

**The impact of the introduction of girl choristers at
Salisbury and its influence on other British Anglican
cathedral choirs**

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PhD

November 2020

'I, Claire Elizabeth Stewart confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.'

To the Choristers, Adult Singers and Organist at Sandringham who show great commitment every week in rehearsals and services. You enrich my life and bring me joy in all our musical offerings together.

Abstract

The aim of this thesis has been to examine the effects that the introduction of girl choristers has had on the all-male tradition that hitherto characterised the Anglican cathedral choir. Arguably, the future of any tradition relies on the success of the present generation for its survival and continuity. That should not imply that the tradition remains identical as in past generations, but rather that a tradition should be able to respond and, if necessary, embrace new ideas. The thesis provides an historical context for the widely reported and seemingly ground-breaking initiative at Salisbury Cathedral in the early 1990s. Through the analysis of contemporary texts, related literature, interviews, a small-scale survey and three illustrative in-depth case studies (Salisbury, Lincoln and Lichfield), the thesis reviews the background to this choral development and explores the immediate and subsequent impact across the sector. The initiative at Salisbury was not (and in some instances is still not) without controversy and so opportunity is taken in the text to rehearse examples of these conflicting views by drawing on contemporary commentary, in part by using the lens of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). Notwithstanding these cultural dissonances, by 2020, nearly all the Anglican cathedrals have introduced girls' choirs to share the responsibility of sung services with boys across the liturgical year, occasionally combining for special festivals and musical events, such as concerts and broadcasts. In each instance, the boys' choir has continued and the evidence suggests that there is now commonly mutual recognition of the value of having separate choirs of girls as well as boys – a value that is both musical as well as social and cultural.

Impact Statement

This thesis aims to highlight the impact of the introduction of girl choristers at Salisbury and its influence on other British Anglican cathedral choirs. In order to investigate this phenomenon, a detailed scrutiny of contemporary literature and reports was undertaken, followed by detailed case studies in two cathedrals of the introduction of girl choristers. Through a comparison of the reported impacts, allied to stakeholder perspectives, it is possible to see that the cultural change was the outcome of wider social trends, as well as the commitment of particular individuals who felt that such a change in terms of the previously all-male hegemony was appropriate. Currently, there are 39 out of 42 Anglican cathedrals which have girl choristers. The innovation at Salisbury offers a unique insight into the possible drivers for change across the sector and how this has influenced other cathedrals and brought about fundamental change in the make-up of the young personnel (in terms of sex) who participate weekly in the music of the Anglican choral tradition. The similarities and difference between the case studies (Salisbury and two subsequent followers) enabled a comparison and contrasting of different moments in the histories of three cathedrals. The research narrative seeks to provide a unique and important contribution to an ongoing debate about the virtues of such changes, not least by providing much detail and grounded evidence in contrast to the opinions of various individual stakeholders – which, although valuable, are not sufficient to explain the nature and impact of these changes over the past three decades. Currently, only 3 out of the 42 cathedrals continue to rely solely on an all-male choir. One impact of this doctoral research would be to enable any remaining cathedral that is considering the introduction of girl choristers to understand the likely nature of this process, the strengths as well as the challenges. The thesis also can provide a lens by which it is possible subsequently to examine in greater depth the gender politics of choirs, such as at the University of Oxford where Einarsdottir (2018) has recently completed an EU-funded small-scale study.

The evidence presented in the thesis suggests that, through analyses of empirical data (derived from the literature reviews, fieldnotes, case studies and interviews), generally there has been an overwhelmingly positive response to the introduction of girl choristers. Furthermore, it appears not to have had any negative impact on the provision for boys, nor on the quality of the sacred music performance. Indeed, the innovation has been suggested to have led to benefits, in the sense that a slight reduction in the numbers of boy choristers' sung services each week has allowed additional time to be available for more in-depth rehearsal and the shaping of musical performance – more time to concentrate on the interpretation of the music and perform it with greater musicality, rather than just simply sight reading the music without fully understanding the importance of the text or appreciating the beauty of the music. With extra rehearsal time there is an opportunity to rehearse larger scale musical pieces which would have been limited in opportunity previously.

Impact Statement

One impact in a vocal sense is that empirical and experimental studies have shown that boys' and girls' voices, particularly in a younger age range, can be shaped to ensure that the characteristic customary chorister sound of the Anglican cathedral choir (notwithstanding individual differences between cathedrals) can be perceived to be very similar if not identical much of the time. This evidence has been emerging for some time across various studies, and one value of the current thesis is to provide a richer understanding of the ways that the choral tradition has been sustained throughout this period and why there are such similarities between male and female choristers. The vocal training of both sexes is undertaken by the same small set of expert Directors of Music and their deputies in order to produce the desired sound that people associate with cathedral choral music, which is why it can be difficult to distinguish (should you want to) between boys' and girls' collective singing within the acoustic spaces of a cathedral. The thesis reports that, despite the initial controversy, there appears to be little if any negative impact of these changes – on the contrary, there are various pluses, including the induction of a whole new group of children and young people into the music that characterises the Anglican Tradition. Also, as the study's participant female choristers report, the personal impact of this initiative stretches well beyond their chorister years and accords with findings from other literature on the possible and actual benefits of collective music making on well-being through the lifespan.

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Acknowledgements

I should like to acknowledge and thank my Supervisor Professor Graham Welch to whom I shall always be indebted. He has, and will continue to have a profound influence on my life. I will never forget how he has inspired, encouraged and believed in me. I am particularly grateful that during a period when I sustained painful injuries and was unable to work, he gave me hope for the future by motivating me to keep going with this research. Throughout this long journey, he has given me so much of his time, energy, enthusiasm and continuous support to enable me to give of my best. I simply could not have completed this research journey without his invaluable guidance.

I should also like to acknowledge and thank Dr Ross Purves who enabled me to complete some of the more challenging aspects of this thesis. His understanding, concern and patience will be forever appreciated. I am indebted for his considerable support, inspiration, kindness and knowledge in guiding me to the finishing post.

My very grateful thanks also to Professor Evangelos Himonides who has encouraged me on this research journey and supported me with the more challenging aspects of the CD analysis.

My special thanks to Derek Thomas who throughout my research has helped me by reading the proofs and has continually shown support and understanding. I should like to thank him for always seeing the good in me, always encouraging me to succeed, always making allowances for me when putting my research at the forefront of things and always supporting me particularly in difficult times. His stature as a musician has always greatly inspired me to achieve the highest possible both as a practical musician and researcher.

My thanks also to Dr Colin Durrant for accepting me on the MA in Choral Education course which opened up the world of research to me and whose inspiration as a Tutor led me to pursue this PhD.

I should like to thank Dr Richard Seal, Simon Lole (both former Directors of Music at Salisbury Cathedral) and David Halls, the current Director of Music at Salisbury Cathedral for all their help and encouragement.

I am also grateful to Peter Allwood, formerly Head Teacher of Lichfield Cathedral Choir School, for allowing me to visit the school weekly and to collect video data of rehearsals and interview choristers.

I should like to thank all the cathedral Directors of Music who completed the questionnaire and for Matthew Owens (Directors of Music at Wells Cathedral) for distributing it for me through the Cathedral Organists' Association.

Thank you also to all the people who allowed me to interview them and who provided me with a wealth of information. Sadly, they cannot be named, but they were extremely kind and encouraging in my research and helped make it such fun.

I should like to thank my parents who have inspired me by their life and work. My Mother for always encouraging me to try to achieve the highest standards in all I do, and my late Father who would have been so proud that I have completed this research.

Finally, I should like to thank my brother for helping me to transfer the Lichfield video data from cassette to CD format, and to Katrina Robinson for her help and enthusiasm in proof reading the thesis

List of Abbreviations

AO Assistant Organist

AT Activity Theory

ATB Alto, Tenor, Bass

BERA British Educational Research Association (2004)

CHAT Cultural-Historical Activity Theory

COA Cathedral Organists' Association

COP Chorister Outreach Programme

CSA Choir Schools' Association

CTCC Campaign for the Traditional cathedral Choir

DOM Director of Music

DOM (CC) Director of Music (co cathedral)

DOM (F) Director of Music (former)

DOM (SM) Director of Music and Senior member of the cathedral staff

FCM Friends of Cathedral Music

G.C. Girl Chorister

G.C.S.E General Certificate of Secondary Education

HT Head Teacher

PCC Parish Church Council

ITWH In Tune With Heaven

RCO Royal College of Organists

RSCM The Royal School of Church Music

SECM The School of English Church Music

Chapter 1: Introduction, context and methodology

1.1 Introduction and context for the study

Choral music is a long-established feature of formal Christian worship in English cathedrals and their predecessors stretching back over a thousand years. The ritual of cathedral music has been sung (except for a very brief spell during the Reformation and Commonwealth periods) by boy choristers and men (Phillips, 1943). Tradition dictated up to 1991 that (with a few exceptions) the gender of cathedral choristers was primarily male because boys had originally sung in the monasteries during the Middle Ages. Most cathedral choirs in England have their cultural origins dating back to boy choristers who lived and were educated in monasteries and who sang some of the daily services with the monks (Leach, 1971). The medieval monasteries educated boys for the prime purpose of providing singing in their religious services, and it has been suggested that it was also hoped that such participation would encourage boys as they matured to take Holy Orders. In addition, to receiving vocal training, they also were given an education in other subjects, such as mathematics. The choir schools catered exclusively for boys and, due to the large number of services and choir practices, most cathedrals in earlier times offered a boarding school education which has often continued to the present day. This early form of education for boy choristers later became formalised with regard to its administration and the number of boys educated, and each cathedral had its own Choral Foundation (In Tune With Heaven: The Archbishops' Commission on Church Music 1992 - abbreviated from now on as ITWH). The Choral Foundation in Anglican cathedrals still exists today, and the continuation of choristers singing in cathedrals in the present day is often referred to as the Anglican Choral Tradition (Muhly 2018).

Tradition plays a large part in the existence of boys' singing in cathedral choirs and, to a certain extent, it can be argued that societal expectations have become entrenched in this culture. The established tradition of only boy choristers was not based on a conscious decision to exclude girls per se, but down to the fact that the Church was 'exclusively male' (Jacobs, 1963: 53). Girl choristers were not, therefore, excluded on musical grounds, but it simply would not have been thought of as being necessary to recruit them, as the education of girls was not regarded as being important. 1991 marked a moment in this ancient perpetuating tradition of boy choristers singing almost exclusively in cathedral choirs came to an end. In that year, Salisbury Cathedral introduced

the first girls' cathedral choir with its own Choral Foundation to sing services as a separate choir to the boys.¹ This innovation, from its very beginnings to the present day, has challenged and continues to challenge the framework of a tradition where music in English cathedrals had been dominated exclusively by an all-male choir.² The resulting, and fiercely contested, debate amongst those within the cathedral tradition, as well as amongst members of society more generally, has created more controversy than any other development in cathedral music during the 20th and 21st centuries. Changing the identity of this tradition has raised issues that focus on aspects of the Choral Foundation, such as musicological arguments, liturgical interpretations and social and cultural perceptions.

When liturgical changes have taken place in recent years, such as moving away from the Book of Common Prayer and introducing other forms of worship, including the Alternative Service Book in 1980 and in 2000 Common Worship, public comment has been restricted and the general population at large have not questioned the action and, indeed, some may not have even been aware of it. This could partly be due to the fact that society does not feel threatened culturally by innovation in the dominant ritual text for worship. However, the issue of girls singing in cathedral choirs generally elicits an opinion from people, whether they are directly involved in cathedral music or not (e.g., Cathedral Music Magazine 2000 (1), pp. 5-8; Cathedral Music Magazine 2000, (2) p. 47).

For some, the inclusion of girls singing in a cathedral choir is long overdue (ITWH, 1992). The opportunity for girls to receive a high-quality musical education and the experience of becoming integrated within a particular form of Christian worship, which seeks to instil the highest of musical standards, is something in which they should have the opportunity to participate:

With changing attitudes in society, questions are being raised about the morality of denying girls the opportunity to sing in a cathedral choir. In being excluded, they are denied the experience of liturgical participation in services as well as a unique form of music education. (ITWH, 1992, p.89)

However, for others, this innovation in an historic tradition has caused them difficulty in accepting changes to the traditional cathedral music regime. People of older generations and sexes often identify socially with traditional culture (Hargreaves & Miell, 2002). In this particular case, the

¹ St David's Cathedral, Wales and St. Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh had previously included girl choristers in their choirs. However, this thesis has its prime focus on Anglican cathedrals in England.

² St. Edmundsbury, Leicester and Manchester cathedrals included girl choristers; these were built as parish churches and were given cathedral statutes in modern times. This research is more focused on the cathedral foundations, which evolved from the seventh to sixteenth centuries.

traditional cathedral choir consists of boy choristers and men who sing Evensong, Sung Eucharist, Matins, Eastertide, Advent and Christmas services, and other festivals throughout the Church Year.

Since the innovation at Salisbury, an ardent group led by Peter Giles continue to argue that the gender of cathedral choristers should be exclusively a male domain. They defined themselves through the creation of a 'Campaign for the Defence of the Traditional Cathedral Choir' (1996)³, which they renamed in 2005 as the 'Campaign for the Traditional Cathedral Choir' (CTCC). The CDTCC (2000) established a website for those who strongly objected (and continue to object) to the introduction of girl choristers; it invited people to join the organisation and published articles explaining the tradition of the all-male cathedral choir and how the group thought that the introduction of girls would jeopardise the tradition's continuation. They have published regularly and continue to publish against this innovation on their website⁴.

It is not only men who feel strongly about the gender of a cathedral choir. There are some women who also believe that tradition necessitates that only boys have the right to sing in cathedrals. Simon Lole, formerly Director of Music⁵ at Salisbury Cathedral, revealed the reaction of a lady on an occasion when the girls' choir were singing in a concert. On seeing the girls about to lead into the concert venue, she exclaimed with some distain that she had been under the impression that the boys would be singing and promptly left (Pyke, 2002, p.4). No attempt by the cathedral or concert operators had been made to misrepresent the fact that girls would be singing and her response naturally had a dampening effect on the girls who had heard her comment and seen her leave. In the same article, Lole also revealed that 'I do get some hate mail' from the general public who are against girls' choirs (Pyke, 2002, p. 4).

Yet despite ongoing and at times vociferous debate, Salisbury Cathedral nonetheless pioneered the way for girl choristers in 1991. Twenty-nine years later, with 37 out of 42 cathedrals having female choristers, the Anglican choral tradition still continues to flourish, perhaps providing evidence of the enduring power of this musical tradition. The aim of this thesis is to examine the effects that the introduction of girl choristers has had on the all-male tradition that hitherto characterised the Anglican cathedral choir.

³ The original CTCC website is now offline, but the content is archived at <https://web.archive.org/web/20001017031923/http://members.aol.com:80/cdtcc/index.htm>.

⁴ See www.cdtcc.org.uk/www.ctcc.org.uk.

⁵ The job title of the person in charge of the music in cathedrals has been referred to by various different titles according to the cathedral foundation, e.g., Organist and Master of the Choristers, Master of the Music, Organist and Choirmaster. This title has in some cathedrals been changed to Director of Music and it is this title I shall use to cover them all.

1.2 Personal motivations for the study

My first association with cathedral music was as a child aged four listening to services and rehearsals at Peterborough Cathedral where my older brother was a chorister under the legendary voice trainer Dr Stanley Vann. As a child, I can remember questioning the fact that I was denied the opportunity of being a cathedral chorister due to my sex, as—at that time—the widespread introduction of female choristers in cathedrals was some way off in the future. I remember my mother telling me in exasperation at my persistent questioning that I could not sing in a cathedral 'because you are a girl'. With hindsight, being an outsider, looking in on the cathedral choral tradition during the six years that my brother was a chorister, had a profound influence on my musical career and aspirations. I sang throughout my childhood in a parish church choir and followed the Royal School of Church Music training scheme. In the early 1980s, this scheme included an annual, week-long residential course during the summer holiday at Lincoln cathedral for girl choristers from parish churches. Whilst the RSCM had run cathedral courses for boy choristers starting several years earlier, this was the only cathedral course available for girls in the UK and was highly competitive.

I attended the Lincoln Cathedral course for three consecutive years. These consisted of morning rehearsals followed by a further rehearsal prior to Evensong and then a final rehearsal after supper. Evensong was sung daily and on Sunday there were three services. Girls aged between 14 and 19 sang the soprano and contralto parts alongside tenors and basses who were men who sang in parish churches. In my experience, this opportunity to sing in a cathedral even for just a week, which I had seen my brother do almost daily for five years, was an innovative step. I remember one year after a Sunday service a member of the clergy told us that we sounded as good as the boys. That compliment made us feel as though we had achieved something outstanding, even if—in hindsight—it was probably said out of kindness rather than it being actually true. The invitation to attend these courses was only issued to girl choristers for three years and there would be sadness amongst girls singing their final service in their third year.

Yet, whilst I was fortunate to have this experience, my impression was that it was in no way comparable to the intensive training given to boy cathedral choristers with their regular rehearsals and services in which music is sung to a very high standard. Subsequently, as a Post-Graduate student at Trinity College of Music in London, I attended sessions for Organist and Choirmasters, but again, at that time because of my sex, the possibility of securing a position in a cathedral was highly unlikely⁶. I was, however, fortunate to be appointed Director of Music in a Roman Catholic

⁶ Whilst I was not able to participate in the cathedral choral tradition as such, my interest led me to research the Music and Musicians of Westminster Abbey, the Chapel Royal 1500 - 1700 and, for my Master's degree dissertation, the Vocal Training given to Cathedral Choristers.

Cathedral in England in 2007. Whilst it is equally unusual for women to be appointed in such a role in the Roman Catholic Cathedrals, it would seem that I was appointed on merit and that my sex was not an issue. Nevertheless, the gender balance remains distinctly uneven.

The reason for my research in this area is because of my deep interest and love of choral music. Throughout my adult life, I have had an involvement in cathedral music, either as a spectator or as a working musician, and I wanted to investigate what, if any, impact the introduction of girl choristers had made on the previously all-male Anglican Choral Tradition in England. I wanted to both investigate the context and procedures that enabled this to happen and to understand and document the practical innovations which were necessary to bring it about.

1.3 Research questions for the study

My research seeks to chart the introduction and impact of girls' choirs and, where appropriate, draw comparisons between girls' and boys' choirs. I explore a wide range of vocal, social and educational issues and seek to answer the following specific research questions:

- Can girl choristers sing in the style that constitutes 'the English cathedral tradition'?
- Did the girls' style of singing change over time?
- Is age a factor in the vocal sound of girl and boy choristers?
- What is the experience of working with girl and boy choristers, such as in rehearsal and performance?
- Do girl choristers require different kinds of choir training than boys?
- Are there differences in the repertoire chosen for boys' and girls' choirs?
- What was the impact, if any, on boy choristers following the introduction of girls' choirs?

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 Research paradigm

In considering the importance of paradigm research, it is crucial to acknowledge that the way each individual sees the world is not necessarily the same way as others. Each researcher comes to it with their own personal experiences, background, education, perspectives and involvement in the area of study. Defining a research paradigm and recognising the researcher's interests and position in the world, Guba and Lincoln state that it is a:

set of basic beliefs that define the nature of the world, the individual's place in it and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts. (1998, p. 200)

The research paradigm in the hands of another researcher may cause them to look at it in a different way. Other people viewing the same phenomenon will bring together different insights, experiences and beliefs. It is important, therefore, that researcher uses a variety of methods in order to ensure that reliability and validity are present at all times:

Examination of the different methods of sociological research should consider the concepts of reliability and validity. The degree of reliability and validity acts as a sort of quality control indicator in the assessment of any particular research method. (Marsh, 2000, p.141)

The strengths and weaknesses of each research method should be recognised so that the findings are as unbiased as possible. A research paradigm is defined in several parts and described by Crotty (1998) as consisting of ontology, epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods. These concepts have been used to formulate decisions of how to conduct this research and what the outcomes reveal.

In ontological terms, there is no objective truth; instead it is based on religious, social and professional conventions that have developed over 1000's of years. Whilst it might feel like truth to the people in it, it is not; it is just how it has come to be. This research in the social sciences looks at what is believed to be true, what are the reported facts and what is the information that exists today, based on what people think and believe.

In looking at the Anglican choral tradition from an ontological position, what exists is the formation and development of a choral tradition in religious life. Ontologically, it has evolved by rules from the earliest foundations, having been established by statutes and these rules still govern the tradition to present day. As a reflexive researcher who understands where I am in the research, it is important in ontological terms that my position is recognised:

Researchers are shaped by their socio-cultural and disciplinary backgrounds, and bring this influence, often unconsciously to the research practice. (Frambach, 2014, p. 200)

Having been a parish church chorister from the age of 7-18 years, with my brother being a cathedral chorister, to some extent I grew up in this tradition and have continued as a professional musician specialising in church music, both through study and performance. It is not possible, therefore, for me, as Frambach, (2014) describes, to be an 'independent' researcher, given the wealth of experience and involvement in the phenomenon.

In coming to this research as a female investigating girl cathedral choristers, in truth, I was not in the earliest days one of the advocates of the inclusion of girl choristers in cathedral choirs. On one occasion when visiting a cathedral and realising that the girls' choir were singing Evensong, I chose not to attend the service, although I would have attended had it been the boy choristers singing. In

fact, my brother raised the question with me regarding how advantageous it would be for my niece (his daughter) to be able to have a cathedral chorister experience at her nearest cathedral if the opportunity presented itself, but I was far from enthusiastic. Like many at that time, I was anxious that the boy chorister tradition was not jeopardised by the introduction of girls. This realisation, despite my own burning desire to be a cathedral chorister like my brother at a very early age, is difficult to rationalise. Perhaps, like so many others who wanted to ensure the continuation of boy choristers, it was also impossible in my mind to prevent girls who like me wanted to be part of the tradition. Tradition is extremely important, to maintain it and ensure its perpetuation whilst, at the same time, being open to let it embrace other factors that might add to a tradition. In my own current experience as a Director of Music of a parish church, my purpose at the appointment interview stage was made clear in my declaration that I wished to introduce choristers into the existing large adult choir. Despite some hostile reactions from members of the congregation and, indeed, the then existing adult choir members, choristers were introduced and have maintained regular singing duties ever since. At the start of this longitudinal research, I did not easily identify with feelings of equality which have become more prevalent during the last three decades. As the research study has progressed and knowing the importance of bias, I have endeavoured to remain neutral, even though experience and social development inevitably affect us all. Nevertheless, I believe my data collection (both early and subsequent) in no way gives any reason to suggest bias in my position on the subject in my efforts to remain as neutral as possible.

Epistemologically, I needed to be clear about how I understand what is believed to be perceived as 'truth'. By standing back from it and adopting an interpretative and constructive stance, I understand that there is no objective truth in my world, it involves going to people and asking them about it and then constructing the reality from that. The validity of the information relates to the collection of the data that counts as acceptable knowledge and how it should be acquired and interpreted. Marsh describes this as follows:

Epistemology refers to the theory of the origins and nature of knowledge. It sets the rules for the validation of knowledge. It answers questions about who can be the 'knower's, and who can say what truth is and what kinds of things constitute knowledge. (2000, p. 134)

Epistemologically, it is important, therefore, that I try not to have any preconceived ideas of what I was going to find in my collection of data. I needed to acknowledge my own relationship with this research in order to distance myself from it. I needed to stand back from the complexities, such as the history, beliefs and practices in order to try to understand it in a more objective manner. As an interpretative and constructivist researcher, it was important to understand the whole synopsis, rather than just a lot of small outcomes, thereby being able to stand above it and seek to see a pattern. Adopting this stance allowed me as the researcher to try and make sense of the field as I found it, i.e., avoiding imposing any pre-conceived ideas about what I might find and why. In order

to do this, I needed to 'stand back' from this complexity of convention, belief and practice, to 'stand back' from my own experience, my gender (a key point, made earlier in ontological terms), to 'stand back' from my prior views on the matters being explored. In attempting this, it was essential to try to find a way of presenting a synoptic understanding of a very complex field of study as objectively as possible.

As a result of initial inspection of the data and after careful reflection, the best methodology for analysis that fitted the approach and data was Activity Theory, sometimes known as Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström 1987; 1993; 1996; 2001; Welch, 2007; 2011). This has been chosen as the theoretical framework because of its strengths of understanding complex systems that evolve over time and which need to adapt to change through external pressures. CHAT is a framework for studying how people work individually, collectively, socially and historically in order to communicate and develop. It helps the researcher to analyse what people think, say and feel and what the activity is, in which they do it. It is defined as 'an epistemological theory that posits that learning takes place through collective activities that are purposefully conducted around a common object' (Makute, & Lotz-Sisitka, 2012, p. 345). CHAT originates from the thinking of Vygotsky, originally published in the early 1930s, who developed what has become known as the original theory in order sociologically to study organisations, management, education and how people interacted with each other. This concept was later used, developed and made popular by Engeström. Welch (2007, p27) explains Engeström's principles (2001) of data collection as:

four questions that he regards as central to the design of any theory of learning: 1. Who are the subjects of learning, how are they defined and located? 2. Why do they learn, what makes them make the effort? 3. What do they learn, what are the contents and outcomes of learning? 4. How do they learn, what are the key actions of processes of learning?

The cathedral tradition is a complex human system that has evolved over time and one that has needed to adapt to change, including external change in society. The use of a CHAT lens provides a model which appears to be well-suited to my research. I have confidence in this as a framework to use in my study because it has already been used in this field. Two music education research studies which have used this framework are those by Barrett (2005) and Burnard (2007). CHAT was also used by Welch (2007) who found it effective in his research into the nature and impact of the introduction of female choristers into an all-male UK cathedral choir in South West England. In trying to understand the introduction of girls' choirs and using CHAT, the figure below (Figure 1.1) clearly explains how the model works. In introducing girl choristers at Wells cathedral, Welch explains the related elements that come together in order for 'novice' girls to be included in an established all-male culture, how this affected all of the society in the culture and how the activity

system adapted and developed so that the 'novice' girls became competent singers resulting in 'cultural transformation as the culture adapts to unforeseen pressures' (Welch, 2007, p. 26)

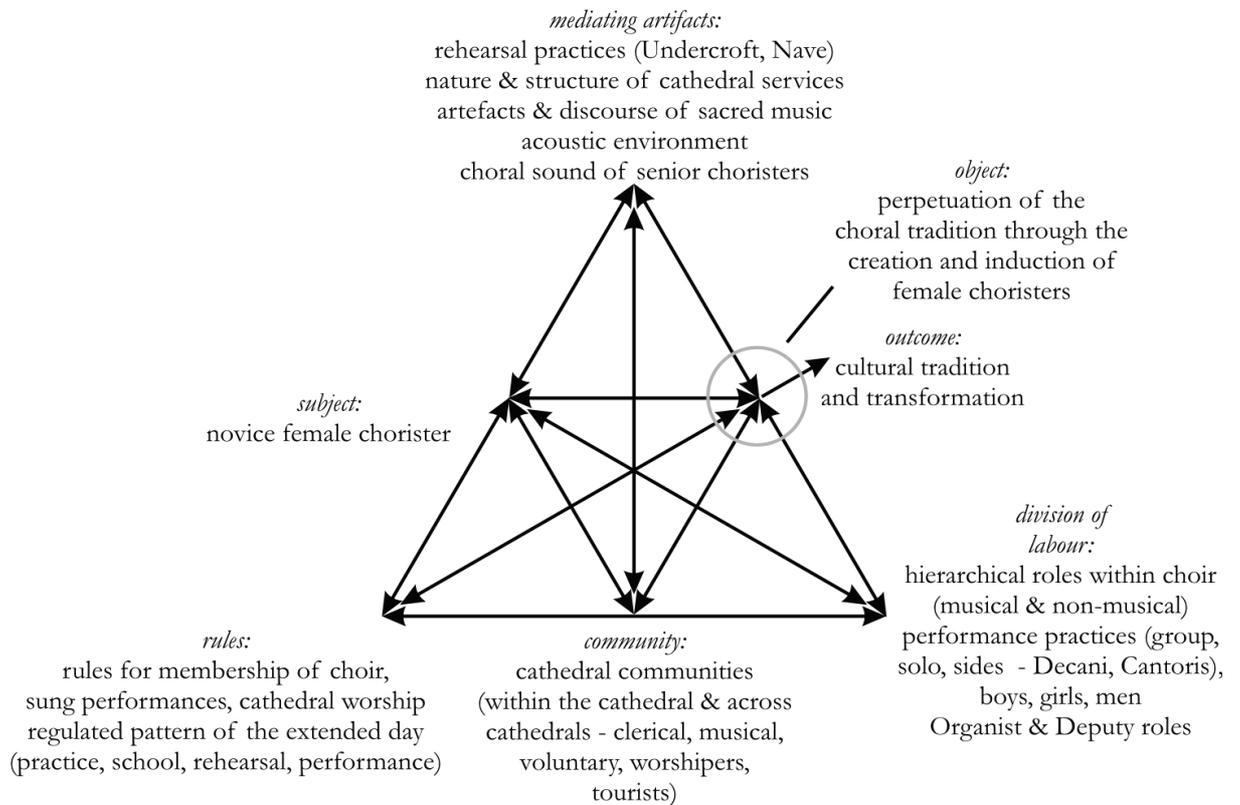


Figure 1.1: An example of the activity system that is theorised to frame the development of the novice (female) cathedral chorister (Welch, 2007 p. 26)

Welch (2007) reports that chorister development is nurtured, shaped and – at the same time – constrained by systematised cultural practices.

In terms of using an appropriate methodology in order to find out how we look at knowledge, the part that a researcher plays in it and how this is achieved needed to be considered before embarking on my research, (*cf* Guba, 1990) and highlights the following important points about methodology. These factors together generate a unified view of how knowledge is viewed, how we position ourselves with regards to this knowledge and the methods we use to understand this unification (Guba, 1990).

The framework for CHAT calls for a study to be undertaken by the investigation of people in their natural setting, e.g., their work place. This was done using an ethnographic approach often using qualitative methods in order to understand the following: (1) The reason why girl choristers were introduced in a particular location; (2) The opinions of those prior and after it happened; and (3) What the motivations were behind it being implemented and that of sustaining a new tradition. Marsh described qualitative research as:

Similarly, it is mythical to see Qualitative research as a coherent and superior alternative (to quantitative research) that can get to grips with the special character of human meaning. Contemporary sociological research, according to Pawson, is essentially pluralistic: in many cases it is necessary to gather information by whatever means is practical and so to use both approaches. The combination of methods to gain a fuller picture of the area being investigated is now generally taken to be a sensible research strategy. (2000, p. 141)

A diverse range of methods was used in order to try to understand the complexity of the 'system(s)' being studied. These included interviews, case studies, questionnaires, surveys, observations and documentary audits. CHAT also looks at the importance and understanding of historicity (Chapter Two 'changes and developments'), i.e., how things have come to be the way they are over time. Welch (2007) states:

Activity systems take shape and are transformed over lengthy periods of time, suggesting a concept of 'historicity' (ibid). Historicity embraces both the local history of the (particular) activity and its objects', as well as the wider 'history of the theoretical ideas and tools that shape the activity'. (2007, pp. 26-27)

In trying to rationalise research findings, it is essential that there should be an understanding of how individuals interact with groups within the research field, and also to consider others who reacted to changes in the whole cathedral music scene surrounding the introduction of girl choristers. This was achieved, for example, by interviewing the Director of Music at Salisbury Cathedral who was responsible for initiating a scheme whereby girl choristers were introduced in 1991 and how he put the plan into action. Alongside this approach was the study of published articles from cathedral musicians who were totally opposed to girl choristers.

The focus of the research is always on 'work' of some kind, i.e., purposeful activity is an aspect of CHAT. The Anglican choral tradition has always been based on purposeful activity in order to continue the musical traditions of cathedral music.

The methods used in this study were selected on the basis that they would bring together answers to questions to make sense sociologically within a sector of people involved in a cultural environment across the whole of England. Within the 42 Anglican cathedrals in the UK, the culture of each cathedral aims to follow a somewhat identical pattern of values, customs and behaviours within their social interactions in order to perpetuate the 1000-plus year-old cathedral tradition of choral music. However, there are slight differences in the ways that each cathedral achieves this, despite each one adhering to the common outcomes of the provision of (customarily) daily choral services.

An initial survey of whether a cathedral had introduced girl choristers was initiated by the author in 2005 and was continually updated until 2018. It was undertaken by telephone, email and a literature search and consisted of short qualitative questions and archive data. A further small-scale survey was emailed in order to update information as part of the theory of historicity in CHAT:

The presence of the historical past in any investigation is essential to make visible any changes that may be going on in an activity system. (Cole 1996, p. 185)

Following this, a more detailed survey was emailed that asked more specific questions covering a large-scale method of data collection to all the Directors of Music in all 42 cathedrals. The questions were structured so that factual responses were given in order to compare data across the cathedrals. The benefits of a survey are that a large number of people can be contacted, creating a large data collection. Criticisms of this method, however, suggest that surveys do not allow respondents to voice their own opinions and data is rigidly factual, Marsh (2000):

Technique – based criticisms emphasise the restrictiveness of surveys due to their reliance on highly structured ways of collecting data. The statistical emphasis is seen as reducing interesting issues to sterile and incomprehensible numbers. (2000, p. 144)

My questions did not allow for the opportunity for respondents in the first two surveys to deviate from the subject matter. A structured response to the data being collected was the essential factor here, as it was factual evidence that I needed to collect. In terms of CHAT, this was part of a 'historicity' perspective, as cited by Engeström & Miettinen:

History is present in current practices... manifestations of basic historical types of thinking and practice... coexist as layers within one and the same current activity system. (1999, p. 11)

However, to readdress the criticisms of the limitations of survey data collection, a third survey allowed an opportunity for respondents to add their own comments about what they thought and felt.

1.4.2 Case studies

Three case studies were used in this research which involved questionnaires, diaries, observations and interviews in order to investigate and explore in depth what had taken place, why it had happened and what were the outcomes. By using CHAT and following an in-depth study of three cathedrals, the methodology provided a very detailed picture of events past and current. Case studies are also important in providing a framework for understanding how other people might have emulated them. The model of Salisbury Cathedral was taken up in various different guises by other cathedrals when they introduced girl choristers in their local settings. Three areas in the use of case studies which need to be taken into consideration according to Marsh points are as follows: (1) Historical data through people's memory; (2) Experiences, beliefs and attitudes of those involved; and (3) Interpretation of events which give a wider picture of all involved (2000, p. 158).

A criticism of case studies could be that, by studying historical data using questionnaires and interviews, there is a danger of people's memory being unreliable. As it is not possible as a researcher to be part of history and experience what happened at the time, reliance is on those who

had such experience and by comparing data related to the same case. Fortunately, in these cases, personal accounts of factual evidence can be validated by documentary reporting. However, when looking at data that are based on thoughts and perceptions which are non-factual evidence, one person may perceive things in a different way to others, which make reliability more difficult to assess. Two other criticisms of case studies are that they are very time consuming and the in-depth research can lead to bias, with the researcher becoming enmeshed in the culture that they are investigating,

However, when looking at data that are based on thoughts and perceptions which are non-factual evidence, by collecting the experiences, beliefs and attitudes of those who were involved using a CHAT perspective, it is possible to draw together common themes which suggest how events developed in order to try to establish reliability. The interpretation of what happened and reactions to why it happened and to how it felt at the time and subsequently, has been described as the researcher's lens in order to provide insight as to how participants felt individually and collectively as a group.

1.4.3 Interviews

Interviews were made up mostly of cathedral Directors of Music, as well as former and current girl choristers. There is no such thing as objective truth in such data and so the only way to find out the perceived reality of these people's worlds in which they find themselves is by asking them. In order to try to establish validity when collating the data, I looked at themes that emerged from the same questions that I asked all participants. A criticism of using interviews is interviewer bias where people do not want to tell you what they really think. Being female and asking mostly men about gender related issues could affect my results. For example, the respondents may not say what they really thought for reasons of not wanting to cause offence on the assumption that I was in favour of girl choristers. Also, due to their working environment, they might find it difficult to admit that they did not approve of a girls' choir, even though I explained that the interview data would be anonymous. Being part of this ontological perspective, this world view with all its contradictions, they could feel that they cannot go against it. I need to acknowledge, therefore, that some of these limitations may have existed. Whilst there was nothing that I could do about this, other than giving them opportunities to have an extended conversation, I was aware that there was at least a possibility of limitation.

In order to try to gain validity through interviews, the interview questions were designed to be objective throughout which helped in gaining factual knowledge. The last few questions (by which time the interviewees tended to be more relaxed) specifically referred to how they felt personally about the impact of the introduction of girls' choirs. More specifically, they were asked whether they would prefer to work in a cathedral which only had a boys' choir. As a researcher, and

involved in education, like many teachers, I am very familiar with quickly assessing people's reactions and responses to what is being asked and their willingness or unwillingness to answer accurately. Whilst assessing the way a person responds does not provide validity to the answers, it does give the opportunity to investigate more by asking further questions in order to try to get a better picture of what they really believe.

1.4.4 Observations

Weekly chorister rehearsal recordings were made at Lichfield Cathedral in order to assess the outcomes and vocal development of a newly established girls' choir throughout its first academic year. One of the possible criticisms about undertaking observations was made by Marsh (2000) with a reminder that the observer needs to remain neutral. When observing the choir rehearsals each week, it could be easy to become biased as a participant researcher through experiencing the personalities and development of the choir.

Participant observation involves the researcher becoming a part of a group or community in order to study it. (Marsh 2000, pp. 149-150)

As a relative outsider, when looking in on this culture each week it was important to seek to distance myself from the community and to view it as objectively as possible when analysing the case study video data. For this reason, the video recordings were left and analysed at a much later date when it was possible to step away from any possible immediate involvement. Musically, it was therefore easier to gain a sense of more objectivity in what I heard and also in watching the responses of girl choristers and their Director of Music. I also shared video examples with my principal supervisor during tutorials and we discussed and shared perspectives on what we were seeing in order to provide a sense of validity and reliability.

With regards to the data sources, I attempted to try and find answers by asking clear, well-articulated and unbiased questions. In deciding on which respondents from whom to gather my data, I chose those who were in the cathedral culture, either in the past or current times, e.g., former and present Directors of Music, Assistant Directors of Music, senior members of the cathedral community and girl choristers (past and present). These people had first-hand experience and a particular knowledge and expertise with regard to my research questions. Had I gone to different people, I might have gotten different views, due to the fact that they were not part of this particular culture. If I had not collected data from the respondents that I chose, I would not have been able to find out what actually happened, why it happened and what the outcomes were. Prior to my data collection, I did not know any of the respondents, nor what their views and opinions were, and so they were not chosen on the basis that they were mostly all in favour or against the introduction of girl choristers. At various points in the data collection, participants were each given

the opportunity to speak or write clearly what their views were. In the case studies particularly, it was important to get a range of all the opinions of the people who were in the cathedral's operation and, therefore, this embraced people responsible for musical direction.

In drawing conclusions when analysing the data, there was evidence of validity and unbiased questions and comments shown in the ways that participants responded. For example, Directors of Music and Assistant Directors of Music cited the ways that girl choristers had been introduced into their cathedral culture and interviews with the girl choristers supported what was said by those with oversight. In the instance of a case study cathedral, it was important to get a range of all the people who were involved in the musical direction. In doing so, in one case for example, the Directors of Music, Assistant Directors of Music and senior members of the cathedral staff believed that the implementation of a girls' choir was not thought out in enough detail prior to them being admitted. When collecting data from former girl choristers (in which I was extremely careful to design my questions in an unbiased way), the respondents echoed what the Directors of Music and Assistant Directors of Music reported. In considering the limitations of the research methodology, if time had allowed, I would have liked to have interviewed the lay clerks, the boy choristers, the parents of boy and girl choristers, the clergy and the congregation. This would have thrown up more data and possibly given a different slant on the research evidence. It was, however, difficult to find these people who experienced what happened at the time and so the focus remained on the main constituencies. Also, relying on their memory of the time and development of a tradition, change and development can influence people's views, which can then become less reliable. In the overall 'lens' of CHAT, the data collected have been analysed to present a picture of how an innovation began in 1991 and, subsequently, has become integrated into—and part of—an established tradition going back over a thousand years.

1.4.5 CD Data collection

Data collection was made consisting of recordings of the case study cathedrals (Salisbury, Lincoln, Lichfield). The intention was to find and identify a small number of the commercially-available recordings which featured common repertoire. Searches were conducted on the open web, the Amazon product catalogue and specialist databases, such as the British Library Sound and Moving Image Catalogue. In some cases where CDs featured both boys' and girls' choirs together, or where the choir sex was not indicated, personal enquiries were made with the relevant cathedral authorities.

The reason to use commercially-available recordings, as opposed to archive and fieldwork recordings gathered during the research process itself, was to maximise the possibility of locating critics' reviews. After considerable checking and cross referencing, the final set of recorded performances and published reviews were selected for analyses:

Table 1:1 A collection of CD recordings by Salisbury, Lincoln and Lichfield Cathedrals

Composer and piece performed	Cathedral		
	Salisbury	Lincoln	Lichfield
Walford Davies: Psalm 23	<p>Performance by Girls' Choir:</p> <p>Canticum Novum: Choral & Organ Works by Poulenc, Britten, Parry, Howells, Leighton (Guild Records, GMCD7101, recorded 1994)</p>		<p>Performance by Boys Choir, originally recorded 1984:</p> <p>A Lichfield Celebration (Griffin, GCCD4064, released 2008)</p>
Berkeley: The lord is my shepherd	<p>Performance by Girls' Choir:</p> <p>Angels' Song (Griffin, GCCD4020, recorded 2001)</p>	<p>Performance by Boys Choir:</p> <p>O be joyful in the Lord (Guild, GMCD7325, 2008)</p>	
Parry: I was glad	<p>Performance by Boys Choir:</p> <p>Anthems from Salisbury (Meridian, CDE84025, 1986)</p> <p>Performance by Girls' Choir:</p> <p>Praise and Thanksgiving (Griffin, GCCD4046, 2004)</p>		<p>Performance by Boys Choir:</p> <p>Alpha Collection Vol 8: Choral Music from Lichfield Cathedral (Priory, PRAB107, 1988)</p>

An older recording of the Lincoln Boys Choir performing *The lord is my shepherd* as part of a BBC Choral Evensong broadcast on 27 September 1989 was also located on YouTube⁷. This was included in the analysis as a means of comparing the 2008 recorded performance with one from almost twenty years before.

Table 1:2 Recording and review details

Recording	Review details
<i>Praise and Thanksgiving</i> (Griffin, GCCD4046, 2004)	John Portwood, November 2004, published on MusicWeb International Reviews ⁸
<i>Canticum Novum: Coral & Organ Works by Poulenc, Britten, Parry, Howells, Leighton</i> (Guild Records, GMCD7101, recorded 1994)	Roderic Dunnen, originally published in the Church Times c.1994, reproduced on Guild Music's website ⁹ Roger Wilkes, originally published in <i>Laudete: the magazine of the Guild of Church Musicians</i> , c.1994, reproduced on Guild Music's website ³ James Hejduk, <i>Choral Journal</i> (1995; 36(3): 56).
<i>Angels' Song</i> (Griffin, GCCD4020, recorded 2001)	Janet Banks, <i>BBC Music Magazine</i> , 15 Oct 2001. Christopher Thomas, November 2001, published on MusicWeb International Reviews ¹⁰
<i>Anthems from Salisbury</i> (Meridian, CDE84025, 1986)	Anonymous reviewer, date not known, <i>Gramophone Magazine</i> .

