is absolutely wearing and it's hard not to take it personally as someone who they apparently don't want to let into the 'in group'. Finally, women's position in the industry is an overall problem, and honestly being faced with constant sexism as someone who is pretty outspoken and has made a lot of reports has affected my ability to progress. I won't work for several high profile men who are well known to have committed sexual harassment and assault and men just don't have to face this kind of decision making about their own safety when accepting work. It's separate, but I think it's compounded for people who are feeling like you aren't part of the crowd anyway - it just creates another layer of feeling like an outsider.

Questionnaire N:

1. What were the key factors in your route to becoming a professional choral singer? For example: school music, musical activities outside school, parental support (whether financial, helping with practice, providing transport, encouragement etc), events attended, any particular teachers or other individuals.

I took ballet lessons from the age of 3 or 4 and we had a pianist in our classes - I remember being quite affected by the live music and in particular the 'interpretation' section of our classes, where we would make up our own dance to a piece of piano music and then describe how the music made us feel: I think this really got me thinking and realising how much of an emotional impact music was having on me (perhaps more than on others in the class!).

I wasn't from a classical music background -y parents did love listening to music, but always pop. I played recorder at primary school with a class teacher (who also played piano in assemblies) and I did well at exams. I also sang in our local church choir (once I left Sunday School!) which was a unison choir of children and a few adults. The choirmaster was lovely but also very disciplined, which

appealed to me. He quickly recognised my focus and willingness to sing and gave me solos in the weddings for which we often performed. He encouraged me to take the Deanery and Diocesan RSCM medals and those gave me an intro to the concept of music exams. Once I had started piano lessons he also encouraged me to play the organ for some of the liturgical music in the services. I learnt piano privately with the previously mentioned primary school teacher, who had noticed my interest at school. Later on my Year 6 class primary teacher loved playing jazz standards on the piano in our classroom and I remember being given some music to play recorder alongside!!

I took up the flute when I moved to secondary school simply because it was offered and I had seen someone else play one at church! I played that through past Grade 8 and had lessons at university. I also taught it, alongside piano and singing later on.

My parents were very encouraging - they shared a mindset that if my brother or I were interested in anything we shouldn't let money (or fear of lack of it) affect our enthusiasm. They were not from a generous background in that sense and I think they wanted to make sure we had opportunities - for my brother it was sport and for me, music, but always through our own choice.

My school music activities really benefited when at Grammar school a new and brilliant class music teacher started (when I was 13). He created choirs and orchestral ensembles out of seemingly nothing. He always accommodated anyone who was keen - I remember playing a violin part on the flute in one ensemble - and he would organise visits to concerts and plenty of performing opportunities in school. I joined the local youth orchestra which also had wind band attached - run by a keen local conductor. My school music teacher received some leaflets from the National Youth Choir and encouraged me to apply for the at the age of 16, and again at the age of 17 - when I was successful, after they had written to him suggesting he help me choose some better audition repertoire!

My parents were happy to pay for NYC courses from the age of 17 and even an NYC world tour in my first year of uni - these were definitely expenses that were a world away from those they had been offered when they were children. They would come to all my performances however far away. At uni I started off as a first study pianist with flute as second study, and switched to first study singing by my finals - mainly due to my enthusiasm developed through NYC. My first formal singing lessons were in my second year of uni!

Later on, I sang in [] while working as a piano, flute and singing peri teacher - I was given the opportunity to sing Romilda in Handel's Xerxes and then the title role in Semele and took some singing lessons to prepare for these. This teacher, plus the director of Semele, encouraged me to move to London to sing professionally. I was already too old for a postgraduate singing course so made sure to take private lessons and started auditioning for church choirs and professional ensembles as soon as I moved.

2. How did you learn to sight-sing?

A little bit in church choir - learning by repetition - and then in the National Youth Choir through trial and error. I recall putting up and down arrows over notes I'd got wrong... I didn't ever receive tuition on sight-singing, not even with NYC (although I believe they now include it formally). I taught myself a rising minor third (from the start of a piece of Schütz!) and worked a lot out from there...

3. Did you experience any difficulties in entering the world of professional singing, or ever feel out of place because of your educational background?

In this regard I was definitely lucky to have contacts through NYC - when I moved to London at the age of 32, after working in artist management and full-time part-time teaching for the years after uni I was fortunate to make contact with some old singing friends.

When I first moved to London I started off by asking for auditions with as many churches as I could find contact details for - only one refused to hear me because I hadn't been to a music conservatoire or sing with "the likes of the BBC Singers or The Sixteen"! All the others were happy to hear me or add me to contact list for future auditions.

I have occasionally felt out of place - when singing at the Abbey and St Paul's as the sight-singing skills there seem so expected and the rehearsals so short. I recall in particular an evensong rehearsal at a city church where I was singing in a quartet and came across the Philip Radcliffe Preces & Responses for the first time. The conductor had already been in touch to shorten the rehearsal, presumably as he thought all the rep would be well-known by the three men plus me - and proceeded to intimidate me as I stumbled my way through the rehearsal. At one point he said "well gents, I'm glad we rehearsed this". When the performance in the service went without a hitch he didn't even say an encouraging word to me. I felt very much that I was the odd one out in that situation and that it was being highlighted. And this I felt was mainly due to being a soprano without the experience of the four men in the room..

Questionnaire D:

1. There were a few key factors in my route to becoming a professional singer. They mostly revolve around meeting the right people at the right time.

There was very little music at the school I went to but I was singing at my local church choir in []. It was usual for broken voices to sing countertenor for a while before moving to tenor and bass but I just stayed there. I suppose it normalised something which would have been completely abnormal at my school and more generally in society.

