SINGEN MIT SCHUBERT (SINGING WITH SCHUBERT): A COMPARATIVE STUDY
OF TWO CHILDREN’S CHOIRS

by
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A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT
SINGEN MIT SCHUBERT (SINGING WITH SCHUBERT): A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TWO CHILDREN’S CHOIRS

The purpose of this comparative study is to examine the effects of selected works of Franz Schubert on the singing technique, attention span and overall reaction of two children’s choirs: the Oxford Children’s Chorus and the St. Peter’s Children’s Choir. In the fall semester of 2015 each choir was given a separate work by Schubert, one in German and one in English, to study throughout the semester and sing one final performance. By video recording each rehearsal and using Scribe 4 Software analysis, I was able to record the children’s singing technique and attention span. Each choir was given a survey to reflect on their perception of the Schubert piece they learned to discover their reaction. The findings concluded that the pieces did contribute to an improvement in leaning toward head voice singing more so in the St. Peter’s Children’s Choir than the Oxford Children’s Choir, and could indeed hold the children’s attention span. The reaction of the children varied by musical preference and interest. Overall, the children enjoyed singing a piece of Franz Schubert while improving their tone quality and vocal technique.
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<table>
<thead>
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<td>OCC</td>
<td>Oxford Children’s Chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPCC</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: My Schubert Story- An Introduction

I first discovered my inclination for the music of Franz Schubert during my sophomore year of college through my vocal studio lessons. As a choral singer throughout most of grade school, I was never taught the correct and healthy vocal methods of solo singing, and for the first time in my life I had to find my individual voice, in the context of these lessons. Trying to change my vocal habits at the age of nineteen felt uncomfortable and awkward, not unlike a pubertal vocal transition. I felt self-conscious in my own solo voice, because I had never been called upon to sing as a soloist before these one-on-one studio lessons. My duty as a member of a large ensemble had always required that I adjust my sound to blend with the voices around me. The experience of finding my own voice was liberating, but I often found myself feeling frustrated while practicing my solo vocal music. Much like a person unaware of what kind of clothes would be flattering on them, I could not shop for the right repertoire, and the sound of my own voice exposed made me feel self-conscious and insecure.

In the fall of 2013 my voice professor assigned to me my first German piece: Schubert’s *Frühlingsglaube*. Prior to receiving this music, no piece had yet captivated me the way this simple strophic work could. The fluid melody, the intricately crafted phrasing, and lilting accompaniment all combined to feel like a wonderfully comfortable selection for my voice. Even the vowel placement of the text within the musical phrases felt carefully fashioned, as if to compliment my individual voice. *Frühlingsglaube* (meaning *Faith in*
Spring) actually restored my own faith in the emergence of my solo singing voice. This piece not only has a nice tessitura, or most comfortable part of the vocal range, but its melody line seemed as though it was intentionally created to comfortably glide over my passaggio. The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians defines passaggio as “a transition or modulation.”¹ This transition exists in a different part of the range for every mature voice whether male or female. For most women, it rests near B₄ or C₅ as in Figure 1.² Much of the vocal line resembled the structure of a vocal warm-up with alternating ascending and descending intervals, as is a compositional trend in much of Schubert Lieder. The structure of the melody helped catapult my sound over my passaggio and comfortably descend over the uncomfortable break in my voice.

Figure 1

I became fascinated with Lieder, especially those by Franz Schubert, primarily because of the way his songs made my voice feel while singing them. I continued to ask for Schubert Lieder in my studio lessons, wrote papers about Schubert for my music history classes and read books on his tragically short but incredible life. As I studied more German Romantic repertoire, I gained confidence in my singing voice, practiced and retained healthier vocal habits, and ultimately improved my sound as a performer.


My Vocal Health

There are many contrasting opinions on the subject of healthy vocal technique. By this I mean factors included in the physical act of singing such as breath support, laryngeal position in the throat, soft palate placement, vocal chord vibrations and desire to eliminate tension in affected parts of the body. Each style of singing from classical to musical theater requires a different process of vocal technique. In choral singing, a straight tone style tends to be a popular and garnered aesthetic in many regions of the United States. Straight tone refers to a lack of vibrato in the singing voice, or free vibration of sound.

As a choral singer, I was trained in the straight tone style of singing because it was understood to be the desirable sound for a mature choir. It also employs many mechanisms that result in a free flowing sound such as a raised soft palate and strong breath support. However, some of its effects on the individual singer can be detrimental to his or her independent vocal style. As Darryl Edwards observes, “to ask for straight tone is to require developing singers to take on the habit of locking their larynx in an unhealthy high position… without the benefit of regular muscular release that comes from natural, vocal vibrancy, the singer fatigues more quickly… The high laryngeal position causes them to associate singing with tension in the muscles between their chin, jaw and larynx.”

During the course of my private lessons in voice studio, similar issues, such as jaw tension, became recurring issues that were hindering my vocal development. As a result of my straight tone training, I constantly misconstrued this tautness as control of my vocal production as a soloist. My study of Lieder helped me through the process of learning a more free style of singing, one that required a relaxed jaw, a low larynx and an open throat.

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Over time I felt that the music of Schubert was helping me with my other repertoire in my studio lessons. I lost some of the tension I was holding in my jaw and my facial muscles, my range started to feel more flexible, my voice began to feel supported in the higher end of my range, my tone quality improved drastically and my breath control expanded substantially in songs that required great amounts of articulation.
Chapter 2: How This Experience Inspired My Work With Choirs

The technical aspects of classical singing are very intricate, but they are practices that are critical to healthy sound production. It is important that these healthy habits be introduced on a straightforward and basic level during childhood. Unfortunately, I did not acquire this vital instruction until I began college. This is where my love for Schubert and my passion for children’s choir intersect. As an aspiring elementary music teacher, I have made it part of my mission to not only teach music, but to teach a healthy vocal production that goes against the grain of the popular culture of singing. This trend of style is one that I believe encourages and reinforces unsustainable vocal habits. In my undergraduate years I have been fortunate to have the opportunity to not only to co-direct a community children’s chorus, but also to serve the role as lead director of a children’s church choir. The unhealthy singing habits I hear on a weekly basis are parallel to some that I struggled with as a singer in college, because throughout my childhood I was never taught the healthy habits of solo singing that I am currently aiming to instill in my young singers.