By identifying common repertoire between the boys' and girls' choirs, it was possible to subject recordings to long-term average spectrum (LTAS) analyses. The acoustic artefacts were then triangulated with qualitative commentary made in the reviews and comments made by the cathedral directors of music interviewed in Chapter 5.

⁷ Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lhu5FgwodX4>

⁸ Available at: http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2004/nov04/Praise_Salisbury.htm

⁹ Available at: https://www.classical-music-review-blog.com/?page_id=3

¹⁰ Available at: http://www.musicwebinternational.com/classrev/2001/Nov01/Angel%27s_Songs.htm

It is important to mention that there is no intention to claim that these recordings are necessarily representative of all boys' and girls' cathedral choirs of the era, or of the performances/repertoire of the particular choirs in general. It is simply common repertoire that was found in order to compare across the three target cathedral choirs discussed in the thesis. It is a means of identifying a common baseline.

1.4.6 Acoustic Analyses

Data collection of the digitally recorded performances was achieved by using a series of spectral analyses thereby providing both quantitative and also qualitative assessments of the general sound of the different choral groups performing the same piece(s). To start with, all digital files were normalised using open access digital audio editing software (Audacity v. 2.3.2). Further consequent analyses was calibrated using peak audio levels.

The digital recordings were then used for LTAS computation and plotting of curves using PRAAT (Paul Boersma & David Weenink (2020): Praat: doing phonetics by computer [Computer program]. Version 6.1.13, retrieved 14 October 2020 from <http://www.praat.org/>); this allowed an initial visual exploration for remarkable junctures in the plotted spectra. LTAS datasets were then also generated and exported as simple text data files for further statistical analyses.

All of the individual LTAS datasets were consequently merged into a master dataset, where all eight respective LTAS sub-datasets were coded as unique columns (i.e. variables).

Two additional sets of ordinal variables were computed for frequency range, a macroscopic frequency range variable (values: Bass, Mid-range, High-End) and a microscopic frequency range variable (values: Bass, Lower mid-range, Middle mid-range, Upper mid-range, Presence, High End, Extremely High End). These classifications were performed using standard textbooks in acoustics (i.e. not specific to singing science).

Qualitative assessment and comparisons were then performed across the spectrum, whereas parametric statistical testing was performed between subsets that had a substantial amount of data points (e.g. Bass and Lower mid clusters did not warrant parametric statistical analyses).

Statistical comparisons between LTAS clusters were performed using Paired Samples T-Testing, similar to widely published methodology (Sergeant & Welch, 2008)

Table 1:3 A summary of the allocation of research methods and data sources used as the basis for this study

Method	Tool	Data format	Date/Period undertaken (with updates)	Foci/topics covered	Participants (codes)	Sample Size
Initial survey of early beginnings of cathedral girls' choirs	Short email, telephone and literature-based articles and internet website	Short qualitative questions and archive data	2005 – 2018	A list of cathedral choirs who have admitted girl choristers with brief details as to how and when these choirs were founded	Directors and Assistant Directors of Music, senior cathedral staff	35 – not including the 2 cathedrals with a mixed choir
Initial Survey of Cathedral practices	Emailed questionnaire	Short qualitative questions	2006	A comparison between the old and new foundation cathedrals with more detailed data: services sung, educational scholarships, who is responsible for conducting boy/girl choristers.	Directors of Music	42 responses (100% response rate)
Initial Survey of Cathedral music	Short emailed questionnaire and literature-based articles and internet website	Short qualitative questions	2006 and updated in 2018	Chorister age range, number of rehearsals and services, combined services, number of choristers, educational opportunities, who directs the choirs.	Directors of Music	42 responses (100% response rate)

Method	Tool	Data format	Date/Period undertaken (with updates)	Foci/topics covered	Participants (codes)	Sample Size
Case study 1: Salisbury	Face to face interviews	Transcribed semi-structured text	22/1/2004 continuing to 22/9/2005	How the girls' choir was established and what were the outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directors of Music x3 DOM (F) 1 DOM 1 (SM) 1 	3 (Data for one of the interviews not used due to problems with recording apparatus)
	Archival documentary analysis	Archive transcripts. Tape recording of first girls' choir rehearsal.	2004 – 2005	Planning stages for the introduction of the girls' choir. Public reactions to the girls' choir.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Archive transcripts from newspaper and magazine articles 	N/A
	Photographs	Photographs of first girls' choir	1991	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Observation	Observation of girl chorister rehearsal	2005	Permission to attend a girl chorister rehearsal prior to Evensong.	N/A	23
	BBC Archive Department. BBC Channel 4 television documentary	Television programme transcription	Broadcast 1998	Documentary 'Choir Works' by Howard Goodall entitled "Salisbury Girls' Choir"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Richard Seal former Director of Music. Housemistress. A current girl chorister and boy chorister. 	4
	BBC Radio 4 Woman's Hour	Radio programme transcription	Broadcast 18 th November 2011	Documentary 'Salisbury Choristers 20 th Anniversary' by Fiona Clampin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directors of Music (Richard Seal and David Halls) Six former girl choristers recruited at the time of its inception. 	8

Method	Tool	Data format	Date/Period undertaken (with updates)	Foci/topics covered	Participants (codes)	Sample Size
Case study 2: Lincoln	Two face to face and two telephone interviews	Transcribed semi-structured text	14/6/2005 21/9/2005 25/11/2005 24/2/2006	How the girls' choir was established and what were the outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director of Music and Senior member of the cathedral DOM (SM) 2 DOM (F) 6 AO (F) 1 AO (F) 2 	4
	Short emailed questionnaire	Short qualitative questions	2005	Data collection from some of the first girl choristers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Former original girl choristers 	3
Case study 3: Litchfield	Face to face interview with Head Teacher	Transcribed semi-structured text	19/9/2006	How the girls' choir was established what were the outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head Teacher HT1 	1
	Face to face interview with choristers	Transcribed semi-structured text	2006 – 7	Experiences of first girl choristers at the time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choristers 	4
	Observation	Video data	2006 – 7	Weekly chorister rehearsal recording the outcomes and vocal development throughout the academic year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director of Music Girls' choir 	16
	Girl chorister diary	Diary	2006 – 7	Record of choristers' experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Girl choristers 	2

Method	Tool	Data format	Date/Period undertaken (with updates)	Foci/topics covered	Participants (codes)	Sample Size
Survey of cathedral organists	Gender make up of choristers distributed for me by the COA	Short qualitative questions to all cathedral choirs	2006	Services, choristers, repertoire, musicianship, general questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of Music 	42 responses (100% response rate)
Interviews with Cathedral Directors of Music etc	Thirteen face to face and two telephone interviews	Transcribed semi-structured text	2004-2006	<p>Section A: Development of girls' choir? Number of girl choristers, rehearsal, services, concerts, recordings and school education; Should the two choirs be combined?</p> <p>Section B: Advantage/disadvantage of girl choristers; Vocal ability/vocal difference; Repertoire; Girl chorister identity; Reaction of boy choristers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of Music • Former Director of Music • Director of Music and Senior member of the cathedral DOM (SM) 2 • Assistant Organists • Head Teacher 	4 6 2 2 1

1.5 Ethics

In accordance with BERA (2004) guidelines, the different methods of research undertaken comprised a wide selection of people, e.g., Directors of Music, Assistant Director of Music, Head Teacher, senior cathedral staff, former choristers and current choristers, and demonstrate the findings to be as reliable and valid as possible in terms of these participants' perceptions. This involved the following ethical considerations:

- All questionnaires, surveys and interviews were undertaken with the assurance of Privacy under BERA (2004) Ethical Guidelines in which all respondents were informed in advance of the right of confidentiality and anonymity. At the time of initiating the research, I did not know any of the people that I interviewed or sent questionnaires or surveys to, thus there was no possibility of coercion to participate as a result of pre-existing personal relationships.
- Questionnaires and survey were returned to me individually by email, thus demonstrating consent. Interviews were agreed upon after I phoned or emailed interviewees explaining my research and them giving me informed consent. They responded in writing and arranged a date to meet, and agreed when I asked for permission to record the interview on a mini disc. Two telephone interviews were also recorded, and permission to record each was obtained prior to the start of the interview.
- All email responses, interview recordings, video footage, archive material, photographs and written notes have been kept in secure storage in a box room at my home and no one else has had access to them, as in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and BERA (2004) guidelines.
- I attended Evensong to commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the formation of the girls' choir at Lincoln cathedral. On this occasion, I met former choristers who had been in the original girls' choir and I distributed a questionnaire which focused on the number of services they had sung, repertoire and personal recollections of their experiences as choristers. Replies were emailed to me with personal photographs which they had taken at the reunion, along with archive reports that one of them—who had been Head Chorister—had written for the Old Chorister Magazine.
- I took video footage and analysed 16 weekly rehearsals of the girls' choir covering their first academic year at Lichfield Cathedral. At the end of the video sessions, I gave a copy of the video data to the Head Teacher complying with the Data Protection Act 1998 and BERA (2004) guidelines.
- Related to the above, a longitudinal case study was undertaken at Lichfield Cathedral which followed the introduction of the first year of the development of their female

choristers. In the first rehearsal, I introduced myself at the start and explained what I was doing. I also asked for volunteers to work with me in a small group comprising younger and older choristers with the Director of Music present. I undertook semi-structured interviews with girl choristers from Lichfield Cathedral School during their morning break in the school library. Questions related to their experiences of being a chorister. This was an informal chat which I recorded and they spoke of their experiences individually and collectively. In accordance with BERA (2004) guidelines, the school granted access under in loco parentis. All participants had the right to withdraw if they wanted at any time for any or no reason. On some occasions, the girl choristers might not have been able to attend due to other commitments. The same pupils were asked to keep an individual diary to record their thoughts, experiences and any major events, e.g., singing at their first Evensong and concerts. I provided the diaries and they had the freedom to write or not write as they wished.

1.6 Summary

By using the framework of CHAT, it is possible to understand how girl choristers (being the Subject) were introduced into a specialised cathedral culture of educational and religious expectations historically stretching back centuries. The study of whether it was possible that girls (as the objects in CHAT) could sing in the same style as boys, was vital if they were to perpetuate the continuation of the style of singing, by imitating the sound of boys associated with 'the English cathedral tradition'. Through a CHAT lens the community to a certain extent dictates how girls are expected to sing, and it is highly likely that in order to conform to the tradition, the model given by boy choristers is the accepted culture.

The interpretation of this study leads to the implications of the results of whether girls can sing in the same style of the boy chorister tradition, if not did would their style of singing influence the way that boys sang and the comparisons made between the vocal sound of boys and girls.

The reason for using CHAT as a particular method of investigation was, firstly, to map the demographic information about which Anglican foundations were to be examined and by undertaking a study of the historical perspective in order to understand the history of cathedral choristers, the traditions and singing repertoire.

The focus on Salisbury Cathedral (Chapter Three) was undertaken because it was an iconic event at the time in the early 1990s due to the fact that it was the first of the old cathedral foundations to undertake such an initiative.

Chapter 1: Introduction, context and methodology

I then looked at the cathedrals of Lincoln and Lichfield as case studies. Lincoln Cathedral was chosen having introduced girl choristers early on only four years after Salisbury. Whereas Lichfield Cathedral was most recent having introduced girls in 2006. For Lichfield I was able to undertake a more detailed case study as I had the opportunity to undertake research as the event was actually unfolding across an academic year (Chapter Four).

Further to the case studies, I interviewed people across the sector about the impact of the introduction of girl choristers in the form of surveys and interviews in order to understand the impact of girl choristers on 'the English cathedral tradition'. (Chapters Five).

Chapter 2: Historical and current contexts

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the origins of the historical tradition of training boy choristers in cathedrals from AD 597 to present day and the development of choral music leading to the repertoire as we know it today. It charts the improvements in the welfare of choristers during the 19th century and the raising of the musical standards of the 20th century. It also attempts to explain and define the 'authentic' sound of the 'the English cathedral tradition' which is regarded as the accepted way of singing in which girl choristers were introduced. Finally, it looks at the social developments through the Education Acts and opportunities which opened up for women in their professional life.

2.2 Origins of the tradition

The CHAT concept of historicity applied to the thesis emphasises the importance of the need to look back at the origins of cathedral choristers. In researching current practices, the introduction of girl choristers and the future of cathedral choirs, it is necessary to examine the historical development of the music that was sung. Apart from a brief spell during the Reformation¹¹ and the Commonwealth¹² when the choral foundations were disbanded, the course of history and its music's were to shape and strengthen a tradition, which was to further enhance its status and future. By understanding why, when and how the foundations of cathedral choristers were established and how the tradition has continued to perpetuate, a sense of historicity allows a better understanding of the current situation and ideas for the possible future development of the tradition (Engeström, 1993).

The tradition of training boy choristers to sing the daily religious services in cathedrals has a long history, dating from the earliest foundations of the monasteries and cathedrals in England. The earliest monastery to provide an education for boy choristers is believed to be at Canterbury, which was founded in AD 597 by St. Augustine (Lawson, 1967). Lawson believes that Augustine would have also established a school, which has come to be known as the King's School, Canterbury and that this pattern was also repeated at Rochester (604), London, St. Paul's (604) and at York (627).

¹¹ The Reformation was a period in British history when the Act of Supremacy in 1534 recognised Henry V111 as Supreme Head of the Church of England and led to the King dissolving the monasteries between 1536-1539.

¹² Commonwealth (1649-1660) was a period in British history when Oliver Cromwell took charge of the government after the execution of Charles 1 until 1658 and his son Richard continued until 1660.

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An English monk, Benedict Biscop, founded a monastery at Wearmouth in AD 674 and at Jarrow AD 682 and it is likely that boy choristers sang some of the services here also. Bede joined the monastery at Jarrow to train to become a monk when he was only seven years old and, whilst he was not a chorister, Bede records how:

I passed the whole of my life learning in that monastery... and in the intervals of the observance of the discipline and daily singing in the church. (Nicholson, 1944, p. 55)

During the 9th century, Chrodegang, Bishop of Metz, drew up a set of rules to be used by the canons in his cathedral and Batsford, (1960, p. 12) believes that many English cathedrals may have been originally modelled on the continental style. An account from Aelfric's Colloquy (c.995) gives a fascinating insight into life in the early monasteries. Whilst he does not specify the duties of boy choristers, they would have been involved in some of the services in which the young monks took part. In any case, it gives a revealing insight into the amount of music being sung at this time.

...I heard the knell, I arose from my bed, and went to church, and sang night song with the brethren; and after that we sang the service of All Saints, and the morning lauds; then prime, and the seven psalms with the litanies, and the first mass; then tierce, and the mass of the day; then we sang the midday hour: and we ate and drank, and went to sleep, and rose again and sang nones. (Dalgairns & Lockhart 1844, p. 7)

As other cathedral foundations became established during the Middle Ages (1066 - 1450), boy choristers continued to be given musical instruction and sang some of the services.

A custom, which had its origins dating back many centuries, was that of taking boys from their home towns to sing in major cathedrals (Wridgway, 1980). Leach, (1911, p. 53) records how as far back as 1020, King Canute—on visiting a monastery—would take boys with him to be educated as potential monks. Orme, (1976) describes the reason why boys were taught to chant the words adhering to the plainsong rules:

This taught good pronunciation as well as helping to train the scholars for the clerical life to which it was likely he would one day be called. (p. 2)

Other subjects that were taught as part of the Choral Foundation and included: Music, Theology, Grammar, Rhetoric, Law, Mathematics, Geometry and Astrology.

Cathedral Foundations, prior to the Reformation in the sixteenth century, were either monastic or secular (i.e. no monastic foundation) and generally provided training for boy singers. With regard to this training, Phillips (1943) explains:

In the monastic offices the choir would consist of boys and professional singing men together with such of the monks who could, by dint of long hearing them, sing the psalms and canticles... (p. 64)

The tradition of titles used in cathedrals today, such as Dean, Precentor, School Master and Treasurer, date back to the eleventh century when Thomas of Bayeux at York introduced them (Batsford, 1960). Leach, (1971, p. 73) records how, one year later in 1091, Osmund the first Bishop of Salisbury laid down the foundation statutes for Salisbury Cathedral:

Dean and Chanter, Chancellor and Treasurer shall be continually resident in the church at Salisbury, without any excuse...

The Dean presides over all canons and vicars (choral) as regards the cure of soul and correction of conduct.

The Precentor ought to rule the choir as to chanting and can raise or lower the chant.

The treasurer is pre-eminent in keeping the treasures and ornaments and managing the lights. In like manner the chancellor in (sic) ruled the school and corrected the books.

Historically, these statutes reinforced the tradition of boys singing in the monasteries and the education that they could expect to receive. The ceremony of the church, its ancient symbolism of communion, prayer, teaching and chanting became a powerful ritual. Giddens (1997, p. 444) put forward the opinions held by the sociologist Durkheim regarding the belief of modern-day society and ritual, which—to a certain extent—is dependent on previous generations:

Even modern-day societies depend for their cohesion on rituals that reaffirm their values; new ceremonial activities can thus be expected to emerge to replace the old.

From a CHAT perspective, these early developments in boys' sung contributions to Christian worship might be considered an example of a 'craft activity' (Engeström, 1996). In such activities, apprentices are guided by a 'master' and, as such, traditions are highly centralised around individuals.

Singing in the early Christian church was Gregorian chant, also known as plainsong. This was an unaccompanied melody sung in unison. The teaching of plainsong to boys would not have been considered to be difficult and a master in charge would have done this as well as taking care of their welfare and general education. This simple style of singing developed a stage further with the introduction of counter melodies and led to the beginnings of polyphony. In the middle of the fourteenth century the introduction of polyphony was initially sung by men's voices and did not necessarily include the boy choristers (Wridgway, 1980). However, as polyphony developed during the fifteenth century, boys' voices were not only introduced, but the question of acoustic balance necessitated an increase in the number of boys singing. Wridgway (1980, p. 6) describes this as follows:

The present-day listener might expect to hear the tune in the highest or treble line. This was not a concept known to the 15th century composers and performers. The treble

Chapter 2: Historical and current contexts

voice was added to polyphonic music as a late development and was just one more line to the already dense, sonorous texture.

It was at this time, due to the development of polyphony, that the Choral Foundation (see 2.2) was enlarged from just a small number of boys to a regular constituted choir. Wridgway (1980, p. 6) continues:

the treble line had to be heard against the other parts and an increase in the number of boys was now essential for good musical reasons.

With the development of polyphony, it was necessary to appoint a master who was exclusively responsible for their musical education. Wridgway (1980, p.11) explains:

With the necessary mastery of rhythm, breath control, precise intonation and other problems, none of which had been required of boys to any extent before... it needed the services of an expert.

Engeström (1987) would likely characterise such an evolving system as an example of 'rationalised activity'. As polyphonic music became more complex there would have been a greater emphasis on codes and forms of control. Choristers would have needed to be 'managed' and prepared for 'predetermined' outcomes. This management would have been the responsibility of certain members of the monastery hierarchy, leading to a greater division of labour.

Whilst boys were taught to chant plainsong for monastic services, there is no clear evidence of a comparison for girls singing in nunneries in England. However, provision was made for girls' education in some nunneries, although this was not always the case and it might not necessarily have been a musical education. Leach (1971, p.51) mentions a reference in what is believed to be the first English-Latin Grammar book in the 11th century where Alaric wrote: 'the nun is awake teaching little girls'. Power (1975, p.89) explains that nuns were women who came from high class families and that the nunnery: 'Provided a career for girls of gentle birth for whom the only alternative was marriage'. Therefore, the number of children who were educated in nunneries was restricted to those parents who could afford to pay the fees. Moreover, nuns not only taught girls, but also young boys and both sexes would live in the nunnery. However, it would appear that this scenario was not in any way comparable with the monastic traditions of educating boys (Labarge, 1986).

Evidence suggests that, whilst many nuns would have had a basic knowledge of Latin, this was usually confined to the sung part of services and not a thorough understanding of the language (Orme, 1973). Lawson, (1967, p.61) mentions that the girls probably learnt to read, speak a little French, religion, needlework, and knowledge of herbs and what were considered the feminine social graces of that particular class. However, Power (1975, p. 82) states that their education was difficult to assess due to the fact that there is very little evidence on which to draw. She believes that the education received was less varied than that put forward by other authors:

Children were doubtless taught the Credo, the Ave and the Paternoster by rote, and must have been taught to read, although it is more doubtful whether they learnt to write. Probably they learnt songs with the nuns, and spinning and needlework.

Nuns were dictated to by monastic rule, and bishops who disapproved of them educating children tried to limit this practice (Power, 1975). Yet, the nuns relied on this as a source of income and thus faced financial difficulties on occasions. Generally, nunneries were not as well-endowed as the monasteries and only a relatively small number of women chose to become nuns. Power (1975, p. 89) records that around about 1350:

There cannot have been more than 3500 nuns altogether in England, and these numbers were steadily decreasing to 1900 in 1534.

Education received in the nunneries in England was not to have a long history. Whilst this was partly due to the general decline in the standards and recruitment in nunneries, the Dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII from 1536-1540 disbanded this religious way of life. Whilst the boys continued singing in the cathedrals of the New Foundation¹³, no provision was made for the education of girls in nunneries.

The changes brought about by The Act of Supremacy in November 1534, which recognised Henry VIII as the Supreme Head of the Church of England, was to have a profound effect on choral foundations throughout the country. In 1535, Henry began dissolving the monasteries and confiscating all their lands and wealth. The dissolution of the monasteries between 1536 and 1539 led to the ancient monastic foundations being replaced by secular clergy. Whilst the secular cathedral foundations (old foundation cathedrals) continued with their music tradition of training choristers, the monastic cathedral foundations had a period where they had to adjust to being reformed as secular cathedrals (new foundation cathedrals). It has been suggested that, with the creation of new foundation cathedrals, it was possible to recruit a larger choir as they were not governed by the poverty of the monastic way of life (Sandon, 1997).

The Act of Supremacy in 1534 affected the liturgy and music, and new styles of composition were called for (Headington, 1980). Another development was in 1544 when Archbishop Cranmer introduced the English Litany in which the music consisted of chants with one note to one syllable.

The changes brought about by Henry VIII's break from Rome and the new form of worship must have been extremely traumatic. This upheaval for the population was compounded during 1534 – 1558 by the rapid succession of English monarchs, all of whom upheld different religious beliefs and which must have had an unsettling effect on musicians and church music. The application of Engeström's model of CHAT (2001) suggests that problems associated with rapid changes are an

¹³ New Foundation Cathedrals were formed from the ancient monastic foundations after the dissolution of the monasteries.

example of 'potential for change' within an activity system. Elizabeth I came to the throne in 1558 and was tolerant of both Protestant and Catholic religious faiths. In 1560, she made her attitudes clear in the promotion of the music in her Royal Chapels in a Royal Commission of 8th March, as recorded by Wridgway (1980, p32):

Elizabeth R: Whereas our Royal College of St. George hath in the days of our father been well furnished with singing men and children. We willing it should not be of less reputation in our day, but rather augmented and increased...will and charge that no singing man or boy will be taken out of the said Chapel, by virtue of any commission not even from our household Chapel [the Chapel Royal]. And we give power to the bearer of this to take as many of the cunning singing men and boys from any place within this Realm our own household and St. Paul's excepted. Given at Westminster the 8th day of March, in the second year of our reign.

By the middle of the sixteenth century, composers wrote in both Latin and English; the anthem was replaced by the motet, the canticles were chanted and hymns were sung. This would have involved the need to educate choristers in a new style of singing. The continuity of tradition by church musicians was evident, including in the music of many leading composers who had been choristers, such as Tye, Mundy, Morley, Tallis, Byrd, Weelkes, Tomkins, Gibbons and, later, Purcell. They provided a rich wealth of music, which can be regarded as the early backbone of the Anglican Choral Tradition.

Since the Middle Ages, there has only been one break in the history of the cathedral choral tradition and this occurred during the Commonwealth 1649-1660. The prohibitive attitude among the puritans only permitted the singing of metrical psalms (Jacobs, 1963). During this period, the Choral Foundations were abolished, church musicians lost their positions and became unemployed and choral music was prohibited. It is difficult to comment on what happened to the choristers at this time, whether they remained at the choral foundations until their education at the school came to an end, or whether they returned home. Phillips (1943, p.130) states that the Cathedral Libraries were 'ransacked and destroyed'. In effect, it would appear that the Choral Foundation became silenced and its future development suspended (Hurd, 1968). Given the destruction and the fact that the Anglican Choral Tradition for some considerable number of years was dormant, it is a wonder that it was rebuilt and became established again.

Yet with the Restoration in 1660, musicians were reported to have resumed their old positions in choral establishments and immediately had the task of developing new choirs. At first, due to the difficulties in recruiting and training boy choristers, the treble part was often played by a cornet (Long, 1971). This must have been a challenging situation, considering that for eleven years there had been no choral tradition. As Long (1971, p. 207) notes:

Once the choir has been disbanded and the chain of musical tradition broken, it takes at least five years of unremitting effort to build a new tradition.

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The newly recruited choirs consisted of boys who had never experienced singing in a cathedral before and had no senior boys from whom to take their lead. Jacobs (1963, p.10) writes of the difficulty in re-establishing a choral tradition:

Boys were quite another matter: until they could be recruited and trained the services had to be sung by men only.

At the Restoration, Captain Cooke was appointed Master of the Children of the Chapel Royal. Cooke had been a chorister at the Chapel Royal and, like so many musicians in church music, educated boys for the next generation. Dennison, (1986, p.3) records how successful Cooke was in his recruiting and training of boys:

He began recruiting immediately and even revived the practice of pressing boys into service from choral foundations in the country. Cooke had a complement of twelve boys before the end of 1660, and his unfailing skill in selecting real talent and the excellence of his training are proved by the fact that well over half of the first set of boys emerged as the leaders of the next generation of English musicians.

It was imperative that Cooke quickly trained the boys, as they sang just a few months later at the Coronation. A Chapter Minute of Westminster Abbey dated 23rd April 1661 records the music sung at the Coronation. The choristers that Cooke trained who became notable musicians included Pelham Humfrey, John Blow, Michael Wise, William Turner, Thomas Tudway and, towards the end of the decade, Henry Purcell.

Despite the difficulties and uncertainties during the Commonwealth (1649-1660), music in the latter half of the seventeenth century flourished and laid a secure choral foundation. Whilst other cathedral foundations were not as fortunate, the education of the choristers of the Chapel Royal was perceived to be good. Phillips (1943, p. 152) reports:

For the boys a good musical education plus writing and Latin was provided and with the King's permission and, no doubt, encouragement, the band of instrumentalists was organised. The whole establishment was in perfect working order within three years of starting from nothing – no mean feat.

These positive developments at the end of the seventeenth century, however, were not to continue in the eighteenth, as Hindley (1978) notes a decline of cathedral music after the death of both Blow (1649-1708) and Purcell (1659-1695). Two of the reasons why choral music seen to be in difficulties was due to reported declines in discipline and standards of behaviour and commitment (Wridgway, 1980). This was compounded by limited musical repertoire and the limited number of singers in some cathedrals (Scholes, 1970). Also, financial difficulties associated with a rise in inflation had an effect on the endowment of cathedrals. For example, Wridgway (1980) highlighted that:

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...the wealth of the canons compared with the poverty of their chorister-boys was a national scandal. (p. 56)

Choral music also declined because of the growing interest in instrumental music. As instrument making and techniques improved, the emergence of instrumental forms developed. The 18th century witnessed the rise of instrumental music, opera and oratorio.

As a result of all these factors, it is rather difficult to trace the history of 18th century choristers. It was not until 1st October 1750 when a reference was made in the Chapter Records of St. George's, Windsor to a lecturer, John Holmes:

...to allow the lecturer £5 a year for catechizing the choristers and instructing them in the Christian Religion. (Wridgway, 1980, p. 50)

Wridgway (1980) continues to comment on the lack of information regarding the choir at St. George's and records that, towards the end of the eighteenth century, the standards of choral music had declined:

On 20th September 1785 we read that on the previous day there had only been one singing-man in attendance at Evensong and it was ordered on 16th March 1772 that the singing-boys should be sconced a shilling each for their misbehaviour at Prayers. (p. 51)

Moreover, Wridgway (1980) writes how, by the start of the nineteenth century, Charles Knight expressed the opinion that the services at St. George's Chapel Windsor were sung 'exquisitely', but that the behaviour of the choir left much to be desired:

...sadly distracted by the tricks and grimaces of the young choristers who as they knelt in apparent prayer, were occupied in modelling hideous faces out of the ends of their wax candles. (p. 51)

The state of the choir at St. Paul's Cathedral was also in a worrying condition in the early nineteenth century. Hutchings (1967, p.100) wrote:

In 1815 St. Paul's had only 8 boys, who were neither boarded nor properly educated. They received £5 per annum. The lay clerks received £60 and could be given notice of dismissal without pension when they grew old.

The condition and pay of the choristers and singing men in cathedrals continued to be considered unacceptable. Wridgway (1980, p. 56) states:

The choristers of St. Paul's cathedral were among those whose funds had been misappropriated, and were suffering from sheer neglect.

2.3 Early changes and developments

It would appear that reform was desperately needed and the work of Maria Hackett through her determination and own personal wealth improved conditions for choristers, singing men and organists. Hutchings, (1967, p. 100) explains:

Her campaign began at St. Paul's where, according to Sir John Goss when he had become the organist, the boys had 'only minimal instruction in the Three Rs on three days of the week'.

Change, development and improvement is structured within CHAT and explained by Engeström (1987) as an activity system characteristic 'within the groups...but extended to the overall activity'. The theory posits that 'contradictions' with the system are the drivers of change, in this case related to a perceived lack of appropriate education and care for the boy choristers.

Another account by Phillips (1943, p. 149) reveals how Hackett tried to improve the conditions for choristers:

Miss Maria Hackett wrote impassioned letters to every dean in the country, making herself a veritable Florence Nightingale in the cause of cathedral choristers.

Hackett started her campaign in 1811 when she visited St. Paul's cathedral and was dismayed at the conditions of the boys. Wridgway (1980, p. 56) states:

The choristers were left to fend for themselves between services, which at night they spent much of their time in places of entertainment in dubious company attempting to earn some money to keep themselves.

From 1817-1846, William Hawes was Master of the Chapel Royal. Reynold (1999, p.36) reports Hawes' comments on the choristers' education:

The general education of the boys was extremely slender. A visiting master came twice a week to give one and a half hours teaching, the greater part in elementary arithmetic. There was no musical instruction other than the routine of preparing music to be sung in chapel.

This apparent state of neglect came to an end when the Reverend T. Helmore was appointed in 1846 and, with the help of his wife, cared for the welfare of the boys and also provided them with a fuller education with a wider range of subjects (Reynold, 1999).

In 1818, Hackett visited St. George's Chapel, Windsor to see the conditions of the choristers, a visit which was published subsequently in the Gentleman's Magazine in February 1819. Wridgway (1980, p. 57) explains that Hackett made public the Foundation Statutes of Henry VI (mid-14th Century) which:

...intended that there should be sixteen choristers; that they were to be under twelve years of age and, at their admission, must be completely skilled in reading and chanting. They had the right of free education under the grammar masters and were to dine at the same table with the Foundation scholars without distinction of place. They were to reside altogether within the College and be provided with all necessaries which were good and sufficient of them.

In 1819, Zachariah Buck was appointed as Organist at Norwich Cathedral and was regarded as a prominent figure in cathedral choir training at the time. He had been a chorister at Norwich and, on his appointment in 1819, he studied choir training, particularly methods of developing boys' voices. Reynolds (*ibid*) wrote that Buck:

He took infinite pains to obtain good expression by carefully explaining the meanings of words that were sung, encouraged the use of the 'head voice' by making boys sing with their mouths shut...So much time was spent on musical education and rehearsals that the general education of the boys was seriously neglected, only two hours a day being allowed and that usually from 5pm to 7pm after they had sing two services and had three sessions of practice and training.

Between the years of 1811 – 1844, Maria Hackett visited every cathedral and collegiate church in England and Wales to inspect the conditions of choirs (Wridgway, 1980, p. 56). With a growing realisation that choristers should be given an adequate education, Oyston (1993, p. 4) records that, after correspondence with Maria Hackett, the Dean of Durham (no date given):

...refers to ten choristers, obliged to attend divine services in the Abbey twice per day, entitled to two suits of clothes and a salary of £8 - £10 per annum. From 8am to 10am each day the organist taught them music in the song school in the Cloisters.

In the same article by Oysten (*ibid*), the Dean is then quoted as recording:

...they have besides a master who teaches them reading, writing and arithmetic at such hours as do not interfere with the organist.

In 1856, the number of choristers at Durham increased from ten to include eight probationers and later increased to a choir of twenty (Oysten 1993, p. 4). Maria Hackett's reported influence on the status of choristers in general and at St Paul's in particular is evidenced in the opening of the new choir school at St Paul's on 26th January 1874 (Gedge, 1991, p. 470).

Sir John Stainer (1840 - 1901) was also to have an effect on improving the standards of the choir at St. Paul's Cathedral where he had been a chorister and succeeded as organist from 1872 to his retirement in 1888. Fellowes (1969, p. 244) states that Stainer was:

One of the ablest choir-trainers of his generation, he succeeded in the arduous task of making the choir of St. Paul's Cathedral the best in England, though he took it over in a wretched state of disorganisation; and as a pioneer he did a great work in creating there a standard for the choral celebration of the Holy Communion service.

The choristers at King's College Cambridge were another choir where the choristers received limited education. Around 1836, their education generally took place from 7am – 8am and 10am – 1pm. Reynolds (1999, p.35) recounts the writing of Thomas Case, a chorister at King's College, Cambridge in 1836, and states:

(In) those Sunday performances or parades, (they couldn't be called devotional church services) the words were gabbled, especially on the 15th evening (the psalm for that day has 73 verses, the longest sung on one evening).

Reynolds (ibid) also records the conditions at Westminster Abbey according to John Jebb in 1851:

The service opened in a most careless manner; no decent procession was made and the striking of a wretched clock was a signal for a race through the office to begin. There was a squalid neglect of all the accessories of divine worship, the books were worn and soiled and the surplices were more black than white. It was the mechanical performance of a burdensome duty.

Reynolds (1999) continues to explain that the choristers rehearsed from 9 – 9.45 prior to a service at 10am, after which lessons began at 11am until lunch at 1pm, then 'Only a short time was available, from 2pm until Evensong, after which there was rarely any more school work done. There was no boarding house and many boys had a long walk home!'

The Oxford Movement (*cf* Nockles, 1994), which was set up around 1830, had its emphasis on High Anglicanism where the celebration of the Mass was paramount. The Oxford Movement established choir schools for the choristers to ensure that they received a proper musical education. Reynolds (1999, p. 36) explains:

The larger parish churches aspired to become miniature cathedrals with increasingly elaborate music on Sundays and, wherever possible, on weekdays as well. To achieve this ideal, the choir had to be well trained and disciplined and, looking at the cathedrals, it became clear that a choir school was the best way of making their dreams come true.

Some of the Gentry who were believers in this religious persuasion established their own choristers to sing in their chapel. Some of the more prominent Oxford Movement churches in London which had choir schools were the Temple Church, All Saint's Margaret Street, St. Alban's (Holborn), St. Andrew's Wells Street, and St. Mary Magdalene (Paddington). Churches in other areas which were modelled on the same lines were Leeds Parish Church and St. John's, Torquay.

2.4 Tradition and change in the twentieth century

The tradition of sung cathedral services that we are familiar with now consists of Evensong sung daily and Matins and Sung Eucharist on a Sunday morning. Earlier in the century, the Cathedral

choir would also sing services in the weekday mornings. However, the two World Wars were to have an impact on the frequency of sung services. Storey (2004, p.20) states:

The Great War had a drastic effect on sung services; at Durham choral services on weekday mornings were discontinued to free the men up for war work, though they were subsequently resumed on two days only, whilst at St. Paul's the available manpower was concentrated on five days of the week, with the boys singing on their own on the other two.

Whilst the numbers of morning sung services were reduced as a result of the Great War (1914 – 1918), ITWH (op.cit., p29) records how the standard in music was perceived to be high at the outbreak of World War Two (1936 - 1945):

...elaborate music flourished until the beginning of World War II, and musical attainment in church, school and cathedral was probably at a higher level than it had ever been.

The subsequent half century is generally regarded as a time when the music in cathedrals continued to improve. Reasons for this include the introduction of recordings, radio broadcasts and choir tours. For instance, On 7th October 1926, Choral Evensong was broadcast live from Westminster Abbey and has continued to be broadcast weekly on BBC radio ever since. Each week the BBC live broadcast has come and continues to come from a different cathedral.

It is a well-known fact that English cathedral choirs were in a sorry state in the nineteenth century, but it is also clear that our own century has witnessed a dramatic rise in standards. For many years, the choir of King's College Cambridge was the yardstick by which all were judged, but the wider dissemination of standards through recording and broadcasting and through better training has transformed national approaches to choir-directing and performing (Stephen Darlington, 1999, p.6)

Another reason why cathedral music in the twentieth century improved appears to be due to the professional impact of various renowned Organists and Masters of the Choristers during this period who made significant developments in the improvements in choral singing in cathedrals, e.g., Sir Frederick Bridge (Westminster Abbey), Sir George Malcolm (Westminster Cathedral) 'who revolutionised church musicians' attitudes to the training of boys' voices, and the effects of whose work can still be felt widely today' (Cathedral Music, 1999 (1), p. 7). Sir David Willcocks (King's College, Cambridge), 'One of the great figures of twentieth-century English church music' (Church Music Quarterly, 2000 p.7), Dr George Guest (St. John's College Cambridge) 'one of the greatest choir trainers in the twentieth century' (Cathedral Music, 2012 (2), p.17), and Dr Stanley Vann (Peterborough Cathedral) 'one of the most highly respected church musicians of his time' (The Telegraph, 2010). Menzies, writing about Peterborough Cathedral choir under the direction of Vann, states:

People of my immediate post-war generation will recall with pleasure the time of that great choirmaster and composer Stanley Vann (still alive and in his 90's) and a

pioneering record of the early 1960's featuring the then almost unknown music of Richard Dering and Adrian Batten. (2003 (1), p. 27)

Day (2003 (1), p. 26) reports on George Guest expressing his views on how to achieve a better choral sound from the choristers at St. John's College, Cambridge, by aiming for 'much bigger, more dramatic voices than most'. Day reports that Guest extended the development of choristers' vocal range—a range extending over three octaves, from E flat or D below middle C to the G above top C—and encouraged them when singing top notes not to maintain a relaxed physique, but 'to adopt something of the poise of an all-in wrestler'.

Sir Sydney Nicholson was a cathedral organist for 23 years and the last post that he held was at Westminster Abbey. Whilst he was there, he obtained approval to increase the numbers in the choir school so that he had two groups of 24 boy choristers. The choristers were divided into two groups and sang the services alternatively. He also changed the working conditions of the lay clerks¹⁴ who previously had had no retirement age and, therefore, continued singing despite the natural ageing of the voice. Lay clerks were given a pension equal to what they had received as a salary and younger singers with better voices were employed (Shaw, 1997).

Nicholson resigned from his post at Westminster Abbey in early 1928 and formed the School of English Church Music (SECM) which continues today in a different guise under the title The Royal School of Church Music (RSCM). SECM consisted of a choir school and a residential training college for church musicians (RSCM Church Music Quarterly March 2007, p.6). Nicholson's emphasis was on parish church choirs and many became affiliated to the SECM. In addition to this, the training college gave church musicians the opportunity to develop their skills as choir trainers at the residential choir school. Students received weekly lectures in the history of English church music, plainchant, choir training, and liturgical study with the addition of daily services and choir practices. Perhaps two of the more renowned choir trainers who were students at the SECM and went on to cathedral work were Sir David Willcocks, who became organist at Salisbury and Worcester cathedrals, and then Kings College, Cambridge, and Dr Gerald Knight who became organist of Canterbury cathedral before succeeding Sydney Nicholson as Director of the RSCM. Knight (in Shaw, 1997, p.32) described his time as a student as:

...playing for services was by no means an unalloyed pleasure: we knew only too well that when we operated under the eagle eye and keen ear of Sydney Nicholson that nothing we did would escape him: a doubled leading note or major third would incur his severe disapproval in the post mortem following the service.

Even in the twentieth century, the monastic origins of cathedral choir continue to dictate the makeup of a cathedral choir and stipulate the way in which it is to be administered. Every cathedral is governed by statutes which vary in date from when the cathedral was founded. At Salisbury, for

¹⁴ The term lay clerks applies to the men who sing in Westminster Abbey choir.

instance, the current statutes can be traced back to the early 13th century and dictate that the cathedral should be administered by the following clergy and others:

- The Dean, who has the general oversight of the mission and ministry of the cathedral and is also Chairman of the Governors of the cathedral school.
- The Precentor, who has overall responsibility for the cathedral liturgy, music, worship and pastoral care of all employees and volunteer workers.
- The Chancellor, who works with the cathedral librarian and also has responsibility for ministry to visitors and volunteer workers, e.g., day chaplains, Chapter House stewards and cathedral guides.
- The Treasurer, who has responsibility for the fabric and is also a Governor of the school.
- The Vicar of the Close, who has responsibility for the pastoral care of the residents living in the cathedral close and the cathedral congregation.
- The Cathedral Chaplain, who has oversight of the spiritual, personal and educational development of the cathedral congregation; and
- The Bishop, who is responsible for over 500 parishes and has a duty to visit them in addition to the major Festivals at the cathedral. (Salisbury Cathedral Choir Chorister Parents' Handbook 2001, p. 2).

In addition,

- The Director of Music has responsibility for all the music in the cathedral alongside choir training and organ playing.
- The Organist and Assistant Director of Music undertakes some choir training and does most of the organ playing in the cathedral.
- The Organ Scholar who does some of the organ playing and assists in the choir school.
- The Choristers consist of 20 boys and 20 girls.
- The lay clerks consist usually of at least six singing men.

The procedure for admittance as a cathedral chorister involves a voice test, and in some cathedrals, an academic test also. The voice test generally occurs for boys at about the age of eight years old. For girls, the age range differs in cathedrals as (theoretically at least) they can remain as a treble chorister for longer, unlike the boys whose voices have a natural change point generally at age 13 or younger. If a candidate is successful, they are admitted to the choir as a probationer, which usually lasts for one academic year. During this time, they will have rehearsals with the full choristers, but not necessarily sing at services in the choir, or sing all of the musical elements in the service, until they have been properly admitted as choristers. They will attend services, but may sit separately from the choir. Once admitted as choristers, they will rise through the ranks of the choir taking on more responsibilities such as solo work, helping with the younger choristers and helping give out music. There are 'rules' for joining the community and these are governed by strict initiation ceremonies and membership of the local as well as wider choral tradition. These can be viewed through a CHAT lens (Welch 2007, p. 25).

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...individual and group actions being embedded in a collective, interactive system in which 'rules', a sense of 'community' and 'division of labour' are also evidenced.

