

MY THREE YEARS IN PRISON: TEACHING MUSIC BEHIND BARS

AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

A Thesis

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by

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*To move beyond barriers in order to create communities of hope that restore, enlighten,
and transform lives through music.*

*Mission Statement for ACW Prison Choir
Miranda Rowland and Rev. Dawn Adamy, 2010*

Abstract

This study investigated my experience as a facilitator of musical activities at a men's correctional facility in New Jersey. Over a period of three years, I served as the director of the men's chorus at Albert C. Wagner Youth Correctional Facility in Bordentown, New Jersey. This study focused on my planning, repertoire selection, and rehearsal processes. Data were collected using self-created lesson plans, personal reflections and journal entries, and individual feedback from members of the choir.

The results indicated that in order for me to be an effective teacher, I had to work *with* my students rather than working *in front* of my students. Teaching in the prison environment influenced my ability to facilitate dialogue between students.

Finally, the results indicated that the physical location of our rehearsal impacted the experience of our time together. When we allowed our rehearsal space to have power over our attitudes, our creativity was blocked, which had a negative effect on our environment and our sense of community. Conversely, when we focused on creating music rather than the location of our rehearsal, we were better able to enhance our time together.

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Try picturing yourself in my shoes.

Take a deep breath as you arrive at the front steps of a physically oppressive building.

Now, since you are in my shoes, you are a female under five-foot tall on the verge of entering a building housing all male inmates, most assuredly all larger than you.

The first thing I see is a metal detector and two armed guards at the front of the prison.

The heavy feeling in the pit of my stomach is hard to ignore as I stand there waiting for a female officer to come out and pat me down. I then give my school ID to another guard behind a counter with thick, protective glass between him and me.

On my journey to the rehearsal space, an old auditorium with bad acoustics and plastic chairs, I have to pass through several barred gates while escorted by another guard.

The heavy feeling from the pit of my stomach has begun to find its way to my throat.

I worry that I might not be able to do this.

As I continue to the rehearsal space, I begin to realize that there is no turning back.

I arrive in the rehearsal space. The guard shows me where the chairs are and I arrange them in a circle.

It is seven o'clock.

I panic a little as I hear a guard call over the loudspeaker for inmates to be escorted to the auditorium for choir rehearsal.

As soon the men enter the room, the reason that I am here is becoming clear.

The heavy feeling in the pit of my stomach is gone as I begin to feel relaxed and ready to rehearse.

I take a deep breath, introduce myself, get to know the names of each man that has chosen to come to rehearsal, and we begin making music.

Introduction

During the last three years, I have been involved in an amazing, yet unusual, choral experience. I have had the opportunity to work with a group of men at the Albert C. Wagner Youth Correctional Facility (ACW) in Bordentown, New Jersey. While pursuing my education at Westminster Choir College of Rider University in Princeton, New Jersey, I learned of this activity as a result of meeting the Rider University Chaplain, Rev. Dawn Adamy. In the spring of 2009, she and another student from Westminster Choir College had started a general music class at ACW where they taught the men to recognize musical patterns, to find a steady beat, and to create music of their own, using the concepts learned. Rev. Dawn invited me to be a part of this group in the fall of 2009, and it was during that semester that we transitioned from a general music class to a choir.

Teaching choral music in a prison setting has some inherent hurdles that must be cleared. For example, we were not allowed to bring in any music from the outside, so I was asked to find music that could be taught by rote, an aural call and response method of teaching based on repetition. This was great news to me because most of my previous teaching utilized rote teaching. I had previously co-directed a female ensemble in Illinois specializing in music by women and for women, as well as songs of praise and protest. Although I had plenty of music for women's voices, I suspected that much of this music would not work for the men in the prison choir.

From the beginning of my work at ACW, it was my goal to use music as a vehicle to encourage the men to connect to themselves, to each other, and to the music itself. For many of these men, self-expression was not something that they were used to. Jane Ellen

Ibur teaches poetry and other forms of creative writing at a county jail in Saint Louis, Missouri. She described the men that she worked with as a group of young men that were presumably taught to not show their emotions and when they begin to show their emotions, “they become different than they’ve ever seen themselves or imagined themselves to be” (Ibur, 2003, p. 101-102). This statement was also true for the men in my choir. I recognized that I needed to find a way to encourage the men at ACW to choose music that they could connect with and that would motivate them, as well as encourage them to express their emotions while singing or by creating new lyrics to songs that we were learning.

While teaching music at the prison, I tried to provide the men with opportunities to expand upon their beliefs about specific musical styles and selections. This choral program not only allowed the men to develop their own musical opinions (O’Neill, 2009) but to become responsible for their actions within the group setting. This type of interaction encouraged the men to use the social skills within the choir as well as outside of our time together.

There were many similarities between the men at ACW and other young people that I have worked with over the years. Each young person, whether inmate in prison, or middle school general music student, has the “potential and capacity for positive musical development” (O’Neill, 2009, p. 463). Too often, I think educators tend to focus on the objective of our lesson that we forget the written objective is not actually the *goal*. I believe the most important part of our lessons should be the path that is taken towards an objective and not the objective itself. If we, as educators, can begin to look at lessons or

rehearsals in this fashion, I feel it is more likely that we will more clearly see the potential of our students.

Purpose of the Study

Learning does not take place solely within schools. My belief that learning can and does occur outside the classroom walls and outside typical teaching settings is why I am reflecting on my time teaching music in prison. I believe this type of reflection is important because it can foster an understanding of the importance of service learning when completed by future educators. Kushner (1999) states, “the boundaries of education spread far wider than those physical boundaries of the school, these days more than ever, perhaps. Correspondingly, the knowledge base of music is changing, and is changing music education . . . “ (p. 214).

Further, I wish to discuss why building communities is of fundamental importance when working in a non-traditional classroom such as my work teaching music behind bars. Diverse populations have been shown to coexist as well as improve the ways in which they relate to one another through choral singing and dialogue (Richmiller, 1992; Block, 2008; Cohen, 2009, 2010, 2012; Sheih, 2010). This project looks at not only what it means to build a community through music, but also the ways in which a service-learning project changed the way I view music education. This project also serves as a personal reflection of the time I spent teaching music at ACW and attempts to address the following questions:

- In what ways can music educators use choral singing to build communities in a prison environment?
- In what ways were music and the arts significant for the prison inmates at ACW who were part of this project?

- In what ways did teaching music at the prison serve to transform how I approach being a music educator?

Service Learning and Music Education

Service learning is a structured learning experience in which students take the knowledge that they have acquired during in-class sessions and apply it to *real life* situations. Service learning has been described both as a “powerful vehicle that educates, transforms, and gives us meaning in our lives” (Taylor, 2002, p. 51), and as a “form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community need together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote [individual] learning and development” (p. 53). In this case, I viewed my work at the prison as a form of service learning where I was able to utilize learning I had acquired in the classroom and use it in a real, concrete teaching situation.

Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service learning (Jacoby, et. al, 1996). Manley et. al. (2006) describe service learning as a pedagogy that “require[s] students to insert themselves as social actors and agents into a particular community, place, or experience outside of the classroom” (p. 116).

Service learning had the ability to enable me as a student to associate ideas that I was learning in the classroom with matters of current events in the world. It also had the potential to encourage me to communicate my ideas, to solve conflicts, or to address the needs of a specific group of people. Service learning also served as an effective tool for me, as a novice teacher to practice the craft of teaching by providing me with teaching opportunities that may not have been available to me throughout my college courses. Finally, it had the ability to facilitate discussion between me, as the teacher, and my

students in the classroom setting. Initiating a service-learning project into a music curriculum was my way to “consider the role music play[ed] in developing the qualities required for good citizenship” (Yob, 2000, p. 76).

My first task in beginning this service learning project was to engage in planning and preparation for the project (Burton & Reynolds, 2009). I had to work on my own to find information that would help to create meaning, not only for the men at the prison, but for me as their teacher. I needed to find out as much as I could about the inmates and the institution itself before I was able to understand what they needed from me.

Froehlich (2006) states, “when proposing change . . . one overriding paradox is that one tends to find it easier to call for change [and it] is usually much easier to say than do” (p. 6). This was a conundrum for me. When I first began teaching music at the prison, I thought that my being there might change the way others looked at these men in prison. I considered that, since I acted as a contact from the *outside* coming *inside*, my peers would no longer think negatively about the members of my choir even though they were inmates. This overarching response did occur to a limited extent. However, the one significant change that took place was in my teaching style and my ability to adapt in front of students.

The time that I spent teaching at the prison enabled me to understand that in order to inform my curricular decisions, I must first place my students at the center of the decision making process (Hanley, 2005). For example, when I was learning to write lesson plans for our rehearsals together, the men were frequently co-creators in the writing of the plan. At the end of each rehearsal, we discussed what they wanted to do the next week, why they wanted to do it, and how we might accomplish that task. Frequently,

these conversations centered on music they wanted to learn rather than musical concepts. In turn, I incorporated musical concepts throughout the lesson using their musical choices.

In many ways, these conversations helped place my students at the center of the decision-making process, thus creating a curriculum that was co-generated by the inmates, themselves. I was beginning to feel that many small changes had been made in the ways I approached teaching the men at ACW, and the social needs of my students was one of the motivations for teaching music at the prison (Burton & Reynolds, 2009; Arrington, 2010).

Teaching Music behind Bars

It is a sobering statistic that the United States incarcerates more prisoners than any other nation in the world (Gallagher, 2008). In fact, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, “about 2.9% of adults in the U.S. were under some form of correctional supervision” (Glaze & Parks, 2012). Michael Santos, a current inmate in a California prison, describes the American prison system as a “costly but effective design . . . if the end goal is to warehouse human beings” (p. xxiii).