In his book *Directing the Choral Music Program*, Kenneth Phillips writes: “Two of the biggest problems that directors encounter in teaching children proper vocal production are incorrect breathing and singing only in chest voice. Once children learn to breath properly and discover the use of the head voice, the technique for singing begins to properly align. Until that time a conscious effort must be made to have students use the vocal
One of the most common unhealthy vocal habits I encounter on a regular basis while working with the two children’s choirs is a child who sings in his or her chest voice rather than in head voice.

In order to fully grasp the practical application of chest voice versus head voice, one must have a thorough understanding of the physiology involved in vocal production. In her article “The Child Singing Voice as a Social Construct: Physiological, Pedagogical and Sociological Perspective,” Linda Ries appropriates three different functional groups for the process of sound production: the larynx, the respiratory system and the resonators. The larynx is located in the throat and serves its function as the producer of sound. The respiratory system provides the air necessary for sound and the resonators carry the sound. Muscles in the larynx determine the frequency of the pitch through a process of vibrating and stretching. There are no differences in the physiological characteristics of boys and girls before puberty. Children have less stiff laryngeal muscles than adults. In addition, the muscular tissue is smaller and located in a higher placement in the throat. These muscles give a child a concise range compared to that of an adult. Children have a vocal range that encompasses about an octave and a half; therefore, it is critical for adults to observe these

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8 Ries, “The child singing voice as a social construct: Physiological, pedagogical and sociological perspectives, 6.
limitations by carefully selecting repertoire for the classroom that not only promotes healthy vocal development, but that also stays consistently within the healthy vocal range of a child.

Chest voice is primarily treated as a positive aesthetic in today’s popular culture of singing. It is not surprising to see this trend find its way into the rehearsal setting as well. Children often mimic the adult voices they hear, whether singing or speaking. The habit of chest voice singing is one that is hard to break, simply because the sensation feels powerful to the singer, in contrast to head voice, which may feel vulnerable and unpredictable without regular practice. Singing in head voice requires that the larynx and tongue are relaxed and space is opened in the mouth. With solid breath support and correct technique, head voice produces a healthy and unobstructed sound that causes minimum strain on the vocal folds. However, many singers choose to sing in a mixture of chest and head voice because it gives them the feeling of control they seek in their own sound production. This particular habit is one that I also had difficulty abandoning in college. Not only does singing in this style strain the muscles involved in sound production, but it also reinforces bad habits that can carry into other styles of singing, ultimately risking potential damage to the vocal mechanism. For this reason, it is imperative to identify these habits in children, in order to help prevent them from damaging the necessary physiology involved in vocal production.

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General Description of Intent

For my senior thesis, I intended to use selected works by Franz Schubert as a model for children to learn and establish healthy vocal habits of singing. My inspiration for this thesis study was to teach two separate Schubert songs to the two children’s choirs in hopes that they will help the children learn and sustain healthy vocal habits. I argue that the music of Schubert can help in the journey to teach these singers solid methods of singing that they can then depend on for the rest of their lives. As soloist Kevin D. Skelton writes, “…children can gain an outstanding vocal technique, and learn to sing both musically and expressively. Certainly those musical and expressive skills learned at a young age will remain with the individual throughout puberty and into adult life.”

I believe that this experience will enhance their musical experience, knowledge, and most importantly, improve their tone and vocal habits.

The study of the music of Schubert, and its subsequent effect on the vocal habits of the children of these two choirs, is a study that took place during the fall semester of 2015. There are many of the same underlying factors, regardless of a singer’s age or comfortable tessitura. Schubert’s pieces cannot be sung successfully in chest voice. By teaching proper vocal technique throughout the semester, and by applying these methods to the two selected Schubert songs, it is my hope that the children will discover and explore the use of their head voice to improve their overall tone quality. It is my belief that once these mechanisms are in

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place, it will be easier for the children to revert to head voice in singing other pieces for children’s choir.

**Why Schubert?**

My introduction to Schubert *Lieder* was a turning point for me, both in my vocal studies and also in related academic fields. It is not that other composers did not also break such boundaries, but it was Schubert that inspired me to create a crossover between two very different vocal pedagogical realms.

The area of children’s choral music is very broad and is steadily gaining momentum and popularity. However, much of this music are arrangements of popular culture songs that encourage unsustainable singing habits and frankly lack substance in the development of ear training, vocal production and overall musical skill. As a result, many children’s choirs no longer teach children how to sing healthily or contribute to a group, but rather focus on goals of fame. In the face of today’s technology, many children expect instant entertainment and gratification; I was curious if the music of Schubert could successfully hold their attention span. As I stated previously, children often learn to sing by mimicking adults. “Chest voice now is frequently abused by untrained or misguided young singers who desire to be the next Annie or American idol.”  

The popular culture sound may be the only musical example some students in the elementary classroom are exposed to, and it is imperative that the music teacher introduce students to methods of healthy vocalization. “It is essential that the teacher be able to provide a good vocal model. Children will echo what is presented whether

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it be good or bad.”  

Without the proper training or understanding of vocal ranges, a teacher will not be able to accurately communicate the sound and production of sung head voice.

My intention in introducing Schubert works to these children’s choirs was to gauge three different aspects: 1) Would children have the attention span to learn mature vocal repertoire? 2) How would these pieces affect their singing technique? 3) What would be the overall reaction in learning and performing these works?

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Chapter 3: Meet the Choirs

Before outlining the research and careful planning involved in this study, it is important to first introduce each children’s group. The two choirs I currently work with are similar in age and ability, but differ greatly in size.