The senior chorister is usually titled Head Chorister. At Salisbury Cathedral, the Head chorister for boys is known as the Bishop's Chorister and for girls as the Dean's Chorister. Each of these positions is formally recognised during an Evensong in September when the post-holders are presented to the Dean and Chapter and awarded their medals. Each chorister then promises to lead the choir during their time of office. It is reported that a tradition for boy choristers is 'bumping', which involves being taken to the south choir aisle of the cathedral and having their heads bumped against an ancient stone to the words 'I bump you a Chorister of Salisbury Cathedral according to ancient custom...bump' (Salisbury Cathedral Choir Chorister Parents' Handbook 2001, p. 10). Girl choristers have evolved a different 'bumping' tradition, as they are taken to the Trinity Chapel and are 'bumped' on the head with a large Bible (Figure 2:1).



Figure 2.1

(By kind permission of Salisbury Cathedral)

Another ancient tradition which is held at Salisbury Cathedral is that of the Boy Bishop ceremony. This tradition was common in all cathedrals until the Reformation when it was abolished by Henry VIII, but a modern version of this was reintroduced at Salisbury relatively recently. The ancient tradition is based on the passage from the Gospel according to St. Matthew which records how Jesus 'calling to him a child, put him in the midst of the disciples'. This was meant to illustrate how

they should live their lives, doing so with humility. In Salisbury, the Boy Bishop takes the place of the Bishop for the day and leads the prayers, blesses the congregation, preaches a sermon and is dressed in a replica of the Bishop's regalia.

In terms of 'mediating artefacts' with the CHAT framework, Frambach, (2014, p. 193) states:

The activity is governed by a set of implicit and explicit rules; takes place in a specific social and cultural community; and implies certain roles, or a division of labour, for those involved.

The tradition involves the organisation within the community and how it is upheld, e.g., the choristers singing duties and who is responsible for ensuring the work is done. Salisbury's division of labour (*cf* Welch, 2007, p. 29) is well established. Generally, in the course of a week, a chorister will sing Evensong five or six times, with two or three services on Sunday, all involving daily rehearsals. The workload is increased if there are special services, concerts, recordings or tours abroad. The Christmas term (September – December) and Lent term (January – April) are longer for choristers, as they have to be available to sing on Christmas Day and, in the Lent term, they are required to sing through Holy Week (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday) until Easter Day. They do not have school lessons, but their free time in between rehearsals is supervised by staff that organise activities.

Most cathedrals have a choir school in which the choristers are often boarders and there are also a number of non-choristers as part of the overall school population. By the early 1990s, ITWH (1992) calculated that more than 800 choristers were being educated within these schools, alongside a further 12,000 non-singing boys and girls. These are normally fee-paying independent schools and the fees for choristers are usually at a reduced rate or waived for the duration of their membership of the choir. The ITWH were concerned that, by charging fees, pupils would be from a similar social background instead of representing a more widespread cultural demographic. In its recommendations regarding this matter, ITWH suggested:

...that those responsible for choir schools seek ways both of recruiting children from less wealthy backgrounds and of providing the same musical and liturgical education for girls as that enjoyed by boys. (1992, p. 256)

Not only do choristers have to comply with all the usual academic and sporting curricular requirements, they also have one—if not two—choir rehearsals each day, in addition to daily sung services. Very often, they have one day off from service singing a week, which is when sports fixtures against other schools are then planned. Many learn to play two instruments which require daily practice, in addition to evening homework, and they are also required to take part in concerts and recordings during term time. Due to the commitment to weekend services, the opportunities for families to go out together on a Sunday are reduced and can lead to a disruption to family life. Yet despite the anxieties some people may share regarding the demands made upon choristers from

busy schedules, it is widely regarded that a chorister's education is a great advantage. James O'Donnell (1999) in an interview with Roger Overend in *Cathedral Music*, prior to his appointment as Organist and Master of the Choristers at Westminster Abbey, explains the benefits that can be experienced as a chorister:

Choral foundations and particular choir schools are precious, and need to be nurtured and can have a huge influence on the musical future of the country. One just has to look at the number of musicians who have begun as cathedral choristers, or have begun their professional life in a cathedral choir or playing the organ in a cathedral. The discipline is really second to none. There is an extraordinarily high level of commitment and effort and quick work, which is the only way in which these places can keep going. I think there is a place for excellence, for that kind of dedication and commitment, not just in the Church but in the broader context of society that cathedrals, abbeys and collegiate churches, all have a unique place to play. (1999 (2), p. 24)

Due to the amount of time spent on rehearsals, services and music practice, it is essential that a chorister is able to maintain an appropriate academic standard in their non-musical curricula, particularly as the structure of the day carries an extra workload compared with non-chorister pupils.

2.5 Attempts to define the 'authentic' sound of the English cathedral boys' choir in the twentieth century

Collectively, the twentieth century developments outline above resulted in the widespread view that boy choristers were the ideal with regards to the interpretation the cathedral repertoire, with claims to 'authenticity of performance' as a result. Described as early as 1917 as being part of England's great glories of our national musical life (quoted in Day, 2018, p. 1), over the last century:

the prevailing orthodoxy... has been that the straight, clear sound which boys are capable of producing is distinctive and valuable and uniquely fitted for the music of the Anglican church, (Day, 1989, p. 33)

Yet, the perceived sound of 'the English cathedral tradition' is difficult to define. A description of 'the English cathedral tradition' in general terms has been suggested as:

A rather effeminate, potentially inexpressive sound. It is variously described as hooting or floating, depending on the commentator's point of view, with indistinct words and good, if rather hazy blend and balance. (Phillips (1980, vol. 2, p. 180)

Day (2000) explains that throughout history the sound of boy choristers has been described by many terms as being:

'pure', 'otherworldly', 'ethereal', 'impersonal'; writers who do not admire the style refer to its 'coldness', its lack of 'passion', or 'personality', to the cultivation of beauty of sound at the expense of any real expressiveness, to 'under-interpretation', to rather barren meticulousness. (Day, 2000, p, 123)

Another issue is that we have no real idea of how close the sound of the twentieth century boy's cathedral matches that of previous centuries, and therefore how 'authentic' it can be claimed to be.

Phillips explains how boys' voices may have sounded different from present day boy choristers as past generations would possibly have had more mature voices due to the older age of vocal change:

The answer does not really lie, however, in an examination of the size of choirs in Tudor times. This is partly because we cannot predict how much more sound the boys, who were on average a few years older than modern youths, could produce (Phillips, 1980, vol. 1, p. 15)

Secondly, he questions authenticity with regard to the number of lay clerks singing which varies in cathedral choirs which explains how the sounds of choirs would be different:

One can easily hear performances of Tudor music with widely differing numbers of men within the 'authentic' context of our cathedral choirs, and the sound of course greatly varies (Phillips, 1980, vol. 1, p. 15)

Thirdly, he also brings into the question of authenticity by the fact that priests may have also sung with the men of the choir which would have increased the sound of the lower parts compared with present day cathedral choirs where there are fewer numbers of men compared with boys:

In general, even if the priests did not sing, there were more men than boys, which is rather the reverse of the present situation. This rather supports Mr Seal's concern that the sound should not be top-heavy. (Phillips, 1980, vol. 1, p. 15)

The overall sound of Tudor verse anthems is also characterised by the organ accompaniment which is likely to be played on a modern-day organ instead of a small chamber organ (Phillips, 1980, vol. 2, p. 198). Harrison Oxley offered a further perspective, explaining that he did not think authenticity mattered, as composers from other countries were not writing for the English cathedral tradition in any case (cited in Phillips, 1980).

Consequently, 'authentic performances' do not exist in present day cathedrals in the sense of being an identical imitation of the sounds from a distance past. Rather, 'authenticity' can be seen as a product of the constraints of expectations and perceptions within the current cultural setting, related to tradition, choice of repertoire and ritual, but also open to change and transformation.

Earlier, writing in 1980, Phillips (1980, vol. 2, p. 181) explained 'while the King's style is gentle, that of St John's is quite the opposite':

Dr Guest told me he was astonished by the high standard of the King's choir when he first heard them under Boris Ord: 'I had never heard anything like it. But one of the

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reasons why we have made any kind of name is that we are different from King's; it would have been inappropriate to copy their characteristic tone and trying to create something quite different has been a constant spur to me.' (1980, vol. 2, p. 181)

Here is another response regarding the different vocal sounds of choirs by Williams:

Sir – Correspondents advocating boys-only choirs often refer to the 'unique sound of boys' voices' as though there were only one such sound. There never has been any 'unique sound', for the tone of boys' voices in choirs has and does vary enormously. For example, the tone of the boys of King's College Chapel, Cambridge, changed dramatically between 1958 and 1964. In more recent years, the tone of the Temple Church boys has changed almost beyond recognition. (1999, Letters p. X)

A Director of Music commenting on his own choir sound explained:

I cannot honestly say whether the sound here differs from the usual cathedral sound; each choir differs from its neighbours anyway. (Phillips 1980, vol. 2, p. 193)

According to Phillips (1980), the reported distinctive sound that George Guest achieved was by training his in understanding and interpreting the text, and secondly using a correct vocal technique:

If you think of the two elements of interpretation as being emotion and technique, it's an impossibility to achieve 100 per cent in both those things at the same time. To use percentages loosely we go in for 80 per cent emotion and 70 per cent technique, whereas in most choirs the ratio would be reversed. The difference between our choir and King's lies in this shift in emphasis, and both approaches are of equal validity (Phillips 1980, vol. 2, p. 181)

Yet there is also evidence to suggest that boy choristers do not all sound identical and that the tradition has changed over time. Beet (1999) discovered some recordings of pre-war solo chorister voices which he collated and released as a CD 'The Better Land: Great Boy Sopranos 1914-1944' in November 1999. He explains the 'Cathedral sound' that we now hear bears no relation to the sound at that earlier time. These aspects of change and development, as a mediating artefact in CHAT, highlight that these comparisons were not possible before the introduction of recorded sound. However, it should be noted that he is commenting on individual 'star' soloists and this does not necessarily translate to the tonal structure of the whole choir. Beet compared the different sounds of then and now and, in so doing, reveals possible biases in his own preferences:

What we hear today from boys is not the pure head-tone boy soprano voice of the past, but a harsh incisive voice produced from the chest register, the voice of a small boy which fades quickly at the first sign of puberty. The old head tone is so unmistakable and distinctive that there can be no doubt that it is produced by a boy. This sound capable of filling a large building, does not fade with the onset of puberty, and this is perhaps the most convincing explanation for the fact that many boys in those days sang on well into their teens. (1999, p. 18)

Beet (1999) explains that a generation of pre-war cathedral choristers were trained by Directors of Music who tended to use a popular Victorian choir training book 'Boys' Voices' by John Spencer

Curwen (1981). This book contained vocal advice from famous choirmasters at that time. It emphasised in-depth extensive vocal exercises, mouth position, vowels, consonants and breathing, and the book also paid much attention to the development of a 'head tone'. Beet lists the reasons why pre-war choristers sounded different and, in his opinion, were better than choristers of today:

- The technique of training them has been lost, initially through deliberate neglect ('This pretty, fluting sound is an insult to boyhood' wrote George Malcolm of Westminster Cathedral). Although there may be some evidence to suggest that voices change earlier in those days, I feel this is a greatly exaggerated claim. The cultivation of the head-tone seems to have preserved the voice beyond the natural break.
- Fashions have changed: a more impersonal style is now called for.
- The school-leaving age has been raised, and less time can be devoted to training.
- There were far more boys in choirs in those days, and it was considered socially acceptable to go on singing for as long as possible. Boy singers were greatly in demand and sought after for major roles now taken by women. (Beet, 1999, p. 18)

Beet quotes from the conflicting opinions on choir training held by Hodgson and Malcolm regarding the sound of trebles in past years:

- George Malcolm (Westminster Cathedral) in 1963 criticised the way boys previously sang: 'In foreign countries, it is considered perfectly possible to train a boy's voice without destroying its natural timbre, and without removing from it the characteristics of the normal human boy. Yet in England, most choirboys are trained to produce an artificial and quite unnatural sound, popularly known as 'Cathedral Tone'. Certainly, the tone is pure if purity connotes only the negative emasculated quality of an angel; but this pretty, fluting sound is an insult to boyhood'.
- Hodgson disagrees with the views held by Malcolm, however, remarking: 'Here we have what can only be regarded as a serious challenge to that unique quality of English choirboy tone, which stood the test of centuries and became the envy of the world'. (Beet 1992, p. 22)

A more recent view concerning Malcolm's choir training methods is stated by Hill et al:

...but George Malcolm's famous phrase, that 'good singing is a controlled form of shouting' is absolutely true. (1995, p. 28)

Day has also noted with regards to recordings of the sound produced by choirs in the 1950's:

If this huge collection of recordings makes one thing about musical performance plain, it's that performing styles change, that performing traditions are continually being remade. (2003(1), p. 26)

Similarly, neither does the sound of boy and girl choristers in cathedral choirs follow an identical uniform sound:

'there can be no such thing as pure authenticity', was Cleobury's straightforward view on the matter; supposing you could prove what the sounds actually were ... you've still got the audience listening with twentieth century ears (Day, 2018, p. 227)

Thus, there is not one uniform identical sound made by boy choristers in the 'the English cathedral tradition'. Instead, as one of the interviewees in the present study noted, there are differences and

variation of tone quality, and cathedrals are believed to have their own sound, although this is based on the perceived tradition:

The sound of New College boys' choir couldn't be more different than the sound of say Chichester, or it couldn't be more different and those two again sound different from Westminster Cathedral which sounds different from I don't know Durham or somewhere. I mean they all have their own sounds; there's not one boys' sound which everyone seems to think there is. (DOM 1 b)

In fact, some believe that the sound constituted as 'the English cathedral tradition' is entirely related to the preferences of the Director of Music and/or Cathedral Organist, and the ways the boy choristers are trained. For instance, during the 1950s, there was a reported change in choir training by Sir George Malcolm (Master of the Music at Westminster Cathedral 1947 – 1959) and Dr George Guest (Organist and Master of the Choristers at St. John's College, Cambridge 1951 – 1991). Both men were reportedly influenced by the continental choir boy sound and changed their approach to choir training from the reportedly softer head tone of the Anglican Choral Tradition to a harder, more 'continental' tone (Day, 2000, p. 131).

Day comments on how it is possible to hear the differences in vocal tone under Guest from recordings in the early 1950's, when he first took over the choir, and then later when he had changed the style. Day comments on how Guest was influenced by other continental choirs:

You can listen to the sounds that inspired him to aim at the cultivation of different timbres, to the sound of the boys at Montserrat Abbey near Barcelona whom he heard singing Victoria on an HMV recording released in 1953 and also to the Copenhagen Boys' Choir who had come to the Aldeburgh Festival in 1952. (2003 (1), p. 26)

Day also gives details regarding Guest's choir training methods in order to produce:

much bigger, more dramatic voices than most developing in each boy a range extending over three octaves, from E flat to D below middle C to the G above top C and encouraging them when singing top notes not to maintain a relaxed physique but 'to adopt something of the poise of an all-in wrestler. (ibid)

As another of the present study's interviewees makes clear, perceptible differences are perceived to be due to senior cathedral staff's approaches to chorister development:

Turn the radio on at ten past four on a Wednesday and you don't know who is singing Choral Evensong, but it doesn't take you long before you have got a fair idea, because you know the kind of sound that you get from this place and that place. You know the sound that Alan gets at Chichester is so entirely different from the sound that David gets up at St. John's, or indeed the sound that you know Westminster Cathedral is a particularly obvious one ... But what are you listening to? ... You are listening to the effect of ... I'm ashamed to say, the man in front and here's another good bit of research, why the man? There are beginning, there are some women coming through now thank goodness and his preferences, his moulding and so on his saying 'yes' or his saying 'no' to the group of people who he works with every day... (DOM F 2)

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This interviewee was clear that it was not necessary that all cathedral choirs should sound identical and each choir should have their own style of singing:

Why do we all have to be clones of King's Cambridge in order for us to be legitimate now? (DOM F 2)

Day (2018) compares the style of Christ Church Oxford under Simon Preston as being 'more assertive' than that of King's College Cambridge under David Willcocks:

Christ Church under Preston... could sound more assertive than Kings under Wilcocks, just as meticulous in intonation and blend and ensemble, just as beautiful, but with an extraordinary boldness and vigour. (Day, 2018, p. 223)

Training boy choristers in cathedrals to sing in a particular way is perceived to be down to the Director of Music and many have their own distinctive sound. One interviewee told me:

the sound that I get, how one achieves it is difficult to put your finger on. I do think that every choirmaster has his own sound, and he gets that sound where he is (DOM F)

Another interviewee who had experience in training different combinations of choristers as in a mixed choir, a boys' choir and a girls' choir explained about choir training methods:

I think you just train them to sing properly and then you get whatever sound you get. (DOM 1 b)

Several Directors of Music are known for having trained boy choristers to produce a particular sound. For example, one interviewee reported that the sound of Peterborough cathedral under the legendary Director of Music and trained singer Dr Stanley is a typical example, remembered here by one of the present study's interviewees:

Stanley, absolutely yes. Every choirmaster has their own particular sound which they take with them. I think Christopher Robinson had his own sound, George Guest had his own sound, and it's very difficult to pinpoint why it is, it's just something in the personality maybe of the person, or the way they speak you know. It might even to do with the lilt of the speaking voice that just encourages a particular sound. It's quite a complex thing isn't it? (DOM F)

The Continental style has been described as:

Virile, nasal, well-focused, melodramatic, tending to bad blend, balance, tuning and, especially, bad vowel-sounds as lines become distorted in pursuit of more expression. (Phillips 1980, vol. 2, p. 180)

There is evidence of other choirs also adopting some of aspects of the Continental style such as New College Oxford. This style of singing is described by the former Director of Music Edward Higginbottom as:

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I go for resource, power and vigour, and only secondly for refinement. I concentrate a great deal with the boys on producing a vocal quality which is fairly chesty, open and loud and take that as the basis on which I can refine their sound. Their tone is steely, clear, forthright, the warmth derives from timbre and sonority rather than from vibrato. The boys are using their voices to good effect; in a word I think they can sing. (Phillips 1980, vol. 2, p. 180)

Dr Guest also deliberately trained his choir to sound more Continental in timbre:

George Guest explained that this sound did not exist at St John's before he became Organist and that it was achieved partly by getting the boys to listen to records made on the Continent, especially of Spanish choirs and the Copenhagen boys' choir. Having established the sound it is easy to perpetuate it; boys are great imitators. We are not as extreme as Westminster Cathedral because, apart from singing music by the rather passionate Spanish 16th century composers, we also wish to sing the music of Stanford and Wood and the sound of the Spanish choir would be as artistically and historically incorrect when applied to Wood as the plummy, breathy tone is when applied to Lassus. (Phillips 1980, vol. 2, p. 181)

Whilst some Directors of Music train boy choristers in 'the English cathedral tradition' and some more in the Continental style, Bernard Rose former Director of Music at Magdalen College Oxford used both styles. He described how he merged 'the English cathedral tradition' and the Continental sound for different periods in music as:

We get all the boys to sound their vowels in the same way, which produces a sound halfway between the English cathedral tone and this brittle Continental style which is very effective for certain types of music and very effective for others, just as the modern baroque-type organs are good for Bach but ridiculous for Reger. It strikes me as being quite scandalous that a choir or an organ which is required to make music from several centuries may be only ideal really for one. (Phillips 1980, vol. 2, p. 181)

This style of vocal training was also evident at St John's College Cambridge. The Director of Music at the time, George Guest developed boys' voices to reflect the different styles of music in their vocal tone and describes how he achieved this:

I try to give boys two voices, and to achieve this one must change the actual tone which they produce. This involves quietening down boys who have more strident voices in the late 19th- and early 20th- century music and bringing them out in more in the 16th-century music. Boys with a breathier tone must be subdued in Continental polyphonic music. Thus, in Stanford's work the accent is on ensemble, with a special regard for phrasing, with Victoria one aims at something more passionate. (Phillips 1980, vol. 2, p. 183)

This style of singing was also adopted by Barry Rose, the former Director of Music at St Paul's

The boys have two stops. We can sing Byrd's *Prevent us O Lord* and the *Hallelujah Chorus* in the same service and make the latter sound like the Royal Choral Society in full flight and the other like a very beautiful, ethereal choir. The boys simply make a different noise-different in timbre, different in production. For the big sound they tighten up in the throat slightly so there is an increase in hardness and intensity, they take their chest-voices into the upper range; and they know by my arms which sound I'm after, if I tense my movements they know to harden the sound. (Phillips 1980, vol. 2, p. 183)

The training of boys' voices to differentiate vocally between styles of music was not supported by everyone as Sir David Willcocks remarked:

I didn't consciously make much alteration of the sound for different periods in music; that is getting the wrong perspective...Of course you may adjust your style to suit that of the music, romantic music requires a bigger dynamic spread than the earlier repertoires; but it is fussy and pernickety to expect a choir actually to alter the tone-quality that it produces. (Phillips 1980, vol. 2, p. 183)

Whilst Bernard Rose stated that the beauty of the vocal tone should always dictate the style:

I believe that if you concentrate on pure and unanimous vowels, this will produce a sound which is appropriate and pleasant for every period of music. If others are right in thinking that the distorted vowel-sound, which is so regularly produced for Victoria's music, is what the composer expected, then we are being inauthentic in our approach, but this does not worry me. I am sufficiently old-fashioned to think that some sounds are beautiful and some are not and I would not seek an ugly sound just to be authentic. (Phillips 1980, vol. 2, p. 183)

Edward Higginbottom commented that the importance of vocal tone quality was the result of good voice production:

I do not attempt to get a certain sound because I believe it to be the right sound for a certain type of music, I seek a sound because I believe it to be the right way to sing. (Phillips 1980, vol. 2, p. 183)

A more detailed description of Higginbottom's vocal training is explained by Day (1989) and include working towards:

Resource, power and vigour, and only secondly refinement. I concentrate a great deal with the boys on producing a vocal quality which is fairly chesty, open and loud and take that as the basis on which I can refine their sound. Their tone is steely, clear, forthright, the warmth derives from timbre and sonority rather than vibrato. (Day, 1989, p. 34)

Martin Baker, the then Director of Music at Westminster Cathedral, discusses the reason with Asquith (2010) as to why his choir had the renowned 'Continental' Westminster cathedral sound:

Martin thinks that the 'continental' sound that the choristers produce stem from their use of Italian vowels. Singing so many masses, it is important for both vowels and consonants to be as clear as possible and to have a consistent sound, and the younger choristers tend to copy their elders in this respect. Trouble occasionally rears its head when the more mature choristers' voices deepen and their tone changes; sometimes the younger ones will copy this too, resulting in more of a head tone, much desired in days gone by, but less popular now. It sits well with Leighton, Howells, or similar, but for Palestrina or Victoria, the music is generally lower in pitch so the quality of the line is all important... And because the boys are not used to singing twentieth-century Anglican music, when they do sing it they can sound rather unexpectedly foreign, with very Italian vowels. (2010, p. 22)

Directors of Music have to consider not only the acoustics in the chancel where the choir usually sing, but also in the nave which is sometimes used for sung services. An acoustic with a delayed

response also impacts on the style of singing, which was explained in the case of King's College, Cambridge by Phillips (1980):

The building at King's itself prevents the choir from developing a more rigorous tone: 'it narrows the range of expression because if you sing *ff* you will hear it five seconds later; if you reach *mf* at the climax you can move on to something else two seconds later. That restriction dictates the tone – semiquaver runs *have* to be light, detached and rather soft in order to achieve clarity.' (Phillips 1980, vol. 2, p. 181)

The acoustical problem experienced at Coventry cathedral impacts the way the choir have to project their voices in order to make a big sound. This is because the building will not carry the more gentle sound which is attributed to 'the English cathedral tradition'. The vocal training given at Coventry results in a sound which is considered to be more Continental in style:

We aim to fill the whole building with sound, in an attempt to lead those at the furthest end of the cathedral into worship. The choir makes a big sound and the boys are taught to project their voices. This leads to problems for the choir, as with our acoustic it is hard for them to hear those in the stalls on the opposite side. With boy altos, the general effect is closer to that of many Continental choirs than those of the English tradition. Thought the boys are not encouraged to develop much vibrato. Our sound is physically very tiring to produce, yet we have little option because the building simply will not carry a soft, cooing sound. (Phillips 1980, vol. 2, p. 181)

The transferability of a Director of Music's preferred sound across employment locations is reported by several interviewee.

(He) did the same, he had his own sound here and then he got the same sound when he went to St. Alban's. (DOM F 4)

Another interviewee also commented on the distinctive sound two different choirs made when trained by the same Director of Music in different buildings, despite the likely difference in their acoustics:

There was a story told many years ago of when George Thalban-Ball – who was at The Temple Church – went to conduct the Westminster Abbey choir when William McKie was there and immediately the boys at Westminster Abbey choir started to sound like boys at The Temple Church simply because George was standing in front of them. There is something indefinable; it's to do with all sorts of things, the way you sing to them, the way you talk, all that sort of thing. (DOM 2)

Whilst the acoustics of the building can influence the sound, it has been suggested that the choir training under two different Directors of Music in the same building can produce different tonal qualities. This has been put down to the personality of each choir trainer. As one interviewee commented:

The personality, it's just hard to know why. Well it's a fascinating thing isn't it, yeah it really is, and David Willcocks had his own sound at King's, but that might have been, that might have come out of the building, although Stephen Cleobury gets a different sound from the David Willcocks sound. (DOM F 4)

The following descriptions of how choristers were trained taking into consideration the acoustics reveal another possible reason why the style of 'English cathedral tradition' varies in cathedrals:

It is not a flattering acoustic, but if the basic sound is satisfactory, we do not have to work to project it (John Birch former Director of Music, Chichester cathedral Phillips 1980, vol. 2, p. 182)

I was very conscious of the acoustic when I first came here; but it is such a good thing ... because if it sounds right here, its certain to do so in just about everywhere else. I would not wish to be in the position of King's where they have to work harder once they get outside the chapel. (Simon Preston former Director of Music, Christ Church Oxford and former Organ Scholar at King's College, Cambridge Phillips 1980, vol. 2, p. 182)

The building suggests the best possible approach-it suggests tempi and style, it thrives on soft singing, lifting and expanding the sound. (Roy Massey former Director of Music, Hereford cathedral Phillips 1980, vol. 2, p. 182)

The choristers at Salisbury cathedral have an added challenge as the acoustics can vary due to the weather and when the humidity is high, they have to sing with more energy:

At Salisbury the water-table is only a foot below the floor of the cathedral, and when conditions are humid the table rises, the acoustic is reduced and the choir have to work much harder. (Phillips 1980, vol. 2, p. 182)

By comparison it is believed that Christ Church Oxford has a rather dull acoustic which is reported to necessitate a different approach to choir training. Day (1989) explained how Simon Preston, a former Director of Music, aimed for a bright focused sound:

Simon Preston at Christ Church during the 1970s cultivated timbres with a bright, hard edge to them to overcome the deadness and blandness of the acoustic. (Day, 1989, p. 34)

Another challenge with the acoustic properties of the building can also be the distance between the choir stalls, as in the case of St Paul's cathedral. Directors of Music have to ensure that the balance and blend of the choir is absolutely equal on each side:

It's a very big acoustic and a very large choir of 18 men and 30 boys. You can't actually hear from side to side. I can't hear a bass on the other side when I'm singing. If I'm not singing as in the psalms, when each verse is sung by alternative sides. I can hear them then, but not when we are singing together. (Stewart 1999)

A Director of Music interviewed for this study explained that the acoustic was better in the nave than in the chancel. He trained the choristers to produce a focused sound which he perceived to have worked in a previous cathedral. This was despite the acoustics being vastly different in both. The choir stalls in his previous cathedral had acoustics which were rather dead, whereas in his next cathedral these were extremely resonant. The same focused sound worked in both acoustics:

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It obviously would have affected the sound, it's difficult to know how, and I think probably I would say the choir area was quite dry acoustically, so the choir needed to make quite a focused clean sound to cut through. Interestingly, in the nave it was much kinder and we used to do our recordings in the nave because there was a lovely echo there. I think in the choir with the tapestries and the kneelers and everything that soaked everything up. So, I think that's why we went for a very clean sound at ... Oddly enough this is a very resonant building, but you need to make a clean sound in ... because of the opposite reason, because the dome effect is that the sounds just tends to swirl around and get very muddled so the clarity is important. (DOM F)

It has also been suggested that the cathedral organ accompaniment can influence the singing style of choristers:

Last year we had a different practice piano from our usual grand piano- a weak-toned upright-and at the same time the main organ was being overhauled and we had a pathetic electronic. The combined result was to play havoc with the singing. It became spineless, without bite or character. (Phillips 1980, vol. 2, p. 182)

Another contributing influence to the style of singing has been remarked on when the choir sing with an orchestra. Day (1989) relates how the sound of King's College Cambridge changed according to the Director of Music as a result of hearing an orchestra accompany them:

David Willcocks did not set out deliberately to alter the choir's style but he realised during the 1960s that it was singing louder and with greater rhythmic bite as a result of recording with orchestras. (Day, 1989, p. 34)

Through an activity theory lens, cutting across these individual comments from Directors of Music is, firstly, a clear sense of the relative lack of a common professional language in being able to describe the experienced acoustic events in these buildings. Language is recognised as one of the 'tools' in the activity system. Directors' various comments about choral sounds in cathedral spaces as being 'rich', 'dry', 'resonant', 'dull', 'pure', 'muddled', 'unclear' offers possible illustration of why what counts as 'authenticity' is a difficult concept to pin down. Secondly, as reported above, the possibilities of shared meanings may be hindered by a relative paucity of professional experience in the fundamental principles of the anatomy and physiology of the singing voice. This will also impact on the language used in the pedagogy of chorister instruction. Thirdly, in terms of an activity system perspective, in this cultural setting the 'rules' for developing the chorister are strongly associated with the personal preferences of the Directors of Music, their biographies and biases in their personalities, as well as, fourthly their awareness of the constraints and opportunities provided by the performing spaces within the cathedrals.

2.6 Directors of Music and their knowledge of singing in the twentieth century

Another contributing factor of the vocal differences in the 'English cathedral tradition' is that, generally, Directors of Music are likely to be professional organists rather than trained singers. Many will have had little formal education in singing as an adult. Williams (2003) writes that this is a far cry from when monastic song boys were taught singing by a songman.

Whereas in days of yore, the *bel canto* and other methods of vocal production were handed down from generation to generation, nowadays it seems to be assumed that the acquisition of skills as an organist automatically confers qualification as a vocal coach, choirmaster and conductor. In a recent survey published by the Association of British Choral Directors it seemed that less than 20% of cathedral organists had received any formal training as choirmasters and a similar [large] proportion had not had singing lessons. (2003 (1), p. 55)

Variations in vocal knowledge and understanding of voice production are likely to impact on chorister training. A former chorister at King's College Cambridge spoke about his vocal training under the direction of A.H. Mann (1876-1929). He explained how they were taught to sing with a 'round guarded vocal tone' which was required due to the acoustics of the building:

None of the choral scholars of those days learned to throw the voice forward. Those who went to singing teachers who tried to correct this fault were promptly checked if they dared to sing with a more open tone. (Day 1989, p. 32)

Two interviewees from previous research (Stewart, 1999) who were trained singers and experienced lay clerks described the situation:

There are some organists who are very competent at doing their job, some are less so and a very few are not good at it at all. That is what I've found in my experience over many years. (1999, p. 141)

On a day-to-day basis, they are dealing with people who generally don't know about singing. They are organists and instrumentalists and they generally don't have a knowledge of vocal training. There is one fundamental thing which I think causes the problems, a fact that I've found in my own teaching and that is the whole process of reading music. It sounds crazy, but you have a wonderful system that is based on reading off a sort of a ladder, being the stave and the notes go up and down, and yes, you might get very good at reading the system, and being aware of where the notes are, and trying to pitch those notes, but unfortunately that means that all the information is going into your brain and then you are singing the way music works – it goes up and down, and that's how people think and then their muscles work harder because of that. If you get someone to sing the notes ccc, eee, ggg, eee, c to 'lah' they consciously think of the direction of the pitch going up and down and they don't realise how much it affects the muscles... so, I think that doing that day after day in a choral situation in a cathedral set-up with someone who doesn't understand the voice fully causes

problems, and I think nowadays choral trainers are realising that more, and getting choristers to have lessons. (1999, p. 131)

Another commented that it was unrealistic that Directors of Music should be expected to be vocal specialists as there was no training system in place for them. Directors of Music may have been choristers in 'the English cathedral tradition' as children and so believe that they fully understand 'traditional' choral sound, with its balance, blend, and resonance. However, they would not necessarily understand the mechanism of efficient healthy voice production:

To be fair to these organists, they were trained to be organists to a very high standard musically. Therefore, as a general rule, you have got people who are playing the most mechanical of instruments and they are expected to be vocal specialists also. It is unfair on them because there is no recognised system of training to learn how to conduct and understand physically how you make noises as a singer. Now you will find some organists will have been boy choristers, but I have to say in all honesty that my experience as a boy chorister in no way prepared me. It may have prepared me musically in terms of sight reading and pitching of notes, blending, singing in tune, all those sorts of basic musical ingredients. But in no way does that prepare you as an adult for what you actually have to do physically to produce a proper vocal tone. (Stewart 1999, p. 141)

A former Director of Music explained how by accompanying professional singers and reading about the voice he gained experience in choir training:

As my career has developed and I have got more experienced I think that what happened was I began to work with more professional singers, I observed what they have done and tried to learn from that, I played in my early days when I was working in London accompanying people who were having singing lessons and read books about it. In more recent years we have been more systematic here at King's about singing and also getting across technical ideas without making them appear dryly technical and pedagogic. (Stewart 1999, p. 124)

Another earlier interviewee explained that, if choristers were given a better understanding of voice production, they could avoid over singing and tiring the voice:

They are just getting on and doing it, which is great, but there is always a temptation because you go by what you hear and so, if you have got to sing in a group of boys eight to twelve in a row, there is going to be a lot of noise there, so you are trying to hear yourself. Consequently, you are going to sing louder to hear yourself and you are not going by the sensation of what it feels like, and not thinking about whether it is actually comfortable. So, at the end of it they may feel that their voices are quite tired, but they have not realised that because they have just been pounding away. (Stewart 1999, p. 132)

Some Directors of Music will have more knowledge of vocal training than others, although none unless they are singers will have the craft knowledge of a professional singer. A Lay Clerk who also taught singing at St John's Cambridge described his experience of teaching former cathedral choristers:

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The worse people I ever taught at Cambridge were the ones who had been boy trebles at a cathedral and had come back as Choral Scholars. You can get away with it when you are aged 7 to 11 in a way, even if you are doing a certain amount of muscular damage to yourself, which is obviously not ideal. Of course, the fundamental problems are tension in the throat muscles, the tongue, the developing of head resonance and space. The idea of getting the throat to open and then breathe diaphragmatically have got to be true of an alto, a treble, soprano or whatever voice. (Stewart 1999, p. 140)

However, the Director of Music at Trinity College Cambridge, reported that new recruits to the choir who had been cathedral choristers had a wealth of experience within the Anglican choral tradition which benefitted them as Choral Scholars (Day, 2018, p. 231).

Another interviewee commented on the common problem of throat tension:

I have come across several people who were choral scholars or choristers and quite a few of them had problems vocally with a lot of tension that had to be removed. (Stewart 1999, p. 131)

It was explained that the cause of throat tension was down to daily singing, sight reading music, forcing their voices and not having sung with a good vocal technique:

They are constantly singing on a day-to-day basis and they are constantly sight-reading music so consequently they are not thinking about vocal technique. In a choral situation they are frequently competing against each other and so they are forcing their voices. (Stewart 1999, p. 131)

It has been suggested that, whilst Directors of Music are generally not trained singers, there are simple basics that they can teach in order to improve choristers singing technique and achieve resonance and good vocal health:

Boy choristers need singing teaching in the right hands, and there are a lot of people who coach singing but don't actually teach singing technique. They teach you how to sing pieces but they don't get down to the basics or the physical aspects of singing. You can't put all that physical minutiae on a boy, but you can generalise about producing head resonance, relaxing throat muscles. You can get them to waggle their tongue and jaws around, and to waggle their head so they are releasing throat muscles. You can encourage them to think about breathing diaphragmatically; most human beings don't breathe deeply enough with their diaphragms. They breathe very shallowly and in doing that, by getting these special effects in the head by getting them to breathe more deeply and make the right vocal sounds on vowels, you can begin to effect where the resonance is taking place, and by getting it further back, away from the mouth where we speak English all the time. You can get them to encapsulate this sound in the fixed domed part of the skull which immediately means that the breath control is going to be better contained... what you can do is to get them to yawn with a smile, then lift the sound into the mask, yawn the larynx down, the soft palate up, and in doing that they are beginning to get this pivotal mechanism, working which to some extent will help them contain the air flow and create extra resonance. (Stewart 1999, p. 140)

Another interviewee who was a Director of Music, but specialised more as a trained singer than organist explained that it was essential for Directors of Music to have a good vocal knowledge. He described the importance in understanding how to achieve resonance:

Absolutely essential to have some kind of singing training. Certainly, to have an idea of how the voice is produced and the matter of resonance, even the basics. The three resonators we have, one is in the throat itself, but so often the throat isn't opened. The second is in the mouth itself with the hard and soft palate being important factors of that; and then of course the nasal cavities because they produce the brightness of the upper partials. Without that sort of brightness of the upper partials you lose a little of the sheen on the voice; without the throat and mouth resonators you don't get the depth or the velvet in the voice. As to the training, I think the only thing is to instil into young organists minds the need for some vocal training. (Stewart 1999, p. 130)

He continued to explain how he trained the younger probationer voices who would become a role model for other boys as they became more senior. The difficulties of having limited rehearsal time in order to get through the cathedral repertoire, is a common problem. Due to this pressure, less time is available for vocal training and vocal exercises:

Well, when they came into the choir school as probationers, all had a lot of specialised training in the sense that they had to produce their voices and blend the voice; because one of the first things about choral singing is to get a real balance and a blend for the wholeness of the choir's tone. Since the probationers have to start with that, they get an idea of singing, and once you have got those boys through to the top end of the choir then it's not quite so difficult. Boys have a tendency to imitate; they hear the tone of the other boys and they gradually blend into that. So, the first five years in a new job [for the Director] is the important one because by the time the probationers are at the top end of the choir they have got their tone more settled. Exercises are valuable, but the cathedral repertoire is such that you can't always spend much time on vocal training and so this sort of imitation is very valuable and it does at least spare you some time in training them. (Stewart 1999, p. 128)

A more recent interviewee who as Director of Music also specialised as a singer explained the importance of teaching the choristers how to sing:

I know that there are many very great Organists who are superb, but we all know that the job of standing in front of particularly choristers ... is firstly the job of a teacher and secondly as a job as someone who knows about singing and the voice, (DOM F 2)

Another interviewee explained how younger boys generally imitate the sound of the senior boys:

I think in general terms, no. As I said, it is generally done by osmosis. You will inevitably in any group of boys get some with a natural outstanding of tone qualities. Little boys, rather like little monkeys, imitate and try to do the best they can to reproduce what they are hearing. (Stewart 1999, p. 141)

In more recent times cathedrals have included individual singing lessons for choristers given by a voice specialist. A Director of Music who attended the lessons explains the importance of incorporating singing technique from the lesson in his choir rehearsals:

Well I've increasingly come to realise the importance of it and of course I think as I've got older there's a sense in which one defers to an expert as one becomes less confident in entering that role oneself. I attend the lessons they have and so what I try to do is then back up what the singing teacher has done by reminding them of what they have to do and then combining that with how to put into practice in terms of the particular piece of music being rehearsed at the time. (Stewart 1999, p. 124)

Another Director of Music explained the difficulty of incorporating the singing technique from the lesson and connecting it in a meaningful way into the choir rehearsal:

Of course, it's a potential problem of how you connect it, but I think that again our singing teacher sometimes comes to some of the choir rehearsals and just the presence of their seeing her there watching them reminds them 'Oh goodness, yes I'm supposed to be doing this'. It is different of course for a child who is learning a lot of music. There are lots of things thrown at him all the time and it is difficult for them and they tend to compartmentalise things, like, today we are doing singing technique, breathing and exercises and now we are learning a piece of music and sometimes they don't see the connection and so the trick is to try and get them connected up. (Stewart 1999, p. 124)

We have found that they don't relate it, as they see it as, you are doing that performance for that examination as if it's got nothing to do with what they are doing in the cathedral. I have to keep saying to them, well, all these bits of technique you have been taught, you need to apply that here. (Stewart 1999, p. 118)

One Director of Music explained it was useful to have the singing teacher attend his choir rehearsals in order to spot any individual chorister vocal issues whilst he was rehearsing the whole choir:

Undoubtedly, it is better, but of course some kids do it naturally anyway as I can remember children in some of the choirs I've been involved with where they did not have official singing tuition as such, who had wonderful natural voices and I think that you have only got to have one or two voices like that and the others will emulate the sound, but there is no doubt singing lessons are a beneficial thing. I think with a choir working with only one conductor who listens to the sounds every day, it is useful to have a visiting teacher come in and say 'hey, that boy has got a bit of tension' or 'he's not breathing as freely as he could'. It's very easy to become just used to things when you hear them on a daily basis. (Stewart 1999, p. 125)

A former Director of Music who was a professional singer explained that he refused to have a singing teacher in his rehearsals as he believed the choristers singing technique and vocal development was his responsibility:

I refused steadfastly ever to have singing teachers coming in and teaching the choristers, I was there singing teaching. And if I needed to take somebody aside and say come early for next rehearsal and we will work on that, I did. So, I knew their voices inside out and we used the same language and so on and so working with them as a group was like working with them as a giant singing lesson. (DOM F 2)

Not only in some cathedrals is there provision for a separate singing teacher but also teachers of Alexander Technique to alleviate problems:

Nowadays much professional expertise is brought to the development of boys and girls voices. A number of foundations employ professional voice trainers as a matter of course, calling on specialists such as those in Alexander Technique if a voice seems to need particular attention. (Mould, 2007 p. 270)

The above account suggests that the 'English cathedral tradition' is made up of choristers trained under Directors of Music who have a varying amount of vocal knowledge. Some have added tuition from singing teachers. Some choirs have boys who produce 'natural voices' and very often there is the constant problem of limited rehearsal time.

2.7 Early girl choristers and their vocal sound prior to 1991

Prior to the introduction of girls in the choirs of the oldest cathedrals in 1991, women in choirs sang liturgical repertoire in concert settings and radio broadcasts. Looking back in history, S.S. Wesley, the prominent nineteenth century organist is reported to have had a preference for women's voices over boy choristers, regretting that he had to use what he considered 'poor substitute for the vastly superior quality and power of those of women' (Day, 2000, p. 124). On the other hand, the Organist at Westminster Abbey in the 1920's believed that, even with the same choir training as boys, girls were not capable of singing in the same style:

Taking children's voices as a whole, and assuming equal skill in training, it will be found that boy's voices are superior to those of girls of similar age in power, compass, and resonance, while in expressive instinct and true musical feeling the boy is at least the equal of the girl. (Day, 2018, p. 78)

Subsequently the BBC Singers, which included women, began broadcasting morning worship daily from the 1930's on the radio, as well as singing in concerts.