We then got a new conductor who had studied music and worked on some projects in London like BYO- he told me that I could think about being a singer and going to music college. He really helped

my parents, who were keen but had no idea of the routes to achieve this- for example going to [] junior conservatoire as an oboist and doing an NYC summer course. Then I met [] who was conducting my mum's chamber choir and became my first singing teacher. He is a countertenor and sings at [] and with []- his guidance was really the moment that it shifted. He helped my parents find out about things like Eton choral courses and helped set up an audition to be a choral scholar in my gap year at [] cathedral. Whilst there I applied for music colleges and took two years before getting into the RCM.

2. With difficulty. I learnt everything by rote until I went to [] cathedral as a choral scholar. I used to spend the day learning the music for that day's evensong but I got to grips with it eventually. This was part of []s' plan because he knew how important depping was for getting to know people.

3. Yes- I felt very out of place. It was a difficult balance because at my school I was different because my parents could afford for me to have private music lessons but then I felt like one of the few token state school kids at music college. It is difficult to extract how much of this was my own feelings of being an outsider and how much was as a result of other people's behaviour. I think it was just small markers of privilege that people didn't even realise- eg going to a school with a good music programme, having been a chorister, not having to have a side job so they could focus on their studies.

I was extremely lucky to have supportive parents- to be able to go on summer courses and to have private music lessons. But had I not met those key people at the right times I wouldn't be doing this at the level I am.

I remember feeling particularly out of place on the Eton choral courses I did as a teenager. One interesting instance of class dynamics (I am very middle class) was that when someone once asked me what school I went to and I answered 'a state school in []' they said 'oh' and walked away. Those courses were like being dropped straight into a very public school world that I had absolutely no idea how to navigate. But I did learn a lot.

Appendix 7: Initial data codes

(green codes used 1x, amber codes used 2-3x, red codes used ≥3x)

A lot of challenges [DETERMINATION]
A lot of preparation in place of sight-singing [SKILLS]
Accessibility not taken seriously [CULTURE]
Advanced recorder group [SCHOOL]
Advice from NYC and school teacher [OPPORTUNITIES – NYC][SCHOOL][TEACHERS]
Alien environment to those from state schools [CULTURE]
Always loved music [INSTINCT]
Always loved singing and performing [INSTINCT]
Always paid proper fees [FINANCES]
Amateur choir involved boring note-bashing [OPPORTUNITIES]
Amazed by complexity looking back [SCHOOL]
Amazing opportunities that weren't known about [PATHWAY]
Amazing primary music provision [SCHOOL]
Anger at poor sight-singing [SKILLS][CULTURE]
At university people already knew each other from NYC, Rods [CULTURE]
Aural skills lessons at Conservatoire [SKILLS][STUDY]
Balance between earning and learning [FINANCES][CULTURE]
Before culture of exposure, experience for CV [FINANCES]
Oxbridge choral scholarship was a leg up, but what happened BEFORE had lasting impact [CULTURE][CATCHING UP]
Benefit of coming from poorer background [FINANCES]
Benefited from Cambridge music scene [STUDY]
Betraying roots by teaching in private schools [FINANCES]
Big range of socioeconomic backgrounds [CULTURE]
Boys don't sing [CULTURE]
Brought up not to be scared of anything musically [CULTURE]
Bursary to music school – wouldn't have been possible otherwise [FINANCES]
Business skills learned on the job [FINANCES][SKILLS]
Busking to earn money without needing Saturday job in retail or similar [FINANCES]
Came from musical family, but unfamiliar with church choral repertoire [CHURCH]
Can't accompany pupils [SKILLS]
Can't afford failure as a working class singer [FINANCES]
Cathedral choral scholar in gap year [CHURCH]
Challenging games, developing inner ear [SKILLS]
Chance contacts were key [CHANCE]
Chance teachers [CHANCE][TEACHERS]
Charitable funding for music school [FINANCES]
Cheap to offer mentoring [PATHWAY]
Choral scholar – everything was new [STUDY][SKILLS]
Choral scholarship challenging because of unfamiliarity [STUDY][SKILLS]
Choral scholarships gave financial security [FINANCES]
Choristers get scholarships to private schools so the training takes them away from state schools [SCHOOL]
Church choirmaster recognised talent [CHURCH][TEACHERS]
Church choral scholarships [CHURCH][FINANCES]
Classical music declining in private schools too [CULTURE]