The Oxford Children’s Chorus, which I will hereafter refer to as “OCC,” is a community group that consists of about 20 children ages 9 to 12, and meets on Monday nights from 4:00 to 5:15 p.m. Our initiatives in the OCC include not only teaching healthy vocal habits, but also introducing music literacy and presenting a collection of music for the students to enjoy. We hold one concert at the end of each semester in Paris Yates Chapel, on campus at the University of Mississippi, where each co-director conducts one piece. For this group, I taught and conducted Fischerlied by Franz Schubert as my one piece of the fall semester of 2015.

I am also the director of the St. Peter’s Children’s Choir of St. Peter’s Episcopal Church in Oxford, which I will hereafter refer to as the “SPCC”. This choir is smaller than the OCC with about seven singers. The children range from ages 7 to 10. For some of them, this is their first introduction to music. The SPCC meets on Wednesday nights from 6:00 to 6:30 p.m. and performs once a month at the 9:00 a.m. service on Sunday mornings. Each month, this choir learns one piece in preparation for their Sunday morning performance. The Schubert piece I included in their repertoire this semester was Litaney, which they performed in November of 2015.
Timeline

The study of the music of Schubert and its effect on children’s vocal technique, attention and interest, occurred within the Fall Semester of 2015, with one final performance for each choir. Both groups held rehearsals once a week, with one additional run-through before the final performance; however, rehearsal schedules and other requirements determined the timeline of preparation for both groups.

The OCC began rehearsing *Fischerlied* on Monday, October 5th, 2015, and the SPCC began rehearsing *Litaney* on Wednesday, October 7th, 2015. The final performance for the OCC occurred on December 7th, 2015, while the final performance for the SPCC occurred on November 1st, 2015. In the case of the SPCC, the piece *Litaney*, or *Am Tage Aller Seelen*, is a work in reverence of the Day of All Souls, which occurred this year on Monday, November 2nd. 13 It was imperative that the children perform the piece in observation of that day, which is why the performance was scheduled a month earlier than that of the OCC.

Selecting the Repertoire

The first step going forward in my research process was to choose appropriate repertoire for this specific age group of the children. In choosing repertoire, author Kenneth H. Phillips suggests “leading children to an aesthetic experience through wonderful choral singing can be accomplished only through using high-quality literature.” 14 Although Schubert composed music for adults, the structure of his songs can be accommodated for children. It was important first to consider the contrasting context of the two choirs. The

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14 Phillips, 358
SPCC has a sacred focus in teaching children music for worship with a Christian context. Although the OCC allows for music with a religious text, the repertoire for the group is nondenominational; therefore I decided that picking a piece with a secular focus would fit the intention of the group more than a sacred work. The distinctions between the two groups dictated the kind of Schubert songs needed for each choir, meaning one secular song for the OCC and one sacred song for the SPCC.

In choosing music for both choirs, I first sifted through the collected works of Franz Schubert and filtered the vocal literature by categories of sacred and secular. Next I filtered the pool of possible songs by key. Children of both genders share similar abilities in range and vocal quality of their voices. Therefore it is best to use keys that will sit in a comfortable tessitura (area of the staff) where the voice can comfortably sing without strain. It is recommended for children to stay in the range of a little over an octave on the staff, with Bb3 as their lowest note, on the lower part of Figure 2, and E5 or F5 as their highest note at the top of Figure 2.\(^\text{15}\)

\[
\text{Figure 2}
\]

In looking for a piece for the SPCC, I had a smaller pool of sacred songs to choose from, so the key was going to be a determining factor for the song selection. I discovered

Litaney during my research process and selected it not only for its beautiful melody, but also for its structure. The song’s highest note is an Eb5 and its lowest note is C4 or middle C. The tessitura meets the criteria for music suitable for children. Figure 3 highlights the German text and English translation of this sacred piece.16

The Litaney is a piece to be sung on a day that is reflective of very heavy themes. One of the other aspects of this work I was interested in testing with presenting it to the children was their comprehension of an adult theme. In singing this piece, I asked children what they interpreted as the meaning of the song. I wanted to observe if they could use deductive reasoning to interpret and expand on the message of this work.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>Litaney</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ruh’n in Frieden alle Seelen</td>
<td>Find rest in peace all souls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die vollbracht ein banges Quälen</td>
<td>The accomplished with anxious torment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die vollendet siüzen Traum,</td>
<td>The completed sweet dream</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebenssatt, geboren kaum,</td>
<td>Life, satellite, born barely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aus der Welt hinüberschieden:</td>
<td>over retired from the world</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alle Seelen ruhn in Frieden!</td>
<td>All souls rest in peace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die sich hier Gespielen suchten,</td>
<td>The studied here playmates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>öfter weinten, nimmer fluchten,</td>
<td>often wept, never flush</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wenn von ihrer treuen Hand</td>
<td>when their true hand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keiner je den Druck verstand:</td>
<td>no one has ever understood the pressure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alle die von hinnen schieden,</td>
<td>All have departed since,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alle Seelen ruhn in Frieden!</td>
<td>All souls rest in peace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3

16 "Am Tage Aller Seelen, D.343 (Schubert, Franz)."
Litaney
auf das Fest Aller Seelen.
Von J. G. Jacobi.
Für eine Singstimme mit Begleitung des Pianoforte
componirt von
FRANZ SCHUBERT.

SINGSTEMME.
Langsam, andächtig.

Pianoforte.

al-le See-len, die vollbracht ein ban-ges
spielen suchten, öfter weinten, nimmer

Qua-len, die vol-lent das sü-sen Traum,
fluchten, wenn von ih rer treu en Hand
Kein' je, den Druck verstanden.

aus der Welt hinü berschieden: Al-le See-len ruhn in Frieden!
Al-le die von hin verschieden, Al-le See-len ruhn in Frieden!
Lieber, lieber, deiner Seele, 
Der Liebe zu sterben, nicht zu zählen.
Die ein falscher Freund verließ,
Und die blinde Welt verstieß;
Alle, die von hinnen schieden,
Alle Seelen ruhn in Frieden!