Moreover, girls singing as choristers in a cathedral was not unheard of. The cathedrals of Bury St. Edmunds, and Leicester included girl choristers informally and separately from the boys for various local pragmatic reasons. However, this was still a revolutionary step, despite it seemingly appear to provoke little comment or interest at the time.

When the parish church cathedrals of Bury St. Edmunds and Leicester had introduced girl choristers in 1958 and 1974 respectively, this question of whether girls could sing in the style that constituted 'the English cathedral tradition' appeared not to arise. This is possibly because as these were both formerly parish churches, which were given cathedral status, and whose cultural traditions were more recent and were unlike most of the long-established foundation cathedrals. The girl choristers were recruited specifically to sing services which were more congregation-based and not services that were part of the traditional Book of Common Prayer, such as Choral Evensong, Matins or Holy Communion and, consequently, they were unlikely to be seen to be in any way a threat to the boy chorister tradition. In these two instances, the object of the activity system remained the perpetuation of a choral tradition in the mould of boy choristers singing traditional services.

Harrison Oxley, the Director of Music at Bury St. Edmunds, who is reported to have argued that the church should not 'bar half of humanity from the benefits and opportunities of cathedral membership' (Phillips, 1980, vol. 2, p. 193), and believed choral music should be available for boys and girls equally. There was also the practical matter that he was experiencing difficulties in recruiting boys. As a result, girls were introduced in 1958 to sing with the boys in the first Parish church mixed choir:

there were congregational services, very simple sort of children's services, family service and you know, I said, 'well we want a choir for this' and that was a way I thought we could have some girls. It was not singing Cathedral music or anything, it was a very, very simple thing in those days, but that was how girls came into the

He continued:

it was for boys or girls who liked to join it and they only had to sing a few hymns you know. It was just a very, very simple little children's choir for a simple children's service, but that's, that's how girls first came to be involved. To start with it is a Parish Church Cathedral and we had in those early days, we had definitely services that were not Cathedral type services at all, that were simple for a Parish congregation. (DOM F 5)

When Phillips (1980) attended a rehearsal at Bury St Edmunds which at the time had a mixed-choir. He found that the voices blended well together and he described the sounds as being well focused with a clear, soft, light quality. There was also some evidence of a steely sound (as is more often attributed to boy choristers) to the singing. However, Phillips believed that the mixed choir possibly could not achieve the strong tone-quality which has in more recent years been associated with 'the English cathedral tradition.'

I was privileged to attend a rehearsal for trebles alone at Bury and for my part I found the mixture of voices thoroughly pleasing. There was a little edge to the sound, but it had soft, light quality which was as clear as it was well-focused. Although these children could sing loudly when required to do so, they were not intent on producing the forthright, steely sound which Dr Higginbottom describes and which I think to be finding greater favour in our cathedrals nowadays; and it is probable that they could not produce this tone-quality even if they wanted to. (Phillips, 1980, vol. 2, p. 195)

Phillips stated that it may be considered as inauthentic to have a mixed choir. He continued to explain, however, that authenticity in music and stylistic music nationalities should not be taken literally:

To say that this sound is unsuitable for church music requires from the critic a very precise ideas of what he expects, and it would be misguided to hold up any tone-quality as representing the 'average cathedral sound'. To say that the sound is inauthentic is an objection which Harrison Oxley has satisfactorily countered in his statement quoted above. Certainly, it is technically inauthentic to perform church music written for boys, with girls; but we should first complain of some pure-toned English choirs singing Spanish music before we make the relatively small distinction of objecting to mixed choirs singing music we are happy for boys alone to sing. (Phillips, 1980, vol. 2, p. 195)

From the outset in Bury St Edmunds, there was no intention of them singing on equal terms with the boys, yet all the same the Director of Music encountered some opposition from clergy who were against a girls' choir being formed:

the whole idea was not to let anybody know about it. The cathedral hierarchy did not want the wider public to know that girls were singing in the cathedral (DOM F 5).

The CHAT 'object' thus remained the perpetuation of a choral tradition of boy choristers singing the traditional services exclusively. Yet, the success in recruiting girl choristers resulted in them being combined with the boys as a mixed choir and the results of this led to difficulties with the recruitment of boys:

Always much easier to get girls than boys, yes; but girls they supported, they brought their friends along you know, that was always easy, but persuading boys to come was certainly more difficult. (DOM F 5)

As the number of girls auditioning for places increased, the number of boys declined. Ultimately, the Director of Music was told he could not recruit anymore girls unless 'for every girl, a boy was also recruited' (DOM F 5). In addition to the problem of recruitment with a larger choir made up predominantly of girls, they could not fit in the newly made choir stalls and some of the clergy were not supportive of the direction the choir was taking:

[That] I was on my own, there was no question. I mean I suppose it got to the point where the Precentor was with me because his two daughters were in it and he was a trained singer. He was a musician as well as being a clergyman, but you know the senior choir hierarchy of the cathedral were very much against it. (DOM F 5)

Subsequently, the Director of Music found his position untenable and resigned and the choir reverted to a boys' only choir.

Leicester was the next parish church cathedral in 1974 to introduce a girls' choir and, like Bury St. Edmunds, the girls' choir was formed to sing once a week at a Sunday evening service which was not part of the established service cathedral rota:

I was appointed as Assistant Organist at Leicester Cathedral in 1973, and part of my responsibility was to take charge of the 6.30 evensong service. At that time there were two evensong services, one at 4 p.m. which was a fully choral service with settings of the Responses, the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis, and an anthem, but with no sermon. The service at 6.30 p.m. was effectively a service for the parish of St. Martin. It was a typical Parish Church type evensong, including a short psalm, the canticles sung to Anglican Chant, ferial responses, a short anthem, and a sermon. (DOM F 7)

He explained that, originally, the 6.30pm service was sung by a small number of boy choristers and probationers:

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usually sung by eight boys, four of whom were probationers, and the other four were choristers who sang this service on a rota basis, having already sung at 11 a.m. and at 4 p.m. The alto, tenor and bass parts were sung by songmen, most of whom did not sing at other Cathedral services. (DOM F 7)

He continued that, this service, in addition to the two other services, was not very popular with those singing and it was decided to give the boys more free time with less singing duties and recruit girls:

It was felt that this situation was not entirely satisfactory, and the Provost (only recently has this title been changed to Dean) and Chapter decided to investigate the possibility of having the treble line sung by girls' voices. (DOM F 7)

Auditions were held in the summer of 1974 and, despite no scholarship being offered, 16 girls aged between 12 and 14 were selected, with a retiring age of 18 when they came to it. There was no competition or comparison with the boy choristers in any way:

At the beginning, the repertoire was fairly limited, but in the course of time, quite a wide variety of music was sung within the confines of what was basically a parish church service. (DOM F 7)

Occasionally, the girls sang with the boys in a minor capacity:

Occasionally, the girls took part in special events such as the Christmas Eve Nine Lessons and Carols, when they sang the descants for the congregational hymns. (DOM F 7)

The girls' choir continued singing the 6.30pm Evensong for ten years until, in 1984, the congregation was declining in number and it was decided to change it from a sung to a said service. Congregation numbers then declined even more and the service was stopped altogether:

By 1984, the congregation at the 6.30 Evensong declined to such an extent that it was decided to dispense with the services of a choir. In fact, the service was discontinued a few years later. (DOM F 7)

The girls' choir were then given the opportunity to be part of the Choral Foundation and sing Evensong on Saturday which at that time was sung by the boy choristers and men, but this was not well received and the girls' choir folded up:

in 1984 the girls were asked if they would sing for the Saturday Evensong, which up till that time had been sung by boys and men. The Sunday girls were reluctant to do this, and so this choir was disbanded. (DOM F 7)

A new choir was then formed and girls were recruited to sing Evensong on Saturdays. This introduction of girl choristers into the choral tradition appears to have happened largely unnoticed, unlike the reaction when Salisbury introduced a girls' choir a few years later. The question of whether or not girls could sing in the style that constituted 'the English cathedral tradition' would

most probably not have been addressed. The girls were simply singing the sort of music sung in a parish church at a cathedral. Their style of singing was not in question, as they were there really to sing at the same time as the congregation.

In the early 1980s, the RSCM held an annual cathedral course during the summer holiday at Lincoln cathedral for girl choristers from parish churches. Whilst the RSCM had run cathedral courses for boy choristers starting several years earlier, this was the only cathedral course available for girls in the UK and it was highly competitive (Rees, R. 1980, p.63). The selection process was by invitation only and, to qualify, girl choristers had to sing in a parish church choir affiliated to the RSCM, and attend three residential weekly courses each year at St. Elphin's School Darley Dale, Derbyshire. In addition to this, most of the girl choristers had passed the examination for the RSCM St. Cecilia Award which was the highest award for a girl chorister. The examiner for this award was often a cathedral Director of Music. The invitation to attend was only issued to girl choristers for three years and there would be sadness amongst girls singing their final service in their third year. However, by restricting it to three years, this did allow a larger number of girls to take part. These early opportunities for girl choristers singing in cathedrals seen nationally did not attract much comment or interest. However, nor did they succeed in changing the entrenched attitudes of some. Most organists of the time remained opposed to girl choristers, although coherent justifications for these views were hard to come by (Phillips, 1980). This said, Alan Quilter believed the reason for their opposition was because it was thought the girls could not sing in the style of 'the English cathedral tradition':

I'm told by organists that girls are not capable of making exactly the right sound, but I've a suspicion that this is not the whole truth (Quilter, quoted in Phillips, 1980, vol. 2, p. 195).

It was also thought that girls were not capable of making a strong enough sound that was required:

There is general agreement that girls under the age of 13 are not usually capable of making as *much* sound as boys: therefore, to have girls who leave at 13, which they would have to do in most choir-schools, would be a bad investment if boys were available and of the same musical standard. (Phillips, 1980, vol. 2, p. 195)

A girl's voice is weakest where a boy's is strongest; a boys' voice hardens considerable during the term, and a girls' could not I think. (Phillips, 1980, vol. 2, p. 195)

Another general justification related to:

the assumption that because of physiological differences, they cannot produce the clear white impersonal tone quality that boys are uniquely capable of. (Day, 2000, p. 132)

Director of Music Roy Massey believed that girls under the age of 13 were not actually capable of producing a pleasant sound:

I've never seen a set of girls of under-13 age who make a nice noise. I've adjudicated at many festivals which have included such choirs and they sound windy and awful. After puberty, they make a very much nicer noise. (Phillips, 1980, vol. 2, p. 195)

Perhaps surprisingly, even Oxley, whose mixed choir at Bury had challenged so many conventions, made the point that when boy choristers sang Stanford they made a more thrilling sound than a mixed choir: 'we cannot quite produce the thrilling noise which an all-boys treble line should make in that piece' (Oxley, quoted in Phillips, 1980, vol. 2, p. 193). Nevertheless, he also expressed his delight at having fooled listeners into thinking he led an all-male group:

You cannot really tell that they are not boys. We fooled the critics – our last record had a girl and a boy singing solos and the comment was printed 'two fine boy soloists' (quoted in Phillips, 1980, vol. 2, p. 195)

It was also thought by some that girls' voices under the age of 13 were simply not strong enough to sing the music repertoire sung by the boys. At St Paul's cathedral, the workload of weekly services, high profile special services, recordings, broadcasts and choir tours is considered to be one of the most demanding schedules for boy choristers. Barry Rose, the former Director of Music, explained that he did not think that girl choristers would be strong enough to cope with the workload:

My relationship with the boys is not so much friendly as professional. We sing almost every day, often on the radio, sometimes on television: that relationship is critical. Would young girls be able to stand up to this? Are they as tough, as prepared to be pushed around, when necessary, as boys? I think not. (Phillips, 1980, vol. 2, p. 195)

Phillips (1980) supported this perception, pointing out that the girls of Bury St Edmunds were able to manage the workload there, as the choir had fewer services each week:

The situation at Bury differs from that at St Paul's in that the choir sing there only three times a week and they have more rehearsal time than most of these appearances. It could well be that the differences between a boys' and a girls' character at that age, when put under the kind of pressure which choirs like St Paul's experience, are significant. (Phillips, 1980, vol. 2, p. 195)

Opportunities for women, as opposed to girls, to sing liturgical music were found in the Cambridge University chapel choirs, the most distinguished of these being Clare College, Gonville and Caius' and Trinity. In addition to singing two or three services a week in the College chapel, they also went on to make recordings and have concert tours:

Critics and commentators immediately found in the three choirs the familiar characteristics that had marked out King's in recent decades, the blending of the voices, the brightness of the tone quality, the way the sound gleamed, the 'whiteness' and 'cleanness' of the sound, the 'boyish purity' of the top lines, the impeccable intonation, and they marvelled at how beautiful the performances were, how ethereal, how eloquent. (Day, 2018, p. 230-231)

Moreover, from the 1940s onwards, mixed secular choirs such as the Schola Polyphonica, Renaissance Singers and the Deller Consort sang liturgical music in concerts. A comparison of boy choristers in cathedral and collegiate choirs with secular choirs singing Tudor church music is described by Day (1989) whose research suggests that the standards of secular choirs were higher than the cathedral and collegiate choirs:

It was these secular choirs who were setting high standards of performance of Tudor church music in the 1940's and 1950's and generally speaking the standards attained by the cathedral choirs could only be compared unfavourably. Denis Stevens described a recorded performance by the choir of Canterbury Cathedral singing Tallis's *In ieiunio et fletu* as demonstrating 'a lack of phrasing, expression and understanding which has to be heard to be believed' and Andrew Porter regretted the trebles' 'wavery cooing sound. English boys seem unable to produce firm solid tone'. Michael Howard thought that 'if the waning interest of English people in the music of the church is to be revived, surely it is an ill-advised action to issue an album containing certain records that fall so far below the high standard that should have been set'. (Day, 1989, p. 29)

Other professional adult choirs such as the Monteverdi choir (founded in 1964), The Sixteen (founded in 1977) and The Tallis Scholars (founded in 1978) have continued the practice of singing liturgical music in the concert hall or in cathedrals. Comparisons in more recent times are more favourable as standards of singing has risen in cathedral and collegiate choirs. This is partly due to better vocal training of choristers by Directors of Music assisted by a vocal coach, but also the younger age of lay clerks. In the early 1900's, there was no retiring age for lay clerks who could continue to sing even though their voices had deteriorated. An account by Baltimore, a Parish church organist, who attended services in English cathedrals in 1900 commented on the inferior quality of the lay clerks' voices:

'In some cathedrals the men singers are on what is called the 'foundation', and have grown old in the service, and their voices are no longer either pleasant to listen to or useful, and yet they are retained in the choir', he commented in a letter to the Musical Times, 'Consequently the music suffers'. (Day, 1989, p. 31)

In more recent times, a retirement age has been introduced for lay clerks and, due to their salary not keeping up with modern day inflation, the age of lay clerks is younger, leading to more youthful voices. Day (1989) records a comparison by David Fellowes commenting on a recording of Byrd's Great Service in 1987 by King's College Cambridge and The Tallis Scholars as both being recordings of a high standard. He also comments on the way each choir has a different and equally valid interpretation of the music:

from Stephen Cleobury and Kings you get the performance that seems nearer to the spiritual and historical sound-world of the piece, whereas Peter Phillips and The Tallis Scholars provide something more helpful for an objective understanding of the works' greatness. (Day, 1989, p. 31)

The women in The Tallis Scholars, like many professional choirs singing Tudor music, sing with a minimum of vibrato and the vocal colour is perceived to be stylistic of liturgical music, at least in the UK. The Clerkes of Oxenford (founded in 1961 from University undergraduates and graduates) are reported to have inspired many of the later choirs mentioned above. Originally, it was an all-male choir and later began to use women to sing the soprano parts. It has been noted that their voices sounded in a style which is very similar to boy choristers:

The girls' timbre of the Clerkes of Oxenford may not have been indistinguishable from trebles' – though it was often mistaken for it – but it certainly embodied the hallmark qualities of the cathedral choirs' male voices. (Day, 2000, p. 132)

The inspiration for the Clerkes' vocal colour and general style was clearly the English cathedral tradition, as it had been for many of the earlier mixed choirs specialising in sixteenth-century polyphony. The women who began singing in the Clerkes were all young undergraduates or recent graduates, were capable of producing a clear, bright tone characterised by a virtual absence of vibrato, yet each of them able to sustain a stringer and fuller sound than most choirboys can. (Day, 1989, p. 36)

Further CD reviews also comment on their purity of sound:

Wulstan used girl sopranos who were trained to sound like boys (necessary because boys' voices break earlier nowadays). The result is magical and even overwhelming in the angelic purity and crystalline texture of the voices and the astonishing definition of the contrapuntal lines as they weave about each other. The tuttis have an emotional force like no other recording and the total effect can leave one dazed. (David Wulstan (Conductor), & 1 more Format: Audio CD Hafizullah Chishti 'Spem in Alium' Reviewed 16 December 2005)

The Clerkes' exquisitely poised ensemble emphasises beautifully the composer's striking exploitation of individual vocal characteristics, with finely judged balance between the ethereal, soaring sopranos and the mellower tone values of the lower voices. (BBC Magazine Sheppard/Gibbons 20 January 2012 - 4:09pm Submitted by root_admin)

Nevertheless, others do not appear to have been fully convinced. For instance, Day (1989) records the opinion of Sir Sydney Nicholson:

There are undoubtedly those who prefer the singing of women in church owing to its greater emotional appeal, which they feel to be a more sincere expression of personal religion than can be expected from boys... It may readily be admitted that for many purposes women's voices are more suitable than those of boys, but not for English church music. This was written for boys and men and cannot produce the effect intended by the composers when rendered by any other voices (quoted in Day, 1989, p. 33).

This debate has continued into more recent times. Prentice, Director of Music at Lincoln cathedral where a woman was appointed to sing contralto, commented in 2015 that their voices do not alter the overall choir's sound:

As an alto myself, I have sung in choirs where there's a mixture of men and women, and have always found it to give a greater flexibility of sound. The blends have provided an interesting sound that hasn't deviated far from what people's perception of what a cathedral choir sounds like. (Prentice 2015)

Ultimately, as Phillips comments, this may be a matter of taste and perception:

The range of a real contralto is supremely useful. The question of timbre is less certain. Can female altos make the 'right sound', since a warm, womanly timbre might well be thought the antithesis both of how falsettists sound and indeed how boys sound? ...In the end it is a matter of taste as to how the altos can best bind the boys' timbre with that of the lower voices, but there is a concern that women altos might compromise the very particular Anglican cathedral sound we have all got used to. (Phillip 2010)

2.8 Could girls sing in a style that constituted 'the English cathedral tradition'?

Through the application of CHAT, we see a cultural change as being necessary in order to provide an equal opportunity for girls to sing in cathedral choirs. The CHAT lens shows what happened and why, but also it highlights what was the outcome, and what this might mean. The theory posits that one of the drivers of change is disequilibrium in the system (*cf* Bingham, 2016, in this case a perception by some that the perceived exclusivity of the all-male choir needed to be challenged. By providing an equal opportunity, would the outcome result in girls having the same or different style of singing from the cathedral tradition? It is not clear if Directors of Music had any preconceived ideas of how girl choristers would sound. In the early days it is very probable that the community cathedral tradition would possibly go through a period of change, as it was unlikely perhaps that novice girl probationers would sing in the same style as boys. The object of girls being introduced, even after following the rules such as regular vocal training, could mean that the actual outcome might be a different object from that intended under the traditions of the cathedral community.

Community is central to the process of the cathedral tradition, interpreting the rules and viewpoints so that they are in line with a collective opinion. The stylistic concerns of girls' voices lead to the analysis of whether their singing would traditionally match the style that composers intended and whether authenticity would therefore be upheld. Artistic implications are part of the rules and the outcome of the cultural tradition which may include a possible transformation.

For many, the introduction of girl choristers was thought by many to signal an end to centuries of tradition because they believed it would completely alter their perceptions of accepted choral sound. They believed girls' voices were not suited to singing in the style of 'the English cathedral tradition' and that, therefore, girls' choirs would jeopardise the quality and standard of singing and the choral tradition (Day, T. (ed. J. Potter). (2000). It was even suggested that the inclusion of girl

choristers could have a detrimental effect on the boys' self-discipline (Phillips, 1980). Just eleven years before the introduction of girls at Salisbury, young girls were still being described by Birch as singing:

very prettily but it's a vapid sound. Adult women would simplify things no end; but we are here to educate not to run a professional music-party every day. (Phillips, 1980, vol. 2, p. 195)

Even Harrison Oxley said that they lacked 'attack' (Phillips, 1980, vol. 2, p. 195). Historically, (apart from more recent) cathedral music had been written for an all-male choir and, therefore, one line of thought was that the boy chorister tradition of singing in cathedrals up to 1991 should be preserved without any threat from a new choir of girls.

Some saw the traditional constitution of the cathedral choir as 'a stupendous inheritance' and were sure that the introduction of girl's voices would lead to a 'total transformation' of the sound and the style of singing in cathedrals, a style that had taken centuries to perfect. (Day, 2018, p. 234-235)

This question of authenticity was emphasised by one interviewee several years after many cathedrals had included girl choristers, believing that the all-male sound was in danger of being lost:

If you want authentic performance practice of church music, rightly or wrongly, it's all-male. That's the sound that has nurtured from the earliest year's right through until 1990 when it started to change, and I think we are in danger of losing it. (DOM 4)

The introduction of girl choristers at Salisbury cathedral in 1991 raised the question of whether girls could sing in the style that constituted 'the English cathedral tradition'. Yet, as outlined above, there was in reality a more fundamental question as to the extent to which this was a stylistically coherent, homogenous tradition at all. As has been shown, Directors of Music typically had their own particular 'boy chorister sound', and whether girls – of either the same or different ages – could sing and emulate any, some or all of these sounds remained to be seen. Girls' singing in school choirs, parish churches and the like did not provide a clear picture of the kinds of sound that they might produce within a cathedral service, as one interviewee explained:

we hadn't a clue with what we were going to come up with, we really didn't, and I hadn't really heard girls sing before (DOM F 1)

Similarly, Day (2018) notes that, prior to the introduction of girl choristers at Salisbury, Richard Seal believed that they would not be able to achieve the powerful sounds of boys before voice change. Instead, he is reported to have thought that they would make a sound which would be feminine and musical:

He was sure that they would make a different sound from the boys, indeed he hoped that they would. He didn't know what sort of sound it would be, but he hoped he would never tell them to make a sound 'like the boys'. He anticipated that it would be 'a

female sound' in that he thought it would be 'slightly frailer, with less carrying power maybe'... if a girl's voice might be fragile he was sure that it could be 'just as musical' as a boy's. (Day, 2018, p. 237-238)

Yet these unknowns did not prevent an explosion of reactions by those who felt strongly that the introduction of girls would mark the beginning of the end of the 'the English cathedral tradition'.

2.9 Twentieth century social developments

Despite the perceived high standards of cathedral music in the latter part of the twentieth century, there was simultaneously evidence of a perceived need for 'change and development' within the Anglican choral community more generally. External, as well as internal pressures, presented challenges to the established historical order, and these influenced a shift in thinking about what was appropriate. External social, cultural and economic changes began to influence the bases for the established traditions – which experienced tensions that lead to different parts of the system altering. The period from around 1914 onwards witnessed a series of accumulating 'tensions' which would serve to influence the development of the cathedral tradition from this point onwards. As is outlined below, these include:

- War, economics and human capital;
- Educational reform;
- Perceived tensions with family life;
- Socio-economic change;
- The 'equality of opportunity' agenda;
- Choral and voice training methods and approaches;
- Professionalism of the sector;
- Mass media, especially broadcasting; and
- The influence of popular musical styles and forms of worship.

The two World Wars had an impact on the cathedral tradition, with a reported difficulty of maintaining regular services, the individual evacuation of children, and some cathedral choir schools *en masse* moving to other locations in the country. One example was at Rochester Cathedral, where a women's choir sang the Services in place of the boy choristers when the choir school was evacuated to Devon (BBC, 2005). Also, there was the difficulty of retaining the tradition when Directors of Music and lay clerks were required to go to war.

Although the system's objects and outcomes were still potentially the same (to maintain the choral tradition and to include child choristers within that), the community experienced challenges ('contradictions'), which can be interpreted through a CHAT lens as 'historically accumulating

structural tensions'. These included wider national concerns related to equal opportunities (and resulting legal legislation in the 1970s), as well as within-system challenges related to the regular recruitment of sufficient boys in some parts of the sector. The outcomes were the need for some form of resolution in the face of such challenges:

Change and development arise from 'contradictions' that are 'historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems' (Welch, 2007, p. 27)

These changes and developments overturned what had been the norm in chorister recruitment, in that the recruitment of boy choristers could not be taken for granted anymore. A succession of Education Acts from the final quarter of the 19th Century onwards provided free educational opportunities for children at their local Primary schools (Simon, 1960). Instead of the regular daily singing commitments required by cathedrals, boys receiving free education locally, and allowed their lives to become more family-centred. Boy choristers did not have to go away to a choir school and become boarders and this 'change and development' arguably led to more 'togetherness' of family life. The boys who had sung first in the monasteries and then in the cathedrals had (by comparison with their peers) experienced a privileged (musical) education. However, following the 1944 Education Act which provided free Secondary school education for all pupils, the education of cathedral choristers faced a new challenge. In the early days, parents of song boys were glad of the opportunities for them to learn a few basic subjects, whereas more recently chorister recruitment risked being jeopardised by parents' concerns over the amount of commitment that was needed to be a chorister compared to other aspects of their education. Farr (2003), Organist at Guildford Cathedral, explains the impact of such demands in terms of difficulties in chorister recruitment:

All of those currently at the 'sharp end' of cathedral music know that recent years have seen enormous changes to the broader educational and social context within which cathedral choirs operate. In particular, there has been a fundamental shift in people's attitude to children, and in their assessment of the demands it is reasonable to make on them. Academic pressure now comes at a far earlier age. As a consequence, the recruitment of boy choristers, in particular, has become a far more difficult thing than it ever was. But there is still considerable interest in what we have to offer, and I am convinced that many parents are still keen for their children to have the 'chorister experience'. The challenge we have to meet is that far fewer are prepared to sacrifice their family life to achieve it – and we might well ask, why should they? (Farr, S. 2003 (1), p. 30).

The Precentor, Canon Ralph Godsall, also reflected on the situation of chorister recruitment:

A generation ago local parents from the lower socio-economic groups saw choristerships as a way of getting a reasonable and cheap education for their sons in return for their singing. Today's choristers come from the professional classes, and despite the best efforts of the Chapter to obtain sponsorship for one hundred per cent scholarships for boys from lower socio-economic groups, it is proving difficult to find boys from such backgrounds, possible because of the requirement that they must attend the cathedral choir school. In conversation with other cathedral precentors, it

has been interesting to learn that cathedrals without schools, which have to recruit without the incentive of choral scholarships, are finding it easier to recruit across the social spectrum (Godsall 2003, p.14).

As evidenced by the sources above, the future of the choral tradition has at various times in history provoked strong reactions amongst people who have been passionate about safeguarding their vision of its heritage. The tradition is influenced by those who are directly responsible for its continuation. For instance, during the first half of the 20th century, an apparently worrying state of cathedral music was reported by Fellowes (1941). At this time, it was felt by some that church composers should be writing music for people, particularly younger people, in a more popular style and that the language of the liturgy should reflect a more modern age, musically. Fellowes observed:

If the sung cathedral service eventually disappears, as gloomy prophets have foretold, a good deal will have been lost. Masterpieces which were designed for a particular purpose will be relegated to recitals, where they may impress as music but, deprived of their context, will lose much of their significance. It is clear, however, that mere respect for past achievements will not save church music from extinction. Its survival depends on a re-creation at the hands of the composers who combine devotion to their task with an awareness of the world in which we live. (Fellowes 1969, p. 262)

Almost fifty years later, during the second half of the 20th century, this problem was highlighted again. In 1987, there was much debate relating to the style of hymn tunes being sung in cathedral music. Some clergy favoured a more popular style of music for hymn tunes rather than the traditional hymns used in cathedrals. This view produced much discussion and it directly came into conflict with the views of some of the cathedral organists who, as professional musicians, were adamant in striving for the highest inherent musical quality. For example, Bradley (1987) thought that 'the world of church music is in a state of acute crisis.' He continued:

...the past few years have witnessed an unprecedented spate of rows between organists and vicars. (Bradley 1987, p. 15)

Bradley quotes Simon Preston in his article, a prominent cathedral organist who had recently (1987) announced his resignation from his post at Westminster Abbey:

There are now two kinds of musician in Britain (he says), ordinary musicians who aim for the highest standards they can and church musicians who are forced to cut corners and actually aim for the second-rate. The clergy can't come to terms with the fact that musicians are very dedicated people. They see choirs as just being there to encourage and sing along with the congregation and that is something I just can't accept. (Bradley 1987, p. 15)

2.10 Developments in girls' education and women's professional life

When considering the history of education in England, girls for many years had not enjoyed the same opportunities as boys. It was only in 1870 that England saw the first Education Act that required all young children aged 5 to 13 to attend school (Simon, 1960). It was a previous practice historically for girls to remain at home, as education was not considered to be important for their development. Education was not a right and there were many boys as well as girls who did not receive an education during that time. Attitudes founded on this history prevailed into the twentieth century. For example, Goode and Delamont, (1996, pp. 11-114) questioned many older women regarding the reaction of their parents when—as girls—they passed the scholarship to attend Grammar school in the period 1918-1944. Whilst many parents of both sexes could not afford to send their children to such a school, Goode and Delamont (1996) focused on responses concerning those parents who could afford it, but prevented it because of their beliefs about gender roles:

It wasn't important for a girl, it was important for my two brothers, but it wasn't important for me. (Mrs E.)

Another woman referred to as Mrs L. also commented on the belief that the education of girls—as viewed by her mother—was not of primary concern:

I can hear my mother saying, 'Girls only grow up and get married, what's the point of keeping them in school till they're sixteen', and that was that.

Yet over time, there were increased educational opportunities for girls, not only through state education, but also later on with their introduction in some Independent schools which had previously a long history of educating boys only, and who had started to admit girls as well. Oakham School being the first school to admit girls in 1971 (www.oakham.rutland.sch.uk › about-oakham › history-of)

All-girl boarding schools had begun to appear more systematically in the mid-19th Century, such as Cheltenham Ladies College (1853) and Roedean (1885).

Many Independent schools had a chapel choir consisting of boy trebles and boys with changed voices singing the lower parts, often with the Masters of the school such as Bedford School aged 7-18 (www.bedfordschool.org.uk › pastoral-care › chapel)

With co-education, the chapel choir had to provide singing opportunities for the girls. Unless the senior school had a preparatory school attached (aged 7-13 years), introducing girls into the choir was also helpful, as older boys aged 12/13 years usually began to experience voice change (earlier

than in previous times) and thereby making the continuation of a treble line difficult. These 'contradictions' raised the question 'Why can't a girl be in a cathedral choir? '.

1991 was a year with significant impact on the opportunities given to girls when they were provided with the chance to sing in cathedrals. It came at a time when socially the situation for women was changing, and being excluded 'because you are a girl' was to be against a prevailing concern with equal opportunities. It was a year that included several historic landmarks for women in different walks of life that had previously been male dominated:

- Stella Rimmington – first woman to head MI5;
- Dr Anne McLaren – first woman officer of the Royal Society as Foreign Secretary;
- Helen Sharman – first British astronaut to go into space and first woman to visit the Mir Space Station;
- Patricia Scotland – first black woman to become a QC;
- Dame Mares Hartman – first woman president of the Amateur Athletic Association;
- Edith Cresson – first woman Prime Minister of France;
- Begum Khalada Zia – first woman Prime Minister of Bangladesh; and
- Jo Salter – first woman to qualify as a fast-jet pilot flying Tornados.

(List taken from BBC, 2009)

Of course, these individual 'firsts' did not occur in isolation and must be seen within the context of far broader developments in social and professional life over many decades. For instance, gradual advances since the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919 first enabled women to practice law meant that, by 1990, women represented over 60% of new entrants to the legal profession (Law Society, 2018). Similarly, the proportion of female medical students within the UK rose steadily from between 20% and 25% in 1968 to exceed 50% in 1991 (McManus & Sproston, 2000).

Women employed in science, engineering and technology roles increased by nearly 30% between 1992 and 2000, although men were still far more likely to predominate overall (Greenfield, 2002).

In elite sport, 1991 marked the founding of the English women's national football league with 24 clubs, exactly eighty years after the Football Association had prohibited women on the grounds that 'the game of football is quite unsuitable for females and ought not to be encouraged'¹⁵ 1991

¹⁵ (en.wikipedia.org › wiki › Women's_association_football).

was also the year that the first Women's Rugby World Cup was held in Cardiff¹⁶ another sport with a history of limiting female involvement. Developments in school sports followed, and in 1992 the National Curriculum for Physical Education (NCPE) in England and Wales set out the sports curriculum in all state schools. It specified that all pupils should be taught games, gymnastics, dance, athletics, swimming and outdoor activities, thereby achieving greater equality for both genders (Waddington, Malcolm and Cobb, 1998).

Within the world of church music, the years leading up to the developments at Salisbury had witnessed the appointment of the first female assistant organists at English cathedrals in over four decades¹⁷. Rosemary Field was appointed Assistant Organist at Birmingham cathedral in 1986, followed three years later by Claire Hobbs at Bristol. Subsequently, the first female Organ Scholar, Katherine Dienes-Williams, was appointed at Winchester cathedral from 1991¹⁸. It would, however, be a further eight years before the appointment of the first female Oxbridge Director of Music: Sarah MacDonald at Selwyn College Cambridge. Her reflections twenty years into the role in January 2019 suggest that, whilst many glass ceilings have continued to be broken over this period, attitudes persist in some corners regarding the 'appropriate' division of labour for a female church musician:

I have never felt discriminated against by my colleagues or my students, and indeed many of my more junior colleagues come to me for advice now that I am comparatively senior...I also suspect that I am pigeon-holed by some older (male) colleagues (both musical and clerical) as someone who can only conduct/train girls' choirs in cathedrals, simply because I am a woman. I hope that future generations will be spared that kind of nonsense! (www.minervafestival.org 9 Jan 2019)

A still more recent, and yet unusual appointment for its time, was Sarah Baldock as organist at Chichester Cathedral (Easter 2008 – 2014).

It is only within this same, comparatively recent period that women have been appointed to other prominent roles within the wider cathedral music community. The organ tuning profession, for instance, has historically been all male. One of the first women tuners was Laura Johnson, appointed at Harrison and Harrison in 2006. She explained that in the early days people would often not realise her position:

I used to find that the organists would often talk to my assistant (usually older than me and male) rather than to me, but now it's quite normal to be a woman in the trade. As part of my apprenticeship, I went to organ building school in Germany where 10 out of

¹⁶ (en.wikipedia.org › 1991_Women's_Rugby_World_Cup)

¹⁷ Previously, in an apparently isolated example, Anne Maddocks had served as Assistant Director of Music at Chichester cathedral between 1942 and 1949.

¹⁸ Subsequently, in January 2008 Dienes-Williams became the first woman to hold the most senior music position in an English cathedral having been appointed as Organist of Guildford Cathedral.

60 of us were women. (Our Members | SWO www.societyofwomenorganists.co.uk › our-members)

More recently still, Katie Schofield became the first female cathedral contralto lay clerk at Peterborough in 2010, almost thirty years after the first girls had entered the choir stalls in Salisbury. A small number of adult women have found roles in cathedral choirs in the years since (Day, 2018). That adult, female singers are amongst the last to find a place within the expanded, if not yet completely transformed, cathedral music community is significant. It points to the continuing belief, in some quarters, that cathedral vocal timbres are conventionally thought to blend most effectively with the voices of male lay clerks (Phillip 2010; Prentice 2015), a topic to which we will return below in more detail.

There were also concomitant changes in the parent activity systems of cathedral music. April 1987 witnessed the ordaining of the first women deacons within the Church of England. This was followed in March 1994 by the ordaining of 32 women as Anglican priests, a development which caused great debate and division. Whilst women priests were subsequently promoted through the clergy hierarchy, there remained few women Deans of cathedrals. Additionally, much dissent arose regarding the question as to whether they may be allowed to progress to the office of a Bishop. The first woman Bishop was not appointed until 2015, with 12 others following suit over the next three years, including the senior position of Bishop of London.

Strides were also made within the world of secular Classical music. Women conductors who came to the fore during this period included Jane Glover, Music Director of the London Mozart Players from 1984 and Sian Edwards, Music Director of English National Opera between 1993 and 1995. Yet whilst musicians such as Suzi Digby, Xin Zhang and Marin Alsop have all helped to continue to raise the profile of female conductors in the years since, attitudes have remained entrenched in some quarters. Recently, for instance, Joana Mallwitz, a leading German conductor, has explained that she is often asked the question 'Can a woman conduct Wagner? Isn't it too tiring?' (www.dpa-international.com). As will be discussed later, lingering strains of biological determinism also dogged the first generations of female choristers and their directors, with some repertoire regarded by a minority as only viable through the application of masculine strength. With regards to British orchestras themselves, the 1980s saw the introduction of more women, and by 1990 the number of women orchestral player rose to 30% (Scharff 2015). A survey in 2003 revealed that, out of the top 5 professional British symphony orchestras, the Hallé orchestra had 45 men and 38 women, the BBC Symphony orchestra had 55 men and 37 women, the London Philharmonic orchestra had 52 men and 23 women, the Bournemouth Symphony orchestra had 45 men and 26 women. The lowest number of women represented was by the London Symphony Orchestra having 77 men and 22 women. A further study in 2014 found that the number of women had increased to 43.2% (Scharff 2015).

Overall, then, the number of women employed in previously male-dominated professions has increased considerably since 1991. Yet even so, in some aspects of each discipline there remains resilience to change, particularly with regards to traits traditionally perceived as feminine. These traits include women's traditional nurturing role, perceptions that they are inherently unattracted to technical careers, and concerns that they might not be strong enough for physically demanding work (Frize, 2009). For instance, faced with a dominant culture which associates masculinity with logic, risk-taking, courage and the control of emotions, some 'women scientists are reluctant to express feminine qualities at work, fearing loss of credibility' (Frize, 2009, p. 237). Others may attempt to adopt more masculine characteristics, including via clothing, in order to fit in (Martin, Wright, & Beavan, 2015).

These are perhaps some of the reasons why women still appear to face barriers regarding senior promotion. As noted, in 1991 the medical school population was over 50% women, yet this cohort had not reached the most senior positions in medicine in proportional terms according to McManus and Sproston (2000). In the mid-2000s only 6% of women were QCs, 7% were judges and there was only one female High Court Judge according to Connolly and Gregory (2007). Similarly, whilst over 60% of entrants to law are female, only 28% of partners in UK law firms were female as of 2018 (the Law Society 2018). In 2020, the scientist Andrea Ghez has been awarded a Nobel Prize in physics, only the fourth woman since 1903, Marie Curie, with a 60-year gap until the next female prize winner in 1963.

Within orchestral music, out of the 43% of women players in orchestras in 2014, only 26.8% were principals. A majority of senior instrumentalists are male and continue to play under male conductors performing music usually composed by men. Whilst more women have been appointed in more recent times the instruments they play tend to be those regarded as more 'feminine' such as violin, flute and harp (Allmendinger & Hackman, 1995; Scharff, 2015). Some have claimed that the appointment of women orchestral players around the world has been held back with men claiming that women are weaker, less competent or could be a distraction (Phelps, 2010). There is some evidence of similar attitudes within cathedral music over this same period. Anna Lapwood, former Organ Scholar at Magdalen College Oxford and currently (since 2016) Director of Music at Pembroke College Cambridge, has recalled being told by an adjudicator to 'play like a man', questioned as to whether she could play the 'hard stuff', and attempting to fit in more effectively by wearing masculine clothes and trying to deepen her speaking voice¹⁹

As a further example from the world of sport attests, resilience to change and barriers to the promotion of women to senior roles is remarkably persistent, even as tradition gradually gives way to the introduction and advancement of women and girls in society. 1991 was the year that the first

¹⁹ (Franks, 2018 <https://www.classical-music.com/features/artists/interview-anna-lapwood/>)

women applied to join the Marylebone Cricket Club, but it would seven years of divisive votes of the membership and a further twenty years on the waiting list before they were finally able to take to the field (Ammon, 2018). It is against this complex milieu of greater opportunities for women tempered by persistent sexist attitudes that we must assess the impact of the first girls' cathedral choirs.

2.11 Summary

The Anglican choral tradition has its roots firmly established over 1300 years ago in Canterbury, York and London. The convention of using a single sex (boys) as choristers within this tradition—rather than girls—remained in place until the final decade of the 20th Century. In order to understand why the tradition experienced this disruption, it is necessary to understand that this cultural tradition was not necessarily static across this period, but was bound by the rituals of religious practice, themselves shaped by larger political events. As in other areas of human endeavour, continuity and change, consonance and dissonance are characteristics of collective human activity. Consequently, Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) is a useful tool in understanding why this virtually unbroken period of cultural stability experienced such a dramatic change in 1991 in Salisbury. The essence of CHAT as a theoretical approach is signalled in its combination of elements: its focus on understanding the interrelated impacts of culture, history and activity because '...activity theorists are concerned with upholding human activity—the historical results of the division of labour—as *the* fundamental unit of analysis' [italics in the original] in which, following and expanding the original Vygotskian theory '...object related practical activity [is seen] as the proper unit of analysis' (Roth & Lee, 2007, p189). Thus, in order to understand the introduction of female choristers in Salisbury in 1991 – an 'outcome', it is necessary to understand the broader historical context, including contemporary late 20th Century cultural forces, and how particular individuals at that time acted to make explicit a particular 'object' – the need for change (and see Chapter 3 for more detail concerning the case study of Salisbury Cathedral).

Looking at the historicity of this tradition (Welch, 2007, p. 29), the 'subjects' (participants) of the activity were originally boys who came either from the local community or were—by tradition—taken from their home to sing at a major cathedral with the 'object' of turning them into 'choristers' (child performers of collective sacred music in specific geographical locations). Their parents, particularly those from poorer families, may have perceived that the boys would receive a good quality education which was free of financial cost to them. At a time when education was extremely limited and not generally available for all children, but only for those children with wealthy parents, the opportunity to become a chorister would likely have been a big incentive for some parents seeking sustained educational experience for their offspring.

The 'outcome' of a choral education within the tradition was that boy choristers became intrinsically involved in a perpetuation of the English choral customs and practices through induction, structured and sustained experience, and including a specific musical education.

This 'outcome' – which in CHAT is related to the intended 'object' of the system– was essentially the same as the intended 'object', in that new choristers had their development framed within a community process towards producing musically competent, skilled singers that enabled the Anglican choral tradition to continue and, arguably, flourish – as evidenced by the numbers of cathedrals choirs currently who record commercially and perform, including media broadcasts.

The 'mediating artefacts' within the CHAT system include the social and cultural expectations, the rituals, the sacred repertoire, and the extensive rehearsal and performance schedules. The 'rules' whereby the music is sustained include adequate and regular rehearsal time, both where and how the choristers are rehearsed, who has responsibility for rehearsals, discipline, schedules, and high expectations for what needed to be achieved, alongside established conventions in singing styles and duties. This is arguably held up as a model for other choirs to emulate within a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), in the interpretation of the music, and with the treble line of boys singing with a clear straight choral sound without vibrato²⁰.