Classical music not played at home [EXPOSURE]
 Classical music seen as elitist [CULTURE]
 Coaches aware that students needed to be earning money from music [FINANCES]
 Conductor recognised talent and gave advice [TEACHERS][PATHWAY]
 Confidence lost through rejections [DETERMINATION]
 Conservatoire not suitable because of focus on one instrument [STUDY]
 Contacts from NYC helped get work [OPPORTUNITIES – NYC][CULTURE]
 Contemporary music not presented as difficult or unusual [CULTURE]
 Could only fund by working [FINANCES]
 Could only have two sets of lessons because 6th form paid for one set [FINANCES][TUITION]
 Couldn't afford instrument [FINANCES]
 Couldn't get lay clerk position because of lack of experience [SKILLS]
 County music service coaches worked to disprove this [COUNTY MUSIC][FINANCES][CULTURE]
 County music service provision to school [COUNTY MUSIC][SCHOOL]
 County youth choir [COUNTY MUSIC]
 County Youth Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra, chamber music coaching [COUNTY MUSIC]
 Denied singing opportunity [STUDY]
 Didn't feel unmanageable, just new, needed to catch up [CATCHING UP]
 Didn't get into chamber choir due to lack of familiarity with choral music [SKILLS]
 Didn't have to pay for instrument [FINANCES]
 Didn't know about choral scholarships and lacked confidence [PATHWAY][SKILLS]
 Didn't know about Eton Choral Courses [OPPORTUNITIES - ECC][PATHWAY]
 Didn't know how to learn to sight-read [SKILLS]
 Didn't understand church choir banter [CULTURE]
 Different systems for each church [SKILLS][CHURCH]
 Difficulty with school A level music provision [SCHOOL][STUDY]
 Director of music allowed learning of skills [SKILLS][SUPPORT]
 Distressing experience [CULTURE]
 Don't feel out of place, just took longer to get there [SKILLS]
 Don't spend much time with people from similar background [CULTURE]
 Earning a lot of money through busking, weddings, restaurants etc. [FINANCES]
 Earning an income is a necessity [FINANCES]
 Emotional reaction to music at an early age [INSTINCT]
 Emotional support from parents [PARENTS]
 Emphasis on music as a trade lead to good business skills and success later on [SKILLS][FINANCES]
 Encouraged to move to London to pursue singing opportunities [LOCATION]
 Encouraging teacher [TEACHERS]
 Endured because of determination to become a singer [DETERMINATION]
 Enjoyed warm but disciplined approach [TEACHERS]
 Even playing ground when learning unfamiliar repertoire [SKILLS]
 Every child taught music notation [SKILLS][SCHOOL]
 Everyone else had sung as children and was familiar with church settings [SKILLS][CULTURE]
 Everyone knows each other already and helps each other out [CULTURE]
 Everyone knows each other from school – existing network for others [CULTURE]
 Everyone learned basic notation [SKILLS][SCHOOL]
 Everyone sang confidently [SKILLS]
 Everyone seems to know all the institutions and who belongs where [CULTURE]
 Everyone's parents know each other [CULTURE]

Everything done with solfege hand signs [SKILLS]
 Excellence prioritised [CULTURE]
 Experience of world-class music at NYC [OPPORTUNITIES – NYC]
 Exposed to contemporary music at early age [EXPOSURE]
 Extracurricular music funded through bursaries and scholarships [FINANCES]
 Far better musical/choral opportunities [SCHOOL][OPPORTUNITIES]
 Feeling of privilege that was off-putting [CULTURE]
 Felt out of place because of sight-singing expectations [SKILLS]
 Felt out of place both in school and in music world [CULTURE][SCHOOL]
 Female lay clerks [CHURCH]
 Finances better so course fees were affordable [FINANCES]
 Financial help [FINANCES]
 Financial insecurity growing up [FINANCES]
 Financial security from church positions [FINANCES][CHURCH]
 First singing lessons in 2nd year of university [TUITION]
 Foreign world [CULTURE]
 Found it fairly easy to audition for church choirs [CHURCH][CULTURE]
 Found opportunities to play with staff etc [OPPORTUNITIES][TEACHERS]
 Friendly and fun [CULTURE][CHURCH]
 Friends stopped because of increased costs [FINANCES][TUITION]
 Funded singing lessons through job [FINANCES]
 Funding for NYC [OPPORTUNITIES – NYC][FINANCES]
 Gained familiarity with rep in unauditioned group [SKILLS]
 Gained more paid work by word of mouth [CULTURE]
 Gave charity recitals featuring own compositions [OPPORTUNITIES][FINANCES]
 Gave up piano, didn't feel fun any more [TUITION]
 Given extra musical opportunities [SCHOOL][TEACHERS][OPPORTUNITIES]
 Got to sing with the choir when they needed a male voice [OPPORTUNITIES]
 Got unrelated job for reliable income [FINANCES]
 Grandad's piano [CHANCE][EXPOSURE]
 Guidance from someone with connections [PATHWAY]
 Had to catch up understanding unfamiliar music [CATCHING UP]
 Hard even to get auditions whereas others with connections don't have to audition [CULTURE]
 Hard to access London depping scene [CULTURE]
 Hard to cope with failure to do job properly [DETERMINATION]
 Hard to get well known when you don't fit in [CULTURE]
 Hard to recruit for school chapel choirs [CULTURE][CHURCH]
 Hard to win when you feel out of place at the start [CULTURE]
 Head teacher musical [SCHOOL][TEACHERS]
 Head teacher supported music [SCHOOL]
 Hearing live music at church [EXPOSURE][CHURCH]
 Help from council per [COUNTY MUSIC][TEACHERS]
 Hesitancy from foster care and working class background [CULTURE]
 Hindered at audition due to lack of familiarity with setting [SKILLS]
 Holistic understanding of harmony [SKILLS]
 Huge impact of being a chorister. Wouldn't have been possible without fee discount
 [OPPORTUNITIES][FINANCES][SCHOOL]
 Huge increase in tuition costs [FINANCES]