I believe that teaching music in prison is important because it teaches inmates to work together and allows them another form of self-expression and exploration of interpersonal skills. In many correctional facilities, inmates have few opportunities for self-expression (Kupers, 1996). To many inmates, the only form of self-expression that they know is violence. This violence manifests itself either physically or with hurtful words or phrases. Cohen, et. al. (2012) state, “musical programs provide opportunities to build positive relationships, group responsibility, aesthetic sensitivity, and individual

attributes such as empathy, respect, and perseverance” (p. 199). The use of music within a prison environment has the ability to rectify the ways in which inmates socialize with one another.

Music offers the opportunity for the inmates to have a positive way of relating to and interacting with one another. Van de Wall (1936) was one of the first music therapists to use music as therapy in state-funded institutions. He viewed singing as an activity that fostered a sense of belonging and had the ability to “shift destructive habits into constructive ones” (p. 50). Cohen (2010) echoed these sentiments and added that music can “contribute to reducing the tensions felt by the prison population, both between each other and between themselves and those [from] the *outside*” (p. 151). One research study in Missouri found that music programs in prison also had an impact by increasing self-esteem of the inmates involved in the music program (Richmiller, 1992). In other words, music was not only teaching the men at ACW how to express themselves but it also gave them a sense of self-worth. This type of self-expression can lead to creativity through music.

Music education in prisons not only offers the possibility for creativity or the improvement of self-esteem, but also the opportunity to stimulate personal change. It is interesting to note that many of the men in my choir “have been removed from society [for so long that] their self-perceptions . . . are restricted” (Cohen, 2012, p. 52). Through conversations with the men in my choir, I have come to understand that many of the members of my choir were taught *not* to show emotion or have high expectations for their lives. In this context, music offered the men in my choir, an outlet to investigate the inner workings not only of themselves, but of their fellow singers. As contributing members of

the choir, the inmates were encouraged to create new meaning to songs that they were learning and have an understanding of some musical concepts in the process. They were inspired to write new verses to songs that showed their creative side while also sharing their feelings with the other men in the ensemble.

In this setting, music gave them an insight that might not otherwise exist. How was this possible? According to Abrahams (2006), “music, by its very nature, has the power to liberate, transform, and effect change.” At ACW, music functioned to create a space where voices and visions could be expressed in a safe and positive manner. Music was a vehicle to support a positive change in the members of my choir. During rehearsals, the men changed the way they interacted with each other and were more willing to express themselves through music. It was my opinion that these changes were necessary in order to make humanization possible.

Humanization can be defined as recognizing the human characteristics of an individual. In many cases, humanization exists within conflict. For example, if an inmate in my choir viewed me as *outside* his community, he would need to recognize me through our similar human characteristics in order to advance our interactions with one another. Another example could be an argument between the men in the choir. Humanization would encourage the men to see each other as human rather than in-human to limit the intensification of violence. Dialogue, empathy, and focusing on commonalities ended up promoting humanization among our group (Maiese, 2003).

Dehumanization existed as a psychological process of “demonizing the enemy, making them seem less than human and . . . not worthy of human treatment” (Maiese, 2003, n.p.). In many ways, the prison structure was designed with dehumanization in

mind. For example, many people in positions of power refer to those in prison as *animals* or *subhumans* (Berkman, 1995). Once a person or a group of people was deemed unworthy of human treatment, the likelihood of humanization in the choral setting seemed impractical.

Humanization was only possible when everyone worked together. One type of humanizing education was built on dialogue between the teacher as *facilitator* and the students, with the purpose of reshaping their education (Sheih, 2010). In order to make humanization possible, teachers must first recognize that dehumanization is present (Freire, 1970). When I was able to recognize that my students felt that they were the objects of their education, or oppressed by my instruction, I was better equipped to remedy the occurrence of dehumanization.

During my experience at ACW, music was used to relinquish the authority that I seemed to embody because I was the teacher. Music was also used to bridge the gap between teacher and student. For example, upon first meeting the men, I was primarily present as a member of the choir rather than assuming the role of *leader*. We sang together, prayed together, and wrote poetry together. Through this type of introduction, I was able to determine the skills of the men while acting as a peer rather than a teacher. Our early interactions encouraged humanization to thrive.

After the first two rehearsals at ACW, I began to transition from peer to leader of group activities while continuing to work *with* the men as equals. We engaged in dialogue and did not pay attention to the obstacles in front of us constructed by our differences (hooks, 1994). When I began to relinquish my authority as the leader of the group, my students were able to become the leaders while I became the student. In order

to forward the musical abilities of my students, I acted as a facilitator, through dialogue, to recognize when a student was falling behind. Our use of music and our abilities to communicate encouraged the prison choir to become a space conducive for constructing a community.

Building Communities

The need to create a community in the prison environment stemmed from the sense of isolation in the lives of the inmates at ACW. Building communities can be seen as an act of transforming isolation into a sense of caring and connectedness for the good of the *whole* group of people (Block, 2008). It can include an evolution based on gender, ethnicity, or class (Higgins, 2012). Anthropologists have defined communities with three types of groupings, which included common interests between people, a common locality and a common social system or structure (Rapport & Overing, 2000). Scholars agree that a community can be built when they are made up of people that share common interests (Rapport & Overing, 2000; Block, 2008; Cohen, 2009, 2010, 2012; Sheih, 2010; Higgins, 2012).

I felt using music as a vehicle to build a community would be the best way to move this group of seemingly self-centered, inattentive young men into a group of motivated and thoughtful men, working together to achieve a common goal. At ACW, it was important to first build a community where the men, at first felt safe. After our community was established, the men allowed themselves to react, respond, and reflect upon the music that we were learning and what our time together meant to them. After several months, it had become clear that the men felt a community had been formed.

I have come to define community to include partnerships or relationships between people. In order to create a community among people, individuals must work together towards their goals. In the choir at ACW, community building also required each student to form a partnership with one another. Since music had the ability to “break through barriers and provide a truly human perspective”, it seemed that music could encourage us to create partnerships (Pascale, 2010, p.7). This was also dependent on the individuals within the group. It was my understanding that each individual was different from the other and this was our foundation for creating similarities and forming a community.

Once I was able to accept the fact that each individual brought something new to the discussion, chances were greater for our community to form. I began to “acknowledge difference as the only condition of possibility for community, where community is understood as an imagined state of being derived from shared attitudes, interests, or goals that exist concomitantly with human difference” (Bradley, 2009, p. 59). Using music as a vehicle to foster community, music educators in prisons could focus on developing relationships with the individuals in the group by sharing stories and asking for perspective. This type of focus could strengthen personal growth and encourage the inmates to be independent thinkers, while improving relationships with each other (Allsup, 2011).

The possibilities of becoming a more cohesive unit increased when relationships developed with those around us. According to Block (2008), “the communal possibility rotates on the question, ‘What can we create together?’ This emerges from the social space we create when we are together” (p. 98). While I was teaching music at the prison, it was important for me to be aware of the needs of not only the men around me, but of

my own needs in order to facilitate conversation. Through conversation and music, I needed to acknowledge the contributions that each person made to the creation of our community. As a whole, we were able to develop relationships with each person inside our community, which led to an understanding that we were all different. As soon as that type of understanding was able to take place, we allowed ourselves an awareness of the boundaries and differences that existed in order to generate similarities within our community.

Building communities was considered a positive activity within our rehearsal setting because it encouraged the men to share responsibilities and develop relationships with me and with the other inmates. However, like many activities, it could have a negative impact on our students. Coll and Deane (2008) stated, “partnership working is frustrating and amazing, time-consuming and powerful, irritating and enriching – usually at the same time” (p. 75). Community building appeared to be a balancing act of good intentions for students and the poor execution of the development of a community. While, educators attempted to create a community within a classroom with the best of intentions, they may meet resistance from certain individuals. According to Bradley (2009), community building could be considered an “extreme of good and evil respectively” (p. 57).

While I continued to advocate for building a strong community within our rehearsal, I was unintentionally neglecting the needs of many of the men in the choir. One scholar described the efforts of advocacy as a method of trying to convince others that their ideas and promises are necessary for the good of the group (Bowman, 2003). Advocating for the building or formation of a community could cause the community to

be formed inauthentically due to the micro-management of the actual development of such community.

The facilitator who perceives that the community has been formed may have inaccurate perceptions due to the bias of wanting to form a community. Their desire becomes so passionate that they can no longer see that they are pushing members of the group away, creating a pseudo community. They convince others that building communities will enrich their lives and they forget that each student is different and has different needs. They can no longer promise that their efforts in creating a community will be fruitful. In advocating for community building within a classroom or prison environment, I had to maintain the focus that a community could not be forced into existence, much like my students could not be forced to enjoy every activity.

In order to create a community in the prison, I needed to allow my students room for personal growth and make an effort to define communities with the ambition that my students would form an authentic community without me micro managing the formation of the community. I also needed to experiment more during my lessons and give less direct instruction (Allsup, 2011). As Bradley (2009) stated, “music education should not be used to ‘engineer humanity’ because the potential results of such engineering can neither be predicted nor controlled”(p. 72). Creating communities should not be used to *engineer humanity* for the same reasons that music education should not be used in that way.

