

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide consists of a 4x3 grid of squares. The colors of the squares are: Row 1: Yellow, Orange, Dark Blue; Row 2: Dark Blue, Blue, Orange; Row 3: Pink, Orange, Yellow; Row 4: Light Blue, Blue, Dark Blue.

An investigation into leadership styles and the effectiveness of praise and criticism in a choral setting



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Module 3



“It takes a very great person, a Very Great Person (and notice that I don’t say a very great musician), it takes a very great person to be an inspiring conductor”

Howard Swan

(1987, cited in Allen & Apfelstadt, 1990, p. 25)



Background

- Choral conducting is more than the art of gesturing (Jansson, 2019)
- Relationship between choral conductors and adult amateur choral singers in the UK
- Jansson suggested that there is limited research on “the impact view” of choral conducting (2019, p. 866).
- Bonshor (2017) stated that more research was needed on the receipt of group feedback, so that it successfully targets the correct people.

Research Aims

1

To recognise the traits and competencies that underpin successful relationships between choral conductors and singers

2

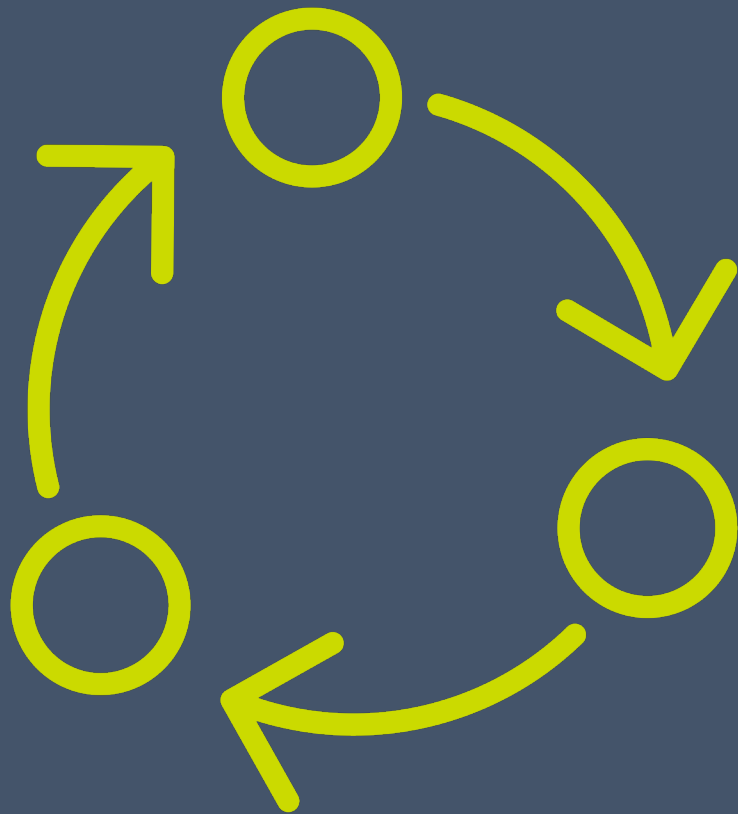
To appreciate the consequences that positive and negative feedback have on the self-efficacy, attitude and achievements of adult amateur choral singers.

3

To explore strategies to improve the communication to get the best out of choir members and to more precisely target the correct singers.

