

## Creating Connection & Community in the Chorus During COVID

Wendy K. Moy, DMA

Assistant Professor of Music Education, Syracuse University

Co-Founder, Chorosynthesis

www.wendymoy.com | [wmoy01@syr.edu](mailto:wmoy01@syr.edu)

**Social Capital** - refers to the features of organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate cooperation and coordination for mutual benefit

- **Bonding capital** - member to member; horizontal
- **Linking capital** - leadership to ensemble/member; vertical
- **Bridging capital** - ensemble to community; outward

### Bonding Capital Strategies

#### Shared Norms and Values

- Person-focused: Activities/sharing why you love to sing, connections to a piece
- Literature-focused: Discussions regarding meaning of text and context of piece
- Choir handbook with stated values
- Poll everywhere; Kahoot; Socrative word clouds

#### Fellowship

- Kahoot or Socrative games (get students to lead!)
- Retreat or extended rehearsal

#### Trust & Reciprocity

- Community-building activities
- Group work

#### Networks

- “Chorus Buddy” program
- Section Leaders
- Freshman-only/new member rehearsal

#### Shared Norms and Values: Text & Music Exploration

- *Still I Rise* by Rosephanye Powell
- Listen to Maya Angelou’s reading
- Student read text aloud
- Assign research topic to breakout rooms
- Research via the internet or readings, video, etc.
- Add information to Google slide
- Report back to full group
- Have students think about when they have overcome something in their life
- Submit pictures for virtual choir video

### Linking Capital Strategies

#### **Trust & Reciprocity**

- Programming and conversation that represents their perspectives
- Policies that have high expectations but grace
- Safe environment to be courageous
- One-on-one assessments
- Section leaders
  - Feedback on adapting to COVID protocols
- Student announcements
- Personal anecdotes related to rehearsal

#### **Learning**

- Music that builds on what they know but teaches them something new
- Variety of levels – aim for Flow
- Music that empowers them to be musicians

#### **Fellowship**

- Opportunities to laugh
- Address students by name
- Talk to individuals before and after class and during the air exchange break
- Sweet treat
- Celebrate what they have learned after a “performance”
- Opportunity to share what their family and friends gained from a performance
- Show interest in their activities

#### **Shared Norms and Values**

- School Spirit
- Establish shared norms and values that honor them
  - What is the culture of your school? Program? Community?
- Issues of social consciousness
- Share vision for your programming

### Bridging Capital Strategies

#### **Learning**

- Introduction to piece (background, why you programmed it, what it has meant to choir)
- Performance broadcast or virtual choir
- Zoom discussion with composer
- Pre-concert talk
- Social media

#### **Shared Norms and Values**

- Pieces on relevant topics

**Music of Social Consciousness (Music focusing on important social issues)**

- Connections between programming to singer
- Creating social capital/connections among singers, singers to conductor, and ensemble to community/society
- Effect changes in community/society
- Rehearsal and concerts become a place of diversity, inclusion, and belonging

**Suggested Repertoire**

- *We Shall Overcome* arr. Tesfa Wondemagegnehu (Justice Choir Songbook or hymnal)
- *Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around* arr. Rollo Dilworth
- *When Thunder Comes* by Mari Esabel Valverde
- *Still I Rise* by Rosephanye Powell
  - Crouse Chorale performance: <https://youtu.be/9AB8zf5usRI>

**Resources**

- Empowering Silenced Voices Choral Database: <http://chorosynthesis.org/esvdatabase>
- Chorosynthesis Reading Sessions Archive: <http://chorosynthesis.org/esv-reading-session-archive>
- Empowering Silenced Voices CD:  
<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLnqoMxzvjkPTLoAkHImuKpxx0vwHRiv-K>
- Composer Diversity Database: [www.composerdiversity.com](http://www.composerdiversity.com)
- Justice Choir Songbook: <https://www.justicechoir.org>

**Syracuse University Summer 2021 Professional Development/Graduate Course**

*Fostering An Inclusive Culture in Your Choral Ensemble*

This course will focus on fostering an inclusive culture in your choral program through the performance of socially conscious repertoire and rehearsals that create a place of belonging. We will study how choral singing brings people together in different settings (educational, LGBTQIA, corporate, prison, refugee, and homeless) and what it means to the people engaged in it. Diverse repertoire and programming ideas will be presented for the middle school and high school choral ensemble on themes such as identity, human rights, women's rights, racial equality, LGBTQIA advocacy, environment, and war/peace. We will also discuss strategies for dialogue on these topics, inclusive rehearsal techniques, tools to foster connections (social capital) with and amongst your singers, and ideas to engage with your greater community.