Methodology & Data Collection

This research study falls into the research paradigm of autoethnography within the larger scope of qualitative research. It is a form of research that relies on self-observation

and narratives of personal research (Glesne, 2011). Another way to define autoethnography is a story or a method that connects personal narratives to that of a cultural or social group of people. Autoethnography differs from ethnography in that the voice of the researcher is not limited to being an objective observer and serves as a primary focal point of the research (Ellis, 2004). This autoethnography focuses on my time teaching music behind bars, reflections of the rehearsal process, and the changes that came about due to this service-learning project.

Lesson plans as artifacts. After each rehearsal, I would have an idea of what we could accomplish in our upcoming rehearsals. I wrote the lesson plans using the skills that the students demonstrated with the hope of enhancing their knowledge of specific musical concepts. This task was not as simple as it sounded. The problem for me was actually writing down what I had planned to teach. This became easier as I continued to practice both assessing where my students were and writing where we could go next. It was not until my second year at the prison that each lesson plan was written on the Monday before each Wednesday rehearsal, otherwise many of my lesson plans were written mere hours before rehearsal.

Rehearsal reflections & journal entries. At the end of each rehearsal, I wrote reflections on our time together. Since I was the only person reading these reflections, they were written in an informal manner as journal entries. Not only did I reflect on the execution of my written lesson plan, but also on many of the unplanned moments throughout the rehearsal. In addition to the reflections, I kept a personal journal, which allowed me to be even less formal and speak only of the group interactions that I had with the inmates during choir.

Community building activities & individual feedback. Each rehearsal began with some sort of community building activity. These activities provided a space where each member of the choir could introduce himself to any person that he did not know. During the first five minutes, choir members would make conversations with their peers while I joined their discussion. This type of interaction not only allowed the men to feel safe with one another but to understand that I was interested in their conversations.

Many of the initial rehearsals included an activity in which the men were split into duets and have a list of specific questions that they needed to ask their partner and report their findings back to the ensemble. For example, one such question might have asked a choir member to share a family nickname, or their birthday, or favorite genre of music. Once all of the questions were answered by both men, we came back together as an ensemble and shared what we learned about our new friend.

Individual feedback would often happen during the rehearsal process. At the end of our rehearsal time together, I would often ask the following questions:

- What was it that we accomplished in rehearsal tonight?
- What brought you to choir tonight?
- If this was your first time at choir, how did it go?
- If you could change anything about our time together, what would it be and why?
- What should we do in our next rehearsal?

Findings

Lesson plans. In order to begin discussing the findings during this research project, I have to start with writing lesson plans for my prison choir. Prior to my work in the prison, I did not have any formal instruction on how to prepare lesson plans. I had not yet taken any college methods courses that covered this skill, and although I knew how to prepare a piece to teach a choir, I did not know how to put my sequence into a formal lesson plan.

Schmidt (2005) argued that “teaching experience seems to be necessary for the development of expertise in planning and teaching lessons”, she also stated that just because a preservice teacher has the experience, their “experience alone does not guarantee expertise” (p. 8). For example, when I first began writing a particular plan, I would ask myself several questions. Where do I start? How do I get from here to there? What if someone asks a question and I cannot answer it? How do I know that they learned what I taught? When does the lesson end?

I continued to grapple with these questions as I gained more experience in writing lesson plans. John Dewey (1916) described education as “a constant reorganizing or reconstructing of experience” (p. 76). If this statement is true of education, then it is also true of the lesson plans created. Teachers, novice or experienced, often see the task of lesson planning as a reorganization of sequential materials to arrive at an objective. Many beginning teachers, myself included, see the lesson plan through its individual parts. These parts include, “the objectives...the introduction...the development of the lesson...and the closure to the lesson” (Connelly 1988, p. 168).

My first written lesson plan was written to teach the men a simple melody by rote. We were learning a folk song called *Down to the River to Pray*. The lesson plan, seen in Appendix A, was bare and only included the name of the song and how to break it into manageable chunks. I did not let my written lesson plan determine the way I was going to present the material to the choir. I reflected after rehearsal that night about how wonderful it was to be teaching this group of men and how I had never stopped to think *what do I do next*.

Reflection from Sep. 23, 2009

I am so honored to be working with this group of people. Never, in a million years would I think of teaching music in a prison, but this is where I belong. I decided to teach the guys an Alison Krauss song, Down to the River to Pray, mostly because I knew the song and I thought it would be a song that would get us singing together as I could add harmonies in the middle of the chorus part. I felt like the guys were engaged and just right there with me all night. I have to admit, I was nervous at first but as soon I started singing, the guys' eyes lit up and I could feel that it was going to be an amazing rehearsal. I did not have to be so nervous about writing a lesson plan either, I didn't even look at it during rehearsal.

As the years progressed, my ability to write lessons plans for my prison choir began to flourish. I had an idea of what the men were capable of and how it felt to sing with them. I was also gaining more insight as to what songs they wanted to sing and how to incorporate other musical concepts along the way. I was no longer seeing the lesson plan as the sum of its parts but as a guide for getting from start to finish.

In my second year at ACW, I found that I was writing lesson plans that involved the full rehearsal process, rather than just one part as previously mentioned. In the lesson

plan shown in Appendix B, I was writing a lesson plan for the full hour rehearsal. We were beginning to learn songs that the men would suggest and learn how to improvise, compose, and arrange in the process. It is apparent that this lesson plan has more information than the first one in Appendix A. It is also presented in a different format, given to me in an elementary praxis course at Westminster Choir College.

Reflection from Sep. 29, 2010

We sounded amazing tonight! We were able to work together to create two very different types of music. We learned the chorus and the bridge to Eminem's "Not Afraid" and the guys were given the task of creating 4 new verses. They were given length restrictions and asked to limit their use of swear words, or as S.T. said, keep it P.G. This same man was willing to improvise at the end of rehearsal but he did not pay attention to the length restriction. This was not a big deal. I didn't want to stop him, he was doing such a wonderful job. I mean, who else can improvise a rap on the spot? I sure can't. Anyway, next week we will continue to work on these compositions and begin to discuss a way to make music sound more sophisticated by implementing dynamics.

My final year at ACW was similar to my second year. I continued to write lesson plans that would cover our entire rehearsal. The men were starting to learn at a faster pace and the prison guards allowed me to bring in photocopies of music. This led to teaching the men how to follow the notes on the page as well as teaching them note values and names. The lesson plan in Appendix C shows how I began teaching *Give Us Hope* by J. Papoulis. It was interesting to note that much of this rehearsal was led by the members of the choir. The discussion that followed our introduction of *Give Us Hope* was student-centered and empowered the men to make sense of the text so they could perform it in a meaningful and emotional style. The text can be found in Appendix D.

Reflection from Feb. 9, 2011

When I look back on this week, I can't help but remember the words that S.T. spoke, "People just think we be criminals." He said this in response to a guard that wouldn't let a couple of the men join us for rehearsal, but to be honest, before I began this ministry, my thoughts were identical to his words. I had no knowledge of the lives that they led and I never thought my life would intersect with theirs and I didn't want it to. When I was 21, I had a run in with the police. I never wanted to see the inside of a jail again. At first, it was as if reliving the experience of being a scared, young woman would hinder me from ever coming back to ACW. However, knowing that these guys have to live with imprisonment each day, I realized that I must overcome my fears for them. As a future educator, I have to push myself to be in uncomfortable situations and overcome my insecurities.

With that being said, it was wonderful to discuss the multiple meanings of the text to Give Us Hope. One man described it as a poem that encourages people to listen to each other and to not forget that even those who choose to be silent, can be heard. Another man described it in one word, deep. I am glad that I planned this song for this particular rehearsal. It has been interesting to talk through the text before ever singing a note. I look forward to learning this song with the men of the ACW choir.

I spent a large amount of time learning how to write lesson plans (John, 2006). My interaction with the men of ACW helped to set all of my written lesson plans in motion (Robbins, 1999). Through conversation, we were able to determine where to begin and how to accomplish any musical task. Although I was responsible for the writing of each lesson plan, the men were often the creators of the content. The choir at ACW provided me with practical application of skills acquired in the practicum courses at Westminster Choir College, which empowered our choir to have successful rehearsals (Schmidt, 2005; Bowers, 1997; Clark, 2001).

Rehearsals. In order to share these findings with the reader, there are several processes that I must first present. I will detail the process of being checked in at the front gate, walking to the rehearsal space, and setting up the room. Once the reader has a sense of the surroundings, I will describe our rehearsal process from beginning to end, discuss the songs that we sing, and explain the impact of the physical location of our rehearsal.

On the day of rehearsal, I had to make certain that I was not violating any part of the dress code. For example, I was not allowed to enter the prison if I was wearing any of the following items: khaki pants/shirt, hooded sweatshirt, military issue uniform, navy pants, open-toed shoes, shorts, skirts, or any type of revealing outfit. It seemed that whenever I wore any type of outfit that consisted of dress slacks, the men did not respond to me in the same way as they did when I dressed more casually. One man told me it was because we looked like we were there to impress someone, instead of wanting to create music together. For that reason, my outfit for teaching at ACW frequently consisted of blue jeans, a t-shirt, a button down shirt, and sneakers.

The outside of the prison looked like many of the schools that I attended in my youth (see Appendix E). I felt that although this building looked like a familiar setting, the barbed-wire fences and towers let me know that it would not be like the schools of my childhood. I gathered my music and driver's license, walked to the front doors and proceeded to the next obstacle; the visitor search.

I wandered up the steps, placed my belongings in a tray on a conveyor belt, and walked through the metal detector. Once through the metal detector, I was greeted by an officer who called for a female officer to complete the inspection. This was nothing like entering a school building. After a few minutes, the female officer had arrived and

proceeded to pat me down, making sure that I did not have any type of contraband on my person. Initially, this procedure was the most uncomfortable aspect of coming to the prison, but it soon felt as though it was part of the routine. Once I was cleared to go in, I made my way to the rehearsal space.