Und der Jungling, dem, verborgen,
Seine Braut am frühen Morgen,
Weil ihr Lied ins Grab gelegt,
Auf sein Grab die Kerze trägt,
Alle, die von hinnen schieden,
Alle Seelen ruhn in Frieden!

Alle Geister, die voll Klarheit,
Wurden Märtyrer der Wahrheit,
Kämpften für das Heiligthum,
Suchten nicht der Macht Ruhm;
Alle, die von hinnen schieden,
Alle Seelen ruhn in Frieden!

Und die wie der Sonne lachten,
Untern Mond auf Dörren wachten,
Gott, im rener Himmelslicht,
Eins zu sehn von Angesicht;
Alle, die von hinnen schieden,
Alle Seelen ruhn in Frieden!

Und die gern im Rosengarten
Beim Freudenbecher harren,
Aber dann, zur bösen Zeit,
Schmekten seine Bitterkeit;
Alle, die von hinnen schieden,
Alle Seelen ruhn in Frieden!

Auch die keinen Frieden kannten,
Aber Muth und Stärke sandete
Über leichenvolles Feld
In die halbentschlafne Welt;
Alle, die von hinnen schieden,
Alle Seelen ruhn in Frieden!

Ruh'n in Frieden alle Seelen,
Die vollbracht ein banges Qualen,
Die vollendet süßen Traum,
Lebenssatt, geboren kaum,
Aus der Welt hinüber schieden;
Alle Seelen ruhn in Frieden!
For the OCC, I searched for secular pieces in the key of D major because the notes of this melody would primarily reside on the staff, with all of the pitches in a comfortable singing range for the children. Once I established a group of Lieder in the key of D major I sifted through the works looking for a piece in strophic form. Strophic form is the term for songs that repeat the same melody line with different stanzas. When choosing repertoire for children, it is important to challenge them, but not to be overly ambitious. For example, I know from experience with the OCC that they are capable of singing songs in another language. Therefore, I knew that the task of singing in German would be challenging, but something I was confident they could master with careful instruction. The difficulty of the text needed to be balanced with a simple structure. I opted to find a piece that was strophic in form, so that their only variation in the learning process was the text.

During my research I discovered a strophic piece in D major called Fischerlied, or Fisherman’s song. The piece has a wistful lively tune that outlines the daily life of the fisherman. Although the song has 8 verses, I chose to use only one verse of German, and created my own translation of that verse in English to be sung again when taking the repeat.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>Fischerlied</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Das Fischer gewerbe</td>
<td>The fishing trade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gibt rüstigen Muth</td>
<td>gives sprightly courage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wir haben zum Erbe</td>
<td>Our inheritance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>die Güter der Fluth</td>
<td>The good of the tide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wir graben night Schätze</td>
<td>We dig treasures night</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wir pflügen kein Feld</td>
<td>We plow no field</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wir ernten im Netze</td>
<td>We reap networks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wir angeln uns Gelt</td>
<td>We get fish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4**

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Fischerlied.


Für eine Singstimme mit Begleitung des Pianoforte
componirt von

FRANZ SCHUBERT.
In an effort to build familiarity with the song structure, I created my own English translation, which I believe can serve as a helpful model in arranging a foreign language piece for children. First, it is important to consider the rhyme scheme of the piece and the number of syllables of each phrase. As seen in the chart below, I altered the rhyme scheme slightly to create a more transferrable method in English. Once the rhyme scheme was outlined I used the literal translation of the words. By using key nouns, verbs or other words of the text that fall on strong beats, I rewrote the text in English using the set parameters of rhyme scheme and syllabic patterns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>Rhyme Scheme</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Das Fischer ge werbe</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Our fishing makes us wealthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>giebt rüstigen Muth</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>We're sowing what we reap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wir haben zum Erbe</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Instead of ploughing harvest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>die Güter der Fluth</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>We gather from the deep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wir graben night Schätze</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>We dig up no treasures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wir pflügen kein Feld</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>We farm in no field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wir ernten im Netz</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>We cast out our nets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wir angeln uns Gelt</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>And we haul with great zeal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5**

My purposes in creating a well-rounded text in both German and then English for the OCC was to see if they could master the phrasing requirements of two languages, and sing both texts with a consistent healthy vocal technique.

In August, I was given an English version of *Litaney* by my vocal professor and thesis advisor, Dr. Milton. This piece, like *Fischerlied*, is strophic in structure but with only two
verses. The SPCC learned and performed both verses in English. One of my intentions in the research process was to see if this choir of young singers could learn an advanced English translation and understand the message behind some of the large words out of their vocabulary.

As mentioned earlier, the structure of a child’s singing voice, whether male or female, is high and light in quality. This is because their vocal folds are not yet developed. Some in the field of music education would preach that teaching children songs that are intended for adults would inhibit their vocal health because they will try to sound like adults. I believe that if songs are taught in a manner that exhibits healthy technique for the age group it is being demonstrated for, the children will in time be able to vocalize as children rather than adult musicians.

The content within these two pieces may help strengthen the vocal ability of a child because they each contain many of the basic elements children learn in their elementary music classes. The rhythmic structure of Fischerlied is very simple, containing mostly eighth notes and quarter notes with only a few dotted rhythms interspersed. The children in the OCC would be able to sight read the rhythm alone if it is broken down measure by measure. In addition, the pitches of the music are centered on an arpeggio of the tonic, meaning it refers back to the basic structure of the key. Children learn about arpeggios and are taught from a very young age to hear these intervals in pitch. I rewrote one note in the piece, (the A3 in measure 5) as seen in Figure 6 and moved it up an octave as to keep it within the comfortable children’s range. There are some accidentals in the music, or tones
that do not match the structure of the key, but they are inserted in a way that enhances the flow of the vocal line and makes sense to the inner ear.\(^\text{18}\)

\[\text{Figure 6}\]

\textit{Litaney} is a contrasting piece to \textit{Fischerlied} in more than just its sacred background. The tempo of \textit{Litaney} is very slow and peaceful and requires continuous concentration on pitch, as well as text. I took out the musical turns in the piece that would require forced vocal production from the children, who cannot yet produce quick changing sounds as quickly and healthily as adults. I instead focused on singing this piece in a tone that is straight, light and clear on the higher pitches.\(^\text{19}\)

\(^{18}\) "Fischerlied, D.351 (Schubert, Franz)."