Analyses of the CHAT 'community and division of labour' elements illustrate how the chorister's activities are closely related to others involved in this field, including the lay clerks, Directors of Music, Organists, Assistants, Clergy and other adults with assigned roles (such as related to maintenance of the music and formal chorister clothing). Each of these usually has specific roles within the system/community, including both musical and pastoral welfare.

Another aspect of 'change and development' was within the culture of the cathedral community and the traditional 'division of labour'. Before 1991, cathedral communities were almost exclusively male orientated. The clergy, Directors of Music, Organists, lay clerks and choristers were all-male, the only exceptions in the cathedral community were probably the matron responsible for the choristers' welfare and a wardrobe lady looking after the choir and clergy vestments. The introduction of girl choristers in 1991 into the cathedral community inevitably changed the dynamics of an all-male culture. It was not until March 12th 1994 that women priests were ordained in the Church of England and, later still in 1995, when one of the first women was appointed Canon Treasurer at Salisbury Cathedral. This highlights how long the first girl choristers spent in the early days of their own new tradition in an all-male culture that dated back to medieval times.

²⁰ Just to note that the customary use of the label 'treble' for boy choristers has recently been challenged by Martin Ashley (2020) in an, as yet, unpublished ms '*Wee shall hear the fearest voyces of all cathedral churches in England: Uncovering a lost treasure of English choral singing*'. Ashley provides evidence to suggest that contemporary boy choristers in 16th Century England sang both the mean and top-most lines in polyphonic repertoire and also would not necessarily have sounded the same in terms of vocal timbre as today's cathedral boy choristers.

Other aspects of 'change and development' concerned the cathedral finances as, with a very few exceptions, no new Directors of Music were appointed for the girls' choirs. There was the need for not only the massive prospect of fundraising to establish the new choir, but also the necessity to maintain it in the future.

Gradually the community and development of labour started to change, with the Directors of Music commonly having overall responsibility for two choirs (male and female), resulting in two lots of recruitment, rehearsing, service rotas, repertoire, timetabling to fit in with the demands of the associated choir school, and two sets of parents with whom to communicate.

The lay clerks had to embrace a new version of the tradition, and in some cases in the early days, had to adjust their singing style when singing services with the girl choristers. In some cathedrals which had a 'dumb day' where there were no choral services for one day of the week, the girl choristers were scheduled to sing on that day in order not to disrupt the boy choristers' singing duties. The lay clerks were required to sing with the girl choristers on the 'dumb day', so they no longer had a day off, possibly resulting in further financial outlay for the men.

The boy choristers also had to accept the change and development; in some cases, they had a reduced workload of rehearsals or services, resulting in not always having a regular daily rehearsal, and possibly a decrease in their choral repertoire knowledge. However, this gave the boys some additional opportunity to experience more free time, either at school or within family life.

The 'mediating artefacts' and 'rules' of a highly structured cathedral community (which has existed for over 1300 years) have had to adapt. During the latter half of the 20th century, new media pressures from radio and television broadcasts, recordings and concerts, and choir tours abroad—often made during the school holiday—have put additional pressures on Directors of Music. This new culture of expectations required the Anglican choral tradition to adapt and respond with regard to standards of vocal training, the emergence of new modern hymns, and the commissioning of new anthems, which have needed to be included in the repertoire. The aspect of recruitment, which originally provided less well-off boys with an education, now becomes in some cases, attractive to more financially well-off parents, in order to get a subsidised fee-paying education. However, with a wider evolving society, boy chorister recruitment (as reported in Chapters 4 and 5) declined for a variety of social reasons. Arguably, the biggest 'mediating artefact' in the last three decades of the Anglican choral tradition is the realisation of the importance of opportunity and the introduction of girls' choirs.

Activity systems are subject to 'expansive transformations'. These are the product of the 'aggravation' of contradictions, such as when individuals 'question and deviate from established norms' which 'escalates into collaborative envisioning' (ibid) towards an alternative collective viewpoint. (Welch, 2007, p.27)

The next chapter indicates how an 'aggravation' of contradictions underpinned the introduction of girl choristers by the action of an individual, i.e., the Director of Music at Salisbury Cathedral. He questioned the cathedral music tradition of having only boy choristers and deviated from this norm by finding a way of bringing about greater chorister recruitment equality, at least in terms of sex, being also in line with wider 20th century change and development. As a result of this initiative, there was a rapid change, with many cathedrals following his vision of the introduction of girl choristers. In the process, however, there were contradictions constantly emerging on both sides over a new choral tradition, causing aggravation. Despite this, the development continued from being just initially one individual's vision of the theory of creating a girls' choir, to its wider acceptance and inclusion by the majority of cathedrals in 2020.

Through the lens of CHAT, we see a cultural change was necessary in order to provide equal opportunity for girls to sing in cathedral choirs. However, by providing equal opportunity, this does not necessarily imply that girls would have the same, similar or a different style of singing from that expected hitherto in the cathedral tradition? Introducing a new choir of relative novices could imply that it was unlikely that novice girl probationers would sing in the same style as boys. The object of girls being introduced, even after following the rules such as regular vocal training in an established musical repertoire, could mean that the actual outcome might be different from the intended object within the traditions of the community. However, as revealed in the following chapters, the outcomes were constrained and shaped by the existing tradition to ensure that there was no major disjunction in the quality of the musical outcomes.

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3.1 Early developments

Salisbury was the first long-established English cathedral—aside from those cathedrals that were formerly Parish churches—to form a girls' choir; this was to break the mould of the all-male chorister tradition that dated back to the early monasteries. Two events in 1989 were to raise awareness of the fact that girls were excluded from membership of cathedral Choirs. The first event concerned a girl who had written to a popular BBC television programme of the time, 'Jim'll Fix It', asking if it could be arranged for her to sing with the Salisbury cathedral choir where her brother was a chorister. Dr Richard Seal, who was the Organist and Master of the Choristers at that time, agreed with this television request and so the public seeds of change were sown. Seal, himself became very optimistic about introducing a girls' choir as, in his position, he believed that he thoroughly understood the Anglican cathedral choral tradition of boys and men:

1988, early part of 1989, I would have told you that girls, girls in choirs, was impossible in collegiate cathedral choirs. Had I been told that in two years-time there will be girls at Salisbury, I would have laughed. (BBC Television broadcast 'Salisbury Girls' Choir', 1999)

The second event which was to lead to the formation of a girls' choir at Salisbury cathedral was an item on the agenda at the Annual London Conference for Deans, Provosts, cathedral organists and choir school head teachers, which took place on 10th October 1989 at Church House, Westminster under the title 'Cathedral Choir School and Chorister recruitment'. At this meeting, there were only a small number attending which included the Dean of Peterborough, the Provost of Edmundsbury, the Headmaster from York Minster School and a few cathedral organists. The following quoted extracts of the Minutes of this meeting (in which we can see the contradictions and tensions that are beginning to be recognised in CHAT terms) raised the following points:

- There was a wide-ranging discussion on the desirability of training girls to sing in cathedrals, perhaps in separate choirs.
- There was an agreement that the subject must be aired thoroughly, especially as we shall need to be seen as credible in the eyes of the Labour Party [the official political party of opposition in the House of Commons].
- It was clear from views expressed that this is an immense and complicated subject which cannot be tackled quickly.
- All agreed it is vital to maintain the excellent tradition of boys' choirs in the cathedrals. (ALC, 1989, p. 2)

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Nothing further was discussed about girls singing in cathedrals, although the next two agenda items included the news that in Bristol there was to be a choir of boys and girls singing together of Primary school age, and that the organist at St. Edmundsbury was to receive extra income from taking his work into Primary schools in the area.

Dr Richard Seal, who attended this Westminster Conference, was taken up with enthusiasm for the idea of a girls' choir and how it could impact positively on the then division of chorister labour. On a train journey from London to Salisbury after the Conference, he sketched down his plans for the formation of a girls' choir to sing at Salisbury:

He calculated that since in many cathedrals Evensong on a Monday is sung by men alone, it would be possible without fuss for girls to provide the top line whilst the boys had extra rehearsal. Wednesday had hitherto been the 'dumb'²¹ day at Salisbury, and could supply the girls with another chance to sing, this time on their own. And given the considerable pressure of singing four services each weekend in addition to weddings and concerts, Seal reasoned there would further opportunities for the girls to share the workload of the boys' choir without displacing it. (Shortt 1993, p. 8)

On returning to Salisbury, Seal discussed his ideas and put forward his plans to the Very Reverend Hugh Dickinson, Dean of Salisbury at that time, from whom he gained support:

I put the idea to the Dean and Chapter, to my assistant, to the gentlemen of the choir, and to the Headmaster of the Cathedral School, Michael Blee: They were all fired up with the same enthusiasm and we decided to go ahead. (Shortt 1993, p. 8)

Thoughts and aspirations are one thing, but the setting up of girl choristers at Salisbury must have taken an enormous amount of planning in order to ensure that the new venture was a success.

Richard Seal describes what drove him to achieve this:

What has really motivated me to go ahead with this project has been an overwhelming desire to see a cathedral church opening its choir stalls to both boys and girls, so that girls, too, can benefit from the unique education afforded at an English choir school. It has nothing to do with a drop in recruitment of boys, or a notion that girls will do a better job. It is the church doing its bit for the education of these young musicians. (Shortt 1993, p. 8)

In terms of mediating artefacts, there were several considerations of organising practical matters which needed to be addressed in order for it to succeed. One of the first practical necessities was where the girls should be educated. The chorister school which had been established by St. Osmund and had taken boys exclusively for the past 900 years. However, it seemed sensible that the girls should be educated at the same school, thus changing it from an all boys' school to a coeducational one. The Very Reverend Hugh Dickinson the Dean of Salisbury Cathedral spoke about people's reaction to introducing coeducation to the choristers' school in a Sermon, which he

²¹ A "dumb" day refers to a day in the cathedral where no music is sung by the cathedral choir.

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preached on July 15th 2001 at the Celebration of the Foundation of the Girls' Choir, its tenth anniversary:

That's the way the staff wanted it. That's the way the parents and Governors wanted it. AND – surprise, surprise, that's the way the boys wanted it. I suppose most of you take girls' choirs for granted now. Ten years ago, it broke 900 years of tradition with a kind of seismic shock. But we stuck to our guns and a date was fixed for the first intake of girls. (2001, p. 1)

Another issue was the question of sufficient funding for choral scholarships and to make the necessary additions to the Chorister school for girls' boarding, new music and choir robes. The decision had to be faced whether to raise the money for choral scholarships first, or to admit girl choristers and rely on their parents to finance them until funds became available.

We decided to go ahead, determined that no one else should pip us at the post. So, having advertised the first voice trial, to be held in February 1991, we waited to see what the response would be. As it turned out, the response was such that it became apparent that the whole venture was meant to happen. We found that out of the 32 applicants, we were able to choose 16 musical girls, whose ages ranged from nine to eleven, and whose parents were prepared to fund their schooling in Salisbury until such time as bursaries became available. (Church Times 19th March 1993, p. 8)

It was imperative that the introduction of the girls' choir should provide equality for both choirs and this has been an ideal at Salisbury that still exists today. Seal stated:

The climate seems to be right to offer young girls a chance that only boys have had for hundreds of years (Seal, quoted in Briley, 1990, p. 1)

It was necessary to gain additional support from outside the cathedral community. Plans went ahead to raise £500,000 for scholarship funding for the girls, resulting in a quarter of their school fees being paid compared with the boys receiving a subsidy of half of their fees. The ideal at the time, as is indeed the case now, was that no girl should be deprived of a choristership through lack of financial means. Whilst the funding was not as generous as for the boys, it should be borne in mind that existing funding was exclusively for boys and instigating new fund raising in order to establish a girls' choir very much depended on the support and goodwill of the general public. No idea at the time existed as to the response to establishing girls' choir and, therefore, support in fundraising could not be assessed. Seal, with the strong support of Dr Lionel Dakers, former Director of the Royal School of Church Music and a prominent figure in Church music, approached Sir John Tooley (former General Director of the Royal Opera House) in the hope that he would assist in fundraising. Tooley spoke of the approach made to him (The Girls Choristers Trust, Salisbury Cathedral A Celebration Weekend July 2001, p. 2):

I hesitated, but not for long, fervently believing in the importance of opening the doors of cathedral choirs to girls.

Fortunately, there were many supporters, two of whom were Norma Major and Mary Archer, married to senior members of the then UK Conservative Government. Initially, a fundraising event was held at 10 Downing Street and a fundraising committee was formed officially. One extremely generous donation was given for the entire fees for one girl (ibid).

3.2 Girls' admission to the Choral Foundation

On February 15th and 16th 1991, 32 girls aged between 8 -11 auditioned for the first voice trials. One of the choristers-to-be, Evelyn Howard whose father was one of the lay clerks, saw the occasion as 'the chance of a lifetime' (Kingston 1992, p. 19). Sixteen girls were subsequently admitted, with two more joining at a later date²². Eight months later, on October 7th 1991, the eighteen girls were admitted to the Choral Foundation at the first Evensong in which they sang the service. These few months leading up to this occasion were when the 'object' of the existing CHAT system changed, because previously it was focused on boys within the system and now, relatively suddenly, it was about both sexes.

In the choir stalls of Salisbury Cathedral on 7 October 1991, a minor revolution took place. Like other English revolutions before it, it was a low-key affair, driven by the urge for fair play, and achieved without fuss. But it was none the less a convulsion, a tidal wave in waters that had lain tranquil for centuries. (Church Times 13th July 2001, p. 12)

This occasion was an historic event and one which would influence other cathedrals to follow suit. In terms of CHAT, this minor revolution could be seen as the first move towards both an aggravation of existing tensions (as discussed in Chapter Two) and also their resolution, at least locally

The early formation of the girls' choir was in a sense under the microscope for all to see. Beale (1991, p2) reports David Halls, the Assistant Organist, as commenting:

We are not trying to imitate the boys – girls' voices are different.

In the same article by Beale, two choristers put forward their views on taking part in this epic occasion. Jacobina Gurney, aged eleven, is quoted as saying that it was 'very exciting' and Jessica Townsend aged nine thought that the girls were every bit as good as the boys 'But we haven't had as much training as some of them'. Another chorister, Nicola Rose, the daughter of Barry Rose

²² A recording of the first ever rehearsal of the girls' choir exists and can be accessed (with password 'minstrel') from: <http://bit.do/ezDVD>

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who had been Director of Music at St. Paul's Cathedral and then St. Alban's, commented on the difficulties some of the choristers encountered:

Sometimes, we do find it very hard and we almost give up, but we carry on. (in Kingston, 1992, p.19)

Yet during their first term, they sang further services and began to build up a repertoire. Seal reported that rehearsals would be slow, as girls learnt how to sing psalms and how to learn new repertoire. Likewise, David Halls, who at that time was the Assistant Organist, recalls the early rehearsals as being 'painfully slow. It would take us a whole choir practice to do four verses of a psalm' (quoted in Kingston, 1992, p.19). The skills of good sight singing that experienced choristers customarily have were not in place. The language they were required to sing (including Latin) was not always straightforward, using old-fashioned words or turns of phrase, which could present problems. The ability of listening to each other whilst they were singing in order to achieve a choral blend was a new experience for them. Learning how to use their voices and to develop good breath control were just a few of the difficulties that they had to overcome and learn quickly (Seal, private communication – see also Appendix chapter 8:13). Shortt described their progress as follows:

In that first term they sang three further services, graduating to five then nine services during the Lent and summer terms of last year (1992). Richard Seal's original aim that the girls should take on three services a week – half as many as the boys – is now being realised. Their repertoire has stretched to 25 settings of the evening canticles and Eucharist, 30 anthems, 'a clutch of responses, and a good handful of psalms'. (1993, p. 8)

Looking back to those early days where a new tradition was breaking ground, its success was seen as the foundation for the development of future cathedral girls' choirs. Looking through a CHAT lens, this alternative collective viewpoint is highlighted in Welch (2010, p. 19):

female choristers may be seen both as part of an established tradition, but also as having a 'transformational' impact on it.

Simon Lole, who took over as Director of Music from Seal in 1997, recalled in Church Music Quarterly:

During the early days at Salisbury I know that giant steps were taken with great caution. (2001(b), p. 7)

There were no older girls with either singing or cathedral choir experience upon which to rely. Seen through a CHAT lens, there was a need for the new choristers to be inducted into a sense of the local 'community' and its 'rules', as highlighted in Barrett's description of the induction of boy choristers in Oxford:

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This focus on communication as the production and negotiation of meaning through 'contextualised practices' that are informed by an understanding of the rules of a specific culture and the ability to negotiate these. (2005, p. 5)

There was no knowledge of choral training, nor repertoire, and no feelings of identity and familiarity with expected cathedral behaviour or routine, nor experience of different sexes within the choir school. Lole, who had experience in starting girls' choirs in his two previous choral appointments, commented on the early beginnings at Salisbury:

When you start a new tradition, you need to develop a new culture, to get a group of people and teach them musically. One cannot assume anything at all. It is true that cathedral choristers pass knowledge and experience from one generation to the next. (2001a, p. 8)

However, despite the lack of tradition, there was a feeling of optimism prior to the girls' first Evensong. Seal disclosed in an article by Leighton that:

For the past four weeks he had been rehearsing the girls, aged between eight and eleven who will now sing every Monday and Wednesday and rotate weekend services with the boys. (1991, p. 17)

In the same article, Christopher Helyer, the Headmaster at the time said:

They are sounding good in rehearsal. The boys will certainly be there to hear them. I think they are intrigued. (p. 17)

Looking back at the development of the girls' choir, Dakers, highlighted the success of the choir:

Looking back to those initial days, and coupled with the vision and determination Richard projected, the fact is within weeks of the choir being formed, the girls were taking a full part in singing the services and with a remarkable degree of confidence, style and finesse; this being further evidence of the great gifts Richard possesses in moulding—and, not least inspiring—singers into a fully co-ordinated body. (1997, p. 10)

In establishing what has come to be seen as a new tradition at Salisbury, it was perceived as imperative that events ran smoothly for it to be a success. In CHAT terms, the process and importance of learning within communities is commented on by Barrett (2005, p. 9) who quotes Wenger (1998):

Learning – whatever the form it takes – changes who we are by changing our ability to participate, to belong, to negotiate meaning. And this ability is configured socially with respect to practices, communities, and economies of meaning where it shapes our identities. (1998, p. 226)

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The cathedral environment to which the girls were introduced may have been somewhat bewildering, with all the strange terminology such as Decani²³ Cantoris²⁴, Mag²⁵ and Nunc.²⁶ Lole explained the importance of the early days in establishing a girls' choir:

It really does take time and won't happen overnight. You need to keep your repertoire small; repetition is very helpful to build up confidence. A few services sung well at the start is so much better than trying to do too much in a very short time. (2001(b), p. 9)

Initially, the girls only sang a few services, but as they became more proficient, they shared an equal workload with the boys. The shift in the division of labour was possible because of the way that the system was designed to induct the new choristers:

The lens of activity theory suggests that there is a dialectic development in which the novice cathedral chorister is nurtured and supported to become an accomplished performer. (Welch 2007, p. 19)

As the girl choristers gained in terms of the amount of vocal education and experience, they started singing more frequently, such that, by 1999 for example, they sang the service at Christmas Midnight Mass alongside the boy choristers for the first time, and this was broadcast live on television by BBC 1. Rosemary Moorsom, the Head Chorister at this time, described her experience as a chorister:

The most important thing for us is that it puts us on a par with the boys. There is still a feeling that they are the real choir and we are something else. Performing like this on television helps change that view. (Thompson 1997, p. 6)

Another chorister, Khetsiwe Gile-Rowley, whose parents lived in Hong Kong said:

The greatest thing is the opportunity to sing and enjoy the music. We would like more free time and I wish my parents were here, but I love the sense of achievement which comes from doing something well. If any girl is interested in joining I say go for it, you learn to love the music and you make such cool friends. (Thompson 1997, p. 6)

The Acting Head of the Choir School, Christine Rolt, in describing the hard-working schedule said:

There is no shirking, they cannot say they don't feel like it. They develop terrific team spirit. The show has to go on. Of course, the girls grumble. They would like more free time to chat, watch soap opera and experiment with make-up. What does actually

²³ Decani are chorister on the right-hand side of the choir looking towards the altar, named after the side the Dean sits.

²⁴ Cantoris sit on the left-hand side of the choir looking towards the altar, named after the side where the Precentor sits.

²⁵ Mag. is an abbreviation for Magnificat and is the song of the Virgin Mary with the words from the Gospel of St. Luke. It is sung by the choir alone as part of the service of Evensong.

²⁶ Nunc. is short for Nunc Dimittis and is the Song of Solomon with the words from the Gospel of St. Luke. It is also sung by the choir alone as part of the service of Evensong.

happen is that they tend to use their little free time very constructively. In a few years I can't imagine there will be a cathedral in Britain which denies girls the opportunity to be choristers. (Thompson 1997, p. 6)

3.3 Initial reaction to the introduction of the first girls' cathedral choir in England

With hindsight, it seems obvious that the formation of a girls' choir in a cathedral was inevitably going to provoke much reaction, including from those people who were familiar with the Anglican choral tradition. Seal commented on the reaction to the establishment of a girls' choir:

There will be a lot of alarmed traditionalists. but I hope people won't be too critical until they've seen what we are doing. (Briely, 1990, p. 1)

One of the earliest public reactions towards the introduction of girls singing in cathedral choirs came from Peter Giles at the Friends of Cathedral Music (FCM) Annual General Meeting at Rochester Cathedral on June 16th 1990. Giles gave a speech in which he thought that having girls sing in cathedrals would threaten the existence of the all-male tradition, and stated that he believed the two choirs would inevitably be amalgamated. Such evident 'contradictions' in perceptions gradually built to precipitate the need for appropriate accommodation and development within the Anglican choral tradition (Welch, 2007, p. 28). Giles questioned the FCM's position on this issue in an attempt to establish a reassurance that they were supportive of his views, as they had not made any formal declaration of their position or beliefs. In response to Giles, the FCM:

...appeared to meet with some surprising dissent and discomfort. (CTCC, 2000, online)

Giles continued to voice his opinions on radio broadcasts and presented a paper 'Girls in Cathedrals' to the FCM, which they did not publish. Unable to rally support from the FCM, Giles highlighted the cause in the newly formed Campaign for the Defence of the Traditional Cathedral Choir (CDTCC).

The first main objection that the CDTCC voiced was:

It was feared that girls and boys would end up singing the services jointly because cathedral finances would not stretch to endowing two separate choirs. This they felt would lead to the downfall of the 'uniqueness' of a boy's singing voice. (CTCC, 2000, online)

In response, Seal clearly stated that the girls and boy choristers would remain separate choirs:

there would be no idea of merging the two choirs. (Beale, 1991, p. 2)

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The second CTCC objection was:

There was a belief the introduction of girls would lead to the disappearance of boys wanting to sing in cathedrals. (CTCC, 2000, online)

A few months later, the ITWH wrote regarding the introduction of girl choristers:

Too many girls and women, however, have been lost to church music in the past because of lack of opportunity. This should be reversed, not simply to redress the inequality, but also because the addition of girls could bring a new dimension to music making in our cathedrals. (1992, p. 224)

The support of the ITWH shows how forward thinking the Commission was. In 1992, girl cathedral choristers were still in their infancy and, as in the case of any innovation, it could so easily have been unsuccessful as a new venture. Girl choristers in cathedrals are now a familiar concept. It can be seen that the Commission, which comprised a Bishop, leading clergy, and organists from cathedral and parish churches, was not shackled to the constraints of tradition for tradition's sake. In CHAT terms, this would be regarded as a form of collective envisioning, as explained by Welch (2010, p. 19) to challenge the existing customs with regard to girl choristers:

The introduction of female choristers has been in the context of a primarily all-male musical culture, with its established rituals, processes (including teaching and learning), rules, expectations and communal perspectives.

As mentioned above, two of the first girl choristers at Salisbury included Nicola Rose, whose father was Organist and Master of the Choristers at St. Albans at the time, having previously been at St. Paul's Cathedral. The second was Evelyn Howard, who was the daughter of one of the lay-men of the Salisbury choir. Their recruitment provides a clear sign from their parents of support for the innovation, notwithstanding the fathers' more traditional background.

An article by Gledhill (1993) highlights various views held at the time regarding the girl choristers at Salisbury and the impending introduction of girls' choirs at the cathedrals of Bristol, Wells and Exeter. The article begins by explaining the deep division felt by some people, stating:

Plans to bring girl choristers into Britain's cathedrals is splitting the Church of England's music community between traditionalists and progressives. Opponents argue against girls' choirs on grounds of tradition and sexual rivalry. (1993, p. 8)

The article continues to report that resignations have been threatened from people who belonged to the Friends of Cathedral Music (FCM), a charity that provided financial funding to cathedral choirs in the UK. In the previous year (1992), the FCM awarded a grant of £4000 to the girls' choir at Salisbury. Roger Tucker, spokesman for the Friends explained:

While the controversy may be seen as motivated by male chauvinism, in reality it is one of traditional aesthetics. (Gledhill, *ibid*)

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General opinion held by those who were not in favour of girls' choirs was:

Traditionalists argue that girls' voices mature later and do not produce the quality of sound intended by the composers. They claim boys at that age are sensitive to rivalry between the sexes and will be put off singing if the girls are allowed in. They also fear that girls' choirs will lead to mixed choirs. (Gledhill, *ibid*)

From a CHAT perspective, this highlights a system undergoing rapid expansion and alternative collective viewpoints, as evidenced in Engeström, who states:

An expansive transformation is accomplished when the object and motive of the activity are reconceptualised to embrace a radically wider horizon of possibilities than in the previous mode of the activity. (2001, p. 137)

The article continues to report that, after a recent BBC Radio 3 broadcast of girl choristers, those against girl choristers used this as proof that they 'could not be as good'. In a challenge to such criticism, Canon Colin Semper—a member of the ITWH—said:

I feel it is morally reprehensible not to offer the same training opportunities to girls as to boys. (*ibid*)

Whilst the Very Rev. Richard Lewis, Dean of Wells said:

The mythology that girls' voices are totally different from and can never be like boys' voices has been exploded. (*ibid*)

Three leading musicians at the time also voiced their views in the same 1993 Times article. David Flood, the Organist and Master of the Choristers at Canterbury Cathedral, said 'bringing girls in might put boys off'; Harry Brama – who at that time was the Director of the Royal School of Church Music and formerly Organist and Master of the Choristers at Southwark Cathedral – said anyone who claimed there was no difference in the sound of boys and girls 'had cloth ears'; and Martin Neary – who at that time was Organist and Master of the Choristers at Westminster Abbey – said 'I do not think the sound of the girls would be as strong as the boys'.

In response to these opinions, Gledhill, concludes:

At a time when the cathedral choirs are struggling to fill their places, none of the arguments is strong enough. What matters in the sight of God and the congregation, is the sound not the sex of the singer... A Church that is going to ordain women priest's ought to be able to live with female choristers. (1993, p .8)

These comments illustrate the CHAT principle and power of contradiction, as pointed out by Engeström (1996, p. 137) who stated:

Such contradictions generate disturbances and conflicts, but also innovative attempts to change society.

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The above article by Gledhill generated many responses in the Letters to the Editor page of *The Times*, published the following week on July 24th 1993 and entitled 'Sweet singing in the choir – from girls as well as boys'. Patrick Salisbury, who was Secretary of the ITWH from 1988–1992, wrote (1999, p. 13):

I applaud your well-argued (July 17) on girl choristers. Those who heard the Salisbury girls on their first 'away fixture' as part of the 17th International Organ Festival in St. Albans Abbey last week will need no further convincing about the beauty of the sound they make or their ability to hold their own against a full complement of lay clerks when singing the standard cathedral repertoire. The tone is certainly different from that of boys' voices (although not markedly), but diversity is to be welcomed.

Girl choristers have been serving in parish church choirs for much longer than in cathedrals and few parishes enjoy the luxury of having separate boys' and girls' choirs.

In terms of CHAT, regarding the 'evolution of choral communities' (Barrett, 2005 p.10), Patrick Salisbury (*ibid*) continues:

It is perfectly possible for pubescent boys to sing effectively alongside girls, although not every traditionally trained director of music finds this easy to achieve at first. However, one great advantage is that it facilitates a natural transition for young trebles (boy and girl) into the adult section of the choir as and when their voices and inclinations warrant it.

We surely need to consider the production of future sopranos and contraltos as well as tenors and basses: not to mention that other, rare, commodity—the future choir-mistress.

Barry Rose, a leading choral trainer and at the time Master of the Music at St. Alban's Abbey, wrote:

Our daughter is a chorister at Salisbury Cathedral and in my view the Salisbury experiment, for that was surely what it was, has been an enormous success. On July 12, those 18 girls joined forces with the men and boys of the choirs of Magdalen College, Oxford and St. Albans Abbey in an enjoyable and challenging concert.

From that experience I find it difficult to accept the comment (report July 17) by Harry Bramma, director of the Royal School of Church Music that 'anyone who claimed there was no difference in the sound of the girls and boys 'had cloth ears'.

Surely, he must remember the experiment at the cathedral organists' conference at St. Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh in May 1991, when the mixed choir had sung to a distinguished gathering. Their choirmaster Dr Dennis Townshill, then played a listening test consisting of girls and boys singing on their own, in pairs or small groups. The visiting organists were then asked to identify the sex of each singer. Many got the answers wrong.

Perhaps the traditionalists are worrying needlessly. The success of the choirs at Salisbury is that each has its own identity as a separate unit, joining together only on special school and diocesan occasions. The benefits of having two choirs should bring new members flocking to the Friends of Cathedral Music.

Salisbury Cathedral now has a sung service every weekday in term time. On Wednesday, the day when my boy choristers do not sing (in common with most

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cathedrals), I am nevertheless able to attend choral Evensong there. The permutation of two choirs also brings great relief over the teaching of new music and allows participation in extra things such as recordings and concerts. (1993, p. 13)

Murray Forbes Somerville adds:

I have been instrumental in starting the Royal School of Church Music's training course for girl choristers in the United States, as well as girls' choirs at St. Luke's cathedral in Orlando, Central Florida. In seeking to give girls their rightful place in the choir stalls we need to be aware that simply to mix pre-pubescent girls and boys in choirs is not necessarily the right answer.

If one observes almost any of the mixed-voice children's choirs in the United States, one will see a large preponderance of girls and a few brave boys. Under such circumstances singing is often perceived by boys as 'cissy', and the future supply of tenors and basses is threatened.

Efforts such as those of Salisbury Cathedral to establish separate organizations for boys and girls have been shown to be much more fruitful, and are to be commended. (1993, p. 13)

Alan Thurlow, Chairman of the Friends of Cathedral Music and also Director of Music at Chichester Cathedral at that time, believed that the argument should not be focused so much on the sound of boys and girls, but on the effect it might have on recruitment:

Most of us have witnessed in our lifetime the virtual disappearance of boys from parish church choirs and this, I believe, is probably the largest single factor in the declining number of boys coming forward for cathedral voice trials.

Only time will tell whether cathedrals will similarly suffer a decline in their boys' choirs. The new experiments for girls should be monitored carefully until we can be sure that, in establishing a new tradition, we are not inadvertently dismantling the old.

It should not be forgotten that nature provides girls with an immense advantage over the boys at the age of 14, 15 and 16, when a boy is vocally in the wilderness. (1993, p. 13)

Peter Boorman, formerly the Director of Music at St. David's Cathedral, Wales who introduced girl choristers in 1966, wrote:

A girls' choir was established in 1966 at St. David's Cathedral, where I spent 25 years as organist and master of the choristers. In such a crisis as is fortunately rare before a live broadcast, we borrowed ten girls from Ysgol Dewi Sant, our local secondary school.

After the transmission, a card arrived from Sir Percy Hull, organist emeritus of Hereford, praising the tone of our 'boys'. He was old, experienced and distinguished and I fell into none of these categories, so I did not enlighten him.

There was no secret, merely the careful choice of high-calibre, musical girls of early secondary school age and the describing to them the exact tone and style needed – followed, naturally, by endless practice. (1993, p. 13)

These letters generated yet more responses in the Letters to the Editor page 1st August 1993. Harry Brama, Director of the RSCM, replied to the letter written by Dr Barry Rose:

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My chance remark that those who cannot distinguish the difference between the voices of girl and boys have 'cloth ears' (report July 17) was not intended to imply that boys make a more suitable sound in our great cathedrals.

I have always supported the formation of girls' choirs in cathedrals and in fact wrote an article in the Royal School of Church Music's quarterly magazine in support of Salisbury at a time when they were receiving a good deal of criticism.

I believe, however, that Dr Barry Rose in his excellent letter (July 24) over-simplifies. When girls are carefully selected and trained to conform to a particular aural vision, they can sound remarkably like boys. If, however, a girls' choir contains the whole range of available female tone, the sound will be different, though in the case of younger girls, this difference will be slight.

Traditionalists have an understandable fear that the introduction of girls will cause the number of boys singing in our cathedrals to be halved. Let us hope that the arrival of girls will double the number of children experiencing the wonderful musical opportunities our cathedrals are able to offer. (1993, p. 13)

A letter written by William Hale in response to the perceived issue of recruitment continued:

Cathedrals which have difficulty in recruiting boys should abandon the effort and work on building up a really top-class line of girl trebles instead.

The establishment of a fully-fledged tradition of girl trebles in these cathedrals would be a far more fitting recognition of their abilities than what seems to me the unsatisfactory tokenism of the Salisbury approach. (1993, p. 13)

Whilst Ben Morland believed that the decision whether to include girls should be left to the cathedral musicians:

The arguments for or against the admission of girl choristers to cathedral and college chapel choirs should be left to the judgment of the directors of music and organists. (1993, p. 13)

Finally, David Warwick spoke out regarding the recruitment of men into cathedral choirs, which he believes will be affected by girl choristers:

Girl choristers may perhaps grow up to become women priests, but they will not be the tenors and basses of tomorrow's cathedral choirs. It is this progression from chorister to choral scholar or lay clerk which helps to maintain the heritage of which we are justly proud, and it must be preserved. (1993, p. 13)

During the second half of 1996, the CDTCC conducted some research entitled 'Survey of Developments in the Cathedral Choirs of the United Kingdom', reported in 1997. The survey, concerning the introduction of girls singing in cathedral choirs, took the form of a questionnaire completed by approximately 60% of the n=78 organists and choirmasters in cathedrals, chapel royal, collegiate churches and university chapels who received the survey. The two main areas highlighted in the Survey were:

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- what effects that the introduction of girls singing would have on the position of lay clerks; and
- the possibility of combining the two choirs, boys and girls, which could arise out of financial necessity and thereby having a mixed top line.

Lay clerks, can be former boy choristers who had pursued their vocal training as Choral Scholars, such as at Oxbridge, and then entered the music profession, including securing a post in a cathedral choir. In other cases, they will be professional male singers who choose to have cathedral employment as part of a portfolio career. In the opinion of the CDTCC, the effect of introducing girls into cathedral choirs raised two issues, which they considered would affect negatively the employment of lay clerks and their role in cathedral music in the future. CHAT theory can be seen here in terms of 'contradictions' and longer-term implications for the 'community'. For Welch (2007) this would be an example of how:

there is evidence of cultural transformation as the dominant all-male culture adapts to unforeseen pressures from the creation of girls' choirs. (p. 19)

The first argument against the introduction was that when girls reach the age of leaving the choir as young soprano singers, they will want to continue singing in the cathedral and expect to be able to sing the contralto part, and this would threaten the opportunities for the enrolment of male alto (countertenor) lay clerks. The second issue regarding the position of lay clerks was, with girls singing in cathedrals, the recruitment of boys would decline and, therefore, the tradition of boys returning to cathedral choirs and singing as lay clerks will be under threat. Carrick Smith stated:

Any decline in boys will inevitably lead to a dearth of men brought up in the repertoire. (1997, p. 30)

This is a somewhat confusing statement; if it is literally translated, it suggests that lay clerks have to be former choristers in order to have knowledge of cathedral repertoire. This is unlikely to be the case, given that, firstly, lay clerks sing a different part from the treble line and, secondly, as professional musicians, they should have no difficulty in sight-reading music.

The threat that the introduction of girl choristers would bring about the demise of the Anglican Choral Tradition is voiced by Beet who states:

This great, unbroken tradition is now under threat by the introduction of girls' voices in the choir stalls of our great cathedrals. (1997, p. 30)

In an article by Kay (1998), Seal spoke about the unique boy chorister tradition, the inclusion of girls and his beliefs:

There was never any intention that they should be mixed or that they would sing together. I have always championed the all-male choir and will continue to do so. What

motivated me was an overwhelming desire to see a cathedral church open its choir stalls to boys and girls, so that the girls could benefit from the unique education afforded in an English choir school – it had nothing to do with the slight drop in recruitment that such schools have felt over the past 20 years, or the notion that the girls would do a better job. (1998, p. 31)

The CDTCC also raised another issue regarding the introduction of girls' choirs, which they believe would lead to a reduction of boys wanting to sing. The effect of this would affect their recruitment with the result that the all-male traditional cathedral choir would be severely threatened. The CDTCC stated:

We thoroughly approve of girls singing, but the female genius can and should flower differently without invading and condemning to eventual extinction the traditional cathedral choir – an intrinsically masculine art-form. (2000, online)

Giles makes further comment on what he believes the future will be for boy choristers:

The expert, mature singing boy, as a species, will be gone forever. And gone too, killed by this new Church of England, will be a unique tradition – a sacred art form and its vocal instrument, which even Cromwell failed to extinguish for long. (1999, pp. 36-37)

Both issues portray, in the reaction of the CDTCC, the organisation's sense of a socio-cultural threat to the all-male cathedral choir tradition in terms of its community and identity.

Arguably, the employment position of lay clerks has for some time been somewhat precarious due to the relatively low rates of pay. As a result, it is usually essential that lay clerks find other additional employment, as the remuneration paid by a cathedral is generally insufficient on which to live. Williams, for example, wrote:

This can be difficult because of the commitment required in singing daily services and any extra weekday services for special events that occur from time to time. These appear to be the reasons why recruitment of lay clerks could be considered to be under threat and not the beliefs of what may occur in the future. (2000, p. 4)

When it comes to attracting adults into cathedral choirs, the reality is that—in a highly competitive employment market—cathedrals can no longer expect applicants for lay clerkship to find the work attractive, at least financially. In CHAT terms, this is not only an influence of a wider professional musical activity system, but also the issue of money as a material mediating artefact (Canary et al, 2015). For example, Williams (2000 p. 4) cites the difficulties in recruiting lay clerks as related to:

- comparably better career opportunities being available for singers entering the music profession;
- a small salary, which tends not to attract graduates who perhaps still have student loans (apart from cathedrals in London);
- the difficulty of being able to attend weekday practices and services for lay clerks who are in full time employment, such as in another profession; and

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- the necessity of a reliable deputy list with provision for adequate payment, when lay clerks have to absent themselves.

Williams further explains why he believes recruitment of lay clerks is low:

If the best source of new blood in the past were colleges and cathedrals which trained choral singers, this is certainly not the case now with most graduates moving straight into other careers or branches of music offering better prospects. (ibid)

Palmer (2000) also believed that the terms and conditions of being a lay clerk require consideration, stating that (at that time in 2000), in one cathedral the salary was only £500 a year, with another paying £2000 a year. Like Williams, Palmer does not make mention of the introduction of women singing the alto part, but believes instead that:

It is time to look at pay and conditions and to ensure that lay clerks that need good subsidised accommodation get it, along with extra work in schools. (2000, p. 3)

The other issues which the CDTCC reported itself as very passionate about was a concern that, with the introduction of girls' choirs, the top line would become mixed sex because cathedral finances would not stretch to supporting two individual choirs. The CDTCC then appealed to the FCM to consider the implication for the existence of boy choristers if payments were made to cathedrals which had girls' choirs. They held the view that any financial giving in this way would '...ultimately weaken and probably destroy' (CDTCC, 2000) the all-male tradition.

The FCM responded to this suggestion by agreeing to monitor developments and act accordingly. However, in attempting to choke girls' choirs off financially, it seems the CDTCC might be unwittingly encouraging an amalgamation of both single sex choirs. Through a CHAT lens, critics were clearly concerned that the gradual shift in the division of labour would ultimately lead to a revised object of the system in the form of unisex choirs (*cf* Burnard, 2007, p. 45):

... to encompass the individual and at the level of the collective operating with tools in which 'rules', a sense of 'community' and 'division of labour' (division of effort) are also evidenced.

Any Dean and Chapter who had established a girls' choir are unlikely to want to see it fail, and so it could be argued that perhaps it might be more prudent, if finances became a problem, to combine both choirs.

The CTCC's survey revealed that, whilst there was opposition amongst organists and choirmasters at that time in having both choirs sing together on a regular basis, respondents were happy for the two individual choirs to share the sung services equally. The report stated that:

none of the major cathedrals with girls' choirs saw them as posing any kind of threat. (CDTCC, 1997, p. 8)

3.4 Tradition and cultural identity

The above account of the opposition to the introduction of a girls' choir at Salisbury Cathedral highlights entwined issues of tradition and cultural identity. Turner (1991 p.xi) comments on this aspect of sociological change:

Religion produces community as the consequence of collective ritualistic practices and a common sharing of belief. Religion creates powerful symbols of social life and human existence which generates a powerful experience of social membership.