On my way to the rehearsal space, I walked through several gates before meeting with a guard that would escort me the rest of the way. We walked down several hallways, passing the cafeteria and many inmates who were told to stand against the wall, facing it as I passed them. I was then escorted up three flights of stairs, passing the prison library before arriving in the auditorium. Once there, I was asked to set up as quickly as possible while the guard checked the room for any inmates that may have stayed behind from a previous activity. I set up twenty chairs in a circle and awaited the arrival of the men in the choir.

I anxiously paced near the entrance of the auditorium, waiting for rehearsal to begin. After what seemed like twenty minutes, but was actually only five minutes, the men started coming up the stairs to attend our first choir rehearsal of the semester. I greeted each man with a handshake after they checked in with the guard. I recognized some of the men from the previous semester and greeted them by name. After Rev. Dawn read the selected scripture and uttered the opening prayer, it was time to start singing.

Rehearsals often began with a rhythmic warm-up, which provided me with the opportunity to assess who could keep a steady beat and who had some trouble with this exercise. One inmate recalled that performing a steady beat was similar to his own heartbeat. After the rhythmic warm-up, I asked a member of the choir to lead the stretches. I explained to them that as singers, we needed to get our body ready, since we

were using it as our instrument. We would also learn to sing vocal warm-ups using the modified Curwen hand signs (See Appendices F - G).

Reflection from February 2, 2011

Tonight, our rhythmic warm-ups led to a more structured lesson on the mathematics of music. In 3/4, we discussed the rhythm from our warm ups and learned the names of these note values (quarter notes, eighth notes, and sixteenth notes). We ended up splitting into groups of 2 and 3 to clap out each rhythm. One group kept the steady beat, one had eighth notes and another had sixteenth notes. We discussed what we had just performed and found that the quarter notes (steady beat) were our foundation, our pulse. Our vocal warm ups were interesting. We learned do-sol with Curwen hand signs. After we were solid with that, we completed the octave. Next week we will learn the notes on the staff and the names of clefs. We also discussed contour during this warm up and applied that vocabulary word to songs that we knew from last year.

After our warm-ups, I introduced the musical selections for the evening's rehearsal. Introducing a new piece was often a challenge, but I am reminded of a specific rehearsal in 2011. I had selected *I Want Jesus to Walk with Me* arranged by Eurydice Osterman. I had decided that I would teach the men how to decode the rhythm of this piece by writing it down on the dry erase board. This was not my goal for every piece of music that we learned, but questions in previous rehearsals led us to this rhythm reading and musical vocabulary lesson.

Reflection from March 2, 2011

*Music literacy was the name of the game tonight. We read the first phrase of *I Want Jesus to Walk With Me* arranged by Eurydice Osterman. I wrote the rhythm on the whiteboard and we began with clapping the rhythmic pattern and experimenting with ties across bar lines. It went much better than expected.*

We also discussed anacrusis. This is how I taught them to remember what that means:

who is Ana Crusis ? I don't know, but we better pick her up before 1! Ha!

I said this and the guys told me they would never forget what an anacrusis was. . . we'll see if they remember who Ana is next week.

We also had the chance to discuss the differences between a major pentachord and a minor one. The guys were able to determine which note in the 5 note scale was altered. I also introduced 16 Tons to the group. I was cut short at the end because the guard said we had to leave by 8:15 when we usually end at 8:30. I looked at the guard and asked for more time, but he insisted that it was time to go. I let out an audible sigh and told the guys to put their chairs away and form a circle. One man looked at me after that exchange and said with a grin, "You make my heart at peace."

We ended our time tonight singing Peace Will Come One Day by Joe Utterback. One of our singers wrote his own verse to this song and asked to share it with the group. Each man left the rehearsal at peace and one with the community that we had created.

Here are the lyrics that J.B. wrote: "Community let's come together, where love will show much more, a family of new beginnings, for faith encourage us all. No more separations, we shall be as one. O soon, sweet peace, O come."

We learned a lot of musical vocabulary this week. We reviewed contour, dynamics, crescendo, decrescendo, and added melodic ostinato, canon, and anacrusis. There were many wonderful teaching moments tonight and a lot of very attentive men. There was an instance when I had to ask everyone to switch places simply because there was some chatting that would not stop. We discussed why I asked everyone to move and how important it was for us to respect each other and work together as a community. That conversation ended the side chatting and allowed our rehearsal to flourish. What an Amazing Wednesday night! I have never been more satisfied.

Towards the end of the semester, we used our rehearsals to review all of the songs and musical concepts that we learned. I assembled all of the music and vocabulary that we learned during the semester and asked the choir members to describe what they remembered. The final rehearsal often allowed me to understand the concepts that the men not only remembered, but what it was that they valued about our time together. We began the rehearsal with scripture and prayer, discussed the vocabulary that they remembered, and reviewed all of the musical selections from that semester.

Reflection from May 4, 2011

Tonight was our last rehearsal of the semester. I always love and hate these rehearsals. I love that the guys lead the ensemble in stretches, rhythmic warm-ups and tonight, someone wanted to give leading vocal warm-ups a try. These last rehearsals always show me that I am in the right place in my life and my career path. If I can get a group of young men to respond to one another and be willing to apply themselves as leaders in our choir, I believe I have done my job. It is always great to witness the changes that some of these young men go through during our time together. I have watched one young man go from being angry and introverted at every rehearsal to being an active member of our ensemble who was willing to help any man to understand what was going on. I love that I have had the opportunity to meet each of these men. I just wish the circumstances were different and that we didn't meet in prison, but I am thankful for music for giving us the opportunity to get to know each other and to work together.

Tonight, the goal was to review all of the songs and vocabulary that we had learned all semester. We also had a visiting professor from Westminster Choir College in attendance to observe our rehearsal, so we had the perfect opportunity for an impromptu concert. Dr. Frank Abrahams, professor of Music Education, appeared to enjoy every second of our rehearsal.

After Rev. Dawn read the opening scripture, one man asked if he could say the opening prayer tonight. When that was complete, I asked the men to remind me of our welcoming body percussion warm-up. Successfully, we went around the complete circle with this activity. I then asked the men to recall some of the vocabulary that we had learned during the semester. Each man raised his hand to go to the board to write down what he remembered. We then tried to perform, using the words that were written on the board. Again, this was a success. Many of the words were spelled incorrectly, but that did not matter to me. I was glad that they remembered words like ostinato, anacrusis, contour, crescendo, decrescendo, and pentachord.

We then moved on to review Little Johnny Brown. The guys had more fun than they have ever had with this song. After Little Johnny Brown we began singing 1,2,3,4,5 (do, re, mi, fa, sol). I asked them to recall where this pattern is found in one of the songs that we would be singing next, The Storm is Passing Over. It took them awhile and after I sang it on the text, they figured it out. We also used 1,2,3,4,5 to remind ourselves of canon. After singing The Storm is Passing Over, we sang the pentachord in canon to get us ready for Dona Nobis Pacem. "Security" wanted to try his hand at leading this exercise. He found out how hard it was to remember each groups' entrance. After we sang Dona Nobis Pacem, we went to Eminem's, Not Afraid. S. T. rapped for us, a verse that he had been working on. After this was finished, we prayed with the guys, set up the chairs and said our goodbyes. Sadly, this was our last rehearsal of the school year.

When I arrived at home, feeling satisfied and sad all at once, I checked my email and found that Dr. Abrahams really did enjoy being at ACW. He wrote: "Thank you so much for facilitating my ability to observe at the prison tonight. You made the evening very comfortable and I felt quite welcomed. I am so very proud of Miranda. Miranda has the gift to connect to these men in that indescribable way that was very exciting to see. At Westminster, we teach the music education students that the purpose of music education is to transform lives and Miranda certainly does that. I am very proud of the work that she is doing and pleased that she has this opportunity. I saw mutual respect, not to

mention the high level of achievement from the men. The prisoners were able to use the vocabulary, make some high level musical decisions and were able to sing canons in 2, 3 and 4 parts and do that well.”

As an ending to all of our rehearsals, we stacked up our chairs and came together in a circle for our closing prayer and our final musical exercise, toning. In the circle, we held hands, bowed our heads, and closed our eyes and began to intone on any pitch that seemed appropriate in that moment. Toning was our way of lifting our voices in prayer without restriction. It was our opportunity to make music without knowing the notes or the words. It was music making without boundaries. Toning was our moment to improvise sounds and words that helped to express our emotions and encouraged us to listen to the music in and around us.

Songs we sing. Selecting repertoire for this group of men was a difficult task, especially since I did not know their abilities or interests in music. According to LeAnna Willmore, Chair of the Choral Education Council for the National Association for Music Educators, no matter what music I decided to teach to my choir, it must all teach the choir something (Willmore, 2013). I needed to decide what I wanted the men to learn from the music that I selected (see Appendix H for song selections).

I asked myself several questions before selecting music for the men at ACW. Did I want them to learn musical concepts? Yes. Did I want to select music that appealed to their interests? Yes. Did I want the music to be thought provoking? Yes. Did I ultimately care about tone quality or good singing technique? No. I went out in search of songs that would appeal to the men and encourage them to think critically about the text and subtext

but, in the end, it did not matter to me if we sang with proper technique. The goal was to sing, share, and form bonds with each other.