\(^{19}\) "Am Tage Aller Seelen, D.343 (Schubert, Franz)."
Chapter 4: Collecting the Research

In order to make concrete evaluations of the children’s progress over the course of the semester, I needed valid data sources that I could reference in the review of this study. As a result, much of my data was collected through a video medium on my computer. For each rehearsal with the two children’s choirs, I used the Photo Booth application on my MacBook Pro to record the sound, responses, and attention span of the two groups. At the beginning of the semester, I acquired signed parental permission slips and waivers from both choirs. To ensure that the recording process did not distract the two choirs, I diminished the lighting of my computer to a blank screen at the beginning of the rehearsal, ensuring that the children would react organically in the rehearsal setting, and proceed unaware of my research.

Both choirs throughout this entire process were ignorant of the fact that they were being recorded. However, I did obtain waivers from parents to go forward with the study for both choirs. Neither group understood that the piece they were learning were created by a famous and masterful composer. Nor did they understand that the works were intended for adult vocalists, until the end of the semester. I did not want to project an expectation in their minds that the pieces would be harder to learn than the works usually presented to them. I wanted the children to throw themselves into the learning process of both pieces as if they were works intended for children of their age group.

As the director of the SPCC, I created a lesson plan for each week that outlined the flow of the rehearsal and the order of activities. The warm-ups were carefully planned as to
highlight some of the trouble spots of the piece, whether they were odd intervals or arpeggios, and to get the students singing in their head voice. One of the distinctions I made in teaching *Litaney* to the SPCC that I did not use in teaching a Schubert work to the OCC is the use of physical gestures to aid the process of singing in head voice. In his book *Creating Artistry Through Choral Excellence*, Henry Leck suggests that, “Another very important way we learn is physically. Because a singer cannot see or touch his or her instrument it is even more important to rely on sensation. We place our hands and move our bodies in specific ways to facilitate proper placement of the tone.” While teaching *Litaney* to the SPCC, I frequently had them use three different gestures. The first method was to pull an imaginary string out of their head while they ascended in pitch, to lift their soft palate and create a clear tone. Another method was to put their hand on their head while they sang to get them to associate clear tone with head voice. The third method was to put the back of their hands by their mouths to remind them to keep an open space inside their mouths while singing, thus lifting the soft palate as a result. Sometimes these physical gestures were incorporated in the warm-up as well. My goal in using gestures and physical reinforcement with the SPCC and not with OCC was to see if it aided the process of learning to sing in head voice. At the end of each rehearsal, I made notes as to the progress of the children’s singing voices, and backed them up with recordings of the choir.

In total, I accumulated 5 video recordings of the rehearsals of the SPCC and 8 video recordings of the rehearsals and final performance of the OCC. These videos would later be used in an electronic system of data analysis to track their content and gauge each video for the quality of the children’s voices. It was my hope in this study to use the video content to

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find a pattern and connection in improvement in the way that the children were singing over
time with the music of Schubert.

Scribe 4 Software

The electronic program for data analysis used in gauging the content of the videos I
collected is called Scribe 4 Software. This tool was created at the Center for Music Learning
for the Sarah and Ernest Butler School of Music at the University of Texas at Austin. Scribe
4 is a resource for teachers, which aids in the development of their pedagogical skills in the
classroom by reviewing recorded videos of teaching for certain patterns of behavior.
“Scribe 4 can record data directly from digital videos, linking the data record to the video
file. This permits users to replay labeled events in ways that illuminate relationships among
variables of interest.” 21 I was first introduced to this program in my undergraduate studies in
music education at the University of Mississippi. It is used frequently in our classes as a tool
for reviewing and improving our teaching methods. I discovered that Scribe 4 could not only
function in teacher training, but could be used as a medium to track student behavior as well.

In the Scribe 4 software, once a new file is created, the user must upload video
content to that file. Each new video requires its own file. Once the video is uploaded the
Setup tab can be used as a method of funneling the video content into different areas of
research. In the Setup option, there is tab to Add Subject. These subjects are the
characteristics the researcher is trying to dictate in his or her research. For my Setup as seen
in Figure 7, I created four subjects: Teacher, Singing Technique, Student Response, and Use
of Reinforcement. I then added behaviors under each subject as follows:

21 "Scribe 4 Software." Center for Music Learning. The University of Texas at Austin, n.d.
Web.
Teacher: Talking and Modeling

Singing Technique: Head Voice, Mixture, and Chest Voice

Student Response: Positive and Negative

Use of Reinforcement: Hand on Head, Pull String out of Head, Hand by Mouth.

My recorded behaviors differed slightly between the data analysis of the two choirs. The OCC contained a behavior option under both Teacher and Singing Technique labeled German for moments in the rehearsal where the students and I were speaking and repeating the German for *Fischerlied*. The last step in *Setup* is to decide whether the behaviors would be timed or untimed. I opted to time the subjects Teacher and Singing Technique as a
method of recording how long the students were singing and with what kind of technique. By making myself a subject, I was not necessarily interested in my own teaching, but rather needed to fill in the spaces within the video that the children are not singing or speaking. I left the Student Response and Use of Reinforcement untimed as to simply count the number of times a comment was made about the piece and how often the children used one of my physical methods to remind them of their singing.