Research suggests that, from birth, clear divisions are commonly made regarding gender, both in the ways that children are treated, and in the expectations and perceptions that parents have of them, usually being aligned with a child's sex at birth (Brinkman et al 2012). Giddens (1997), for example, cites cases where studies have been undertaken to show how gender differences are the result of social influences. Such studies show how parents make a distinct difference in the way they behave towards their children and how they influence the gender learning by infants:

By the age of two, children have a partial understanding of what gender is. (1997, p. 93)

As children develop, they become more socially aware of gender identity, the learning process being passed on from the adult. Giddens puts forward the view:

Gender socialisation begins as soon as an infant is born. Even parents who believe they treat their children equally tend to react differently to boys and girls. These differences are reinforced by many other cultural influences. (op. cit p. 11)

A tradition that has, for over a millennium, reinforced a cultural and male musical identity within a religious establishment may be seen to be bound tightly with a sense of self-preservation in its attempt to prosper and continue. Haunch (1998) insists that:

Boys have been singing in those cathedral choir stalls, in unbroken tradition, for hundreds and hundreds of years. Overturning it with a 'Well it's only fair to the girls' is something that I cannot accept as being other than a tragic mistake and a colossal cultural disaster. (1998, p. 1)

A letter to the Editor of the Church Music Quarterly by Beet (1997) highlights the concern felt over what is perceived to be a threat to the Choral Tradition as cathedrals other than York also introduced girls' choirs:

Sir – The English Choral Tradition is the envy of the whole world. This great, unbroken tradition is now under threat by the introduction of girls' voices into the choir stalls of our great cathedrals. York Minster has proudly joined the ranks of those places to have launched a parallel girls' choir; and several other cathedrals are rushing to claim the accolade for being the first to introduce girls. (1997, p. 30)

It would seem from many of the comments quoted above that those who fear the extinction of the all-male cathedral choral culture keenly felt a strong sense of this tradition. Again, the influence of historicity in CHAT can be seen here (Welch, 2010, p. 27). The depth of commitment experienced by those who share this identity is an admirable quality. For those who believe that their reasoning to be correct and seek to uphold the traditional all-male cathedral choirs demonstrates great conviction. Bowers, for example, firmly believes that the all-male cathedral tradition should be upheld:

For the girls to forego this opportunity will of course be a sacrifice – but one no different from so many others in human life, made through generosity of spirit and in the interests of the greater good. (2000, p. 5)

Lees (1993) puts across a different view regarding culture, which could be said applies to the changing cultural and historical position of cathedrals today. In terms of CHAT, this can be seen as culture influencing the progression of change and development:

But culture is not an unchanging entity. Men and women make their own culture, in the sense that they are constantly adapting to new circumstances. (1993, p. 309)

Cathedrals, unlike the medieval monasteries, are public places, and cannot shut themselves away like a heavily guarded fortress. Arguably, throughout the history of religion, change has been constant, notwithstanding a perceived need to be the very best that we can achieve. There is no evidence to suggest that every boy chorister will be the best option in terms of sustaining a choral tradition and that every girl chorister is inferior. The ITWH suggest that some people may prefer to hear boys' voices because:

The sound of an unbroken voice [sic] symbolises a particular kind of innocence. A boys' voice is sometimes seen as especially precious because it is fragile and cannot last. (1982, p. 223)

Phillips (1980) puts forward the views of Bernard Rose, who believed that the introduction of girls could possibly break the choral tradition quoting Rose as saying that he would:

'be extremely distressed' if girls were to be introduced because it 'would break a magnificent English tradition' (Phillips, 1980, vol. 2, p. 195) (Phillips, 1980, vol. 2, p. 197)

Whilst Lionel Dakers, reported by Phillips, explained it would be better to leave the situation unaltered:

That the tradition of boys' voices 'has justified itself in time' suggest a significant argument; that to tamper with a well-established idiosyncratic tradition, even with the best possible motives, may destroy it. (Phillips, 1980, vol. 2, p. 195)

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Phillips believed that the introduction of girls might change the strong tradition and raise financial and social difficulties:

The cathedral choirs are very vulnerable to the changes in society in recent decades- it cannot be said that what they are doing is of increasing value or interest to the bulk of the population; their strength lies primarily in their tradition. To introduce girls might well be a change which could destroy support without replacing it with something so determined to withstand the financial and social pressures which insistently threaten our choirs. (Phillips, 1980, vol. 2, p. 197)

Whilst Rainbow and Jones (1998) believed:

It is the evanescent beauty of the boy's voice, a crystalline cry to a world outside us and beyond us, which is able to touch our minds and hearts as perhaps nothing else. (1998, p.1)

In CHAT terms, theorists might argue that this concept as cited above was culturally learned, i.e., something which was not innate or natural. Welch (2010, p. 28) comments on the traditionalist's beliefs in gendered sound as follows:

The perceived bias in the type of sound produced traditionally by boy choristers drew on the structure and function of the young male voice within liturgical and musical contexts. Because this sound was fostered by existing musical practices, as well as by expectations within the cathedral community, a gendered assumption was made that this type of vocal output was 'unique' to the young male voice and unavailable to the young female.

The cathedral foundations have for decades operated in an environment in which they have set their own rules, expectations and standards. The girls' choirs have simply stepped into this environment, accepted the expectations, behaved accordingly, whilst seeking to also establish in their own right a tradition in which other girls can participate. An example of a community of practice in CHAT is referenced by Barrett (2005, p. 9) who quotes (Wenger, 1998, p. 70):

Communities of practice are characterised by three dimensions, those of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire.

The cathedral offers a unique community environment. Drawing on the ideas of the American sociologist Talcott Parsons, Turner observes:

Characteristically, sociologists have posited the existence of a common moral order or system of values which binds people together into a community as an explanation of social integration. These normative systems, rituals and communal practices are treated as the central fabric of social relations; they are thus an essential feature of all communal activity. (1991, p. iv)

As the girls participate in worship, receive training as a choir and in some cases (see Appendix A4.2) are educated at the choir school, they have become integrated into an all-male community. The opportunity for girls to participate in what was an all-male tradition has no doubt enriched the

education available for girls. Klein (1985) points out the importance of allowing each sex to develop in all areas rather than prescribed ones according to their sex:

Some personal and societal reasons for supporting sex equity are to optimise woman development potential so that all females and males are able to develop themselves as individuals without limitations of gender-prescribed roles. (1985, p. xi)

For an individual girl to establish her personal identity in an all-male culture that has been in existence for over a thousand years could be a daunting process. The number of girls in the girls' choir is relatively few and the different ranks or a position in the choir such as probationer, chorister, senior chorister and Head Chorister may dilute the individual's sense of collective identity even more. How they see themselves and what ambitions they may have in order to achieve a senior position as they progress through the choir could put further pressure on their feelings of identity. Group identity may also be problematic as they attempt to establish their culture alongside the boy choristers and attitudes of the lay clerks and the general public. Personal identity is a similar issue for boy choristers who also might be struggling to recognise their identity and role within the choir. Lees (1993) believes that boys and girls experience identity in different ways:

Identity development is very different for a girl than for a boy. While for men, identity precedes intimacy and generativity in the optimal cycle of human separation and attachment, for women the tasks of intimacy and identity are fused in such a way that girls come to know themselves through their relationships with others. (1993, p.15)

The existence of such a longstanding tradition can make it difficult for some people to easily accept change. Bowers (2000) firmly states his belief that the cathedral tradition should not be altered and that the opportunity for both genders should not be available:

that as boys can only sing until the age of thirteen, girls should desist from singing at all until they reach college age. (1998, p. 5)

Similarly, Haunch (1998) states:

boys have been singing in those cathedral choir stalls, in unbroken tradition, for hundreds and hundreds of years. Overturning it with a 'Well, it's only fair to the girls' is something that I cannot accept as being other than a tragic mistake and a colossal cultural disaster. (1998, p. 1)

Regarding the boy chorister tradition regarding collective envisioning, Lole makes it very clear that the introduction of girl choristers would not threaten the existence of the boys:

I love the boys' choir and would never let it die away – I see the advent of girls as strengthening the tradition, not diminishing it. After all, they will be the mothers of tomorrow. They will be far more likely to enrol their sons as chorister if they have had a fantastic experience themselves! (2001, p. 15)

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Salisbury Cathedral, however, were keen not become complacent with regard to their success. Lole, in an interview, was very clear regarding what he had to achieve:

I have a brief to raise the profile – locally, nationally and internationally. We don't want this wonderful tradition to put us in an ivory tower. We should serve the community and reach out more: having two choirs helps me do that. (Kay, 1998, p. 31)

The historicity aspect of CHAT is seen as influential in the development of the community, as explained by Barrett (2005), who cites (Wenger, 1998, p. 70):

...communities of practice become 'shared histories' of learning, with a shared localised discourse, a 'locally negotiated regime of competence'.

Lole was only too aware of the differences in opinion in the general public with regard to girl choristers. Apparently, members of the congregation would avoid attending a cathedral service at Salisbury if they saw on the music list that the girls were singing. Kingston describes the reaction of two women arriving at Salisbury cathedral for Evensong to find the girl choristers were singing and then deciding not to attend the service:

As the organ slides through a few quiet warming-up chords for Evensong two elderly women step back from the cathedral notice board in evident irritation. 'Oh no, it's the girls' one tells the other, and they stalk back into the sunshine. (1992, p. 19)

A letter written by Thornhill (2001) to the Editor of Cathedral Music expresses her deep concern over what she sees as a continued need for change in the English Choral Tradition, which again points to a sense of ongoing discord facing the traditional collective envisioning:

I have recently received a copy of Alan Thurlow's letter about the FCM survey. My eyes filled with tears, so choked with emotion was I, on reading the depressing statistics revealed. Ninety per cent of the membership favour the continuation of the all-male tradition. 72% were totally opposed to mixed choirs and 58% are of the opinion that girls' choirs do or may pose a threat to the all-male tradition; and to thrust the knife in financially which we all know is the key to existence and progress, an overwhelming proportion of the membership replying to the survey favoured grants being directed mainly to traditional choirs, and not to second choirs, which are invariably girls' choirs.

There is no justification for withholding a musical education in cathedrals for girls who merit it and desire it. It is totally unjust on both moral and educational grounds. Females not only possess musical ability in the same measure as boys but also that spark of spirituality which can be set aflame and nurtured in the cathedral experience, remaining with them for life, and with which they can inspire subsequent generations.

A precious life as a cathedral chorister has been denied them for many centuries. Generations of those who could have benefited remain unfulfilled, whilst the treasures of the cathedral repertoire remained unfulfilled, whilst the treasures of the cathedral repertoire remain the male prerogative. I am aware of the opposing arguments, but they are seemingly futile in comparison with denying potentially gifted girls from developing their musical talents to the praise of almighty God.

The survey presumably produced a democratic result. Females represent 50% of the population and as I see it, this is a case of democracy perpetuating injustice. In my

opinion, the FCM should be encouraging and supporting all cathedral choirs and if not, it should be on their consciences. (2001(1), p. 43)

Lole personally experienced tension from 'traditionalists' who would not attend Evensong if the girls' choir were singing:

People used to look at the notice-board and if the girls were singing they wouldn't come. Angry visitors even took to ringing him up in an attempt to avoid listening to the female trebles. (Pyke, 2002, p. 4)

Lole's decisive response to this was to stop printing on the weekly service sheet which choir would be singing:

We have taken a rather unpopular decision here by not revealing, on our music scheme, which choir is singing. The services are sung by the Cathedral Choir with a top line of either sex and our worship is superbly uplifted. It saddens me when people decide to abstain from worship because it is not the 'proper' Cathedral choir on duty. (2001, p. 9)

In addition to Lole receiving phone calls from the general public to enquire whether the girls were singing Evensong, he also received correspondence from people who were not in favour of the girl choristers. One such letter arrived from an anonymous person who had listened to the girl choristers sing some music by Purcell which he reported as follows:

I do get some hate mail...I had an anonymous letter in through the post. They're always anonymous. It said 'Henry Purcell must be turning in his grave at the thought of these bumptious upstarts. Where was the proper choir? We're never coming to Salisbury again'. It was really nasty vindictive stuff. (Pyke, 2002, p. 4)

3.5 The vocal sound of the early girls' choir at Salisbury

As previous sections have demonstrated, there has been much debate regarding the perceived 'uniqueness' of boys' voices. At this time, whilst some girls may have sung in church choirs or school choirs, they are likely to have done so mostly in an untrained capacity. In the early days when the Salisbury girls' choir was formed, their singing commitment was as originally envisaged on a reduced schedule. From a historicity perspective, the choral tradition relies on a culturally learned craft which is unlikely to have been uniform across the centuries, as explained by Welch (2010, p. 30):

Nevertheless, the historical cultural system that maintained this notion (explained earlier on that choristers should be male) has been subject to various challenges since its English inception in Canterbury in 597 AD, some recent, others being much older.

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Seal had explained, prior to the introduction of girl choristers at Salisbury, that he wanted them to make a different sound from the boys. Whilst he had no idea in his mind what the sound would be, he believed it would be different:

It is an adventure. It sounds almost stupid to be so unprepared but I know that what will condition, it will be the building, the organ, the voices they hear behind them. I hope that they will never, ever hear me say 'Come on, this is how the boys...' May I be forgiven if I ever say to them 'I want you to sound like the boys'. Because I do not! I think that they'll have their own special characteristics; they will make their own special sound. It will be peculiar to them. (quoted in Mould, 1991, p. 26)

Mould (1991) records that Seal explained how the all-male tradition was very 'precious' and 'unique in the world' and he was absolutely adamant that this tradition 'must, must at all costs continue', whilst—at the same time—girls should be given the opportunity to sing. Seal envisaged that girls would sound different and would not sing in the style that constituted 'the English cathedral tradition':

Whether you'll like it as much I don't know but it'll be a female sound and I am prepared for it to be perhaps slightly frailer, with less carrying power maybe; because a boy's voice just before it changes is a very strong instrument, very focused and thick almost and it's got a lot of Bisto in it just before you say farewell to it. Whereas a girls doesn't really start to flower until she's fifteen or sixteen, by which time of course she'll have left. So, it may be a fragile instrument, but it will be just as musical, and I hope they will find a character that's all theirs. (quoted in Mould, 1991, p. 26)

Early reaction to the girls' inexperienced singing by some of the boy choristers is recorded in an interview with Jessica Townsend who was one of the first girl choristers at Salisbury:

At the beginning most of them (the boy choristers) thought, 'Oh God, listen to that, what a screech' but now they don't say it so much. We still make a thinner sound than the boys but it has developed. We still go out of tune quite a lot, and naming no names, some people have to leave out the high notes. (Kingston, (1992, p. 19)

One of the lay clerks at the time commented on the early sound that the girls made:

...raw playground sound. (op.cit. p. 19)

The girl choristers' vocal sound in the early days was unknown. It had been believed by some that only boys could sing in cathedral choirs because...

Girls of the same age, it was claimed, lacked the natural equipment, concentration and stamina for the performance of demanding works on a daily basis. (ibid)

However, as they improved, Halls said of the girls' vocal sound...

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You wouldn't believe how much it has improved. It's a much more mature sound but it's very fresh. And it will still develop. We don't know how they will finally sound for perhaps another five years. (ibid)

Shortt records the singing of the first girls' choir at Salisbury during its infancy:

A musician who has heard them from the beginning, when the girls sounded 'like a lively Primary school choir', comments that 'through expert training, they are now producing a very well-focused, clear and well projected sound'. (1993, p. 8)

It is, therefore, natural perhaps that traditionalists had no concept of what girls might be able to achieve when they received formal choir training. Bowers, who in opposing girls' voices, stated:

Can the voices of girls be engaged in a manner which preserves the unique timbre of the traditional cathedral choir (an endangered species if ever there was one) and avoid extinguishing it in favour of a sound so commonplace and ubiquitous as that of a conventional chamber choir? (2000, p. 5)

As reported earlier, the ITWH suggested that perhaps the reason some people may prefer to hear boys' voices were that:

the sound of an unbroken voice symbolises a particular kind of innocence. A boy's voice is sometimes seen as especially precious because it is fragile and cannot last. (1992, p. 223)

Whilst Welch and Howard also observed:

[the introduction of girls into] the cathedral choral tradition has challenged the cultural association of cathedral music with boy's voices and their 'unique' vocal timbre. (2002, p. 11)

Cultural perception of the sound of a typical boy chorister can be influenced largely by tradition. 'I heard the choir from the nave and didn't realise it was the girls'. Vergers have been reported to often hear this comment, and studies have shown that even experts can be fooled (Kay, 1998, p. 31). In CHAT terms, this relates to the notion of how perceptions of biological bias can be shaped by culture.

In an attempt to identify whether there was any obvious difference in sound between boys' and girls' voices, Desmond Sergeant and Graham Welch of the (then) Centre for Advanced Studies in Music Education at Roehampton conducted one of the first systematic studies of the psychoacoustic perception of chorister gender. They played recordings made up of extracts of singing from boy, girl and mixed choirs to a group of Cathedral Directors of Music. Most answers revealed a misidentification of gender, despite being choral experts. Welch (as reported by Kay 1998) explains that if girl choristers are trained the same way as boys, they will likely make the same sound:

We have a clear stereotype of a cathedral boy choir sound. What this study shows is that if girls have been trained in that tradition, we perceive that they sound the same as boys. Choirs who do not conform to this stereotype were mistakenly identified as girls. We conjecture that this difference is intimately connected to the choral director's approach: they can train girls to imitate the acoustic patterning of the male voice. (Welch 1998, p. 31)

Kay explains that boys and girls at a younger age have the same vocal make up and which changes from the age of nine or ten upwards;

Boys and girls up to the age of eight or nine have almost identical vocal equipment, so their sound is not determined by physiology. However, from nine and ten upwards, the larynx develops differently. There is a chink of space between the female vocal folds. The air turbulence created by this begins to produce more high-frequencies and a rounder, more 'breathy' sound. Boys of 10 or 11, by contrast, have more energy in the lower harmonics and more edge to the sound. Though girls' voices do not 'break' [in the same manner as boys], they take on a womanly sound at 13 – 14, so girls will 'retire' with the boys [i.e., at the same time]. (Kay, 1998, p. 31)

Bruce Pullen, at the time Professor of Music at Western Washington University in America and a former choral scholar at King's College, Cambridge, also supported these propositions in an account by Kingston (1992) which depicts a sense of the underlying biases related to CHAT collective envisioning:

There are no real differences between the voices of boys and girls. They are almost indistinguishable. You can make both sounds any way you like. It's a matter of training and tradition. (1992, p. 19)

Pullen continues in the same article by stating that, originally, he was not in agreement with the appointment of girl choristers and took the line of many traditionalists who championed the cause of boy choristers only. However, after moving to America to work with a mixed choir of boys and girls, he changed his views:

It'll take a generation for the girls to become established in cathedrals. Then there will be no reason at all for not using all this untapped potential. (as reported by Kingston, 1992, p.19)

3.6 The relationship between the boy and girl choristers at Salisbury and impacts on recruitment

At the time when Salisbury Cathedral introduced a girls' choir, there was opinion from some that it would endanger the recruitment of boys. In such a revised division of labour, the clear outcome would be that the boys would sing less frequently (Welch, 2010, p. 29). The impact on the boy choristers had a profound effect. The boys had been told what was going to happen well in advance. The older boys who left in the summer before the girls started in September and the new

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recruited boy probationers were not affected. The other boys were not happy as they thought their workload would be reduced:

those who were left behind, the majority of them knew that some of their work was going to be taken by girls and this upset them. There was genuine concern by the boys that their workload was being decreased and they were unhappy about it. (DOM F 1)

It is thought that the boys may have known what was going to happen due to the events leading up to the introduction of girls prior to September 1991. Seal explained that they were the last people to be told, and that he spoke to them about it towards the end of a practice so they would know definitely what was going to happen:

I think their initial response was one of ...well, they were certainly concerned and interested. I tried to put it across as fairly as I could because I knew that if anybody was really going to be disappointed it would be them. You know how proud they get of the job they're doing. And they have every right to be proud. Some of them felt 'No, we don't like the idea at all' and I respected them for it. But it happened that there were two choristers in the choir who'd got sisters, and I know from what they said that they would be very keen for them to have a chance to sing in the choir so there was already some sympathy amongst the boys. (Mould, (1991) P. 28)

It was explained to these boys that the cathedral was not trying to replace them, but give girls a chance to sing which would give them some free time. However, they felt that their tradition was being eroded:

I didn't ask them all outright 'What do you feel about it?'; all I could do in the summer term or whenever it was before the girls arrived, we were open with them 'this is what's going to happen, this is why we are doing it' and I tried to be as open and as honest as I could be in saying 'it's got nothing to do with trying to replace what we reckon is not good, we are not trying to find a better top line, we are just trying to give some of your sisters because there were a couple there who had sisters in the choir in those early days, we were just trying to give them a chance and all they are taking is a Monday Evensong, which quite honestly down the road in Winchester the boys get Monday off in any case; one of the weekend services that may be a good thing it leaves you free on Saturday especially if you are a sportsman and this may be to your benefit' but they didn't look at it like that in the early days, they thought here is a tradition been going on since the Cathedral used to be up on Old Sarum by the castle and that's where the choir school was founded by Bishop Osmund way back in the tenth century, and I think they felt that their tradition was being eroded. (DOM F 1)

One of the boy choristers explained his surprise when they were told that a girls' choir would be starting:

The first thing I remember about the girls' choir is that Dr Seal telling us in a practice. I don't think I was cross, it's hard to describe it, my heart missed a beat because I was so surprised because I wasn't expecting anything like that. (Appendix A2.1)

As the new girls' choir started in September, efforts were made to make the boys feel both valued and essential members of the cathedral tradition:

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So, all one could do was to jolly them along, make them feel their work was as important as ever. I praised the boys as much as I could but not unreasonably and made them feel that their work was essential. That they were an essential part of the foundation (DOM F 1)

However, the impact on the boys' identity was difficult and it was only after several years when those boys had left the school and new ones were recruited that things settled down:

it took really three, four years before the boys were wholly resigned to there being girls and, of course, there came the stage when a boy would come into the choir and wouldn't know anything other than the fact that girls are here already, (DOM F 1)

The impact on the boys in another cathedral had a similar effect. The news coverage of the girls was quite intense and there was a feeling amongst the boys that no one would be interested in them anymore:

the other interesting thing was the sort of reaction of the boys because we kept them informed right from the start (and their parents) so they didn't feel that they were being excluded, or that things were being done behind their backs, or that sort of thing and they were sort of muttering 'Oh, nobody will be interested in us anymore'. Particularly of course when we were recruiting, the girls, because it attracted quite a bit of media attention local radio and television and so on, used to come along, and the boys 'Oh dear we have had it'. (DOM F)

To what extent the boys may have felt that people were more interested in the girls' choir is difficult to assess, as no one questioned the boys. It was a new venture and may have made the boys apprehensive and had a negative impact on their identity. It was explained to them that it was a way of giving them more free time as they had very full timetables with academic work as well as their singing duties:

I think they were just not quite sure how it would go, but one had to make it very clear to them that it was to relieve the burden on them, which was getting—with all the things we were doing and having to keep up with their school work—they were under tremendous pressure. So, it did mean they would have a little bit more free time when the girls came on stream. (DOM F)

With regard to the financial differences in school bursaries between the girl and boy choristers, the boys were awarded half of the school fees, whereas the girls were only awarded a quarter. It was also generally reported that the boys had better facilities and more prominence. Sarah Mynott, another girl chorister, felt:

It's all a bit unfair. Last year we went to France while the boys' choir went to America. (Thompson 1997, p. 6)

Williams, in writing the article 'Sprinting into the boys' choirstalls', sums up her thoughts on the benefits of having the opportunity for both boy and girl choristers. As a parent of both boy and girl choristers and with a husband who was a lay clerk, she believed in gender equality and the importance of finance being available to support both choirs:

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My husband sings in Salisbury Cathedral Choir, and so have three of my children: two boys and a girl. Neither son has ever expressed any resentment of their sister (at least, not in relation to singing) and nothing can equal the joy of hearing all three sing 'Never weather beaten-sail' in the back of the car. However much one wishes to see the boy treble preserved – I certainly do, since my third son wants to be one – we cannot turn back the clock and pretend girls are not here to stay. Real equality surely means ensuring there is enough money for chorister scholarships for both sexes, and that the survival of one choir does not mean the demise of the other. Which might be a fruitful campaign for all lovers of cathedral music. (2001, p. 21)

In terms of vocal quality, a boy chorister commented on the girls' voices and the different strengths of the sound:

Often boys' voices at our age are stronger than girls, but it's different and boys have their ups and downs, like voices breaking near the end and there's a short peak, and girls have their voices, but when there less mature voices, they can be different, but I think they must have their ups and downs. (A2.1)

At the same time a girl chorister believed that, whilst the boys were more experienced singers, she believed they were equal and both choirs had a different sound:

Well I think they are more experienced, the boys, but I think we are equal. I think there is a slight difference in sound, some people think that it's the same – we've got the same voices. We have a darkness to light when we sing together or against each other and that's only when we hear each other. (A2.1)

As girl choristers became more proficient, the question of vocal equality was that at no stage would both choirs be equal vocally. Whilst it could alternate, one choir would always be better than the other. If the less able choir were aware of this it could be discouraging and it is believed that the motivation of the boys could be impaired:

On any month or any year, the boys or the girls are going to be stronger. You will never get it so that they are of an absolutely equal standard. You see, three years ago the girls were stronger than the boys, now it's the other way around. (DOM 2)

Regarding equality, it was thought that an older age range for girls removed the direct competition between the same age groups:

Here, for instance, the boys are from 7 to 14 and the girls are from sort of 10 to 18 so there isn't that rivalry, but the girls you know are finding their voices at about 14 at a time when a boy's breaks. (AO F)

Another interviewee in the present study thought that the boys and girls got on well together, but in terms of vocal equality, the girls at that time were singing better than the boys and they tended to be rather too proud of the fact. He did not, however, think this attitude had an impact on the boys however:

They are ok, but the girls know they are better than the boys at the moment and I think some of them are a bit snooty about it; well not snooty, but sort of yeah, a bit superior

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about it. I don't know if the boys really care or they probably think they are better than the girls. I don't know. (DOM 1 b)

Another interviewee however, felt that on an occasion when the girls were sounding better, the boys felt disheartened:

I know four years ago the girls were a lot stronger than the boys and the girls did a broadcast and the boys at that stage were really struggling and I think they found it quite demoralising. (DOM 2)

The interviewee explained the difficulties with vocal change in having boys of an older age range stay on in the choir instead of as in some places where they leave earlier. This could explain why at the end of an academic year the girls' choir would be stronger:

By the time boys get to their final year here, often the voices are breaking. I mean we keep them on a year later than Salisbury and St. Paul's and Durham. We go into Year 9 and often you are not left with very much! (DOM 1 b)

If they do make it through Year 9, then often you have got—often, but not always—you have got a good little musician with a voice that's, you know, on its last legs, but probably just beginning. It's just got that pre-dying blossom about it which a lot of places where they finish Year 8 they don't get and they're musically probably not as advanced. And that's the thing with the girls, it doesn't matter. (DOM 1 b)

One interviewee explained that one of the reasons the girls' choir was formed was because the boys had too much additional extra work. It was acknowledged that, whilst the amount of singing the boys did was beneficial in order to maintain their standard, it was felt that due to, for example, outreach work, tours, and weddings, they were in fact singing too much:

We believe that the boys are probably over taxed if anything in what they are doing at the moment. They sing six or seven services a week. They get a tremendous amount from it, it's absolutely terrific, but with all the extra funerals, weddings, tours, this that and the other, concerts, music share, we have an outreach programme and so on. It's a huge amount that they are doing...Now ...would not wish to diminish the amount that the boys are doing because they would feel that their quality would diminish, but actually with all the extras that they are doing, I think they really need support in that, and so my vision also is that in the future the number of regular services they do in the cathedral will diminish slightly, but with all the extras they are doing, they will still be keeping up exactly the same level of performance and expertise. So, I think in all those ways, it's all an advantage to the boys. (HT 1)

The impact of the introduction of girl choristers has resulted in boys singing less services. Directors of Music questionnaire data showed that 53 per cent stated that their boys sang less due to the introduction of girls (A3.3) with one interviewee expressing concern in the reduction of the number of services his boys sang:

the problem, you see, I find now is that the boys are now singing approximately nine services a fortnight. (DOM 2)

He continued by explaining that the impact of introducing girl choristers not only resulted in the boys singing less frequently but believes that—more worryingly—has completely jeopardised their standard and the tradition:

They have jeopardised the standard. The fact that the boys don't sing so much means may mean it's easier to get boys. I don't know because the commitment is much less, but certainly the standard, the standard has been thrown into jeopardy. It's much harder generally speaking now to get the standard you want to get than it used to be. I mean, you know, to be fair there were times when I thought 'Oh gosh it would be nice just to have a rehearsal tonight and not have the boys singing', you know. There were times when I thought that, but once the term got going, you know we had a reasonably good number of choristers they would get into the swing of things, but I saw that this was going to happen. I predicted it and hoped that I was wrong. (DOM 2)

The need for boys to be singing regularly in order to uphold an optimal standard is seen in separate report from another cathedral where they boys sing more weekly services each week than the girls. It was felt that boys also had greater stamina to sing more regularly and girls sang better with a lesser workload:

One thing here is that, because it was boys for centuries, boys still do more than half of the services, so it's not an even split. But I think the boys need much practice, they need to be kept at it. I think possibly maybe they've got a bit more stamina and maybe the girls are a bit better at doing it well less often. Sometimes, I find the girls might sort of flag in a service when you've practised, or the boys might come in on something they know extremely well and it might be dreadful...I think sometimes when they are under pressure and when they're feeling a bit stretched can be a factor. (Mackey (2015) p.154)

Within a decade, however, there is evidence that these early tensions were receding, bringing new forms of recruitment possibilities. In a letter to the Editor of Cathedral Music (2001), Margaret Vincent describes how her son was influenced to become a chorister having heard his older sister sing in a cathedral choir:

Our son decided that he wanted to be a cathedral chorister, having witnessed and having heard his sister's choir and the boy choristers of the same cathedral. She told him about the experience of being a cathedral chorister and he shared her evident enjoyment and sense of achievement. Eventually, he decided that this was something he would like for himself and he is very happy with his decision. Had he been our first child, I am not at all confident that he would have made the same choice, or wanted to be the first member of the family to go away to school. (2001 (1), p. 43)

3.7 Lasting impacts on the first generation of girl choristers

Lole (2001a) records how over half of the girls in the first Salisbury choir went on to study music in further/higher education and that 'only a handful plan[ned] a career involving no music at all'. Subsequently, many of the original girl choristers at Salisbury have forged successful careers. One

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former chorister, Amy Carson, who was one of the first to join the choir, took part in Kenneth Branagh's *Magic Flute* film in 2008. She described her experience whilst being a chorister (Fisher 2008, p5) as:

I value it above any other experience since. We were making music every day, but also developing the other things that come with making music, like teamwork.

Carson (2002) also further described the influence that being a chorister had had on her life:

Becoming a chorister was a formative step in my musical career. The choir gave us confidence to perform as a unit and excel by combining our individual talents with strong discipline in musicianship. It also taught me professional standards, responsibility, corporate and organising skills... Being a girl chorister was very special and gave me a strong sense of identity and inner confidence... (2006 (2), p. 35)

This idea was echoed by the thoughts of two former girl choristers who were admitted into the first girls' choir:

I'd just like to say thank you to everyone who was involved at the Cathedral School for making my years there so enjoyable. I often look back and remember how much I loved the school. (Lole (2001a, p.9)

In the same article, another former chorister said:

Being a chorister is an amazing experience- one you never forget. (ibid)

Whilst Grace Newcombe, aged 11, stated in the same article:

I love singing beautiful church music. I never want to leave the choir and I am not looking forward to the day I have to.... I love the chorister life. (ibid)

Other memories recorded by Williams (2001, p. 12) include:

I don't think any of us realised how lucky we were to be in the choir until we left it.

I will never forget it. It influenced my life immeasurably.

I felt a great loss when I left.

It taught me a lot about commitment.

It prepared me musically, and gave me an idea of hard work at a young age. It was an opportunity that left a permanent mark on my life – something to tell my grandchildren

Positive comments were also reported from three previous choristers who had experienced singing in the girls' choir:

...lots of brilliant music

Very high musical standard...advanced sight-reading skills...lots of practice at performing...it taught me to listen

...one of the best things I have done. (ibid)

3.8 Summary

The impact of the introduction of girl choristers in 1991 on the English choral tradition has been considerable in terms of additional gendered opportunities in the make-up of the chorister body, but—at the same time—the past three decades also provide evidence that performance standards and repertoire with the sacred ritual have remained constant, or at least as varied within an acceptable range, as previously.

In terms of CHAT, this minor revolution could be seen as arising from tensions within (recruitment) and without (equal opportunities) the choral foundation at that time. Then, in seeking to resolve these, other tensions have arisen, both in terms of the diverse stakeholder perceptions (for and against the innovation) and also in the experiences of the choristers themselves (positive for the girls, but perhaps more challenging and disturbing for the boys, at least initially), (as discussed in Chapter Two) This innovation, from its very beginnings to the present day, has challenged and continues to challenge the systemic activities of a tradition where previously music in English cathedrals had been dominated exclusively by an all-male choir. Tradition plays a large part in the existence of boys' singing in cathedral choirs. However, for others, this innovation in an historic tradition has caused them difficulty in accepting changes to the traditional cathedral music regime. In terms of mediating artefacts, there were several considerations of organising practical matters which needed to be addressed in order for it to succeed, such as practical matters concerning the pattern of rehearsals and service rota, the underlying financial basis, publicity and the public's response.

This single event across February 15th and 16th, 1991 when girls at Salisbury were auditioned for the first voice trials was when, in one sense, the 'object' of the system changed because previously it was focused on boys now, relatively suddenly, it was about both sexes. Yet, in another sense, the 'object' remained the same, the continuance of an established choral tradition in which a highly skilled set of musicians, child and adult, performed across the week within the conventions of the sacred ritual.

It would seem that the innovation was timely. The pointers towards an alternative collective viewpoint and envisioning emerged within and without the cathedral community and show the comparative ease with which Salisbury established a girls' choir—as envisaged by the cathedral Dean and Chapter and Music Department—and this was to have a crucial impact on other

cathedrals who, like Salisbury, decided to establish their own girls' choir. Nevertheless, there were tensions in the sector. Alan Thurlow, Chairman of the Friends of Cathedral Music and also at that time Director of Music at Chichester Cathedral describes the reaction of the introduction of girl choristers:

the widespread development of girls' choirs in many of our foundations – either welcomed or resolutely opposed by large numbers of our members and undoubtedly [has been] the most controversial issue of the last decade. (Cathedral Music, 2002, (1), p. 5)

Considering the question, 'Could girls sing in the style that constituted 'the English cathedral tradition'? ', the individual accounts above suggest that there are various factors that influenced the answer; it does not come down to a straightforward yes or no. If the question means, 'Can girls perform the same repertoire?' the answer is yes. On the other hand, if the question means, 'Can girls sound the same in performing this repertoire?' the answer is more equivocal, not least because—as suggested earlier—the available evidence suggests that there has always been considerable (local) variation in the boy chorister sound. Each voice is unique from a psychoacoustic perspective, as demonstrated in forensic voice science (Welch, G.F. 2015). Thus, the blend of individual sets of voices will also be relatively unique, depending on the make-up of the group – which is why Directors of Music with both girls' and boys' choirs' comment that often one seems more advanced than the other, but that this difference is not stable, and can change from year-to-year.

Interviewees suggest that they train the girls in the same way as the boys (Chapter 3.5:113, Welch 1998), which could suggest that the girls therefore sound the same as the boys. The age range of the girls is also a significant factor, as cathedrals with an older age range are said to have girls sounding more mature (Chapter 3.5:113). Some interviewees said they deliberately did not train them to sound like the boys, but to have their own sound (Chapter 3.2:93). It was also put forward by some interviewees that the sound of boy choristers varied between each cathedral (Chapter 2.5:56). It was highlighted that the boy chorister sound of 'the English cathedral tradition' was down to particular Directors of Music who were recognised as having their own sound. The acoustics of the building could influence the sound and also the acoustic differences between the choir stalls and the nave within the cathedral (Chapter 2.5:60-61). A CD review of Blackburn cathedral written by Roger Tucker (2003) Cathedral Music gives a good account of the singing of boys and girls which he believes is a challenge to distinguish which gender is singing:

Everything was superbly sung by the cathedral choirs, with either boys or girls singing the top line. Anyone who wants to sharpen their ears to the different treble timbre when the girls are singing the top line, can learn from this disc. (Tucker, 2003 p. 62)

The formation of a girls' choir at Salisbury provoked much reaction, particularly from those people who were familiar with the Anglican Choral Tradition. In CHAT terms, the strength of the

tradition's historicity played an important part in the reaction of some people who needed to understand why and how this new tradition of girl choristers was going to unfold. They also worried what the effects would be on the tradition of boy choristers and whether it would lead to mixed choirs. In CHAT terms, these mediating artefacts of the perceived original tradition were to cause some unrest, and Peter Giles at the FCM Annual General Meeting at Rochester Cathedral on June 16th 1990 (prior to the inclusion of girl choristers at Salisbury) gave a speech in which he thought that having girls sing in cathedrals would threaten the existence of the all-male tradition, and stated that he believed that any such two choirs would inevitably be amalgamated. In a further example of CHAT and the existing culture, the mediating artefact of the FCM—in terms of its customary financial and cultural support—had not made any formal declaration of their position on this topic at that time, although in 1992 they awarded a grant of £4000 to the girls' choir at Salisbury.

Giles established a pro-boys' tradition organisation (CDTCC) and people were invited to join and protest against the creation of girl choristers at Salisbury, leading to the expression of contradictions as well as longer term implications for the overall community. The opposition appears to have been based on two main beliefs: (a) that it was feared that girls and boys would end up singing the services jointly because cathedral finances would not stretch to endowing two separate choirs, and (b) that it would lead to the downfall of 'unique' sound of a boy's singing voice, whilst also noting their perception that boys would not want to sing alongside girls.

Barry Rose, a leading cathedral musician, alongside one of the lay clerks who sang at Salisbury cathedral, both supported the venture by putting their daughters forward for voice trials. Other cathedrals were influenced by Salisbury and also introduced girls' choirs shortly after 1991. These embraced Birmingham (1992), Wakefield (1992), Bristol (1993), Wells (1993), Coventry (1993), Exeter (1994) and Sheffield (1994).

It could be seen that the original sense of tradition was being challenged by the Salisbury innovation and its impact, leading eventually by 2016 to a widespread revised 'collective envisioning' within the cathedral music community. Nevertheless, at least in the early years, strong opposition continued to exist. Two years after girls were introduced at Salisbury, Gledhill (1993) reported:

Plans to bring girl choristers into Britain's cathedrals is splitting the Church of England's music community between traditionalists and progressives. (1993, p. 8)

Other reported reasons for opposition (according to Gledhill, 1993) were (a) girls' voices mature later and, therefore, girls will not produce the same vocal quality as boys; (b) boys will not want to sing if girls are allowed to; and (c) cathedral finances will not be able to support two choirs – therefore, the boys and girls would become a mixed choir.

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Handley (1993) commented on the article (above) and quotes further:

The Times is in favour of girl choristers. A leader on Saturday declared: 'At a time when the cathedral choirs are struggling to fill their places, none of the arguments is strong enough. What matters, in the sight of God and the congregation, is the sound not the sex of the singer. A Church that is going to ordain women priest's ought to be able to live with female choristers'. (1993, p. 8)

The opposition continued in 1996 when the CDTCC produced its survey concerning the introduction of girls singing in cathedral choirs. The two main areas in the Survey were:

- what effect that the introduction of girls singing would have on the position of lay clerks; and
- the possibility of combining the two choirs which could arise out of financial necessity and thereby having a mixed top line.

In 2001, ten years after the introduction of girl choristers at Salisbury, Dr Alan Thurlow (at that time the Director of Music at Chichester Cathedral) reiterated his 1991 concerns that he was still of the opinion that girl choristers threatened the Anglican Choral Tradition, fearing that ten years was too early to judge the impact on future generations and the possible loss of boy choristers. Others believed that the recruitment of boys would suffer and that their singing routine would be disrupted, thus impacting negatively on the repertoire.

The impact of the introduction of girl choristers at Salisbury also was reported to have had a profound personal influence on the girls and they recorded how grateful they were to have the opportunity and how much it influenced their lives (Appendix Chapter F). Nevertheless, through a CHAT lens, notwithstanding the new opportunities provided for girls, there are still contradictions evident, as in most cathedrals the girl choristers are still not yet treated universally as on an equal par with the boys in terms of financial scholarships, nor necessarily in an equal number of sung services across the week.

The wider community reaction to girl choristers at Salisbury was divided, with those in opposition still continuing to voice their disagreement, as evidenced in the CDTCC (2000) campaign website for all-male cathedral choirs, whose prime objects were 'To champion the ancient tradition of the all-male choir in Cathedrals, Chapels Royal, Collegiate Churches, University Chapels and similar ecclesiastical foundations...[and also] to encourage parish churches which maintain, or seek to establish, all-male choirs'. In contrast, the evidence of support for the original Salisbury initiative is in its widespread impact, with 37 out of 42 cathedrals now having a separate choir of girl choristers.

In the early days when the idea of introducing girl choristers to sing at Salisbury cathedral was first mooted, issues that needed to be resolved successfully included the nature of the sung role in the cathedral's weekly programme, the funding for the choristers' clothing, music, education and its

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location. Nevertheless, on October 7th 1991, eighteen girls were admitted to the Choral Foundation at the first Evensong in which they sang the service.

There were continuing tensions in the sector despite the changes in other cathedrals. Alan Thurlow, Chairman of the Friends of Cathedral Music and also at that time Director of Music at Chichester Cathedral, describes the reaction of the introduction of girl choristers:

...the widespread development of girls' choirs in many of our foundations – either welcomed or resolutely opposed by large numbers of our members and undoubtedly [is] the most controversial issue of the last decade. (Cathedral Music, 2002, (1), p. 5)

Howard Goodall, a former Oxford chorister, who produced a documentary series in four episodes for Channel 4 television entitled 'Choir Works' said with regard to the girl choristers at Salisbury:

There are people who believe that the arrival of girl choristers into a cathedral like this (Salisbury) might mean the beginning of the end of the boys' tradition. These girls don't threaten anyone or anything. They are an added bonus that we should welcome and celebrate. I for one hope and believe that in another 1000 years there will be other Katie's, Sophie's and Sarah's singing here in this broad and forward-looking church. (Choir Works, 1998)

The Very Reverend Canon Trevor Beeson, whilst Dean of Winchester Cathedral, recorded in his diary how he thought the introduction of girl choristers at Salisbury could influence other cathedrals to admit girls:

For Salisbury, and especially for Hugh Dickinson, the introduction of girl choristers has become something of a crusade. They believe all cathedral choirs should be moving in this direction in the interests of plain justice. (1997, p. 200)

With regard to having a girls' choir at Winchester Cathedral, Beeson adds:

It would be good if we could start a girls' choir, but this would involve major changes at The Pilgrim's School, which at the moment is for boys only, and like Salisbury we would have to raise a lot of money to put the girls on an equal footing with the boys over scholarships. Once the new Precentor is settled in, we shall have to look at this very seriously. (1997, p. 200)

The early formation of the Salisbury girl choristers was in a sense under the microscope for all to see and it acted as a catalyst for change across the sector.

Chapter 4: The later case studies at Lincoln and Lichfield

4.1 Introduction

The launch of a girls' choir at Salisbury Cathedral had a major impact on the music foundations in many Anglican cathedrals who also sought to introduce their own girls' choirs. The impact was seen almost straight away, with seven cathedrals introducing girl choristers in the years between 1992-1994. Shortt (1993) records this influence as follows:

Where Salisbury leads the way, other great English cathedrals will follow suit. We look forward to a future where a stream of new musical talent from our cathedral choirs will enrich the great tradition of English choral music. (p. 8)

These prophetic words appear to have come true, with only three out of 42 cathedrals in 2020 continuing to have solely boy choristers (Chichester, Hereford and St Paul's). The Times (20th December 2019) reported that 'choirgirls now outnumber choirboys for the first time', with 739 girls and 737 boys singing in the cathedrals. The article provided a graphic, sourced from the Church of England (Figure 4.1), which mapped the changes in chorister personnel from 2002.