Many of the songs that I selected for the choir at ACW focused on the concepts of struggle, peace, understanding, and freedom. At the beginning of each rehearsal, we discussed the meaning of the text that we would be learning. Many of the men agreed that knowing what they were going to sing about was important because it helped them to better connect with the music. After learning the text, I taught each piece by rote with the goal of being able to perform it at the end of rehearsal.

Impact of rehearsal space. During my first two years at ACW, choir rehearsal was located in the auditorium, before being relocated to the day room on level A2. The relocation of our rehearsal space came as an attempt from the prison administration to force our program into resignation. I will now describe the importance of the physical space of the rehearsal at ACW and how it impacted our rehearsals.

Researchers have discussed the issue of place and space as it pertained to place philosophy and pedagogy (Geertz, 1996; Flay, 1998; Malpas, 1998; Cresswell, 2004; Stauffer, 2012). Flay (1998) explained the idea of space through an example of a jazz club at two different points in time. He determined that although the space remained the same, the feel of the environment changed with the passing of the hours. In the following paragraphs, I detail the impact our rehearsal space had on the social environment of our community.

The formation of a community can be impacted by the space in which choirs rehearse. Our rehearsal space for the first two years was in the auditorium at the prison. In the auditorium at the prison, one can almost forget that they are inside the walls of a

correctional facility. The space was open and there were several windows on either side of the room. It was understood that *we* are in *their* space regardless of our location in the prison, but the auditorium was our home base and because of that, we grew accustomed to our surroundings and know that during our rehearsals, each of us was free in that space. We were free from the cell that we lived in, free from the stressors of working in the prison, working on homework or having perfection demanded of oneself at any given moment. In the space of the auditorium, we did not have to work as hard to create an open and honest environment. The space took care of that for us. Our reactions to that space enabled us to grow together. The auditorium allowed me to attempt to create a safe environment, which then led to the creation of a community.

The change in our rehearsal location was unfortunate but necessary to allow enough space for the multitude of support groups at the prison. Many volunteer groups meet at the prison; however they were guaranteed a space because their efforts were deemed *necessary* for the rehabilitation of the inmates. Programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous appeared to be more important than that of our music program. Initially, I was unhappy about this change because in our new space, there was no denying that you were inside the walls of a prison. I was inside a jail cell with the men of Albert C. Wagner, imprisoned with them for choir on Wednesday night.

Imagine walking down a narrow hallway. Once I reached the end of the hallway, a guard unlocked a steel, barred door to let me in, only to unlock two more sets of doors before I reached the actual rehearsal space. After walking through the second set of doors, I stood in front of a long, military-dorm style room, complete with beds bolted to the floor and a stall-like bathroom on my right. To the left is another cage-like room. This

space, known to the inmates as the *day room*, had two metal cafeteria tables and five benches bolted to the floor as well as several cabinets that remained stationary.

In case the space was not tight enough, there were dozens of desks, which did not leave us with a lot of rehearsal space. This small area with all of its clutter did not have any open space to run a rehearsal. Three of the four walls were solid, concrete brick with small openings up high for windows. The fourth wall was the cage; the steel, barred door.

Our first rehearsal in the new space was a challenge. The men were not happy with the space and I assumed that they could tell that I was not pleased with it either. In the new space, it was my responsibility to make sure that my negative reaction to the space did not transfer itself into our rehearsal and adversely effect the environment created.

Reflection from December 11, 2011

The amount of administrative turnover has caused our choir program at the prison to suffer. We have not had a "normal" rehearsal this semester; meaning we have had rehearsals in many different locations throughout the prison. Tonight, we were told that our rehearsal would be held in the mess hall; the cafeteria where the inmates eat all of their meals. It was an awful space to try to sing in so we did a lot of talking to each other. We talked about some of our favorite things and answered a question about a theoretical world that could become covered in chili. The question: imagine the world was covered in chili and you had to choose between a spoon and a bowl to dig your way out, which would you choose and why? At first, the guys decided that I was crazy and that this kind of question did not make sense. I argued that since we were meeting where they were used to eating, this question made perfect sense. By the end of the conversation the guys found that this was an interesting question in learning how to solve problems.

At the end of rehearsal tonight, we were escorted to our new rehearsal space; the day room on A2. I am not certain that I understand why we are being forced into a different location, but at this point, I do not think I can argue with the administration. We are lucky that they allow us into the prison in the first place. I do not think the men will enjoy this new space. I hope the change in rehearsal space does not alter the community that we have worked so hard to build over the last two years. I guess we will see.

During my final semester at ACW, rehearsals included an average of four inmates each week. In the weeks that led up to the end of the semester, there was a great amount of participant turnover. Many men finished out their sentences or asked to transfer to a new correctional facility. My last rehearsal with the men of ACW was a great night. We performed several songs for each other, taught each other new compositions, and sang one of our arrangements of *Ella's Song* (See Appendices J - K). I made sure to speak with each man as he left for the evening. We discussed poems that they were working on, drawings that they had created based on our songs, and how our rehearsal space affected their attendance.

Reflection from April 24, 2012

Tonight was my last Wednesday night at Wagner. It was very hard to say goodbye to the guys tonight because I am almost positive that this was our last rehearsal, ever. I made sure not to tell the guys of that possibility, but I wonder if I should have. There's so much that I would tell them, but I hope that I made the right decision by not saying anything. I will miss them so much! They have made my Wednesday nights the greatest night of the whole, crazy week!

In addition to singing tonight, we did a lot of talking. We talked about the songs that we were singing and the men shared with me their thoughts about our new rehearsal space. One man said that he could not wait for Wednesday and for the guards to call the

choir to rehearsal. He said that he felt happiest when he was with our group, singing and worshipping with people that made him feel human.

Another man decided to write his responses to me so I would remember them. He wrote, “every time that they call choir, I was happy because you bring life in from outside the gates. It’s like I was a car, running out of gas, and you were the gas station there to fill me with life again. You talk to us the way humans are supposed to talk to other humans. You bring oxygen to keep me living in the prison. Thank you for telling me I can sing even when I couldn’t. Thank you for all of the music that you taught us and I thank God for the music that is in you. Peace WILL come one day!”

The words of this particular man will always be in my mind. It was never my goal to fill anyone with life or to be that breath of fresh air coming from the outside. It was always my goal to share music with the men and encourage them to share their thoughts, feelings, ideas, and their own creations with each other. While I may eventually forget the names of my choir members at Wagner, I will never forget the gifts that they shared with me every Wednesday night.

Conclusions

As I complete my degree at Westminster Choir College of Rider University, I have come to realize the importance of creating a community in the classroom because of my experience at the prison. The men at Albert C. Wagner provided me with many of the tools that I hope to maintain throughout my career as an educator. My involvement with the prison choir confirmed that in order to be an effective teacher, I have to work *with* my students rather than working *in front* of my students.

Teaching in the prison environment influenced my ability to facilitate dialogue between students. At the prison, I was willing to admit when I made a mistake, while also acknowledging the fact that I did not have all of the answers. I was also able to recognize when a student was having a difficult time and was able to bring the interest of my

students to the forefront of our classroom. Also, I was not afraid of sharing responsibilities with my students. Critical engagement with my students was essential but it was only present due to the great amount of trust and respect that we had for one another. I understood that music making in a choir was a very intimate activity and to allow ones self to be vulnerable was scary. When this group of men learned to trust each other, our ability to create music together became less frightening.

I have also realized that in forming a community, the voices of individual students could be excluded, but that should not be a means for dismissing community building within the classroom. The sense of exclusion or differences between people, in my opinion, was the reason communities formed in the first place. In my experience at Wagner, we understood that our differences were the only possibility for creating a community (Britzman, 1998). In knowing that our differences brought us together to create a community, to enrich the skills of those around us, and amplifying our own voice provided my students with a positive class environment and the beginnings of a solid community.

Research has discussed the challenges that communities face in regards to the supplementation of voice within a community. Many of these challenges were to avoid being disregarded or muzzled within the community (Bjorck, 2009). These challenges were also present in our community inside the prison. Allowing oneself to be vulnerable through music was initially a struggle for some of the men. Although our community had the ability to amplify the voices of the choir members, it also acted as a silencing factor for some, which lead to the exclusion of an important member of our community. Despite

the fact that our community attempted to maintain a single voice, some students made an effort to avoid the containment of one, single voice and pulled away from our circle.

Our new rehearsal space was an added variable that encouraged our ensemble to motivate the creativity of one another. Reimer, 2009 stated that "artistic creativity [was] often believed to have entirely positive effects and can be and should be cultivated by all people" (p. 181). When we allowed our space to have power over our attitudes, our creativity was blocked, which had a negative effect on our environment and our sense of community. Our interactions and reactions with and to the space that we were in proved capable of changing the shape of our environment and our community. Even though the space we were forced to hold rehearsals in was small and oppressive, we chose to react positively and created an environment of hope that transformed the lives of each person involved.

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Appendix A: Initial Lesson Plan

This lesson plan was found in my lesson plan binder, which was handwritten. It has been typed into this document for easy access.

Lesson plan for Wednesday, September 23, 2009

First night teaching at ACW!

Song selection: *Down to the River to Pray*

Objective: Teach a melody by rote

How do I do this?

- Break it down into chunks
- Maybe sing the melody on a neutral syllable
- Maybe tap the steady beat while learning the words

Breaking it into “chunks”

Ask the men to Listen and repeat each section

After two lines, listen and repeat the whole line

After a verse, try singing everything

*repeat this way of teaching for the rest of the song

As I went down in the river to pray (echo)

Studyin’ about that good ol’ way (echo)

The goal by the end of your rehearsal time is to be able to sing at least one verse and the chorus as a closing activity.