Once each of the subjects and behaviors is logged in the Setup, it is time to record the data in the video. By clicking the Observe option, the researcher is then able to play the video and click on each of the corresponding buttons with the description of the behavior occurring in the video as it plays, as seen in Figure 8. Only one behavior at a time can be recorded. In order to record all of the data effectively, the video must be watched two times: once only observing with the two timed subjects, Teacher and Singing Technique, and once only observing the untimed subjects, Student Response and Use of Reinforcement. When the researcher clicks on a behavior that is untimed, it obstructs the timing of the video and diminishes the time recorded as a whole, which is why each video must be watched twice.
Once the videos have been viewed and data recorded, the researcher can select the Review tab for either a Chronology of the Recorded Behavior, a Timeline, or a Summary of behaviors. For much of my data analysis post Scribe 4, I used the Summary option to record the total singing time and singing techniques of the children, as seen in Figure 9. The Summary gave me a total for the amount of time the children were singing in each video. From there I could deduct how often the children were singing in either head voice, chest voice, or a mixture of the two in an effort to adjust to the singing technique I was trying to introduce.
The purpose of the study of the singing techniques of the children’s choirs was to see if the music of Schubert introduced healthy habits to the children. It was evident in the vocal habits the children exhibited upon arriving to both children’s choirs that they lacked training in healthy singing. For example, it is one of the missions of the OCC to promote musical learning and experience to students of the Lafayette County school system. For many of the students, the children’s chorus might be the only experience they have had so far to music taught at an elementary level, because not all of the schools have an elementary music program as a class. Their main exposure to music comes from popular culture influences on
the radio, TV or internet. Many of them sang fervently in chest voice and were aware of their inability to carry that sound into head voice while singing exercises that required them to vocalize higher pitches.

Another issue I found in working with these young choirs was a lack of breath support and a frequent usage of a raspy or airy production. One of the characteristics of healthy singing is having enough air to carry and sustain pitch. In chest voice singing with children, the tone can become breathy very quickly because the children forcefully push the pitches out to garner control of their sound, causing them to run out of air. A way to combat shallow breathing is to make the children breath deeply into their stomachs without lifting their shoulders. With repetition of these exercises in the warm-up, students can develop healthy breathing habits to help with their vocal production.

One of the other negative drawbacks of chest voice is its application in a group setting. When children sing in chest voice it not only makes it difficult for their voices to blend with each other, but also hinders the overall tone and aesthetic of a unified sound. Singing with a clear and light tone is not only a pleasing aesthetic; it can promote sustainable vocal habits. This issue in tone quality was one that I not only faced with the OCC, but the SPCC as well. It is especially important to unify group tone when working with a smaller group such as the SPCC. Just as a bad apple spoils a bunch, one child singing in chest voice can affect the tone quality of the entire group.
Chapter 5: Research Results

As stated previously, my intention in conducting this study of the music of Schubert and its effect on these two children’s choirs sought to discover three things: 1) Would children would have the attention span to learn mature vocal repertoire? 2) Would these pieces affect their singing technique? 3) What would be the overall reaction in learning and performing these works?

Attention Span

In order to precisely calculate the attention span of the children’s choirs, I used the videos of each rehearsal from the Scribe 4 Software analyses and timed the rehearsal of the Schubert piece from start to finish. I deducted time in each rehearsal that was spent on other topics, discussions and transition time.

The average attention span in minutes and seconds that the children spent focusing solely on singing and learning *Fischerlied* was roughly 5 minutes and 18 seconds. To calculate this average, I first timed each scribe video to see how long the children were practicing and learning *Fischerlied*. From there I converted each time into seconds. I then calculated an average by adding those seconds up, dividing by 8 (the number of videos) leaving me with 318.25 seconds. By converting the average into minutes, the time was roughly 5:18.

The average attention span in minutes and seconds that the children spent focusing
solely on singing and learning *Litaney* was 14 minutes and 10 seconds. To calculate this average, I first timed each scribe video to see how long the children were practicing and learning *Litaney*. From there I converted each time into seconds. I then calculated an average by adding those seconds up, dividing by 5 (the number of videos) leaving me with 850 seconds. By converting the average into minutes, I was left with exactly 14:10.

**Singing Technique**

Through the use of Scribe 4 Software I was able to accurately calculate the average percentage of time the children spent singing in the various techniques. While watching the rehearsals I divided the students’ sound production into three categories: Head Voice, Chest Voice and Mixture; in other words, a combination of some children were singing in head voice while others were still in chest voice. The results of the two children’s choirs varied.

The 8 videos of rehearsal for the OCC in Scribe 4 show the data swap from week to week, as presented in **Figure 10**. The video #2 or rehearsal 2 shows a dominant presence of chest voice in the children’s singing. The percentage then decreases in video #3 or rehearsal 3, and reoccurs strongly again in video #4 or rehearsal 4. This finding could be explained by a number of factors, one being attendance. After noticing such a drastic difference between these three weeks, I watched each video, trying to locate a reason. The answer can partially be found in the attendance from week to week. Specifically, children who miss content from the previous week will be more inclined to sing in chest voice initially, since they lack the training or encouragement the other students received in the last rehearsal to explore their head voices. It is encouraging that the percentage of time the children sing with a mixture of chest and head voice steadily increases from rehearsal 5 to the final performance of rehearsal.
8. It seems the children were trying to find their head voice, while others struggled to comprehend. The final performance and recording of rehearsal 8 has the children singing in a mixture of chest and head voice 98.48% of the time.