Huge network within professional work [CULTURE]
 Huge parental input due to transport needs and being one of 4 [PARENTS]
 Humour and customs make working class people feel out of place [CULTURE]
 Idea that music A level isn't useful [PATHWAY]
 Idea that professional singers started young [PATHWAY]
 Impatience with poor sight-singing [SKILLS][CULTURE]
 Income persuaded parents of viability [FINANCES][PATHWAY][CULTURE]
 Individual lessons funded [FINANCES][TUITION]
 Instrumental lessons [TUITION]
 Intense competition makes working environment hard [CULTURE]
 Intimidated by conductor [CULTURE]
 Judgment based on who you've worked for [CULTURE]
 Junior colleges don't help with choral rep [JUNIOR MUSIC SCHOOL][SKILLS]
 Just knew she was desperate to do it [INSTINCT]
 Knowledge expected, no training provided [PATHWAY][SKILLS]
 Lack of appreciation for transferrable skills [PATHWAY]
 Lack of career support [PATHWAY]
 Lack of confidence due to unfamiliarity with repertoire [SKILLS]
 Lack of confidence in self-expression linked to class and private education [CULTURE]
 Lack of experience equated with stupidity or lack of musicality [CULTURE]
 Lack of experience publicly highlighted [SKILLS][CULTURE]
 Lack of familiarity [SKILLS]
 Lack of familiarity with 'standard' rep [SKILLS]
 Lack of familiarity with systems and structures [CULTURE]
 Lack of job-specific training [SKILLS][PATHWAY]
 Lack of live music [EXPOSURE]
 Lack of professional work locally [LOCATION]
 Lack of school opportunities compared to schools with chapel choirs [SCHOOL]
 Lack of sight-reading skill [SKILLS]
 Lacked skills and ability to learn [SKILLS]
 Lay clerk position didn't fit around full-time job [FINANCES]
 Learned by rote until gap year at cathedral [CHURCH][SKILLS]
 Learned good business sense [SKILLS][FINANCES]
 Learned sight-singing through practice [SKILLS]
 Learned skills from associating with peris [SKILLS][COUNTY MUSIC][SUPPORT]
 Learned to sing psalms [SKILLS][CHURCH]
 Lessons and instrument hire affordable [FINANCES]
 Links with professional musicians [PATHWAY]
 Live music opportunities [EXPOSURE]
 Loaned instrument in bad condition [FINANCES]
 Local youth orchestra and wind band [COUNTY MUSIC]
 Long rehearsals [SKILLS]
 Lots of music school attendees knew each other from school [CULTURE]
 Made to feel ignorant [CULTURE]
 Made to feel stupid [CULTURE][SKILLS]
 Meeting like-minded musicians [CULTURE]
 More at home in session work or chamber choirs [CULTURE][CHURCH]
 Most pupils had basic understanding of notation [SKILLS][SCHOOL]

Moved to grammar school for A levels [SCHOOL][STUDY]
 Moved to London and tried to get bits of work [LOCATION]
 Mum worked extra hours cleaning to fund music lessons [PARENTS][FINANCES]
 Music as a physical experience [SKILLS]
 Music school alienating as a state school pupil [JUNIOR MUSIC SCHOOL][CULTURE]
 Music service arranged transport [COUNTY MUSIC][SUPPORT]
 Music subscription enabled singing along at home [SCHOOL][SKILLS]
 Musical confidence and enjoyment [SKILLS]
 Musical ear training based on Kodaly/solfege/Dalcroze [SKILLS][SCHOOL]
 Musicianship not taught [SKILLS]
 Nearest cathedral with professional singers 30 miles away [CHURCH][OPPORTUNITIES]
 Nearly all musicians who get music lessons for their children now [CULTURE]
 Need classical church music not to be seen as elitist or weird, otherwise it's impossible to increase take up.
 Needs to be something that's heard every day [CULTURE][CHURCH][EXPOSURE]
 Need support for teachers who can't play piano well [SUPPORT]
 Need to offer state school children realistic view of music world [PATHWAY]
 Network extremely important – positive thing [CULTURE]
 Never confident sight-reader [SKILLS]
 Never got into top groups and attribute that to 'not belonging' [CULTURE]
 Never had singing lessons as a child [TUITION]
 Never struggled with aural because of rigorous training [SKILLS]
 Never struggled with sight-singing [SKILLS]
 Never told anything was too advanced to try [CULTURE]
 No formal sight-singing tuition [SKILLS]
 No help with Oxbridge interview [STUDY]
 No method for learning to sight-sing [SKILLS]
 No music provision at state school [SCHOOL][STUDY]
 No music school because of not being strong instrumentalist [JUNIOR MUSIC SCHOOL][PATHWAY]
 No prior knowledge of choral scholarships [PATHWAY]
 No real choir at school [SCHOOL]
 No training in neumes [SKILLS]
 Not classical rep [EXPOSURE]
 Not comfortable presenting self as classical singer [CULTURE]
 Not comfortable with culture [CULTURE]
 Not too difficult to set up mentoring/speaker support [PATHWAY]
 Not used to unpleasant environment [CULTURE]
 NYC led to real singing enthusiasm [OPPORTUNITIES – NYC]
 NYC may now teach sight-singing? [OPPORTUNITIES – NYC][SKILLS]
 NYC provided alternative to chorister training [OPPORTUNITIES – NYC]
 NYC semi-pro chamber choir [OPPORTUNITIES – NYC]
 NYC sight-singing experience [OPPORTUNITIES – NYC][SKILLS]
 Offered graduate choral scholarship instead of lay clerk position [OPPORTUNITIES]
 One single connection makes a huge difference [PATHWAY]
 Only possible for those without family knowledge to succeed if teachers share their knowledge [TEACHERS]
 Opportunities at Grammar school [SCHOOL]
 Opportunities for more advanced pupils [OPPORTUNITIES][SCHOOL]
 Opportunities given to those in the network [CULTURE]
 Opportunities I didn't know about and couldn't have afforded [PATHWAY][FINANCES]