Appendix B: Lesson Plan, Fall 2010

The second format of this lesson plan can be found in the Music Educators Journal (vol 98, no 4, June 2012).

Name: Miranda Date: September 29, 2010

Title: ACW and Eminem (perform, improvise, compose)

Musical Focus: concepts/skills to emphasize

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Playing instruments | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Form |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Singing | <input type="checkbox"/> Harmony |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Melody | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Creating |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rhythm | <input type="checkbox"/> Movement |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Expressive Qualities | |

Materials:

Chairs in a circle

Pencils

Lyrics to chorus of Not Afraid by Eminem

Lyrics to 16 Tons

National Standard(s) Addressed:

- | |
|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Singing, alone & with others, a varied repertoire of music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Performing on instruments, alone & with others, a varied repertoire of music |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Improvising melodies, variations and accompaniments |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Composing & arranging music within specific guidelines |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading and notating music |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Listening to, analyzing, and describing music |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Evaluating music & music performances |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, & disciplines outside the arts |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Understanding music in relation to history and culture |

Objectives: Learners will...

- | |
|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Be able to (behavioral): keep a steady beat, sustain their individual part when singing a melody over an ostinato |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Understand (cognitive): the concept of pulse and repetitive patterns in music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Encounter (experiential): working in small groups and improvising an original rap |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Change/add value (critical): each voice is heard during our rehearsal |

Assessment:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Written | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Performance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Group | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |

Preparation: At the beginning of each semester, we sit in a circle and play a name game. In 4/4 everyone performs pat pat, say your name, snap, stomp. (rhythm is eighth eighth, quarter rest to say your name, quarter, quarter) Teach this body percussion before trying to add names in the place of the rest.

Sequence:

1. Opening Scripture & Prayer (scripture chosen by choir member, prayer led by Rev. Dawn)
2. Introduce concept of steady beat. Everyone pats on their lap a steady quarter note in 4/4. Once steady beat is established, see step 3.
3. Facilitator inserts 8th notes into steady quarter notes. What did you notice? Was I playing the same thing? How was it different? How was it similar?
4. Split choir in half; one half performs quarter notes, the other performs 8th notes; switch. (which group has the pulse or the foundation?)
5. Introduce name game rhythm. Remembering those 8th and quarter notes, raise your hand when you hear a quarter note and stomp your feet when you hear an 8th note.
6. Teach simple rhythm found in the prep section above; once this is solid, begin to enter each person's name into the space of the quarter rest.
7. Not Afraid → suggestion song of one of the choir members. He becomes the leader for learning this song; facilitator reminds choir members about proper singing posture and how to be good listeners/learners.
8. Once the melody of the chorus is learned, men break into groups to improvise/create a rap verse; give 12 minutes for this activity; discuss topics that were generated during their small group discussion
9. 16 Tons → teach musical term melodic ostinato then actually teach the pattern on "doo" with snaps between each note.
10. Sing a verse of 16 tons for the men and have them continue singing the ostinato.
11. Teach melody to verse 1 by rote; try to transfer this melody to verse 2 without teaching but by having men read the text using the melody for verse 1. (strophic is another musical term learned in this lesson)

Closing Activity: (consolidation of lesson)

Before we circle up to pray, sing through "Not Afraid" and encourage men to improvise a verse. Discuss what happened and begin to pray out. Ask if any man wants to lead us in prayer.

Notes/Extension: Next week, we will continue this lesson. The focus will be on creating new verses for Not Afraid and figuring out how to arrange them in a coherent order. Continue learning 16 tons and create rhythmic ostinato to go with melodic ostinato.

Appendix C: Lesson Plan from Spring 2012

Name: Miranda Date: Wed. Feb. 8, 2012

Grade: ACW Title: 8th notes with Give Us Hope

Musical Focus: concepts/skills to emphasize

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Playing instruments | <input type="checkbox"/> Form |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Singing | <input type="checkbox"/> Harmony |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Melody | <input type="checkbox"/> Creating |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rhythm | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Expressive Qualities | |

Materials:

Body Percussion (see attached)
Give Us Hope by J. Papoulis
(sheet music and text for expressive reading)

Objectives: Learners will...

- Be able to (behavioral):
- Understand (cognitive): 8th notes
- Encounter (experiential): 8th notes
- Change/add value (critical):

Assessment:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Written | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | <input type="checkbox"/> Performance |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Group | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |

Preparation:

In preparation, we will recall back to last weeks' body percussion activity. This activity used 8th notes, placed in different places on the body. We will discuss the steady beat of the quarter notes and how they relate to the 8th notes. How are they different? How are they similar?

Sequence:

Hand out sheets with text from Give Us Hope. Ask for a volunteer to read expressively.

- 1-After performing the body percussion from the previous week, we will perform a new set of 8th notes. (see first page of Give Us Hope)
- 2- Listen and repeat; facilitator performs the rhythm of the first gesture through hand claps, group repeats.
- 3- This step is repeated until we have performed the rhythms from measure 7-14.
- 4- Facilitator performs all rhythms from 7-12; How are these patterns the same? How are they different?
- 5- Men perform rhythms, trying to make each match
- 6- Facilitator performs rhythm in measure 13-14. Is this the same as the first 3 patterns? If no, how is it different?
- 7-Music is handed out. Men are asked to search in the music for the matching rhythms while facilitator performs.
- 8- Facilitator sings Treble I part in measure 7; echoed by men
- 9- Facilitator sings Treble I part in measure 9; echoed by men. Is this the same as the phrase in measure 7? How is it the same or different? Listen again.
- 10- Sing both phrases together, beginning in measure 7 and ending in measure 10.
- 11- Sing the phrase in measure 11. Is it similar to another phrase that we have performed before? How? Which phrase?
- 12- Sing all 3 small phrases together
- 13- Facilitator sings measure 13-14.
- 14- Men describe the shape. How is it the same as the previous stuff? How is it different?

Closing Activity: (consolidation of lesson)

Facilitator will sing through, starting at measure 7 and ending at measure 14, men will echo. Based on the text, how can we make these 8th notes be more than just notes on a page? How can we make each phrase different? What tools do we have as vocalists to perform this song expressively?

Who can share with the group the main idea that we focused on tonight?

Notes/Extension: The learning of this rhythm and melody should be simple but is not meant to sound simple. Using text stress and/or expression can help this song to sound more complex.

Appendix D: Lyrics “Give Us Hope”

Give Us Hope

James Papoulis, Leo Schaff, and Regine Urbach

Listen to the sound of my voice.
Can you feel the beat of my heart?
Listen to the questions I have.
Listen to me.

It’s all very simple to see what we need.

Give us hope, my voice is calling.
Can you see?
Look in my eyes.
Can you feel that my hand is reaching?
Give us hope and we’ll show you the way.

Listen to the sound of my voice, calling.
Can you feel the beat of my heart, pounding?
Listen to the questions I have, listen.
Listen to me.

We are the future, help us believe!

Give us hope, my voice is calling.
Can you see?
Look in my eyes.
Can you feel that my hand is reaching?
Give us hope and we’ll show you the way.

Take my hand, now look in my eyes.
Tell me what you see.

Give us hope, my voice is calling.
Can you see?
Look in my eyes.
Can you feel that my hand is reaching?
Give us hope and we’ll show you the way.

Appendix E: Albert C. Wagner Photo

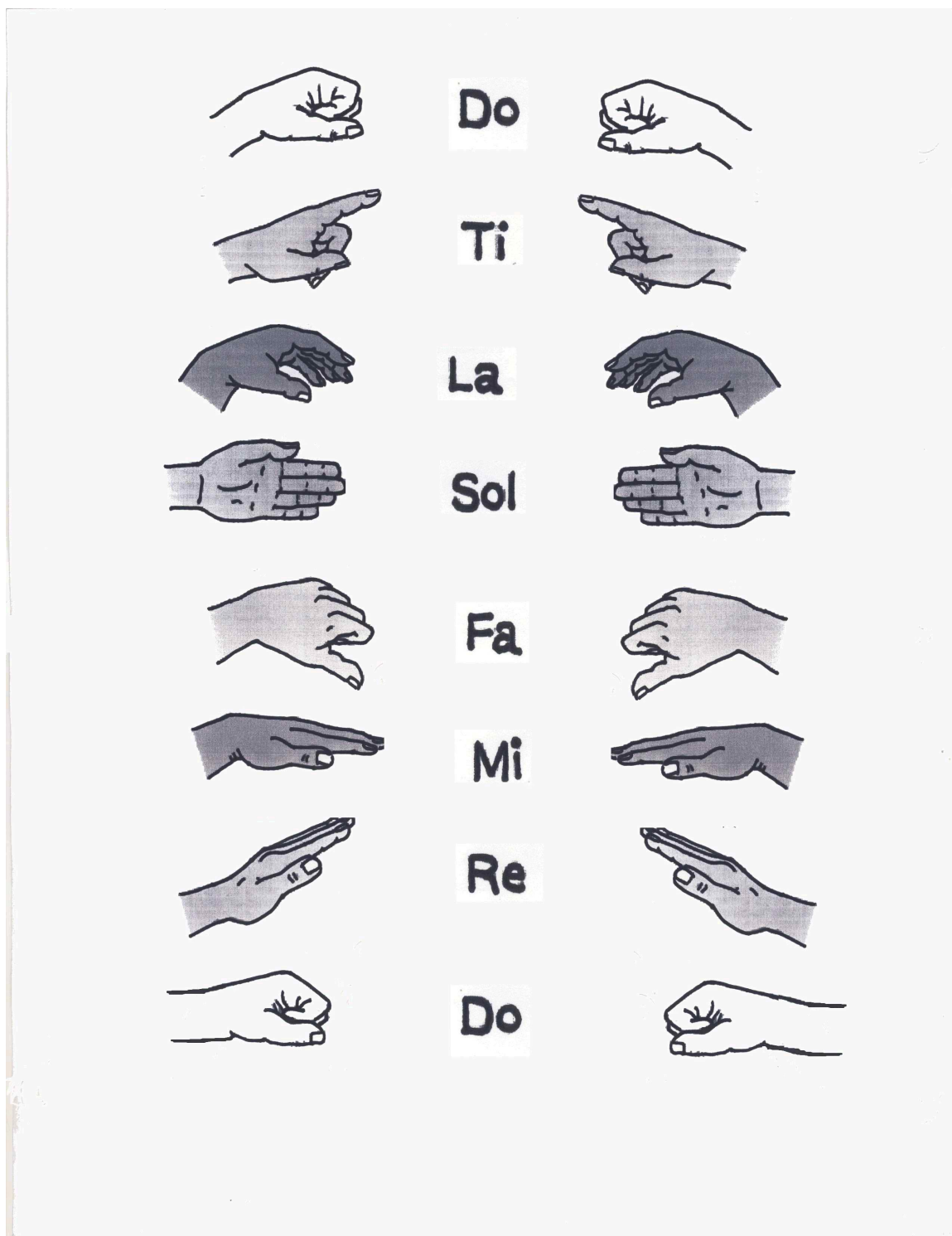
The photo below is an image of the front of Albert C. Wagner Youth Correctional Facility in Bordentown, New Jersey.