**Figure 10**

The SPCC results were more conclusive than those of the OCC. The children started the rehearsal process with an even percentage of the three singing categories. Over the course of the 5 weeks of rehearsal, the children’s chest voice percentage diminished, with the exception of week 4 as seen in **Figure 11**, which I prescribe to a change in attendance. The next four rehearsals after the trial rehearsal show that the children further experimented with mixture and head voice, before finally associating the Schubert with head voice in their last rehearsal before the performance.
Overall Reaction

Upon the return of the two children’s choirs in January of 2016, I issued returning members of both choirs a survey about their work in the previous semester. I distributed the survey for the OCC on January 25, 2016, and the survey for the SPCC on January 27, 2016. For the two groups I created two separate surveys, which are included at the end of this thesis. Each survey asks the students to rate the pieces they sang from the previous semester on a scale of 1 to 10 (lowest to highest.) I then asked both groups to name: their favorite piece, their least favorite piece, the piece they were most proud of learning, and the most difficult piece with a space to give a comment as to why they chose the song that they did. The third portion listed a series of yes or no questions.

For the SPCC I added an additional fourth portion of fill in the blank questions to gauge the children’s understanding of the underlying religious message of the Schubert piece.
Litaney because one of the functions of the choir is to explore the deeper meaning of the text of the piece we perform.

It is safe to say that Fischerlied was not a favorite against the other pieces worked on in the Fall semester of 2015 with the OCC. I surveyed eleven children from the OCC who were returning for a second semester. On a scale of 1 to 10, the average score for all of the 8 songs was a 7.66. Fischerlied garnered a score of 7.18, and was the third lowest score of the 8 songs.

When asked to name a least favorite, Fischerlied tied with the two lower songs with three votes, and comments such as: “I didn’t understand it very well” and “I couldn’t catch up.” However, it did garner two votes for favorite song, with comments such as: “it was upbeat and fun” and “I just enjoyed singing the song SO much.” When asked which song the children were most proud of learning, Fischerlied garnered two votes with comments such as: “It is in a different language”. As for the most difficult song, Schubert’s piece won in a landslide with 6 votes, a majority, because of the difficulty of the German text. It seems the children found the German more difficult than the two Hebrew pieces we also studied.

The next portion of the OCC survey asked a number of “yes” or “no” questions. When asked if they “found learning the German for Fischerlied to be fun”, about 82% said “yes.” When asked if they “would learn another song in German”, about 73% said “yes.” It seems that despite some backlash about German in these surveys, many of the children seemed to enjoy the Schubert piece and would not mind trying another piece in German.

The results from the survey of the SPCC conducted on January 27th surprised me. I surveyed 4 children who were returning for another semester with the SPCC. On a scale of
1 to 10 the average score for all of the 5 songs was a 7.05. *Litaney* scored a 6.25, and if listing the songs in order of highest to lowest scores, it was the third, or right in the middle.

When asked to name a least favorite, *Litaney* was only mentioned one time but given no reason. The piece also garnered one vote as a favorite piece. When asked what they were most proud of learning, the piece was not listed. However, when asked what the most difficult song was, *Litaney* gained a majority with three votes and comments such as: “singing in a really soft voice is hard because I sing loud,” and “I can never remember it.”

The next portion of the survey asked the children to respond to a series of “yes” and “no” questions. When asked: “I was proud of myself for learning *Litaney*.” 75% said “yes.” When asked: “I sang *Litaney* outside of Children’s Choir.” 100% said “no.” When asked: “I taught someone else (a sibling or friend) how to sing *Litaney*.” 100% said “no.” When asked: “I liked the way *Litaney* sounded.” 75% said yes.

The last portion of the survey for the SPCC included some reflection with two fill in the blank answers. As the choir functions in a religious setting, I wanted to find out if the children would have extracted some meaning out of the English text. One such fill in the blank said: “*Litaney* made me feel _______ because….” Some one-word answers included: “sad” (x2), “proud” and “don’t remember.” The only full written response applicable to the question said: “It made me sad of the people I’ve lost.” The other fill in the blank said: “I think *Litaney* is about….” Some one-word answers included: “death”, “life and death” and “Jesus.” I gained no further responses for those answers.
Chapter 6: Conclusions

The results of the various questions used in this study require that each element of these findings not only be interpreted of its effects on both choirs, but its effects on the other elements of the study as well.

Attention Span

The average attention span difference between the SPCC and the OCC was 8:52 (8 minutes and 52 seconds), which seems a pretty strong deficit in attention between the two groups. However, the structure of rehearsal should be accounted in this analysis. The OCC lessons meet for one hour and fifteen minutes, which gives each song roughly 10 minutes of rehearsal time. As each of us, the co-directors, took turns in rehearsing our single piece, we had to be in tune with each other, our timing and the attitude of the children to know when the pace of the rehearsal needed a jolt. The time in rehearsal can fluctuate each week between the songs from various factors such as: attendance, the attention of the children, emphasis on each song and the ability of the co-directors to manage their time to rehearse. The average time for attentive rehearsal of Fischerlied by the OCC, as stated before, was about 5 minutes and 18 seconds.

The structure of the SPCC rehearsals are much different than those of the OCC. As the director of the SPCC, I am fully in charge of rehearsals, their structure, flow and even the direction we take in discussions. This allowed me much more leverage with Litaney to spend
whole rehearsals dedicated to the study of Schubert’s piece. The average time spent completely focused on singing and learning this piece was 14 minutes and 10 seconds. For children ages 7-9, that is pretty remarkable. In music education there is a theory called “Brain-Based” learning developed by Dr. Erik Jensen. This theory claims “that requiring learners to be attentive for long periods of time may actually be counter-productive.”

In this theory, the topic should change every 5-7 minutes. However, the children’s choir was able to focus on this piece for much longer periods of time and even enjoy themselves. In the Scribe 4 analysis, the SPCC made a staggering majority of positive to negative comments about learning Litaney during rehearsal time with 45 positive comments and 4 negative comments in total for 5 rehearsals, while the OCC only made 15 positive comments and 6 negative comments in 8 rehearsals of Fischerlied. The SPCC enjoyment of Litaney is evident in their surveys, but I do believe it ties into their attention span as well. Not only was the overall enjoyment of the song more in the rehearsal setting for the SPCC, but they were more attentive as well.