Orchestral opportunity [OPPORTUNITIES]
 Organ experience [TUITION]
 Organist and piano teacher noticed strong singing [TUITION][TEACHERS]
 Ostracised for attending state school [CULTURE][SCHOOL]
 Other people seemed to take mistakes and inexperience as a personal attack [SKILLS][CULTURE]
 Other pupils unwilling to lend instruments despite having several [FINANCES][CULTURE]
 Others didn't need a side job to earn money [FINANCES]
 Overt sense of judgment about level of education [CULTURE]
 Oxbridge and NYC provided network [OPPORTUNITIES – NYC][OPPORTUNITIES – OXBRIDGE][CULTURE]
 Paid work [FINANCES][CHURCH]
 Paid work as church cantor [CHURCH][FINANCES]
 Parental commitment to not having interests ruined by lack of money [PARENTS][FINANCES]
 Parental determination not to let financial circumstances ruin musical prospects [PARENTS][FINANCES]
 Parental discouragement [PARENTS]
 Parental lack of knowledge of opportunities [PATHWAY]
 Parental support getting to activities [PARENTS]
 Parents didn't drive so couldn't provide transport [PARENTS]
 Parents not convinced it was a viable career path [PATHWAY]
 Parents out of place at musical events [CULTURE]
 Parents recognised instrument as investment [PARENTS][FINANCES]
 Parents supported through their time and determination [PARENTS]
 Parents supportive financially and coming to events [PARENTS][FINANCES]
 Parents wanted to ensure there were opportunities [PARENTS]
 Pathway support most important [PATHWAY]
 People aware of where support was needed [SUPPORT][CULTURE]
 People booking their friends [CULTURE]
 People need to know how to create network [CULTURE]
 Perfect pitch helped with sight-reading [SKILLS]
 Perfect pitch only identified at 15 [CATCHING UP]
 Performing and composing unpaid for experience [FINANCES][OPPORTUNITIES]
 Physical and vocal sensibilities totally foreign to those from a 'rougher' background [SKILLS][CULTURE]
 Piano teacher focussed on aural skills [TUITION][TEACHERS][SKILLS]
 Played alongside peris and other adults [TEACHERS][COUNTY MUSIC][CULTURE][SUPPORT]
 Poor local music provision currently [COUNTY MUSIC]
 Poor sight-singing equated with stupidity and laziness [SKILLS][CULTURE]
 Positive learning experience at ECC [OPPORTUNITIES – ECC]
 Proactive school teacher [TEACHERS][SCHOOL]
 Public humiliation [SKILLS][CULTURE]
 Ready to work as musicians by the end of school [SKILLS][PATHWAY]
 Recollections still painful [CULTURE]
 Refused to give up [DETERMINATION]
 Repertoire unfamiliar [SKILLS]
 Resentful of singers who came in knowing everything already [CATCHING UP][CULTURE]
 Rigorous ear training [SKILLS]
 RSCM medals [CHURCH]
 Sang complex music [SCHOOL][EXPOSURE]
 Sang high notes [SCHOOL][SKILLS]
 Sang in harmony from a young age [SKILLS][SCHOOL][EXPOSURE]

Sang rock/pop with Dad at home [PARENTS][EXPOSURE]
 Scholarship [FINANCES]
 Scholarship instead of part-time job [FINANCES]
 School choir [SCHOOL]
 School music fine, but county music transformative [SCHOOL][COUNTY MUSIC]
 School music never taxing [SCHOOL]
 School show [SCHOOL]
 School teacher keen on singing [SCHOOL] [TEACHERS]
 School teacher received leaflets [OPPORTUNITIES – NYC][SCHOOL][TEACHERS]
 School teacher with knowledge [TEACHERS]
 Seemed as if everyone had chorister/private school background [CULTURE]
 Sexism within the industry exacerbates the problem [CULTURE]
 Shock at secondary school to discover not everyone was happy singing [SKILLS][SCHOOL]
 Sight-reading easier because of instrumental training [SKILLS]
 Sight-reading skills behind [SKILLS][CATCHING UP]
 Sight-singing by repetition [SKILLS]
 Sight-singing difficult [SKILLS]
 Sight-singing easy [SKILLS]
 Sight-singing learned at NYC [OPPORTUNITIES – NYC]
 Singing easier than other instruments without practice [SKILLS]
 Small things those with privilege don't recognise [CULTURE]
 Smaller pool to choose Oxbridge choral scholars from [STUDY]
 Social acceptability by playing in rock and metal bands [CULTURE]
 Solfege hand signs enabled harmony singing and an understanding of degrees of the scale [SKILLS]
 Solfege hand signs used in games [SKILLS]
 Solo opportunity came from being the only child who knew the songs in the school show
 [SCHOOL][OPPORTUNITIES]
 Specific choir where training enables scholarships to private schools [SCHOOL]
 Started learning sight-singing as a choral scholar [SKILLS]
 Started singing rock [CULTURE]
 Stopped looking for new work because of negative experience [DETERMINATION]
 Stopped piano lessons because two sets of lessons was unaffordable [TUITION][FINANCES]
 Strong choral tradition at school [SCHOOL]
 Strong enough voice to overcome challenges [INSTINCT]
 Strong sense of highbrow vs lowbrow culture judgments [CULTURE]
 Students think they need to study the subject they want to work with [PATHWAY]
 Studied music at university [STUDY]
 Success not solely based on merit but also who you know [CULTURE]
 Suddenly something clicked and sight-singing became easier [SKILLS]
 Supportive music teachers [TEACHERS]
 Supportive parents [PARENTS]
 Supportive teacher [TEACHER][SCHOOL]
 Tailored career support [PATHWAY]
 Teacher flexible to accommodate anyone who was keen [TEACHERS][SCHOOL]
 Teacher helped with career path [TEACHERS][PATHWAY]
 Teacher keen on choral music [TEACHERS]
 Teacher not expert but keen [TEACHERS]
 Teacher noticed interest at school [SCHOOL][TEACHERS]