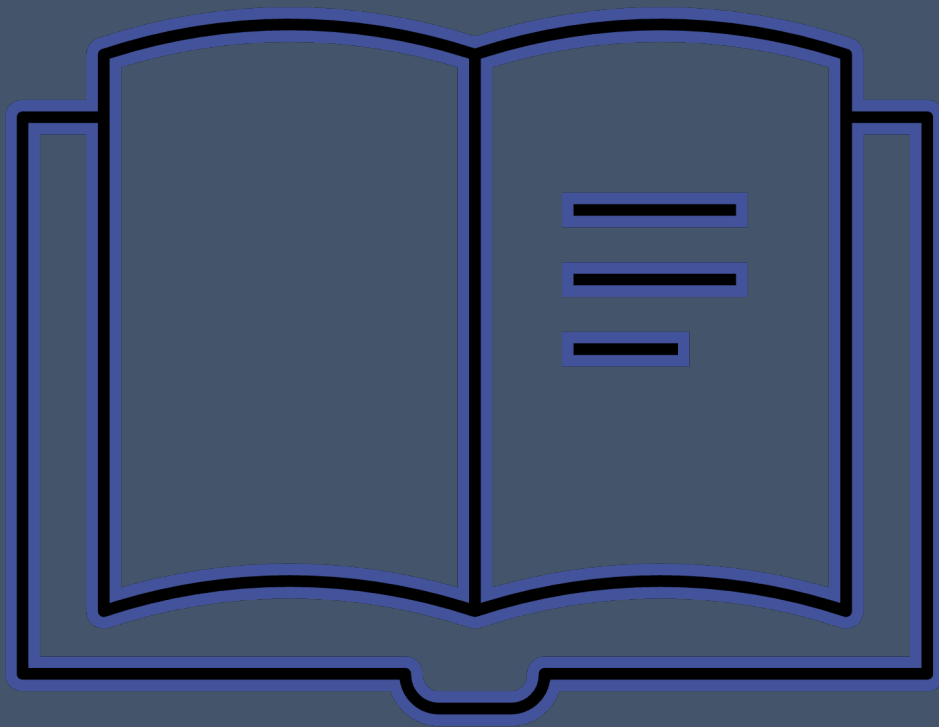
4

The findings from this study could be rolled out to help other choral leaders.



Methods

- Phenomenological study
- Semi-structured interviews: 7 conductors
- Questionnaire: 82 responses from singers
- Ethical considerations



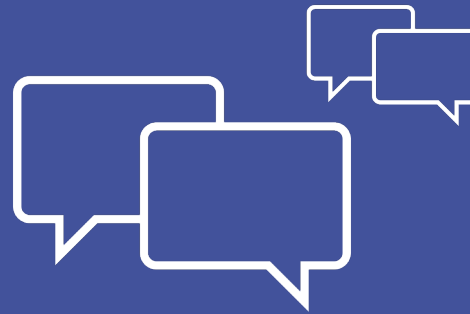
Literature Review

- Confidence and choral singing
- Choral conductor model
- Leadership styles
- Praise/criticism ratios
- Different types of feedback
- Targeting feedback

Findings



Leadership is
driving culture



Data analysis led
to two themes



Leadership is
finding balance

Participant Quotes

I think the whole kind of philosophy ... is to build a culture that means we can work in a way that's going to be best for everybody. And that everybody buys into that. (C2)

My confidence in each choir depends almost entirely on the culture established by the conductor. (S25)



Sometimes singing row by row can be helpful. However, other times it can be seen as a punishment and is uncomfortable (S82)

too much criticism is awful and demotivating (S55)

Who cares - if you're wrong, you're wrong - don't sugar coat it. (S65)

When he would smile and clasp his hands together expressing his appreciation, made me want to do my best. (S24)

If praise is empty it becomes meaningless (S80)

No there is never room for abuse or lack of praise although my first school choir thrived on shouting and negative praise and actually she was the making of us (S23)

I don't think of it as praise versus criticism, but I will be aware of the length of time in a rehearsal where I've been demanding for a long period. And a long period of time is 15 minutes. You know, you need to change the energy. (C7)

Conclusion & Recommendations



The study did not lead to a choral conducting model.

Effective choral leadership for adult amateur singers is about people and creating a positive environment for them to learn and have fun in.

Further consideration



Record common issues
at choir rehearsals



Create a
troubleshooting guide



Test how well it works
at my own choir



Potentially send it to
other conductors



Reflective Examination of the Personal & Professional Learning Experience

- Networking opportunity
 - Specific praise
- It is okay to be demanding
- One singer's feedback



References

Allen, S. G. & Apfelstadt, H. (1990) 'Leadership styles and the choral conductor', *The choral journal*, 30(8), pp. 25-27, 30-31.

Bonshor, M. (2017) 'Conductor feedback and the amateur singer: the role of criticism and praise in building choral confidence', *Research Studies in Music Education*, 39(2), pp. 139–160.

Jansson, D. (2019) 'Choral singers' perceptions of musical leadership', in Welch, G., Howard, D. and Nix, J. (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of singing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jansson, D., Elstad, B. & Døving, E. (2021) 'Choral conducting competences: perceptions and priorities', *Research studies in music education*, 43(1), pp. 3-21.



Thank you for listening!