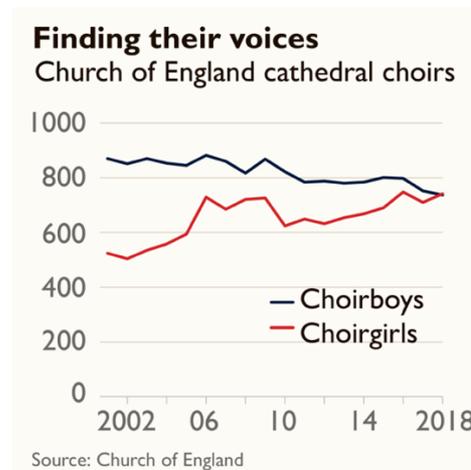


Figure 4.1: Changes in the numbers of boy and girl choristers since 2002
(The Times, 20th December 2019)

Nevertheless, despite this evidence of both change and consolidation over three decades, this initiative continues to provide challenges for those most closely involved, as well as others with a more remote sense of stake holding. For example, Adrian Partington, Director of Music at Gloucester, is positive about girl choristers, but also wary of how best to manage this, perceiving a need to keep the two choirs as separate entities for much of the time.

In certain areas, girls are better motivated than boys, and my fear is that when boys and girls combine on a daily basis, the boys can lose interest. I think having two separate teams that sometimes combine is the best way forward. (The Times, 20th December, 2019)

The challenge of the economics of running two separate choirs continues, however, often with long-established financial support for boys that covers their boarding costs in associated independent schools – such as at Gloucester, where the boys receive a subsidy of 75% on the annual school fees of £15,000, but where girls receive no subsidy, based on 2017 data, as reported in The Times, 12th November).

From a CHAT perspective, despite the Anglican cathedral community in general having gone through a very rapid 'expansive transformation' (*cf* Engeström, 2001, p. 7) with regards to the institution of girls' choirs, not everyone was to participate with equal enthusiasm within a 'collective envisioning' (*ibid.*) that accompanied this transformation. Therefore, whilst this chapter charts the development of what has – to all intents and purposes – become much more than just an 'alternative collective viewpoint' (Welch, 2007, p. 27), CHAT's emphasis on multivoicedness requires us to also consider the perspectives of those whose viewpoints did not (and do not) correspond with this new collective view.

Fundamentally, whilst Seal as the leading musician was instrumental in establishing a girls' choir at Salisbury, in other cathedrals it was reported to be the Dean and Chapter who had instigated much of the initial 'change and development' within their dominant Cathedral Music culture (seen as an activity system). One long established Director who as interviewed in the present study explained that, whilst the Dean and Chapter were keen to introduce a girls' choir, they did allow him to choose whether he wanted to go ahead with the idea:

It started really as the initiative from the Dean and Chapter. They felt that this would be a good move and so they approached me...and they said that if I was not keen on the idea, you know, there was no pressure at all and they would just shelve it presumably until after I retired, you know (DOM F 3)

This interviewee then explained the reason behind his personal commitment to being involved:

I'd had two daughters who both had good voices and would have given their right arm to have had the chance, you know, of being a chorister. So, the more I thought about it, the keener I got and so I said, 'Yes fine, let's go ahead'. (DOM F 3)

The general feeling of whether or not to include girl choristers came at a time when the Church of England in 1994 was considering the question of the Ordination of women. This proposal was also changing the view and 'rules' of the traditional all-male establishment which, one interviewee believed, allowed more inclusivity within the ecclesiastical environments:

I think it was felt that, you know, that at a time when there was so much more inclusivity in the church with women Priests and so on and women were being given a

proper role in the church in general that it was right that there should be a girls' choir.
(DOM F 4)

This chapter reports case study of Lincoln and Lichfield cathedrals' introduction of girls' choirs. Lincoln who were one of the earliest cathedrals after Salisbury to introduce girl choristers in 1995. The chapter looks at how and why girls were introduced in these institutions, the experiences of the first girl choristers, reactions to their formation and how these might be compared with the Salisbury 'model'.

The all- male traditional culture and historical timeline for Salisbury prior to 1991 was characteristic of a centuries-old way of organising the performance of sacred cathedral choral music. Their initiative was both ground breaking – in the sense of disrupting the mono-gender bias in an all- male musical culture – but also a continuation of that same tradition because the sacred ritual, performance spaces and repertoire were the same. Despite the change the system's core rules, roles and expectations have to work together. Through CHAT, we can see the object in cathedrals of perpetuating an all- male tradition continuing alongside the inclusion of girls but with some modification as the mediating artefacts of expectations in rehearsals and services continued to shape the system's function. Nevertheless, applying a core CHAT concept, there is evidence of an ongoing 'expansive transformation' (Engeström, 2001, p. 7) of the established tradition. Yet, a debate that started prior to 1991 continues to the present day as to whether or not girl choristers should be allowed to sing in cathedrals, and whether this will 'jeopardise the boy chorister tradition', as is reported later in Chapter Nine.

Two case studies are discussed below, which provide insights into our understanding of the impact of how girl choristers were introduced, namely Lincoln, which introduced girl choristers in 1995 and Lichfield, a more recent cathedral to introduce girl choristers in 2006. This chapter compares how this new mixed gender 'tradition' at Lincoln and Lichfield evolved compared with the Salisbury 'model'. An alternative collective viewpoint (Welch, 2007) emerged four years after a 'model' was set up at Salisbury and the immediate followers. Furthermore, since the introduction of girl choristers in 1991, there has been an increasing awareness and division of opinions voiced in the media over girls' choirs. So, in a sense, the research lens has become larger.

These two case studies using the Salisbury model are offered to help to expand our knowledge and understanding related to the research questions. Whilst the cultural systems were the same, change happened by a different impetus and in different ways.

4.2 The foundation of the first girls' choir at Lincoln

The Salisbury choir was initiated by Richard Seal who could see the benefits of an equality of opportunity for girls. At Lincoln, the impetus was through the Consistory Court made up of a clerical body to improve cathedral development:

There were a whole long list of recommendations about how the Cathedral should go forward, and establishing a girls' choir was one of them. (DOM F 6)

The Dean, Precentor and Headmaster of the Cathedral school saw the advantage through the Salisbury initiative of changing the traditional culture. Unlike Salisbury where the Director of Music at the cathedral recruited and trained the girl choristers, Nick Perry, a lay clerk at Lincoln Cathedral and also Head of Music at the cathedral school was given the responsibility.

4.3 How the provision of a girls' choir at Lincoln was established

Whereas Salisbury had been meticulous in the preparation prior to the introduction of girl choristers, subsequent reports suggest that Lincoln started the new tradition in a relatively short space of time without adequate planning. This would create tension and conflict in achieving unity, identity and teamwork within the girls' choir and impact on the position of the boy choristers.

Perry describes the early days as:

No one stopped to think -what was the time scale? Let's think about it and plan it. It was 'Start it now, start it next September'. It almost happened too soon really in the beginning (DOM F 6)

Unlike Salisbury, the first audition at Lincoln only attracted a small number of girls from the cathedral school, with six girls being admitted, followed by two more later. Girls from other schools were, therefore, invited to audition and the numbers increased. In describing the climate at the time, Perry said:

I think people were a little bit nervous because it was a new; obviously there weren't many girls' choirs established; of course, Salisbury ...there weren't many girls' choirs around then and people were a bit nervous about it (DOM F 6)

At Salisbury, the girls were the same age range as the boys, were boarders at the cathedral school and sang together all the time. At Lincoln, the age range was for senior girls, being a mixture of boarders and day pupils, and girls who did not attend the cathedral school sang on a voluntary basis. Perry explained the difficulties:

They co-opted some children or young ladies from the other schools just to sort of join in for a time and until it got on its feet, in a semi voluntary capacity. So, it was quite a sort of fluid organisation at the beginning (DOM F 6)

Financially, at Lincoln was not thought through in the same way as Salisbury. Salisbury set up a very successful fund-raising scheme enabling them to make a contribution towards girl chorister scholarships and to ensure that they had their own music and choir robes. In comparison at Lincoln, there was no financial provision due to there being no time to make plans:

Everyone lifted up their hands in horror and said, 'We have no money, we can't do this, we can't afford the budget, we can't afford to appoint anyone to this' (DOM F 6)

In starting a new local tradition culturally and socially, the girl chorister at Lincoln were at a disadvantage:

The cathedral would not pay for any robes, music, music stands or anything we needed. Instead, the Girls' Choir came to be funded entirely by the school instead of the cathedral, and sometimes out of our choir trainer's pocket. (A2.1)

4.4 Initial reaction to the introduction of the girls' choir at Lincoln

Conflicting reactions to girl choristers at Salisbury at that time continued to be evidenced as Lincoln changed their cathedral culture. These ranged from those who were supporters, contrasted by those who thought it was a threat to the boys' tradition. Unlike the staff at Salisbury, the Lincoln staff were not united:

There were some people who were not very pro the girls' choristers and so there were some atmospheres at practice times, rehearsal times. (DOM F 6)

Compared with Salisbury where the music staff remained the same, at Lincoln there were changes in leadership which also created tension. Nick Perry was succeeded a year later by Linda Hepburn-Booth who was Head of Music at one of the schools which provided girl choristers. Three years later, she was succeeded by the acting Assistant Organist, Julian Thomas, for a term, who was succeeded by Simon Morley. Julian Thomas then being responsible for rehearsing them under Simon Morley:

we were without a ...consistent choir trainer... for quite a long time. It was almost 'make it up as you go along' (A2.1)

In the Salisbury model, the Director of Music reported that he made specific efforts to show the boys how much he valued them and, in addition, in a girls' rehearsal never spoke about the boys.

Each choir was, therefore, given its own positive feedback. The changes in the rules of the community at Lincoln led to some anti feelings between the girl and boy choristers, which was believed to have arisen due to the influence of certain adults. This created tension and a lack of unity for the girl choristers, 'I know for those six or those eight and their parents, it was quite hard at the beginning, the first year for them' (DOM F 6). In the early days, the girls were encouraged to sit in on the boys' rehearsals, in order to gain an insight into how the boys rehearsed and for the girls to try to understand what was required of them. But this initiative with senior girls listening to younger boys appears not to have been successful, as it caused division 'to learn how it was done properly, sort of thing, which wasn't very wise' (DOM F 6).

The tensions continued as the cathedral organist at the time was reported to have had reservations as to the possible negative impact that girl choristers might have on the boy chorister tradition:

I think because he was apprehensive that as the girls would develop – as obviously they would, because you look what has happened in the Parish Churches, girls' choirs have grown and grown, boys' numbers have dropped, and then boys have almost fizzled out. I think he was worried that it would affect the future of the choir. (DOM F 6)

The reactions at the time by the lay clerks indicates that, initially, there was concern, but in time they accepted it:

From what I picked up I think there were some of the choirmen certainly initially who were quite opposed to it. But having said that, certainly over time, once they heard the girls and sung with the girls, [they] actually completely overcame that. (AO F 2)

At Salisbury, Seal believed initially that it was difficult for the boy choristers who felt a 'sense of loss' when the first girl choristers were introduced. An interviewee at Lincoln sensed that there may have been some teasing from some of the boys towards the girls:

Certainly, some of the boys individually influenced the group, you know, there was some teasing – you are in the girls' choir, you are second rate, you do second rate music, and, you know, you only sing on Wednesdays and we are the proper choir. (DOM F 6)

It is thought that the parents of the boys saw the girls as a threat to the tradition, which could have influenced the boys' reactions. Some thought it challenged the boys and their standard of singing improved as both choirs were competing to be the best:

I think there was a healthy competition between the girls and the boys. I think the boys very much felt that they didn't want their position to be usurped. (AO (F) 1)

The reaction of some girls' parents created a sense of unease, as they feared that 'their children were seen as guinea pigs' (DOM F 6).

Some of the parents of boy choristers were in favour of the girl choristers as it enabled their boys to have a reduced number of services: 'I think there are some parents who welcomed the advent of the girls because it meant they saw more of their sons' (AO F 1).

In a similar way to Salisbury, some of the congregation at Lincoln initially stayed away when the girls' choir were singing, but as time progressed attitudes changed:

...there were a few members of the congregation; probably I suspect no more than the fingers of two hands, who would actively stay away from the cathedral if they knew the girls were singing...and actually once they had heard them a few times and had seen that the boys weren't suffering as a result of—you know—the arrival of the girls, sort of quietly started creeping back into services. (AO F 2)

In the wider sense of the cathedral community, the reaction expressed by other Directors of Music and cathedral organists in favour of girls' choirs or were neutral or negative, generally, varied according to whether they had experience of running a girls' choir in their own cathedral:

...if it was organists from Cathedrals where they had a girls' choir, then we got support from them. Otherwise, you know, that in a sense there was no interest from those not involved. (DOM F 6)

The position of girl choristers among the cathedral staff at Salisbury was very different to the situation at Lincoln. It appears girl choristers were treated like outsiders by some cathedral staff, who were unsure whether the new tradition would last:

...there was a time when, occasionally, there were memos and talk about the Cathedral choir and the girls. It was sort of, it was not deliberately so, but they weren't thought of as part of the whole organisation as such at the beginning, because it was new and people didn't know or were certain if it would last. (DOM F 6)

4.5 Experiences of the first girls admitted to the choir at Lincoln

The ongoing influence of Lincoln's historical tradition was manifested in tensions in the early stages. As seen in 3.2, it was believed by some that members of the cathedral community were not always unified in their acceptance of the girl choristers. This new pioneering choral tradition established by Salisbury, and followed by Lincoln 4 years later, was a relatively very short timeframe for social attitudes to change compared to what had emerged over the previous 1,300 years. The need to accept a new culture and tradition was seen in different ways by different people.

The choristers at Lincoln being more senior in age to Salisbury may have been more adept at picking up the social atmosphere as it unfolded. Interviews with the first Lincoln girl choristers at their 10th Anniversary celebrations give clear indications of how they remember their impact on the established all-male tradition. Some felt the clergy were supportive and encouraging towards them:

I don't remember the clergy being unsupportive. I think they liked having the girls around for the boring services that nobody came to on Sunday nights! ...The clergy were always very complimentary and had great respect for the girls. (A2.1)

Others thought that the lay clerks were not totally supportive and stated that some refused to sing with them. As social attitudes began to change, however, it was felt that the situation improved over time:

I was aware that there was strong feeling against the girls among some of the lay clerks. Some of them refused to sing with us, and threatened to resign if they were made to do so. Once we started singing with them and gradually improved, this died down and the men became very friendly and positive. (A2.1)

The reaction of the boy choristers indicates that, initially at least, they were not very friendly, although this may have had something to do with the fact that the girls were considerably older than the boys, so it is likely that they would not have had shared interests:

Initially, [the boys were] rather hostile, but once we got to know each other and after the school's merger [September 1996] became very friendly with them all. A little friendly competition always existed though. (A2.1)

The reaction of the congregation was difficult to assess, although it was highlighted that not many people came to the services in which the girls first sang. This could be due to the fact that, originally, the girls sang at services which were not traditionally well attended:

Not many people came to the services that we sang. So, whether that was because they didn't support us, or that the cathedral didn't want to have the choir exposed too much, I don't know. (A2.1)

The feelings of identity within a new culture, were portrayed as having difficulties being accepted through the social changes initiated by the new choral tradition:

...for the first few years, we felt like a third wheel on a bicycle and a sideways facing one at that! Sometimes, we would be encouraged and told that we were just as important, but, mostly, we just heard about all of the bickering and fighting going on within the clergy ranks, or between the parents of the two choirs. We weren't allowed to participate on an equal basis for some time...Very much playing catch-up. They'd been doing this for nine hundred years. We were trying to absorb as much of the tradition as possible without treading on their toes or taking over. So, in a way, we tried not to compete with the boys and, as a result, were given lots of new or different music and we were taken to different types of concerts throughout the diocese and in the city. So, in a way, we were trying to forge a new niche for cathedral music, while simultaneously wishing to become a part of the tradition ourselves. (A2.1)

Whilst it can take time for a new tradition to develop alongside an existing one, there were areas that Lincoln did not plan ahead for, compared to Salisbury. Interview data suggest that the provision of rehearsal space, music, and choir robes, and ensuring there was chorister equality, were areas where Lincoln might have learnt from Salisbury's experience:

No, we were treated differently in every way. There wasn't really a middle ground for a long time; either we were loathed or venerated. Hearing some ugly words being said about us would be quickly followed by a glossy photo shoot. Obviously, that was very confusing! We were only just beginning to be treated on the same level for the year before I left. ...Inevitably, during the first few years - we were effectively probationers ...and gradually built up to sing an equal number of services, sing with the men, sing an equal level of music and so on. ...it took a long time for us to get organised - we were without a regular practice room, consistent choir trainer, music copies, music folders etc for quite a long time. It was almost 'make it up as you go along'. We also didn't have scapula's (i.e., surplices) or medals or copes for ages. (A2.1)

However, there were positive outcomes emerging from this new tradition. Such outcomes included long-term and highly valued impacts on girl choristers:

I strongly feel that my experiences in the choir have made me into the person I am today, and inspired me to do well at school and beyond, and to keep music in my life. (A2.1)

4.6 Tradition and cultural identity

In starting a new tradition, Salisbury were fortunate in having girl choristers as boarders in the choir school, thus increasing the time that they had together musically and socially, and which would develop further their sense of a cultural identity. At a time of related change and development at Lincoln, perhaps the challenges in the local organisation might have meant that these girls' identity was more difficult to foster, even though it was felt that, as an older group of girls, there were some strong personalities in the choir:

I think actually a lot of them saw it as a chance to prove themselves and actually were very proud of what they were doing... and they saw themselves, particularly the very early ones, saw themselves as forging a path for the ones that would follow after. (AO F 2)

Another interviewee believed that the girls' choir had a strong identity:

Yes ...they did very much have their own identity and, you know, they would go and give concerts in the diocese on their own, just as the boys would, and the intention was to make them every bit as part of the Cathedral choir rather than being called in some Cathedrals known as the girls' choir, which automatically sort of sets up a sense of two camps if you like. (AO F 1)

4.7 Vocal issues/vocal sound

As with Salisbury, there was never any reported intention to train the girls' voices to develop a different sound or style of singing. Whilst the original girls' choir in Lincoln was a lot smaller in number, they were an older age range with some excellent singers:

there were some very, very good voices in it. ... they had a good sound, a very strong sound. It was going to be a smaller overall sound than the boys and not particularly the same style. (DOM F 6)

4.8 Repertoire

Similar to Salisbury, the Lincoln girl choristers sang two-part repertoire when singing services without the lay clerks once a week. However, with the Lincoln girl choristers being in an older age range, they also learnt to sing four-part repertoire. They sang the same psalms and settings as the boy choristers; however, for the anthems, new music was needed, as the Dean and Chapter at Lincoln wanted the girl choristers to develop their own repertoire:

They wanted the girls to learn a separate repertoire. Actually, that's really been the pattern all the way through and, even to this present day, the girls do much more in the way of contemporary, music, whereas boys do much more in the way of Elizabethan...Tudor music...the girls tend to do more twentieth, twenty-first century stuff. (DOM F 6)

4.9 Future singing development

In 1996, the development of local educational policy provided the basis for Lincoln girl choristers to be supported in the same way as had happened in Salisbury. Lincoln Minster School was created from the merger of Lincoln Cathedral Choir School and St Joseph's School, followed a year later by Stonefield House School. This initiative was made possible in 1996 by funding from the United Church Schools Trust (formerly The Church Schools Company). Over time, the girl choristers have taken on an equal share of the singing duties. Out of eight sung services each week, the girls and boys sing an equal number of weekday services and, at the weekend, they are on a rota system. Both the boy and girl choristers are now known as the 'Choristers of Lincoln Cathedral' and not the boy choristers or girl choristers.

4.10 Change and Development with the introduction of girl choristers: Expanding the vision

Just over a decade after the introduction of girl choristers at Salisbury, Dr Alan Thurlow – at that time the Director of Music at Chichester Cathedral and who had voiced his concerns in 1991 – was still of the opinion that girl choristers threatened the Anglican Choral Tradition. Whilst like many others, Thurlow wanted to protect the tradition of boy choristers, he also realised that this was an opportunity for girls to benefit from receiving a chorister education. He envisaged a particular form

of enlargement of the choral tradition, whereby girl choristers could have the same opportunities as the boys by singing in those abbeys and larger churches where no choral music was in place. In an article by Williams (2002), he stated:

The number of boys singing at parish level has been in decline for years. Cathedrals have had difficulty in recruiting boys since the 1970's – long before the question of girl choristers arose. As co-education has increased, the same thing has happened in schools, boys begin to feel singing is something girls do – not masculine.

I believe the best way to keep and encourage boys is to make them feel special, and allow them to sing exclusively where they have always sung. There are plenty of abbeys and larger churches currently without choirs, where girls would be invaluable. There is no need to compete.

Ten years is probably too soon to judge, but I have a long-term fear that what this generation has started to change, other generations will take even further, and we may lose the unique sound of the boy chorister forever. (2001, p. 12)

One suggestion was to expand the Anglican choral community through the institution of new girls' choirs in places of worship where no choir formerly existed. There are a number of ecclesiastical buildings that would no doubt have benefitted from the reintroduction or initiation of a choral tradition, as reported in the following interview:

Beverly Minster, Selby Abbey, Wimborne Minster, Bath Abbey, tremendous places which were choral foundations before the Reformation, but after the Reformation were left as Parish Churches with no provision for music at all. Many of them are kept up with music on Sundays, but that's not why the building was there...there are all these wonderful places, Waltham Abbey²⁷ where Tallis was organist, that actually—with the Millennium approaching and lottery money—it would have been able to address the problem and start new choir schools in places that had already had a choral tradition and breathe new life into those new buildings, without in any way threatening or impinging on something that was there and established for centuries and would have actually opened up the opportunities in a completely different way. (DOM 4)

This concept would possibly have taken a significant time to implement if it was to be seen as on a par with the existing boy chorister tradition. Also, in order to establish some form of equivalence to the existing boy-focused choral foundation organisation, other related considerations would have included the provision for a choir school for the girl choristers; recruitment of lay clerks; recruitment of a Director of Music and an Organist; and the implementation of a music library.

In establishing a formal choral tradition in such abbeys and churches, finances would need to be created and maintained in order for the music and worship to flourish. Whilst, in principle, it makes sense, there are also other 'mediating artefacts' such as the discourse surrounding equality in terms of sacred music performance and services (Welch, 2007). Also, it is not clear whether there was any

²⁷ The current (2020) Waltham Abbey church website reports that a mixed choir of boys and girls sings two services a month and occasionally joins the regular adult choir who sing around six services a month (<http://www.walthamabbeychurch.co.uk/Music/WAMindex.htm>). 'They are a mixed-sex group aged 7-14 drawn from a variety of local schools'.

support for such an initiative at that time, especially as, subsequently, the introduction of girls appears to have been so successful generally across the sector across the past three decades.

Thurlow felt that the introduction of girl choristers should have been properly discussed nationally within the cathedral music community: '...that there was no national debate in our profession about it. It was just something that was started and what was started was a job share' (DOM 4).

With regards to an aspect of the historicity of the Anglican choral tradition, prior to World War Two, cathedrals customarily had choral Matins each day as well as choral Evensong. Consequently, instead of a 'job share', Thurlow felt that choral Matins could have been reinstated and sung by the girl choristers. This concept of choral Matins was also put forward by another interviewee:

Now what worried me was when we started the girls was that actually, unless we had double the services, we wouldn't be able to give the girls what the boys had because there simply weren't the services to fill it. I mean, I did say 'Look, we should be singing Matins', but that was impossible. (DOM 2)

Saunders (2000) also agreed that Matins offered a solution, as boys still could retain their daily round of Evensong, whilst girls have an opportunity for daily singing also:

At the moment, it is generally only Evensong which is sung on a daily basis. It is not that long ago that Matins was also sung on a similar basis. Could not this be resurrected? Likewise, the Eucharist could be sung each day, perhaps early in the morning, or at lunch-time? (2000, p. 11)

In terms of the 'division of labour', this idea would have implications also for the girl choristers' school education timetable. Also, the lay clerks would be required for extra singing duties during the day if the full choir was required, which would have resulted in the need for an increase in their salary, assuming that they would be free to absent themselves from their non-cathedral employment. On the other hand, there could be benefits. For instance, Farr records how the introduction of a girls' choir helped Guildford Cathedral by sharing out the workload:

we have recently established a girls' choir, for example, which has given us a wider range of options in planning our musical activities and enables a far more flexible use of resources (Farr, 2003, p. 31)

Lole described his views on the responsibility that Directors of Music have in terms of 'rules' (expectations) by suggesting that it is possible to preserve the boy chorister tradition whilst, at the same time, developing a strong girl chorister tradition, so that both choirs could independently flourish:

I fully understand the concern of those who voice the opinion that the advent of girl choristers is the beginning of the end of boys' choirs for a variety of well-rehearsed reasons, I would proclaim very strongly that those of us charged with the preservation and development of our choral heritage would never let the boys' choir disappear. Having spent a good deal of my career in parish churches, I know that—when you mix

boys and girls in a choir—the boys tend to leave. Yet, I also know it is possible to run parallel traditions that feed off and enrich each other. (2001 (b), p. 9)

In another demonstration of the enduring power of the historicity underpinning the Anglican choral tradition, Giles argued that girl choristers should be excluded from singing in the Anglican choral tradition because the music was not intended for them:

All church and cathedral music was [sic] written for male voices. It is a travesty suddenly, almost on a whim, to turn it over to female ones. They do not sound the same – not worse, just different. Authenticity demands that the music should be sung as it was conceived. 'The all-male choir is', he says with passion, 'an art form with its own integrity'. (cited in Williams, 2001, p.12)

In a Sermon preached by Hugh Dickinson (the Dean of Salisbury at the time the girls were introduced) on July 15th 2001 at the Celebration of the Foundation of the Girls' Choir he stated:

Since the beginning of recorded history, patriarchal societies have systematically, institutionally, and personally conspired to oppress women and to deny them the freedoms which are their God-given rights. (p. 2)

Another interviewee highlighted an opposite opinion to Giles, explaining that the reason a girls' choir was introduced was because they should not be denied the opportunity to sing music that was originally written for boy choristers:

...the argument for having girls was that the girls were being denied the opportunity to sing this music and to attain the skills, simply because they were girls, and this was wrong, which is actually true. (DOM 2)

Giles also argued that boy choristers need the discipline of regular service singing in order to maintain their motivation:

Boys need to be called to account by singing every day – they're naturally lazy, and if they feel that someone else is doing it for them, or that they are being invaded, or if it's no longer cool, they won't do it. Admitting girls is losing us boys. (cited in Williams, 2001, p. 12)

Whilst recognising an equality of opportunity argument, nevertheless, the previous interviewee agreed with Giles, believing the reduction in the boys' singing opportunities had considerably reduced their expertise:

...the boys achieved what they did because of the frequency ...like anything you do, the better you get at it, and with music ...not only rehearsal, the business of performing in front of a congregation, or an audience is one of the reasons why children gain their expertise. (DOM 2)

Over time, girl choristers have taken on a more equal share of the division of labour by assuming more singing duties. The impact of this has led some other Directors of Music to agree that this increase has been to the detriment of boy choristers who continue to need more singing

opportunities because of a perception that they tend to perform better when regularly challenged, 'boys need more performance practice than girls'. (AO F 1) and 'boys thrive on is the routine of just doing the job day in and day out and obviously if they are doing fewer services then potentially that is upsetting' (AO F 2).

One concern was that, with less singing duties, the boys would lose their knowledge of some of the choral repertoire:

...most of the time without the girls, you could look at the psalm... Oh yes, the tenth evening that's fine, off we go. Now, you can find that the psalms haven't appeared for two years. (DOM 2)

However, another interviewee highlighted an advantage of fewer services which had led to more time for rehearsal and more adventurous music to be attempted:

...the flip side to that is that both choirs then have more time to rehearse if they are doing fewer services, so therefore they can—you know—tackle more adventurous music. (AO F 2)

A second interviewee agreed, explaining that...

...whilst the girls sing Evensong, the boys are rehearsing and, therefore, have the benefit of a longer practice. The boys have an hour and a half rehearsal with either the Assistant or the Number Three, so they will do a lot of work and they will do a lot of good work. (DOM 1)

Confirming the evidence of the previous decade's changes and developments, Lole explained that with the girls' choir gaining expertise and experience, it was possible to have two first rate choirs rather than just one:

such fine choirs at our fingertips. Indeed, it now proves much easier to undertake the ever-increasing workload of services and concerts that are required from the Cathedral Now, in 2001, we have reached an absolute parity – both choirs are capable of tackling anything. Musically, I tend to do two separate repertoires and although we must continue to share all that we do, we can be more canny in the use of our resources. We are indeed lucky to have two Choir. Yes, the girls are here to stay and I rejoice at that knowledge. It is a great privilege to see these two great traditions expanding and developing in tandem. (2001(a), p.8)

Moreover, with regard to the 'change and development', the boys at Salisbury cathedral were also affected by the changes to their local tradition. When the girls were first introduced, Seal commented in an article by Williams:

Now, ten years later, no boy knows anything different, but for a while, for those original boys, there was a very keen sense of loss, almost of bereavement. (cited in Williams 2001, p. 12)

As noted in Chapter Three, it is clear that money became an important key mediating artefact in this changed context, to the extent to which its influence prevented some within the community from being able fully to come to terms with the prevailing change in the emerging collective envisioning. Thurlow expressed his concerns in Williams that, financially, cathedrals could not sustain two choirs:

For economic reasons, we may eventually end up seeing cathedral choirs with no children at all. Child singers need time, education and scholarships. Adults don't, and, unlike boys, girls can go on singing treble forever. So, it is possible that the girls who have been through a choir, and know the repertoire, will choke up the system by returning to sing in cathedral choirs as adults – cheaper and more easily trained than the boys. (2001, pp. 12-13)

Naturally, the cost of financing two cathedral choirs is considerable and the girl choristers do not always receive the same financial advantages as the boys. Nevertheless, since the introduction of girls' choirs from 1991 to the present date, none of the cathedrals have disbanded their girls' choir, and their boys' choirs have continued to flourish.

In an interview with L [...] Hodges in 1995, Richard Shephard, Headmaster of the Minster School in York stated the importance of equality:

If being a chorister is an education, then it is morally indefensible to deny it to half of the population...Implying that the only suitable musical medium for worshipping God is an all-male choir verges on the blasphemous. I wonder what God would think about it? (1995, p. 14)

In contrast, Roy Massey outlined his concerns with regard to equal opportunities—an example of an emerging 'collective envisioning' in CHAT terms. Massey stated his thoughts on equal opportunities, believing that it should not be applicable in cathedral choirs:

I fear I have been quite happy to allow others to crusade in this area. As someone who has spent his entire professional life encouraging boys to sing in church and cathedral choirs, I worry that the advent of girls' choirs may well endanger the all-male tradition in the long run. The plea of 'equal opportunities' seems to my mind to be misleadingly ingenuous as a boy's singing days as a treble usually last from the age of 9 to 13. A girl can sing soprano from 8 to 80 if she has a mind to and I hope many of them will. But I have always looked upon the chorister boy's precious few years of treble singing as something very special, fragile and short lived though it be, and something we should foster, treasure and be immensely proud of both as a Church and as a country. (reported by Palmer 2001, p. 6)

With regard to equal opportunity, a situation arose in Winchester where Mrs Jocelyn Edmonstone campaigned for her daughter Emily to be allowed to join the choir at the Cathedral. She threatened them with legal action if her daughter was not admitted. Beeson (1997) records in his diary:

A rather tiresome Winchester woman is pressing us, with the aid of the media, to admit her daughter to our choir and she will not accept David Hill's judgement that boys' and girls' voices are different and should not normally be mixed. (1997, p. 200)

Nevertheless, Winchester Cathedral introduced a girls' choir in 1997 and the CDTCC newsletter of November 1998 records Michael Till, the Dean of Winchester, as having said to The Times Magazine that the introduction of girl choristers had had nothing to do with Mrs Edmonstone, and that the Cathedral had not had pressure put on them to do so by the threat of legal action:

This is totally and also dangerously wrong...It generates hostility for a decision which we have freely made because we chose to do so. (quoted in the CDTCC Newsletter, November 1998)

Giles also supports Massey's views regarding the fact that boys can no longer sing treble after the age of thirteen:

A boy's voice breaks at 13 or so and he'll never sing treble again, but a girl will sing soprano for the rest of her life. There's not much equal opportunity about it. Nature ain't very equal. (reported by Garner 1998)

As girls' choirs began to emerge, cathedrals had different ways of employing the choristers. Some had (and have) girls' choirs which sing a smaller amount of services than their male peers, whilst others run the two choirs on parallel lines. Farrell, Director of Music at Newcastle Cathedral, commented in 2006 on plans to including girl choristers:

There are dangers with the introduction of parallel girls' choirs when they have tried to offer to the girls that same wonderful experience, that the boys have had for hundreds of years. In the worst cases, this marvellous tradition that we so covet is taken away from the boys, but it is not given to the girls either. The tradition gets watered down and becomes debased. I urge caution to any other foundations looking to start a girls' choir; make sure that they have a specific role and that it is not just for the sake of political correctness. I can assure that it will be well thought out here in Newcastle and will be an exciting addition to our music department, whilst not taking away from what we have. (2006 (2), p. 13)

A letter written by Hemmings (1998) to the Editor of Cathedral Music highlights another view with regard to the division of services which again points to a revised division of labour and also comments on vocal issues:

At York Minster the intention is for equality of weekday services and alternate Sundays; will this division of boys' and girls' choirs produce two ordinary choirs instead of one superb choir, whose excellence depends very much on practising and singing together every day? At Manchester Cathedral, the organist believes a mixed top line is the way forward (Radio 4 December '97). Will his boys eventually follow their parish church brethren and leave it to the girls? It is such developments which prompted the organist of New College Oxford to predict recently that in ten years' time, he will be 'one of the last all-male choirs in Britain' together with Ely, one hopes...If this seems over-dramatic, think how many girls' choirs were singing in cathedrals ten years ago – not even Salisbury! Girls' voices do not produce the same sound as boys': they lack the 'more focused, more robust' sound and cannot do justice to much cathedral music, from Allegri to Howells. It is good, therefore, to hear Exeter girls developing their own repertoire; their voices will be developing strongly into their teens, at the very time when a boys' treble life is ending. (1998 (2), p. 5)

Malcolm Archer at Wells explained the importance of running two choirs and giving equal opportunities to both:

Of course, running two choirs is a constant balancing act. Both choirs need to be given the same opportunities in terms of broadcasts, recordings and overseas tours. We alternate these at Wells and, fortunately, there are plenty of opportunities for both choirs to benefit. (1999, p. 26)

John Saunders (Director at Gloucester to 1994) describes how, in giving equal opportunities to boy and girl choristers, the boys reduced singing duties were likely to have impacted negatively on their knowledge of repertoire:

It is now quite common for the boys to sing on significantly fewer occasions, so that the girls can sing instead. Some cathedrals have said that it is their intention that their boys' choirs and their girls' choir should sing at the same number of services, i.e. four. What are the consequences of this likely to be? Less familiarity with the 'Psalms for the Day' – knowledge of a smaller repertoire – a slower 'pacing' in general?... Ironically, the very tradition of daily singing, which is still not actually being made to the girls, is now gradually being denied to the boys! (2000, p. 11)

It is the context of this ongoing disagreement within the community – as exemplified in the above comments – as to the virtues of introducing girl choristers, that the current case study research was extended to include Lichfield. By comparing the outcomes between these three cases (Salisbury, Lincoln and Lichfield), it is intended that CHAT can provide a lens through which relative success at Lichfield might be determined.

4.11 Lichfield

Between 1991-2005, a large number of cathedrals (25 out of 42) had introduced a girls' choir, and 2006 saw another surge of new cathedral girls' choir's being formed. These included Carlisle, Ely, Lichfield, Portsmouth and Worcester. The initiative of girl choristers at Lichfield was, therefore, not seen as being ground-breaking compared with Salisbury. The research methods in collecting data for Lichfield were the same as used for Salisbury and Lincoln. These included interviews with the Head Teacher of the cathedral school (who was a professional musician) and the first girl choristers, diaries of the first girl choristers and attendance at Evensong and concerts. In addition, as Lichfield started their girls' choir during this doctoral research, I collected video data of some of their choir rehearsals across their first academic year.

4.12 The foundation of the first girls' choir at Lichfield

Lichfield's particular historical tradition meant that the origins of its girls' choir were slightly different from the experiences of Salisbury and Lincoln. Instead of the cathedral introducing girl choristers, the initiative was taken by the cathedral choir school under the inspiration of Peter Allwood who, at that time, was the Head Teacher. The intention in forming a girls' choir was to develop a repertoire of both sacred and secular music, which choristers would sing at the school's weekly service in the cathedral, with the occasional cathedral Evensong, and also develop contacts for performing opportunities to sing in concerts in the district and surrounding area. The Head Teacher explained that, having a dual repertoire and not being confined only to singing in the cathedral, the girls would, through a different tradition, develop their own identity and not be in direct comparison with the boy cathedral choristers:

...to begin with, it's very much a secular and sacred choir and we are pushing that strongly to enable the girls' choir to get out as much as possible and do other things and have their own feel to it, not just to be a sort of poor second to the boys, but very much doing their own thing. (HT 1)

It was agreed that this choir, known as the Lichfield Cathedral School Girls' Choir should be totally independent and 'belong' to the school. On any occasion when they wished to sing Evensong in the cathedral, the school would be required to book the event, in the same way as visiting choirs who requested to sing on a 'dumb day', or when the boy choristers were on holiday:

We, as a school, book the cathedral for our weekly assembly and the girls' choir sing in that assembly. The girls have got their first Evensong booked for January, just like a visiting choir and they will sing on a dumb day. (HT 1)

It was agreed that the name of the girls' choir should deliberately include the school name rather than just the cathedral name to avoid possible confusion. The Head Teacher believed that, at some time in the future, the girls' choir would become more closely linked with the cathedral and the school name would be dropped:

I can see once the girls' choir develop strongly; it's going to be of great value. It's going to be seen as a cathedral thing and I feel that the cathedral would like to see the girls' choir as a part of its cathedral programme. (HT 1)

As with Salisbury's commitment to equality, it was thought by both the cathedral and the school that the girls should have the same opportunity for singing as existed for the boys:

As far as the cathedral was concerned it's a question of equal opportunities. We've had the boys' choir here for centuries and the girls are just not getting the same [opportunity] and in any modern cathedral and diocese, that's really important. (HT 1)

Again, as with Salisbury, providing opportunities for the girls to sing also had the positive outcome of reducing the boys' overall singing workload (the system's division of labour). The boys were shouldering a very heavy workload, not only with the daily cathedral services, but also with extra duties such as their Outreach Programme, concert recording and choir tours:

we believe that the boys are probably over taxed...in what they are doing. (HT 1)

As with Salisbury, the newly recruited Lichfield girl choristers attended the Cathedral Choir School, although they were not required to be boarders. The girls' choir's age range was slightly older than at Salisbury, being aged 10 to 13 years (with an intention to expand this to 10-15 years), but a younger age range compared with Lincoln:

The following year they will all go up a year, but the Year Six will become probationers and they will just come in as trainees. (HT 1)

4.13 How the provision of the girls' choir was established at Lichfield

The school already had a junior school girls' choir which was run by the Assistant Organist at the cathedral. He was given the responsibility of directing the new girls' choir, which made the innovation slightly easier, as many of the girls moved on from the junior choir into the newly formed one. This was unique in the forming of a choir which would go on to be taken over by the cathedral. It gave them a tremendous advantage, as not only did they possibly have a strong identity, they also had experienced the advantages of singing regularly together and the familiarity of singing under the same choir master:

I thought it would be a nice experience to actually be in the choir (singing in the cathedral) instead of just being in senior choir. (GC 1)

Another unique benefit of the girls' choir being established by the cathedral school was that the Head Teacher, staff and parents were already in regular contact through parent-teacher meetings, reporting of general academic progress, and meeting at musical events. The choirgirl parents were very familiar with the school, how it operated and the support structure in process through pastoral care. The Head Teacher was very keen that the girls should feel supported by both the school and parents, and organised extra events in which everyone involved could share the experience and ideas of the newly formed choir:

Had a couple of parent's meetings last term and we took the girls to Natalie and Alex's concert in the Festival and then invited all the parents, and they all came back

afterwards and so we could all talk things through, so that they should feel, the girls could feel, really supported by both school and parents. (HT 1)

For the first auditions, there were 24 girls who applied and 18 places were awarded. The idea was for future recruitment to increase the number in the following year to 24:

We decided on eighteen in the choir in the first year. I was going to have fewer than that and build it to that, but then we felt that the girls wouldn't have confidence in the first year unless we had sufficient numbers...Next year they will all go up one year and we will add another six and make it a choir of twenty-four. (HT 1)

The key mediating artefact of finance was managed differently than in either Salisbury or Lincoln. Lichfield was different, as finances for girls were administered through the school and, therefore, fundraising was not necessary. Girls were awarded free singing tuition and a scholarship of 20% of the fees. Girls who were external candidates added to the scholarship by bringing 80% of fees into the school:

...any girls that come, their fees would be additional, even though they are only giving us eighty per cent. That was eighty per cent more than we would have had otherwise, and so financially that has completely covered the twenty per cent that we have offered our internal candidates and it has covered the cost of the ten thousand pounds of operating the choir on an annual basis. (HT 1)

In comparison, boys did not receive free singing tuition, but were awarded a scholarship of 50% of the school fees and boarding from the cathedral. Whilst, financially, it was not equal, it was believed to be fair, due to the fact that the boys had a far heavier workload:

It seems to be right. I mean, the boys have got a very full programme and all the weekends and so on. The girls don't have that, but the girls are getting a twenty per cent off a day place, the boys are getting a fifty per cent off boarding, so it's swings and roundabouts. (HT 1)

The initial estimated cost of financing the girls' choir was approximately 'somewhere in the region of operational costs must be ten and twelve thousand pounds a year and we have got uniform and so on still to deal with, as a part of that, and twenty per cent scholarship as well' (HT 1). The finances had been so well organised that, after the first year of introducing a girls' choir, the cathedral school actually came out with a slight profit:

So, we have actually come out as a school with a profit in the first year, very, very small, a few pounds, but hey it doesn't matter at all. We are absolutely delighted and the business plan has absolutely worked. (HT 1)

Also, an additional place became available in the first year for another girl to join the choir:

I have one more place in the choir because there was a confusion over one place and I have got another girl to come and join in Year Eight from another school and again it was a girl who otherwise just wouldn't have come to the school...and it's not cost us anything. (HT 1)

The financial success of the initiative to introduce girl choristers is due to the fact that the cathedral school had the means to implement it, whereas the cathedral (like many others) did not have the resources to do so:

I can see for them (the cathedral), they don't have the same financial options that we had. (HT 1)

4.14 Initial events for the Lichfield cathedral school girls' choir

Rehearsals started in September 2006 and the weekly timetable consisted of rehearsals on Mondays (0750 – 0850), Tuesdays (0830 – 0845), and with a shorter rehearsal at 1240, plus Thursdays (0750 – 0850) alongside individual singing lessons every fortnight. Whereas the girls' choirs at Salisbury and Lincoln first sang at a service later on in their Autumn term, at Lichfield it was perhaps easier to create a more unified musical output because some of them had sung together previously as a school choir. From the first week of the Autumn term 2006, they sang an anthem each week at the cathedral school's service held in the cathedral. Other performances in the first term included Britten's Saint Nicholas with the Half Circle Singers at Holy Trinity, Sutton Coldfield, Carols for the Lichfield W.I. in the cathedral, and Carmina Burana (with the boy choristers) at Birmingham Symphony Hall. The official Launch Concert took place in December 2006 at Lichfield Cathedral and consisted of various anthems, some sung by the girls alone, and others with the lay clerks from the cathedral. Barry Rose, a former choir trainer at various cathedrals, attended the concert and gave a speech. The Patron of the girls' choir was Emma Kirkby, a professional singer, who also spoke:

I am so pleased that the Cathedral School at Lichfield is to provide this wonderful chance for girls in the West Midlands to grow up within the cathedral music tradition. (Kirkby, 2006)

Plans for the Spring term 2007 included singing Evensong on Wednesdays, which was traditionally the cathedral's dumb day. Normally, on this day, visiting choirs would sing Evensong:

The cathedral will feel more comfortable with that, they will feel that we are just offering as a visiting choir. (HT 1)

The girls' first Evensong was on Wednesday 31st January 2007, which I attended. The girls were very excited and the singing was well prepared. One girl wrote in her diary:

We went to a rehearsal around 4 o'clock and rehearsed everything. Walking, bowing, singing – everything. After the rehearsal we went to the palace... We did our hair and went to cathedral – we all looked gorgeous and the only mistake we made was unnoticeable. I really enjoyed it. (GC 2)

In addition to this, the first girls' choir tour was initially planned to Dublin in Easter 2008:

Dublin, Ireland or somewhere like that, and we are setting that up at the moment. (HT 1)

4.15 Initial reaction to the introduction of the girls' choir at Lichfield

Unlike Lincoln, the early opportunities for singing appear to have been very well thought out and planned carefully, taking into consideration the strengths and possibilities for developing the choir. In addition, as a secular choir who also sang sacred music they were well supported and accepted in the community. As social attitudes were starting to change, it was hoped that the girls would receive support within the cathedral community also:

(they are) already getting respect and support from this community. The wider community, not just the school community...I'd like to think that they were having a regular service within the cathedral ...so that everybody's used to that. That they are getting regular concerts outside the school, so that they are very much still seen as the secular choir. (HT 1)

The reaction to the introduction of the girls' choir was seen to be a positive, with various organisations inviting them to sing at local events:

The girls have got five Christmas events coming up in the next few weeks which is amazing. There have been a lot of requests for them to come and sing very swiftly. (HT 1)

4.16 Tradition and cultural identity at Lichfield

By using the school name in the title of the girls' choir, their identity was immediately seen as separate from the boys and this appears to have avoided there being a direct comparison between the two choirs. In the application form for girls to join the choir, it stated:

The girls' choir in the first instance would form a separate identity to the Cathedral Choristers. (Lichfield Cathedral School Girls' Choir Audition Application January 2007)

Another distinct way in which the girls were to have their own identity, similar to Salisbury, was instead of the traditional cassock and surplice worn by the boy choristers, the girls' choir uniform was especially designed for them. Until the new choir uniform was made available at the end of the

Autumn term 2006, the girl choristers sang in school uniform and they wore badges to denote that they were members of the girls' choir. It was hoped that the badges would develop a sense of belonging and being part of a team.