Teacher signposted opportunities [PATHWAY][TEACHER]
 Teachers looked out for those with potential and helped find them work [TEACHERS]
 Teaching to make ends meet [FINANCES]
 Teased about accent and lack of education [CULTURE]
 There is a lot in classical singing that people are just expected to know [SKILLS]
 Told to focus on trombone rather than singing [PATHWAY]
 Took music home to prepare, but hard to prepare properly with the volume of work [SKILLS][FINANCES]
 Took paid employment [FINANCES]
 Treated as if it was extraordinary [CULTURE]
 Unfamiliarity with church music [SKILLS][CHURCH]
 Unfamiliarity with church repertoire [SKILLS][CHURCH]
 Unfamiliarity with psalms [SKILLS]
 Unpleasant responses in auditions [CULTURE]
 Unsure how sight-reading learned [SKILLS]
 Value of Music/creative subjects not appreciated [CULTURE]
 Very little school music [SCHOOL]
 Village children's choir [OPPORTUNITIES]
 Witnessing live music [EXPOSURE]
 Worked as a peri [FINANCES]
 Worked to save money for course [FINANCES]
 Would have been easy to give up [DETERMINATION]
 Would have felt even more ostracised at school by pursuing classical singing [SCHOOL][CULTURE]
 Would have stopped singing if it weren't for opera and teaching [DETERMINATION]
 Youth instrumental opportunities [OPPORTUNITIES]
 Church choir gave environment for something that would have been considered abnormal at school (men singing high) [SCHOOL][CHURCH][CULTURE]
 A level music [STUDY]
 Charitable funding for instrument [FINANCES]
 Council subsidy [COUNTY MUSIC][FINANCES]
 Determination [DETERMINATION]
 Didn't get on with first instrument [TUITION]
 Didn't listen to classical music at home [EXPOSURE]
 Didn't understand private school network [CULTURE]
 Felt out of place [CULTURE]
 Lack of piano skills makes job challenging [SKILLS]
 Late start – having to catch up [CATCHING UP]
 Live accompaniment [EXPOSURE][SCHOOL]
 Not bothered by private school network [CULTURE]
 Parental support seeking funding [PARENTS][FINANCES]
 Parents not interested in classical music [PARENTS]
 Parents noticed musical talent [INSTINCT]
 Peri lessons funded by LEA [TUITION][FINANCES]
 Sight-singing learned on the job [SKILLS]
 Some bosses accommodating, recognise other skills [SUPPORT]
 Surrounded by musicians [CULTURE]
 Unfamiliarity with neumes [SKILLS][CHURCH]
 Alienating [CULTURE]
 Council music hub/service [COUNTY MUSIC]

Inspiring teachers [TEACHERS]
 Instrumental training helped with sight-reading [SKILLS]
 No A level provision at school [STUDY][SCHOOL]
 Parental encouragement [PARENTS]
 Catching up [CATCHING UP]
 Conservatoire [STUDY]
 Eton Choral Course [OPPORTUNITIES - ECC]
 Hymns [SCHOOL]
 Inspiring school music teacher [TEACHERS][SCHOOL]
 Saturday music school [JUNIOR MUSIC SCHOOL]
 School singing [SCHOOL]
 NYC [OPPORTUNITIES - NYC]
 Singing not seen as viable profession [FINANCES][CULTURE]
 Unfamiliarity with church services [CHURCH]
 Whole school instrumental lessons [SCHOOL][TUITION]
 Church choir [CHURCH]
 Didn't know piano skills were needed [SKILLS][PATHWAY]
 Free instrumental lessons [FINANCES][TUITION][SCHOOL][COUNTY MUSIC]
 Peri demo [EXPOSURE][SCHOOL][COUNTY MUSIC]
 Chance [CHANCE]
 Hearing live music [EXPOSURE]
 Lack of knowledge of musical pathway [PATHWAY]
 Piano lessons [TUITION]
 Lack of piano skills limits opportunities [SKILLS][PATHWAY]
 Singing lessons [TUITION]

Appendix 8: Data themes and subthemes

SCHOOL:

Good teachers – many participants mention teachers who noticed their talent and went to great lengths to help them.

School singing – many participants mentioned singing at school, especially primary school, with hymns, assembly and school shows often mentioned.

Lack of A level provision – many participants had to move school to study A level music.

Good music provision – some participants highlighted good provision, especially Kodaly-based ear training, learning notation, groups and other opportunities for advanced pupils. This was mostly mentioned at primary school and grammar schools.

Class instrumental tuition (recorder) – nearly all participants mentioned their whole school receiving recorder tuition.

Peri demos – many participants started (free) instrumental lessons after a peri demo at school.

Limited opportunities – some participants mentioned the limited opportunities at school compared with private schools and extra-curricular music. This is especially the case for comprehensive secondary schools.

Move away from state schools – mention of the trend for trained choristers to get scholarships to private secondary schools, taking music talent away from state schools.

School culture – some participants mentioned feeling out of place in school because of their musical interests, but also in the private-school-dominated world of classical music.

TEACHERS:

Teachers with a strong interest in singing – some participants mentioned how they benefited from teachers with a strong interest in singing and/or choral singing.

Teachers proactive in offering help – many teachers made a real effort to help pupils with a strong interest and/or talent.

Teachers with a high level of relevant knowledge – some teachers were able to offer advice to help participants make progress and access a career in music.

Luck to have good teachers – being lucky to have good teachers was mentioned.

Culture of music from keen head teacher – two participants mentioned a strong culture of music because of a head teacher's support for music.

Inspiring/encouraging teachers – many participants mentioned having teachers who were inspiring, encouraging and/or supportive.

Communal system where students could learn from adults – one participant benefited from a culture in which young musicians played alongside teachers and other adults, learning from them.

EXPOSURE:

Hearing live music – many participants mentioned situations in which they witnessed live music, and the importance of this.

Lack of exposure to classical rep – most participants mentioned not being exposed to classical music at home.

Peri demos at school – many participants mentioned starting instrumental lessons after watching demos at school.

Exposure to complex or unusual music through participation – some participants mentioned discovering complex or unusual classical music through participation.

Exposure through family connections – two participants mentioned musical exposure from family, even though there was no knowledge of classical music at home.