Appendix F: Curwen Hand Signs**MANUAL SIGNS FOR THE TONES OF THE SCALE.**

(From Curwen's "STANDARD COURSE".)

DOH'**TE****LAH****SOH****FAH****ME****RAY****DOH**

Appendix G: Kodály modified Curwen hand signs

Appendix H: Songs We Sing

A shortened version of the following list can also be found in the Music Educators Journal (vol 98, no 4, June 2012).

Down to the River to Pray – Allison Krauss

This was the first song that I taught to the men at ACW. Prior to singing the text, I asked the men to discuss what the words meant to them. They were given time to read it individually before I asked them to share their opinions with the group. Once each man shared his opinion, I taught the notes by rote.

Freedom is Coming – Traditional Folk Song from *Songs of Protest and Praise*

I began this selection by discussing what freedom meant to each member of the choir. One man said that being in prison did not take his freedom away because he was free in God's eyes. To him, freedom did not have to mean the freedom to roam, but could mean the freedom to feel and to pray. This song provided the men an opportunity to sing duets with one another as well as add body percussion as they sang. The men learned two different voice parts to this song while I added the final part as we sang together.

Yonder Come Day – arranged by Judith Cook Tucker

I began this simply by singing the melody as an opening to our rehearsal. I asked the men to describe the text and the contour of the melody that I had just performed. After a brief discussion we began to learn the melody together. Once solidified, I added the second part. Some of the men really enjoyed singing that part and agreed that it was the easier of the two. This song gave the men the opportunity to *own* a specific part in the song and to feel what it was like to sing in harmony with each other.

The Storm is Passing Over – Arranged by Barbara Baker

For this song, we talked about the symbolic nature of storms. Not only did the text speak to these men, but it also provided opportunity to learn many syncopated rhythms with body percussion before ever putting the notes to the rhythms.

Peace Will Come One Day – By Joe Utterback

The text of this unison piece described the daily trials and sufferings faced by people with the hope that peace will come one day. Because this song is strophic, it was quick to learn. This was another opportunity for the men to share their writing skills. Members of the choir were asked to compose a verse that described community or goodwill to complete the song.

It Takes a Whole Village – Joan Szymko

The common item of importance for our ensemble was to understand the meaning behind the text before ever learning a single note. For this song, the idea that a whole village was needed to raise a child led to some interesting conversations about the childhood of many of the singers. This song gave each man the opportunity to sing solo as well as have a chance at conducting the ensemble.

16 Tons – Tennessee Ernie Ford

The guys fell in love with this song. They learned the musical term *melodic ostinato* as an accompaniment for the verses. The text made some of the men think of a time when they were underappreciated, which led them to look outside their family lives for recognition.

Little Johnny Brown – song from Ghana

This is a play-party song. The men enjoyed this more than expected, but they hated the fact that it was a song for children. They discussed why people would give their burdens to their friends. This made the men realize just how important it was to be able to lean on one another in their times of trouble. After our discussion, they determined that this really was not a children's song because of the deep nature of sharing your woes with another person.

I Want Jesus to Walk with Me – Arranged by Eurydice Osterman

This song provided plenty of teaching moments. It was in a minor key, which led to a discussion of a major pentachord versus the minor pentachord. The men enjoyed learning a technical aspect of music, rather than just learning to sing songs. This song also provided us with the opportunity to see ties across bar lines and how to perform rhythms of that nature.

Not Afraid – Eminem

Eminem is a brilliant lyricist, but the swearing did not work for this ensemble. I decided to take the chorus and the bridge and have the guys compose their own rap verses. There were a few caveats: no swearing and it had to fit into the music, meaning it could be no longer than twelve lines. The final condition was that the rap had to mention community or God, since our choir was a part of a music ministry.

Various Christmas Carols – Various composers

At the end of each fall semester, I would lead a Christmas carol sing-a-long with the men. I knew that each man celebrated the holiday because I had made

sure to ask in the rehearsals leading up to the final one of the semester. In my final fall semester at ACW, I created a program for an evening of readings and carols for all who could join (See Appendix I).

Funga Alafia – African welcoming song; arranged by Jill Galina

This song was quite simple to learn and the guys loved it. We frequently used it as a vocal warm-up that modulated by half steps, ascending and descending. The guys lovingly named it “Fun-guy, the Mafia” simply because they thought it would be better that way. They joked that we should rename our choir to Fun-Guy the Mafia because we would then have more members.

Dona Nobis Pacem – Traditional canon

The men sing this song in three-part canon and it is stunning. I taught the melody by rote. When the men were secure with the melody, I split them into two different groups, while I sang in my own, third group. Once the men had mastered singing in two parts, I asked for volunteers to join me on the third part and we sang in three-part canon. As the group gained confidence, I sang less and less and asked for men to conduct the ensemble. Volunteering to be the conductor was something the men enjoyed because it gave them the opportunity to experience what it was like to be the leader of a positive group activity.

Give Us Hope – J. Papoulis

The men loved the text of this song (see Appendix D). They also enjoyed that it sounded like a popular song that they might hear on the radio. Prior to learning the notes of this song, I asked the men to get into groups of no more than four to read the poem aloud. I then asked for volunteers to read the opening of the poem. This gave the men the opportunity to experiment with reading expressively as well as share what the text means and how different expressions impact our sound. This song also gave the men an opportunity to improvise body percussion patterns to accompany the melody.

Ella's Song – Bernice Johnson Reagon; founding member of Sweet Honey in the Rock; arrangement by members of Albert C. Wagner Men's Chorus

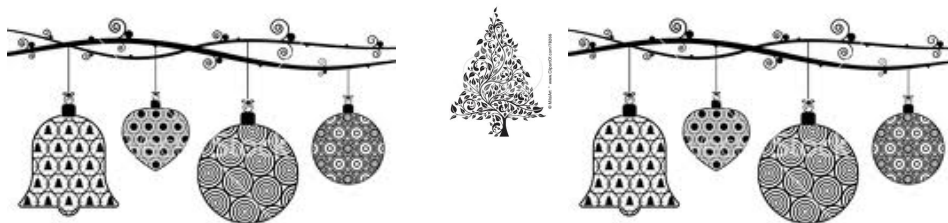
I learned this song when I went to a Sweet Honey in the Rock concert at Carnegie Hall. The members of Sweet Honey taught the audience the chorus and we sang it in canon. I was determined to remember this song to bring it back to the men at ACW. They loved that I taught them a song that I had learned at a live concert. We used this song as a springboard to composition and arranging the text of a piece of music (see Appendices J - K).

Appendix I: Readings & Carols at ACW

At the end of the semester, Readings and Carols is something that is performed every year at Westminster Choir College (WCC). I modeled our program after the programs at WCC.

THE MEN'S CHOIR OF ACW PRESENTS:

An Evening of Readings & Carols



DECEMBER 14, 2011

Program

Call to worship.....Rev. Dawn

Opening Prayer:

Creator God, Father of Jesus from before the world began, your mercy beams from on high like summer sunshine in the dark winter of our hearts. Take the imperfections of our lives and turn them to good, so that we, with all the generations of your children who have gone before us, may find your name on our lips and your love in our hearts, for your reign, Evermore and Evermore. Amen.