Singing Technique Conclusion

The main inspiration for conducting this study of the children’s choirs was to find out if the work of Franz Schubert could enhance and correct the singing techniques of the children performing his work. The results from the video footage and experience varied, not only between the two choirs, but also between many of the rehearsals. Both results show no steady increase in head voice singing, but do show major differences from start to finish.

The less successful of the two groups in promoting and obtaining head-voice singing was the OCC. Although a mixture of chest and head voice seemed to be dominant in the Scribe 4 analyses from Rehearsal 5 to the end, chest voice is still a large part of the results. Even in the final performance of *Fischerlied*, a few dominant chest voice singers can be heard in the recording. What is interesting about the popularity of *Fischerlied* amongst the other songs is that the two other songs that required the students to start singing in head voice were ranked lower than *Fischerlied* in popularity. Both *The Wren* and *Cuckoo* share a similarity in predominance of mixture of head and chest voice while the other songs in the Scribe 4 analysis show a predominance of chest voice.

The SPCC experienced a 73.79% increase in the average head voice singing time between the first rehearsal and introduction of *Litaney* to the morning of the final performance. Although the percentage of head voice singing fluctuated from week to week, by the final rehearsal the children had become much more comfortable with singing in this new style.

**Why such a difference?**

There are many factors that could have affected this transition. One explanation for this is that because I am the director of the SPCC, the children would feel much safer with me to open up and try head voice singing. They are a much smaller and younger group than the OCC, and I try to make my room a safe, judgment free space for singing. This is one of the important factors to keep in mind with the OCC as well for opposite reasoning. There are on average 5 times as many children in their chorus as compared to the SPCC, and they are on average one to two years older than the children in the other choir. Comfort in exploring a
new singing style may occur amongst other peers. Socially this group is very aware of themselves; therefore they are more aware of their voices and may be afraid to sing in a style that is not comfortable. I am also not the only choral director of this group, and while they respect me, they don’t only depend on me for their singing.

Overall Enjoyment

It should be noted that in the surveys for both children’s choirs, the Schubert pieces won “most difficult” piece in a landslide. This tells me that although the children did not know that the works were intended for adults, they could sense a difference between the work of Franz Schubert and the standard children’s choir literature. Although Schubert’s work was not an overall favorite by a majority in either group, the children did learn the entirety of both songs, and performed the notes and rhythms as written in both of the final performances. In the Scribe 4 analyses, both choirs had a majority of positive comments against negative comments. Even the surveys had a majority of positive ratings with a few harshly low scores to bring down the overall average.

Final Thoughts

The study of the effect of Franz Schubert’s work on the two children’s choirs revealed a few things to me about the learning capacity of children. First, that with the right encouragement and safe environment, they can accomplish learning a difficult adult piece and working to sing in a tone that is not necessarily aesthetically pleasing to them but works for the overall context of the piece. Secondly, and this may seem inherent, this study reaffirmed that not every child will be interested in the pieces taught to them. Instead, they
each have their own unique interpretation of music and may have completely different tastes. While Schubert was a huge hit with some of the children, it was the absolute least favorite of others.

If presented with the right enthusiasm and training method, I believe that some of the work of Franz Schubert can be used to teach the method of head voice singing to children to improve their tone quality and blending capabilities. Even though the Oxford Children’s Chorus had a much lower presence of head voice singing in their rehearsals than the St. Peter’s Children’s Choir, the percentage of time they spent singing with a mixture of head and chest voice increased from the first rehearsal to the final performance by 20.85%. The St. Peter’s Children’s Choir experienced a different approach in learning head voice singing because of the physical gestures used in lessons and the smaller group dynamic.

The development of this study and its execution were not only personal for me as an educator, but also an artist. I believe that the works of Franz Schubert I studied and performed in my vocal studio lessons not only enhanced my vocal ability, but helped in correcting some of my unsustainable habits. During this study with the two children’s choirs I could tell over the course of the semester that the Schubert pieces were slowly changing the sound of each choir, even if the children were not singing in perfect head voice. The attention span of the two choirs was retained in each rehearsal setting even with drastically different rehearsal structures. The enjoyment of the two children’s choirs varied depending on each child’s musical preference, but overall there was a majority of positive votes. With an encouraging teaching model, such as hand gestures, a safe space, and enough time, I do conclude that the results of my research support that the study of Franz Schubert’s work, or similar works, with the two choirs did encourage head voice singing.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much did you enjoy or look forward to singing and performing each song?

   1 = your least favorite or least enjoyable.
   10= your most favorite or most enjoyable.

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2. ___________________________ was my least favorite because....

3. ___________________________ was my favorite because...
4. I was most proud of learning _____________________ because...

5. _____________________ was the most difficult song because......

6. Answer “Yes” or “No” for the following statements:

I like learning songs in other languages. Yes No

I found learning the German for “Fischerlied” to be fun. Yes No

I was proud of myself for learning the German. Yes No

I sang “Fischerlied” outside of Children’s Chorus (at home, at school). Yes No

I taught someone else (sibling, friend...) how to sing “Fischerlied.” Yes No

I would learn another song in German. Yes No
1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much did you enjoy or look forward to singing and performing each song?

1= your least favorite or least enjoyable  
10= your most favorite or most enjoyable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song</th>
<th>1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Come One, Come All...</td>
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<tr>
<td>Small Deeds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Litany</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christ was Born...</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carol of Prophecy</td>
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2. ___________________________ was my least favorite because....

3. ___________________________ was my favorite because...

4. I was most proud of learning ___________________________ because...

5. ___________________________ was the most difficult song because...
6. Answer “yes” or “No” for the following questions

I was proud of myself for learning “Litany.”            Yes  No
I sang “Litany” outside of Children’s Choir.            Yes  No
I taught someone else (a sibling or friend) how to sing “Litany.” Yes  No
I liked the way that “Litany” sounded.                  Yes  No

Fill in the blank.

“Litany” made me feel ________________________ because.....

I think “Litany” is about _____________________________