Importance of exposure – impossible to increase take-up unless classical music is something ‘normal’ that is experienced every day.

INSTINCT:

Interest – some participants mentioned a deep desire to study music.

Talent – some mentioned an innate talent that help them succeed.

CULTURE:

Classical singing not socially acceptable – some participants mentioned the difficulty pursuing classical music in school environment where it was not seen as socially acceptable.

Supportive environment in musical settings – some participants mentioned how much they enjoyed spending time with like-minded musicians, and the supportive musical environments they encountered.

Foreign culture – many participants mentioned feeling out of place in the world of classical music, and always feeling that they were catching up because of their lack of exposure and experience in early life.

Singing not seen as viable career path – many participants mentioned that their parents did not view singing as a viable career path, and needing persuading that it could be manageable. One participant told how county music staff worked to prove that music can pay.

Network – many participants mentioned how important social connections are within the industry, and the challenges of breaking into this pre-existing network later on.

Classical music normalised – one participant mentioned a county music culture where classical music was never presented as difficult or unusual, and musicians came from a wide range of backgrounds.

TUITION:

Singing lessons – all participants had singing lessons at some stage, but no earlier than 14, with two participants never having lessons as a child.

Instrumental lessons – all participants had instrumental lessons, and two mentioned the difference made by being supported to switch instruments.

Whole school tuition – most participants mentioned learning the recorder at school.

Tuition finances – many participants started with free or highly subsidised lessons, and experienced challenges when accessing further lessons or when costs increased.

JUNIOR MUSIC SCHOOL:

Attending music school – some participants attended a Saturday music school, with some finding it a very positive experience:

Music schools not that helpful for singers – one participant did not attend music school because of not being an instrumentalist, and one observed that music schools do not foster familiarity with choral repertoire.

Poor experience at music school – one participant experienced an unpleasant culture at music school.

STUDY:

A level – all participants studied A level music, but some had to move school.

Conservatoire – some participants studied at Conservatoire, but one found it unsuitable because of the focus on one instrument. One participant highlighted the excellent aural training received at Conservatoire.

Oxbridge – some participants studied at Oxbridge, and one accessed the Oxbridge choral scene by studying at another university close by. One participant was awarded a choral scholarship, but turned down at academic interview, having received no help from school. One participant observed the challenge Oxbridge is facing in maintaining high standards.

Choral scholarship – many participants were choral scholars but found it a challenge because everything was so unfamiliar.

University music course – many participants studied music at university.

SKILLS:

Sight-singing challenging – many participants reported challenges with sight-singing, and feeling that they were always catching up. Some reported humiliation because of this. Most learned simply through practice in choirs.

Singing easier without high commitment from early age – one participant mentioned that singing was easier to pursue than other instruments, because it didn't require hours of practice from an early age.

Sight-singing aided by instrumental training – many participants mentioned that sight-singing was easier because of their instrumental training.

Lack of familiarity – many participants mentioned a lack of familiarity with repertoire and the norms of choral singing, and a feeling of catching up.

Lack of formal/standard training – many participants mentioned examples of where skills are expected but there is no formal pathway for learning these skills.

Church – some participants mentioned the difficulty of singing psalms, and a lack of familiarity with church music.

Piano – several participants mentioned the limitations placed on them by their basic piano skills, and how they had no idea these skills were necessary until late teenage years.

Supportive training – several participants mentioned supportive environments for learning skills, which varied from choral scholarships and conservatoire classes to primary music and county music services.

No trouble sight-singing – some participants never struggled with sight-singing, despite starting late.

Financial challenges – one participant reported challenges preparing for a church job because of the volume of work needed to earn an income.

CHURCH:

Church choir training – many participants mentioned singing in a church choir.

Church jobs – many participants mentioned the importance of church jobs in providing a stable income.

Supportive musical environment – two participants mentioned the friendly and supportive environment within church choirs.

Unfamiliarity – many participants mentioned a lack of familiarity with church services and repertoire. One mentioned that a chorister training was not available because of location.

Church choirs struggling – one participant mentioned the decline in church music, and the difficulty of recruiting choristers even in private schools.

Exposure to live music at church – some participants mentioned hearing live music at church, and the impact this had on them.

PARENTS:

Lack of interest – some participants mentioned their parents' lack of interest in classical music, but only one mentioned actual discouragement.

Logistical support – many participants mentioned the support their parents gave through their time and by offering transport. One had parents who can't drive and were unable to help in this way.

Encouragement – most participants mentioned the encouragement and emotional support their parents offered.

Financial support – many participants mentioned the help their parents gave by ensuring finances were available (either self-funded or through seeking charitable funding).

FINANCES:

Support received – many participants received financial support, whether LEA-funded tuition and hire, bursaries and scholarships, or charitable funding for instruments. This is in addition to parental commitment to ensure finances were available.

Paid work – participants reported working in other jobs for financial security and to pay for musical opportunities, and the benefits of paid church positions.

Singing not seen as financially viable – many participants reported that singing was not seen as a viable career path by their parents. One reported a county music service that worked to disprove this.

Challenges – many participants reported financial challenges, most notably the high cost of instruments and tuition, and the difficulty of embarking on a music career whilst needing to make ends meet.

Business skills learned – one participant reported learning business skills from working at a young age and receiving help from county music teachers.

COUNTY MUSIC:

County music provision – county music service provision played a large part in many participants' musical training, with one particularly strong example.

Peri demo – many participants took up instrumental lessons after watching a peri demo at school.

Council funding – many participants received funded tuition.

CHANCE:

Many participants recognised the luck that had enabled them to pursue a career in music, most notably through teachers or other musical contacts, and sometimes through chance encounters.

CATCHING UP:

Many participants reported feeling that the job was not unmanageable, but they were always having to work very hard to catch up.