CAROL 1: *O Come All Ye Faithful*.....J.F. Wade, 1751
F. Oakeley, 1841

READING:

Psalm 126

When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. **2** Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them. **3** The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. **4** Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south. **5** They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. **6** He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

CAROL 2: *Deck the Hall*.....Traditional, Old Welsh

READING:

Mark 1: 2-9

2 As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. **3** The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. **4** John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. **5** And there went out unto him all the land of Judæa, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. **6** And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; **7** And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. **8** I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost. **9** And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

CAROL 3: *The First Noel*.....Traditional

READING:

Luke 1: 26-35

26:And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, **27** To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. **28** And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. **29** And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. **30** And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. **31** And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. **32** He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: **33** And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. **34** Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? **35** And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

CAROL 4: *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*.....F. Mendelssohn

READING:

Romans 8: 18-28

18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. **19** For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. **20** For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, **21** Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. **22** For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. **23** And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. **24** For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? **25** But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. **26** Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. **27** And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. **28** And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

DUET: *Dona Nobis Pacem*.....Miranda & Michelle

CAROL 5: *Joy to the World*.....G.F. Handel, 1742

CLOSING PRAYER:

O Jesus, I rejoice at the signs that say you are near. Your power is everywhere if I could see it. Yet my eyes often see only darkness and what has yet to be done. I believe in you, yet when I look around evil seems so strong and goodness so weak. If you have come, why is there still so much suffering and why do the poor still despair? Where are your miracles today? Your grace, O Lord, is more fruitful in my world than I imagine. I know your power is everywhere around me, if I could only see it. Show me today where the blind see and cripples walk. Make my vision sharper than it is.

CAROL 6: *Silent Night*.....Franz Gruber

Toning:

After *Silent Night*, we will form a circle and end our evening with toning. This, remember, is our form of meditation. Throughout this meditation, you can sing anything, say anything, or just listen to the music that has surrounded you.

BENEDICTION: ***Dona Nobis Pacem***

We would like to thank you for a wonderful evening and encourage you to keep singing even when we are away. We have enjoyed our time with you this year and will see you all again in January.

Isaiah 41:10

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Psalm 25:

To you, O Lord, I lift my soul. Show me your paths and teach me to follow; guide me by your truth and instruct me.

Appendix J: ACW Composition & Arranging Activity

The framework of our arranging activity can be seen below. The finished product is found in Appendix K.

Ella's Song by: Bernice Johnson Reagon; Founding member of Sweet Honey in the Rock

Chorus:

We who believe in freedom cannot rest
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes.
We who believe in freedom cannot rest
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes.

Verse 1:

Compose 4 lines that fit with the melody of the chorus.

Chorus

Verse 2:

Compose 4-6 lines with same melody as verse 1 and chorus.

Chorus

Verse 3:

Compose 4 lines with same melody as verse 1, 2 and chorus.

Chorus

(Do we need to end with the chorus or can we choose to end with one of our verses?)

Appendix K: Ella's Song: ACW Style

Each verse was written to be performed with the same tune as the chorus.

Chorus of *Ella's Song*: By Bernice Johnson Reagon; Founding member of
Sweet Honey in the Rock

Verses written by the ACW Wednesday Night Choir

Chorus:

We who believe in freedom cannot rest,
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes.
We who believe in freedom cannot rest,
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes.

Sometimes I get discouraged and just want to quit
When everything I try just takes me down in the pits.
Needing that something that will give me life
A way to reach my heart that doesn't cut like a knife.

I've been all on my own down the darkest of roads, alone.
I ran outta gas, got lost on the way, but I still make it home.
I know I'm an angel, minus halo and wings.
I believe in my freedom, the Lord is my witness that's the reason why I sing.

Chorus

We who believe in Jesus share our love
We who believe in the Spirit cannot run from what has come.
Spirits come from the most high up above,
Blessings from God come pouring down through his strength all over His sons

Come unto me all and I will give you rest
Come unto me all and I will show you the way.
All who are in pain, it will be your day
Come unto me all and I will give you more than rest.

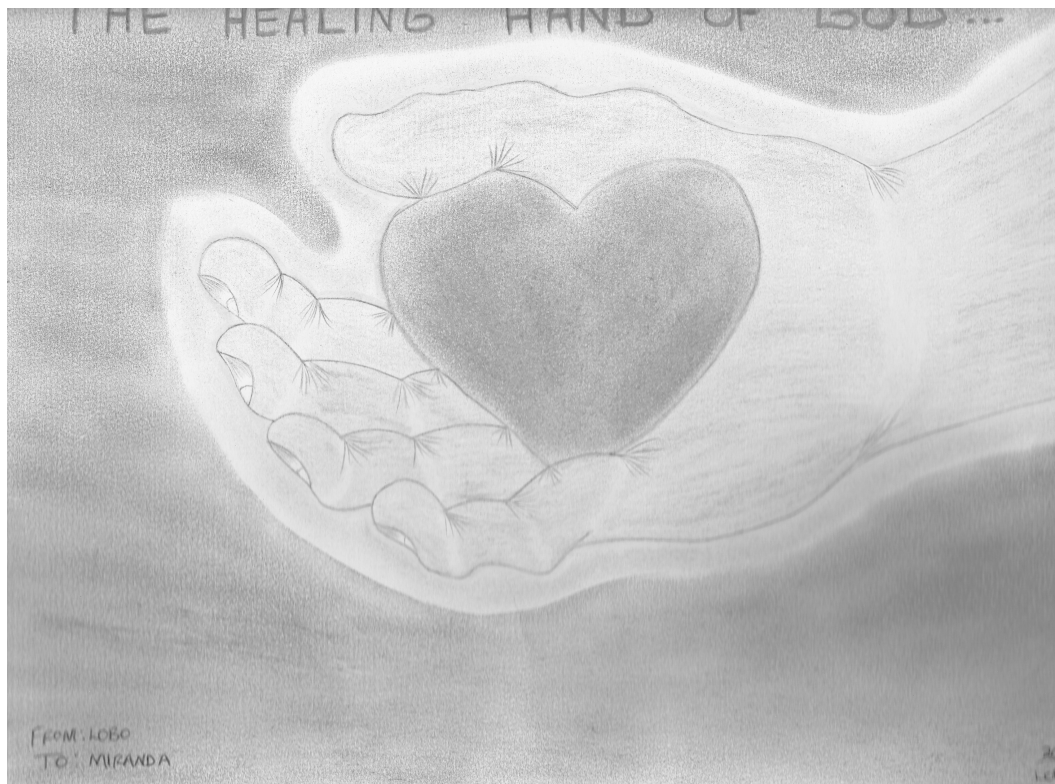
Chorus

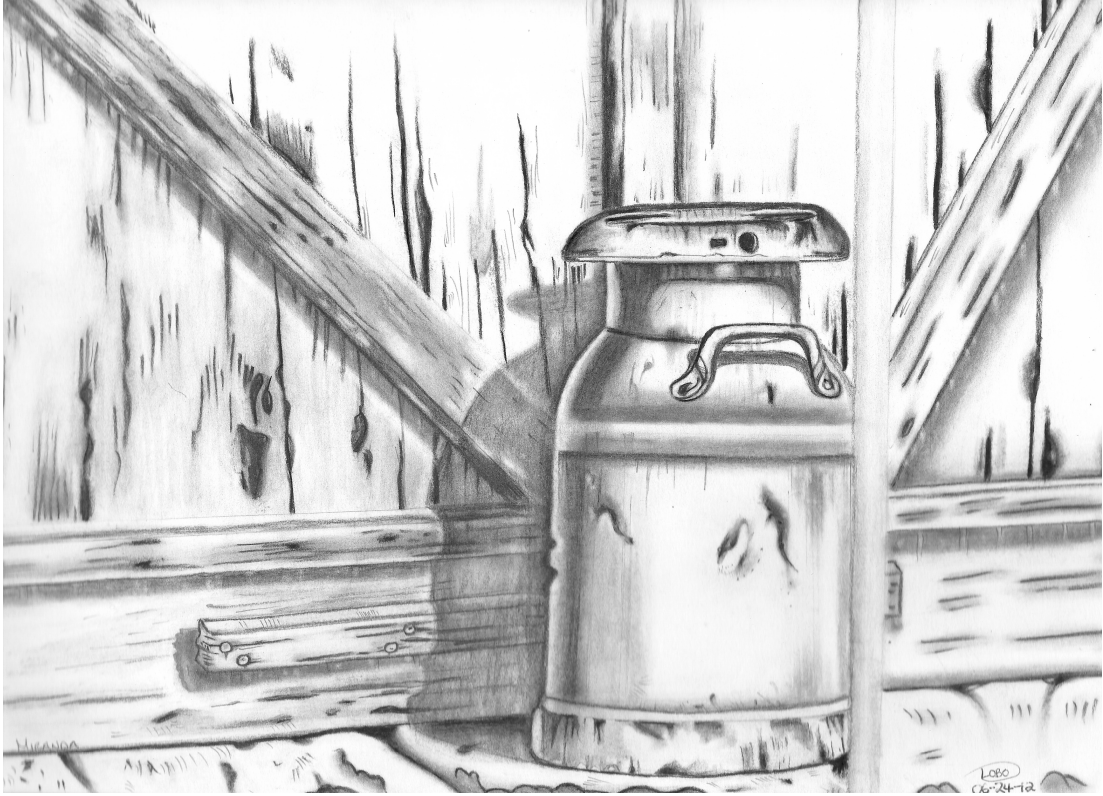
When I am down and weary, I need rest.
My thoughts in my head give me so much stress until they've gone.
When I sit in silence I feel blessed,
Cuz I've got my Jesus and I know He'll lead me home!

I was home all alone just feeling stressed
Until my boy, big Rudi said, "get dressed! Let's go get lunch."
We pull up to the buffet, I said "Yes!"
Until I got to the juice bar and they ran outta fruit punch!

Appendix L: Artwork

The following images were created by one of the members of the choir at ACW. Each image represents either a different emotion that he felt after a rehearsal or depicts how a specific piece of music felt to him.







The final image was sent to me after the artist was transferred to a different prison. It is clear that he missed singing with the choir at ACW. I have since sent him copies of all of the music that we learned together. He says he cannot sing but that he does it anyway so he can remember all of the good times that we had.