RESILIENCE:

Determination shown – several participants mentioned that they succeeded because they simply refused to give up.

Hard to stay determined – some participants mentioned that they were discouraged by the challenges of becoming a professional singer and by negative experiences in the workplace.

PATHWAY:

Lack of knowledge – many participants reported not being aware of available opportunities or how to go about becoming a professional singer.

Music not seen as useful – one participant reported that Music (and the arts more broadly) are not seen as useful subjects for career prospects.

Lack of training opportunities – a lot of skills and knowledge are expected, with no formal training available.

Idea of offering mentoring and career support – aspiring state-school singers could be offered mentoring or career information, which would not be expensive to provide.

Positive career support – many participants experienced helpful support from teachers and/or choir directors.

Scepticism – professional choral singing often not seen as a viable career path by parents.

OPPORTUNITIES:

ECC – many participants reported ECC giving them an inspirational training opportunity. Some reported social difficulties, and some were not aware of the courses.

NYC – many participants mentioned the benefits of NYC as an alternative to chorister training and for building contacts. One participant mentioned auditioning after a school teacher was sent leaflets.

School – some participants mentioned extra opportunities that were found for them at school.

Instrumental – some participants mentioned particularly inspiring instrumental opportunities.

Church – the huge benefits of chorister training were mentioned, but one participant lived too far away from a suitable establishment.

Self-made alternatives – one participant mentioned self-made opportunities and amateur opportunities as an alternative training.

Other extra-curricular – other opportunities included a village children's choir and graduate choral positions.

SUPPORT:

Supportive bosses – some participants reported bosses in schools who were understanding of their limited keyboard skills.

Support to learn skills – some environments allow for learning of skills whereas some expect skills to be perfect already.

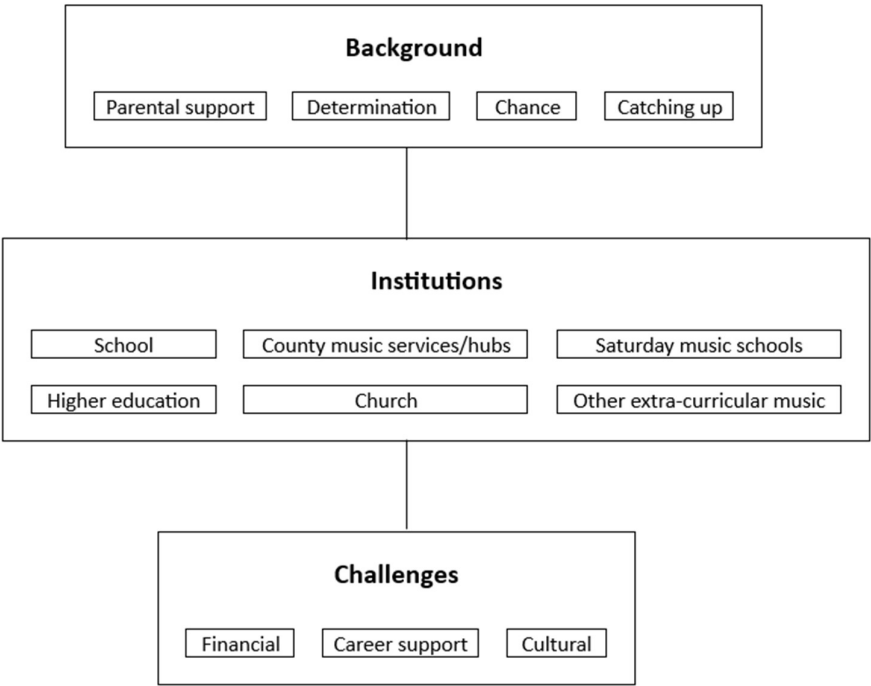
Logistical support – one participant mentioned the logistical support provided by the county music service and local network.

Support by communal music – one participant mentioned the great benefits of playing alongside teachers and other adults. NB This is similar to some church/cathedral choirs.

LOCATION:

Choral work is location-specific, and some participants reported moving city to reach more opportunities.

Appendix 9: Theme diagram



Appendix 10: List of recommendations

School and county music:

- Solfege training in primary schools for all pupils.
- Daily singing in schools for everyone up to the end of KS3 (with options to continue).
- Increased prominence of classical music in schools, with daily exposure. This would ideally include both listening to recordings, and programming frequent performances by student musicians to their peers (for example, in assembly).
- Provision of single-sex singing opportunities, and the use of unchanged, changing, and changed boys' voices in suitable ranges.
- Instrument demonstrations in primary schools, together with free or heavily subsidised instrumental tuition and hire.
- Better training and professional development for school music teachers, that allows them to share good practice and learn from each other.
- Campaign to raise the status of arts subjects within schools, possibly by ending/altering the EBacc.
- Ensure every student is within reach of an A level Music provider.
- Improve opportunities and incentives for able musicians to stay within the state sector, including investment in music hubs to provide high quality provision for the most talented.
- Promote mixed age and ability music provision, where students and teachers sing/play together.

Career support:

- Create a database of professional choral singers who are willing to mentor state-school pupils or speak in state schools.
- Work with careers services to establish the best way to disseminate information.

Church:

- Investigate the current availability of training in church singing, and establish the best way to improve.
- Consider forming a group of 'friendly' churches that pledge to provide a supportive environment for those with less church experience.
- Consider how adolescent males can engage in church singing, ideally without reducing the professional opportunities available to adults.

Financial:

- Ensure professional work is adequately paid at all levels, so that economically deprived singers are not at a disadvantage compared with those who can take unpaid or low-paid work for 'exposure'.
- Work towards better dissemination of information regarding financial support for musicians, so that it is widely advertised and easy to access by students and teachers.