In the same way that the boys had their own identity and ritual rooted in the choral foundation of the cathedral, opportunities were put in place so that the girls also developed their own rituals and identity. The first occasion was at the Launch Concert in December when they would wear their new choir uniform and be individually called out and presented with a sash:

One of the great things about boys' choirs in cathedrals is that they have ceremony. They have occasions, they have events. They are installed, they receive their medals; boys love it. They love the sense of belonging and so we try to get with the girls as many of these, even though we are not, it's not a cathedral choir; we are trying to get as many of these aspects of the choir occasions and so on that give them a sense of belonging...So, looking for as much ceremony and occasion as we can sensibly give them, so that they feel a part of the team and we are getting the parents involved early on. (HT 1)

At the Launch Concert, some of the boy choristers came to support the girls and the Head Teacher explained in his speech the importance of belonging to a community and thanked the boys for their support:

Thank you, boys for coming, that they (the boys) feel very much a sense of community, a sense of togetherness. They belong as one as a group of singers, and we want the girls to feel the same over the next few years as they develop. (HT 1)

4.17 Repertoire at Lichfield

As with any newly formed choir, repertoire growth takes time, particularly if there is little or no tradition of experienced singers to inspire confidence for the 'novice' singer. Lichfield was more fortunate in this respect than Salisbury and Lincoln in that some of the girl choristers already has a history of singing together in school. Furthermore, in terms of CHAT, Welch (2007, p. 30) explains:

Each musical style has its own performance 'rules', established cultural 'artefacts' and implied musical identity... the cathedral music genre is particularly formalised by historic ritual.

The new choir drew on the school's and first Director's experience of running a choir, and quickly established a rehearsal routine and a targeted programme of milestone choral events across the opening months. As I was able to video the rehearsals at Lichfield each week, I witnessed change and development which took place through the building of a selected repertoire and responses as the choir gained in skill and confidence. During the first academic year at Lichfield, they achieved a

varied repertoire of both sacred and secular music, consisting of both easier and more demanding music.

Term 1

In the first term, their sacred/secular repertoire was almost of equal proportions. Sacred music consisted of six anthems, two choir carols and sections from two cantatas. This compared with their secular output which was four Christmas songs and a jazz style song. There was an increased number of secular music items compared to the following two terms, possibly due to the fact they had been invited to perform in Christmas concerts.

If ye love me - Tallis
For the beauty of the earth - John Rutter
St Nicholas - Britten
Ave Verum - Elgar
The Lord's Prayer (African Sanctus) - David Fanshawe
White Christmas - Irving Berlin
As I outrode this endress night – Traditional
Let it Snow - Jule Styne
Carmina Burana - Orff
How Blest are they - Stephen Oliver?
It don't mean a thing -Duke Ellington
In the bleak midwinter - Bob Chilcott
Merry Christmas - Traditional
Deck the halls - Traditional
A grateful heart -Mary Plumstead

Term 2

The repertoire became equally varied with sacred and secular music, although there was greater emphasis on the sacred repertoire, possibly due to the fact that the girls sang their first Evensong in the cathedral. This included learning a psalm, and the canticles and responses. In addition, they learnt five anthems, three of which were in two parts and two songs.

Magnificat, Nunc Dimittis, Responses and the The Lord's Prayer
Brightest and best – Malcolm Archer
Psalm 150
Can you feel the love tonight? – from the Lion King (Elton John)
The Lord is my Shepherd – Howard Goodall
Who is Sylvia – Schubert

Pie Jesu – Lloyd Webber
Jesus Joy – Bach
The Sorrows of my heart – Boyce

Term 3

All the repertoire was focused on sacred music and, whilst there was a smaller number of anthems learnt, they were more advanced musically and technically compared with the anthems in the first term. Also, the Summer term was a slightly shorter term.

Christo Resurgenti – Couperin
Darke in F – Darke
Messe Basse – Faure
Teach me O Lord – Tallis
Cantique de Jean Racine – Faure

4.18 Girls' reflections on changes in identity

The girls themselves were aware of how they were developing vocally and the importance of achieving a good quality of singing. One girl explained how she thought that the choir had improved vocally as they were more confident. The individual singing lessons and focus on the development of vocal technique were two of the mediating artefacts that helped the girls towards the 'object' of becoming successfully initiated into the cathedral choral tradition:

Well, I think everyone at the beginning was shy and they weren't exactly singing except for a few people, but now we have been in the choir for a few weeks [and] we really all have got better and more confident, and also the singing lessons are helping us a lot and doing all the warm ups. (GC 3)

As their confidence increased with regular rehearsals and the need to learn new music, the vocal skill of being able to sight-read also improved:

I couldn't sight-read anything before I came into the Girls' Choir and I had to be taught the tune and everything. (Appendix GC 2)

Another girl believed her sight reading had improved:

Definitely got better, because when I first started, when I looked at the sight-reading it took me about two weeks just to be able to know it ...but now it takes me just a few days really, maybe even hours or something. (GC 1)

Another girl believed that her singing and the choirs' singing in general had improved, although she thought that some girls tried to over sing ('too loud') and tuning was sometimes not very accurate:

I think we're getting much better at singing together, but some girls are trying to stand out. I think my singing is getting better, but it doesn't help when someone is singing out-of-tune. (GC 2)

During the first term, several of the girls commented that their singing had improved and, with regular rehearsals and singing lessons, they felt more confident as members of the choir:

We have got much better and obviously the lessons help us as well with Miss X. She does help because she does lots of warm ups and goes through the pieces we are going through at the moment. (GC 1)

In the second term, progress continued with an increase in their repertoire, and one girl thought that they had all improved, both in their singing and their sight reading:

I think as well we have really, really got better, because there was another girl, who when we started out, we all thought 'Oh my God, what an exceptional singer'. But now we are the same, sort of thing, and our sight reading has improved. (GC 3)

Solo singing in choir practices was something that the girls seemed quite relaxed and confident about:

I don't really worry too much 'cos all of the girls have basically done mistakes in the girls' choir; so, if you mess it up, you get a few who like smiled and that, but it's soon forgotten about. (GC1)

The first time that the girls' choir sang Evensong was perceived as an important occasion for them. I asked them about this experience and the music that they had sung:

I thought it was nice. It was nice to sing in front of all the people. (GC 2)

We had gone through it. But most of it was the music and there was all the like you bow now and walk over here and then you have to say this! (GC 3)

Relieved, because all the music that we had done in rehearsals, we had got it wrong so I was just thankful (a) that there were no boy choristers there to tease us for a lifetime afterwards! and (b) that we didn't.. I think we got one mistake; it was so small that I don't think you could actually tell. It was very good. (GC 1)

Two months after the girls' choir had been formed, the school held a 'Choral Experience Day' in which the girls rehearsed and then sang to parents. An account of this occasion was described by one girl as follows:

It was the choral experience day, we started off with learning the songs we were going to sing to the parents...The parents came in – we were great. (GC 1)

4.19 Summary

In comparison with the Salisbury approach, the data show that more planning and thought would probably have been helpful prior to the formation of a girls' choir at Lincoln. Effective management of particular mediating artefacts, such as in the finances, recruitment, staffing and identifying a clear role for female choristers, would possibly have made the early days a far more successful and positive experience. Data from some of the first girl choristers show that they believed that, whilst the experience had been beneficial for them, it also revealed there were moments of uncertainty with regard to their role, identity and lack of resources due to financial constraints.

Also, within the Anglican Choral Tradition, as with Salisbury, the prevailing social attitudes towards newly formed girls' choirs led to some people remaining somewhat negative or prejudiced. The initiative provoked much reaction, resulting in some girls experiencing 'anti' feelings at times. However, if the cathedral authorities had always waited until sufficient funds were in place, the start of any girls' choir may have been considerably delayed. Nevertheless, at Lincoln finance proved to be a key mediating artefact, and there was simply no money available for a girls' choir and also a fear among some that it would have a detrimental effect on the recruitment of boy choristers.

Although there was a clear momentum for change generated by Salisbury's initiative, practical and philosophical issues persisted, as evidenced in the participants' commentaries in the case study data from Lincoln and Lichfield. Increasing numbers of cathedrals introduced girl choristers, despite the diversity in social attitudes from within strands of the community (both cathedral and beyond) and the ongoing debate for and against. Nevertheless, whatever the individual perspective, arguably, new tradition has emerged, built on and extending the previous system. Change has arisen, firstly, from perceptions of 'contradictions' and related 'disequilibrium' in the conventional activities of the existing Anglican musical culture by key stakeholders, including senior clergy, musicians, and senior managers in the choir schools. Secondly, Salisbury demonstrated that change was possible and beneficial, and could be managed successfully without damaging the tradition. Their example led to others but, as the case study data from Lincoln and Lichfield demonstrate, the realisation of desired 'objectives' (both material and visionary) needs also to take account of the 'artefacts' mediated by the local system (such as resources, rituals, timetables and performance opportunities), as well as how best to manage threats. The 'product' of this activity over the past three decades has been a widespread commitment to include girl chorister in almost all cathedrals as part of their internal cultural-historical activity system, notwithstanding possible and actual tensions. Moreover, Roth & Lee (2007, p18) remind us that the term 'activity' relates to an 'evolving, complex structure of mediated and collective human agency', rather than something brief and so it is not surprising that there are examples of differences in perspective and object realization within individual components of the Anglican Tradition.

Through the use of CHAT, it is possible to understand why the girls' choir at Lichfield was introduced, who was responsible for its initiation, what the implications of its success were, and where it stands in the impact of the introduction of girl choristers at Salisbury and the latter's influence on other British Anglican cathedral choirs.

The mediating artefacts in relation to Salisbury and Lincoln when compared to Lichfield were different in as much as Salisbury needed to generate fundraising, whilst at Lincoln – because the Consistory Court ruled that girl choristers should be introduced immediately – they did not have the time to make appropriate provision financially. However, Lichfield was different, because finances for girls were administered through, and subsumed by, the school, and therefore, fundraising was not necessary in their financial model. It was perceived by Allwood, that if it was a case of waiting for the finances of Lichfield Cathedral to improve, or spend time fundraising, then the introduction of a girls' choir would be greatly delayed.

As the Lichfield choir was introduced in 2006, fifteen years after Salisbury, the earlier 'aggravations of contradictions' with the cathedral community's historical all-male tradition are likely to have been ameliorated to a certain extent if not addressed fully, i.e., the cathedral music activity system had largely been through an 'expansive transformation' to the degree where persistent 'aggravations', such as the discourse on access, funding, and workload were almost welcomed as part of an alternative collective viewpoint.

A key difference between Lichfield and Lincoln related to the division of labour between the boys' and girls' choir. At Lincoln, there had been tensions resulting when some boy choristers were worried that they would be usurped by the girl choristers. This problem did not arise at Lichfield because the boy choristers' workload in the cathedral and wider community was heavy, not only with cathedral services, but also with their Outreach Programme, concert recording and choir tours, and the girls' choir was seen as a positive innovation in helping to reduce this, at least outside the cathedral.

A comparison between Salisbury, Lichfield and Lincoln concerning the girl chorister's ages illustrates how the whatever counts as a new activity system tradition need not be uniform as local diversity is accommodated. Salisbury girl choristers were the traditional preparatory school age of 7-13 years, whereas Lincoln Cathedral's first girl choristers were older at 14 -18 years. Lichfield girls' first choir was aged 10 -14 years old.

Rather like Seal who had been an individual who was instrumental in establishing a girls' choir at Salisbury, it was Allwood the Headteacher who instigated the initial 'change and development' at Lichfield. He had carefully planned how he could recruit and finance a choir, what their role would be, and where they would sing. Under his jurisdiction in the school and senior leadership position within the cathedral and cathedral school community. The girls' choir were separate from the cathedral and so had the freedom to sing where he liked, e.g., cathedral or concert hall. In CHAT

terms, Allwood acted like Seal in that he also sought to 'question and deviate from established norms' (Welch, 2007, p. 27) which, in Lichfield's case, appears to have been based on his recognition of earlier controversies and difficulties elsewhere. However, arguably his efforts were smoother because many of the likely aggravations that had emerged over a decade earlier had become more common knowledge with the cathedral music community by 2006, such as through the networking of related constituencies, such as the Choir Schools Association, the Cathedral Organists Association, the Assistant Cathedral Organists Association and the Association of English Cathedrals.

The success of the Lichfield girls' choir can be seen by the encouragement of members of staff in the school and the fact that the several of the girls were relaxed with a choirmaster whom they knew already, having been rehearsed by him previously as a school choir. Unlike new girls' choirs in other cathedrals, they were used to singing together. The majority of cathedral girls' choirs were and still are to a certain extent very male-dominated in their leadership due to the overall gender make-up of cathedrals which continues to be male biased, although with the Ordination of women priests in 1994, more women are having a role to play in cathedrals. At Lichfield, the girls received weekly singing lessons from a singing teacher who was the choirmaster's wife. In addition, at the rehearsals there was a female gap student who sang with them. All these elements within the system appear to have helped to foster a sense of unity and may have contributed to them having confidence in their singing, which—in turn—created a strong collective identity and helped to build their sense of local community, as well as being part of a larger cathedral school music community.

Extensive video footage was carried out, starting from their second rehearsal and continuing throughout the academic year. This evidence revealed that the girl choristers demonstrated a strong sense of commitment in rehearsals and it also enabled a mapping of their musical improvement as the girls gained in confidence and ability. The choirmaster also played a vital role in his approach to rehearsing them, giving them much encouragement and well-earned praise. There was a strong sense of teamwork, which was evident between the girls and the choirmaster. At the end of the first academic year, the choirmaster gained a promotion to another cathedral and the last video session showed the girls' less confident reaction towards the person who succeeded him, i.e., in CHAT terms, there was still an impact on the collective sense of community by this staffing change. From 2006 onwards, the development of the girls' choir included improving their singing, enlarging their repertoire and gaining experience in performance.

Overall, these findings suggest that the initiative of the introduction of the girls' choir at Lichfield was well planned and successful. In terms of change and development as predicted by the Headmaster, six years later in 2012, the cathedral took 'ownership' of Lichfield Cathedral School Girls' Choir. Perhaps in a bid formally to reconcile these changes and developments within the historical tradition of Lichfield, a new statute was written which confirmed that, from then onwards, the girls became included within the cathedral Foundation and became Girl Choristers of

Lichfield Cathedral. A special Evensong on Sunday 23rd September 2012 took place where they were formally admitted as choristers of the cathedral.

The initial concerns of threats to the boy choristers that were raised in the early days concerning the introduction of girls in cathedral choirs appear not to have materialised (at least so far). For example, the fear that the introduction of girls would lead to a mixed top line in order to cut down on expenses has not materialised. Manchester and Bradford are the only two choirs in England which retain a mixed top line and at Bradford there are weekend services in which the choir is separated with boys only or girls only.

In the last two decades, the tradition of sung cathedral services has continued to flourish in the twenty first century, with no reported sense that standards of music are not being maintained, despite the increased numbers of girls singing in cathedrals and now matching the numbers of boys (see Introduction), but with some concern that the numbers of boy chorister has reduced since 2015 (The Times, Dec 2019).

Whilst new cathedrals are rarely created, eleven were designated in the early 20th century, but none since 1927. The number of cathedrals currently has been the same for the last 90 years or so. What has been different in the last three decades in particular is the way that nearly all cathedrals have introduced girls' choirs, with the concept now being the norm for the Anglican Foundation (see table 4.1). The only cathedrals that continue to have boys only in 2020 are Chichester, Hereford and St Paul's in London. However, St Paul's has introduced an adult female chorister in 2017 to sing as an alto lay clerk.

Table 4.1: An overview of the introduction of female choristers into cathedrals since 1975 to 2020 by year and location

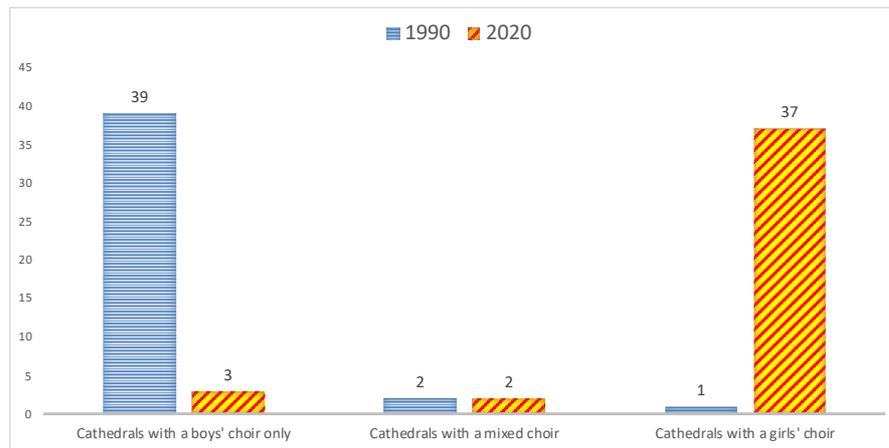
Year	Number of cathedrals newly introducing female choristers	Names of the cathedrals					
1975	1	Leicester					
1991	1	Salisbury					
1992	2	Birmingham	Wakefield				
1993	3	Bristol	Coventry	Wells			
1994	2	Exeter	Sheffield				
1995	4	Lincoln	Norwich	Rochester	St Albans		
1996	3	Chester	Peterborough	Ripon			
1997	3	Blackburn	Derby	York			
1998	0						
1999	1	Winchester					
2000	1	Southwark					
2001	0						
2002	0						
2003	1	Guilford					
2004	2	Chelmsford	Liverpool				
2005	1	Southwell Minster					
2006	5	Carlisle	Ely	Lichfield	Worcester	Portsmouth	
2007	0						
2008	1	Newcastle					
2009	1	Durham					
2010	0						
2011	0						
2012	0						
2013	0						
2014	1	Canterbury					
2015	1	Truro					
2016	1	Gloucester					
2017	0						
2018	0						
2019	1	Oxford					
2020	1	St Edmundsbury					
Total	37						

The table above (Table 4.1) represents the numbers of girls' choirs introduced each year from 1975 – 2020, totalling 37. Within this overall period, the years 1991 – 1997 represent the largest number of cathedrals that introduced a girls' choir, totalling 19 which represents 51% of all such changes across the period from 1991 to 2020 (inclusive) – see Table 4.2 below). In the next seven years, 1998 - 2004, five cathedrals introduced girls (14%). Since 2005, another thirteen cathedrals introduced girls (35% of the total), but five of these (14%) were in one year, 2006.

Table 4.2: Three periods in the recent introduction of female choristers

Year	Number of cathedrals newly introducing female choristers	Total for the period	%
1975	1	19	51%
1991	1		
1992	2		
1993	3		
1994	2		
1995	4		
1996	3		
1997	3		
1998	0	5	14%
1999	1		
2000	1		
2001	0		
2002	0		
2003	1		
2004	2		
2005	1	13	35%
2006	5		
2007	0		
2008	1		
2009	1		
2010	0		
2011	0		
2012	0		
2013	0		
2014	1		
2015	1		
2016	1		
2017	0		
2018	0		
2019	1		
2020	1		
		37	100%

Table 4.3 Changes in the gender make up of cathedral choirs across the period 1990-2020



The number of cathedrals which had a boys' only choir in 1990 totalled 39 compared with only one girls' choir (Table 4.3). This changed dramatically by 2020, with only three cathedrals continuing to have a boys' only choir (Chichester, Hereford, St. Paul's), whilst the numbers of cathedral girls' choirs rose to 37. The two cathedrals which had a mixed sex choir have remained the same in 1990 and 2010 (n=2).

Despite the resistance in some parts of the choral community, there are positives, at least at an individual level, as illustrated by two former girl choristers who provide an insider perspective on their experiences.

A former chorister, Ellie Brown from Bristol Cathedral, records her memories:

I was a member of Bristol Cathedral Girls' Choir for several years and, despite its fairly recent beginnings, it was an extremely well established and respected cathedral choir. We would occasionally join with the male choir, but would usually sing Evensong and Sunday services on our own. Saying that, [to say that] political correctness is the only reason that girls' choirs are being established is simply wrong. We were certainly made to feel inferior to the boys' and men's choirs, but we were nonetheless an important part of the musical life of the cathedral. This should not be underestimated simply because tradition states that it should be the men doing the singing. (Online reader comment on Tomkins 2006)

Another cathedral chorister explained her experience:

As a former cathedral chorister, I can say from experience that very few people could tell the difference between the male and female sound – we did radio broadcasts for the BBC which did not mention that we were the girls' choir, and would receive letters complimenting the excellent singing of the 'boys'. Another choir also meant that some of the heavy workload was taken off the boys - surely a good thing? ('Susan' from Cambridge. Online reader comment on Tomkins 2006)

Chapter 5: '...just a treble sound'? Similarities and differences between girl and boy choristers – a longer term, contextual comparison

5.1 Introduction

As has been documented and exemplified in the previous chapter, following the initiative at Salisbury, many other girls' choirs were created in the cathedral sector around the country. This was not just down to musical reasons, but also related to wider issues in society concerning the concept of equality that were particularly current at that time. Consequently, there was evidence of a strong belief that girls should be given the same opportunities to become choristers as boys. Reactions to the introduction of girl choristers were recorded for this doctoral thesis via interviews and a postal questionnaire undertaken around 15 years after the Salisbury initiative. In both instances, the participants were former and current Directors of Music and Assistant Directors of Music. This chapter offers a CHAT-based, retrospective analysis of the first 15 years, triangulating data gathered through these sources with other sources, including analysis of commercial CD recordings and published critics' reviews of these recordings. The intention is to understand the mosaic of longer-term impacts that the introduction of girls' choirs had on the whole system and culture of English cathedral music.

5.2 Could girl choristers sing in the style that constituted 'the English cathedral tradition'? Did their style of singing change over time?

5.2.1 Early reported differences in the way the girl choristers sang

In Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) terms, the available data suggest that girl choristers – as 'subjects' of the activity within the theory – were likely to be seen and behave as novices. They were entering an established all-male musical traditional system in which they would have had little or no experience, despite their vocal skills as individual singers. For example, one interviewee commented that, when he took over a girls' choir in its early days, they made a very small 'girly' sound compared to the sound produced by boys and his professional expectations of an accepted English cathedral traditional sound:

Chapter 5: '...just a treble sound'? Similarities and differences between girl and boy choristers – a longer term, contextual comparison

I came when the choir was still very much in its infancy, just two years old. Slightly under two years old actually. So, I inherited quite a small sound when I got there and it was very – don't take this the wrong way, but it was very 'girly'. Do you know what I mean? They didn't sound like a chorister ... (DOM F)

One view put forward was that girls make a smaller sound due to them maturing vocally at a slower rate than boys. In some cathedrals, the girls' choir numerically is larger than the boys' choir, as reported in the survey of Cathedral Organists in 2006. One organist stated:

The girls' choirs will always be bigger numerically than the boys' choirs and that's not just recruitment...it's going to be a smaller sound and, therefore, we need more of them to do it...They sing in different ways and a girls' voice is naturally going to mature at a slower rate. (DOM 4)

Notwithstanding such early impressions, the application of a CHAT lens suggests that the 'activity' of the all-male cathedral music has been—and is—sustained by the interrelated nature of its key ingredients – the sense of community within and across cathedrals, the 'rules' underpinning the sacred rituals and related liturgy, the associated core artefacts of musical repertoire, rehearsal practices, rehearsal spaces, internal management roles – themselves related to different 'divisions of labour' within and around the choirs, and a shared overall 'object' of stylistic musical performances in a particular musical genre – an 'object' achieved over many hundreds of years by an all-male choir with boy choristers. The community expects the selected music to be performed in a particular way, irrespective of the personnel. There will always have been some diversity within this sacred performance tradition because human voices are individual and diverse, even when singing as a collective, as evidenced by listening to any group of recordings of the same piece of music by different cathedral choirs. The key question is likely to be related to tolerance: What amount of chorister performance diversity is acceptable within the so-called Anglican Choral Tradition? – a question to which I shall return later in this chapter.

In terms of any initial differences between the ways that girl choristers sang compared with boys, the CHAT framework's ingredients and interactions imply that the cultural tradition would have customary practices that would have both inducted and, at the same time, indoctrinated the new 'novice' girl choristers to shape their vocal products such that they were similar if not always identical to those valued by the tradition. For example, Malcolm Archer described his views regarding similarities and differences in choristers' vocal sounds, drawing on his experience with both girls' and boys' choirs during his time as Organist and Master of the Choristers at Wells Cathedral:

Given the same choirmaster, boys and girls are going to have similar vocal traits, but they will sound different, and that should only be encouraged. Nobody wants girls to be musical clones of boys. Young girls and young boys of eight or nine have similar voices. Girls of thirteen, or more, take on a more womanly sound, in the same way that boys' voices break. The girls should develop their own sound, and that unique character should be fostered. After all, no two boys' choirs sound the same: the Vienna

Chapter 5: '...just a treble sound'? Similarities and differences between girl and boy choristers – a longer term, contextual comparison

Boys' Choir is different from Westminster Cathedral, which is different again from King's College, Cambridge. One thing of which I am certain is that girls, given daily training, can achieve results which are just as good as boys. At Wells, we train them in exactly the same way and we have the same expectations of them, and they rise admirably to those expectations with maturity and stamina. It is also my belief that girls' voices can, under these circumstances, develop a sound which is just as suitable and effective for the music of the church from any period. (Archer, 1999)

Archer's awareness of the choral tradition and its musical expectations would have become ingrained as part of his own professional biography of work within the cathedral music community (Norwich – as Assistant 1978-1983; Bristol – as Director, 1983-1990; then (following work in the USA) Wells – 1996-2004, where he was interviewed for the thesis, prior to moving to St Pauls' – 2004-2007; and then Winchester College – 2007-2018). This kind of trajectory of being an 'assistant organist/deputy' prior to taking on full responsibility for a cathedral's music seems to be typical within the tradition, often beginning in childhood with experience as a boy chorister prior to subsequent adolescent and adult musical studies as an organist – as evidenced in Archer's case at an independent school and the Royal College of Music, then Jesus College, Cambridge. His successor at Wells, Matthew Owens (2005-2019), was educated at Cheetham's, Oxford, the RNCM and Amsterdam, with cathedral employment at Manchester (sub-organist – 1996-1999) and then Edinburgh (Master of the Music – 1999-2004) prior to Wells. Owens is now at Belfast cathedral. The present incumbent at Wells, Jeremy Cole, was appointed as Assistant Organist in 2017 to Owens and took over as Master in 2020. Previously, Cole was organ scholar at Trinity College, and also had experience as an organist of two central London churches with established choirs.

Continuing with the theme of what might be expected in the sound of novice girl choristers and how this might develop and change over time as an outcome of membership, there are data available, both from a variety of empirical studies and also in the research undertaken specifically for this thesis.

Firstly, there is an established psychoacoustic literature on adult professional singers, particularly males, concerning what is termed as the 'singer's formant', 'singing formant', or 'singer's formant cluster' (Sundberg, 2018). This refers to a clustering of harmonics ('formants') in the singing voice that enables the singer to be heard clearly against the combined sound of a full orchestra. In speech, for example, variation in formants enables us to perceive vowels and so are a key component of human vocal communication. In adult professional singers, there is a clustering of the third, fourth and fifth formants as energy peaks in their vocal outputs above the fundamental frequencies represented by the pitches of the melody. In bass voices, the centre frequency of this formant clustering is near 2.4 kHz (being 2,400 Herz or cycles per second, nearly two and a half octaves above middle C), in baritone voices near 2.6 kHz, in tenor voices near 2.8 kHz and in alto voices (female) near 3.0 kHz (Sundberg, 2018). These clusters of acoustic energy are measured using long-term average spectra (LTAS) in which fundamental frequency (which we perceive as

pitch) is plotted against the distribution of acoustic energy for the fundamental and its related harmonics (see Figure 5.1), typically for around thirty seconds of speech or singing.

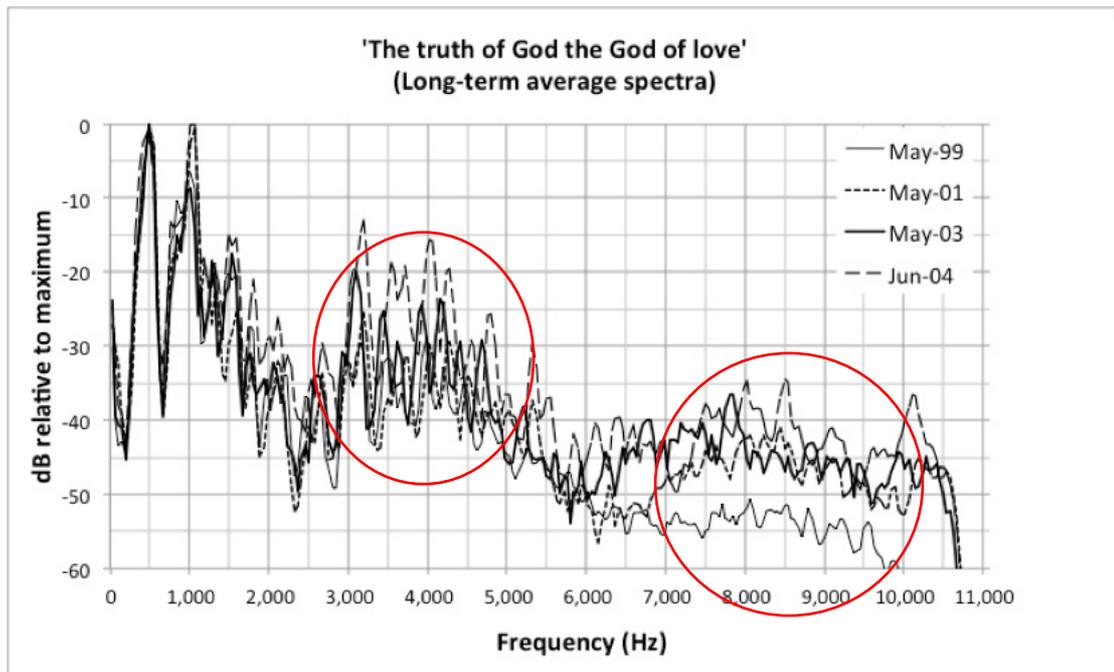


Figure 5.1: Long-term average spectra (LTAS) for four sung renderings by the same girl cathedral chorister of *'the truth of God the God of love'* (the second line of the carol *'This is the truth from above'*) over a period of five years. Recording were made in May 1999, May 2001, May 2003 and June 2004. Note that all four plots are normalised with their lowest peak being fixed at 0dB to enable differences in the LTAS plots to be observed.

In the sung vocal outputs of child solo choristers, not one but two energy peaks are evidenced in the spectrum. These are between 3-5kHz and 8-10kHz (Howard, Williams & Herbst, 2014), and are the skilled chorister's equivalent of the 'singer's formant cluster' in adults. Examples of these two chorister energy peaks for a female chorister over time are shown in Figure 5.1, highlighted with ovals. These energy peaks are the source of our perception of the so-called 'ring' in the chorister voice, which variously appears in commentaries with epithets such as 'clean white tone', 'pure', and 'sweet'.

Secondly, as illustrated in the above figure (Figure 5.1) longitudinal psychoacoustic research with girl choristers has demonstrated how, with growing experience of the culture and its performance expectations, the sung vocal outputs become more skilled. Over time, sung vocal pitch becomes more stable, the amount of breathiness in the voice – a characteristic of the untrained female voice (Welch & Howard, 2002) – is reduced, legato singing is more evidenced, and the child chorister equivalent of the singer's formant cluster becomes more pronounced (Howard, Welch & Himonides, 2019). In Figure 5.1 (above), the highlighted two clusters of singer's formant energy become more prominent as the girl chorister becomes more experienced over a period of five years in her transition from 'novice' to 'senior chorister'. Similar longitudinal changes over a period of

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five years were evidenced in detailed acoustic analyses of sung performance data over a different five-year period (2001-2006) from three other individual female choristers (Howard, Welch, Himonides & Owens, 2019). Age and experience shape the chorister's singing voice to produce greater singer's formant energy.

Thirdly, confirmation of this active shaping of skilled singing development in both male and female choristers towards a shared 'object' and 'outcome' is reflected in the findings from a series of perceptual studies. These have explored whether or not listeners can tell the difference when tasked with identifying girl or boy choristers singing the same piece of choral music. Overall, the perception of sex difference is often at a statistically chance level, even when the listeners are experienced in working with choristers (e.g., see Howard, Barlow, Szymanski, & Welch, 2001; Howard, Szymanski, & Welch, 2002; Howard & Welch, 2002; Howard & Welch, 2005; Howard, Welch, Himonides & Owens, 2019; Sergeant & Welch, 1997; Welch & Howard, 2002).

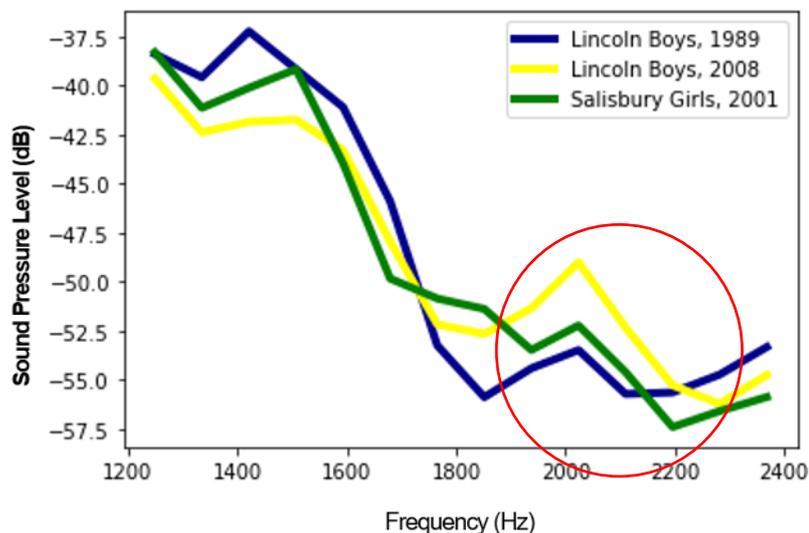


Figure 5.2: Berkeley's *The Lord is my shepherd*: LTAS plots of the upper middle frequency band in recordings by Salisbury girls (2001) and two different Lincoln boys' choirs (1989 and 2008). The circle highlights a distinctive energy peak.

In order to explore further any possible sex differences in the vocal products of girl and boy choristers as part of this thesis, a series of new psychoacoustic comparisons were made between commercial recordings of the same pieces of sacred repertoire. The first of these is a comparison of normalised long-term average spectra (LTAS) in publicly available recordings of Berkeley's *The Lord is my shepherd*, where the recorded performance of Salisbury Cathedral's all girls' choir (GCCD 4020) appears to be somewhat less powerful within the upper middle region (Figure 5.2) compared with two versions of the same piece by boy choristers at Lincoln, especially in the 2008 recording (GMCD 7325) compared to their 1989 performance (BBC, 27th September).

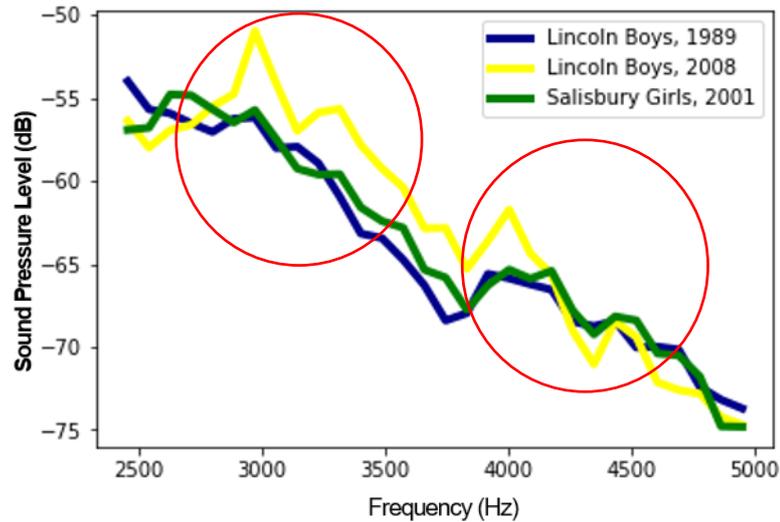


Figure 5.3: *Berkeley's The Lord is my shepherd*: LTAS plots of the singer's formant cluster regions (circled in red) in recordings by Salisbury girls (2001) and two different Lincoln boys' choirs (1989 and 2008). The circles highlight distinctive energy peaks.

This psychoacoustic difference between Salisbury girls and Lincoln boys as represented by the LTAS plots is particularly noticeable in the singer's formant region (see Figure 5.3, above, which is an extension of the LTAS in Figure 5.2). Here, the 2008 boys' recording has two much more pronounced spectral peaks (see circled elements). Nevertheless, despite evidence of Salisbury's slightly lower acoustic power on this recording, one reviewer of their CD remarked on the girls' singing as possessing 'unalloyed sweetness' (Banks, 2012).

Several interviewees offered an opinion that girls generally would be likely to have a smaller sound compared to boys, inferring less carrying power. For example, one described girl choristers' sound as being undeveloped compared with boys' singing at a similar age:

I think what I find with girls' voices at particular ages is that, generally speaking, they are very soft and light and very undeveloped, apart from the odd female ... we have got one or two other girls coming up with strong voices, but—generally speaking—you get isolated voices that are good. The rest of them tend to be a little wimpy; whereas the boys, the actual vocal ability is more, and vocal sound is more even. (DOM 2)

Although empirical and experimental research, such as by Howard, Welch and colleagues (cited above) clearly suggests that this individual perception is not likely to be a replicable and robust assessment in a blinded perceptual test, perhaps the participant is reflecting on an intuitive expectation, or personal subjective experience that correlates with their perceived notion of 'underdevelopment'.

A contrasting example can be identified in the following evaluation of Parry's *I Was Glad* (Figure 5.4). Here, three choral recordings of this piece are compared, two with boys' choirs – Salisbury in 1986 (CDE84025) and Lichfield in 1988 (Priory, PRAB 107), and one with girls—Salisbury girls in

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2004 (GCCD4046). The application of LTAS analyses suggest that the two boys' choirs are similar in terms of sung vocal spectra, but that the Lichfield boys have more carrying power in the singer's formant region (highlighted in the right-hand red circle), which is closely matched in the same part of the spectrum by the Salisbury girls. In addition, the girls have an additional peak lower in the spectrum (left-hand circle), implying the possibility of greater carrying power overall.

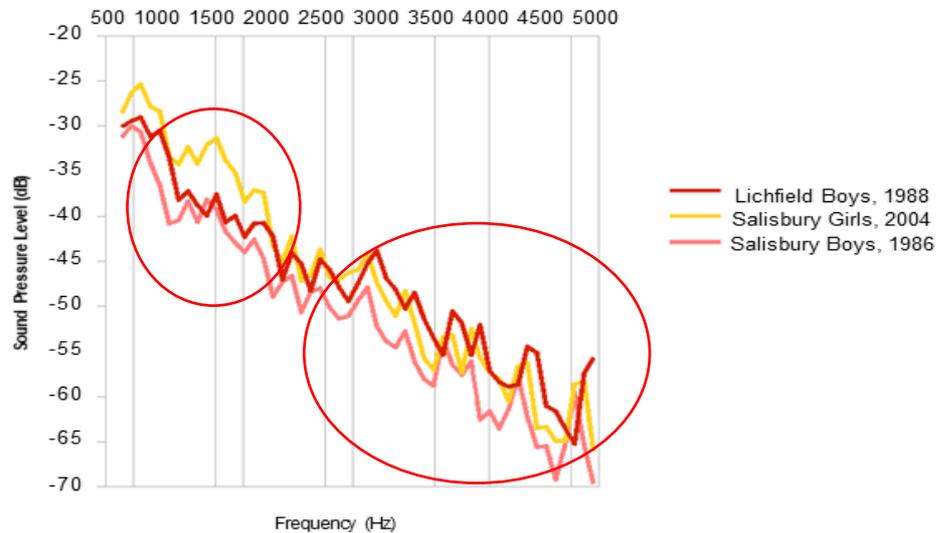


Figure 5.4: Parry's *I Was Glad*: LTAS plots of the choristers' singer's formant cluster regions (circled in red) in recordings of the same piece by Salisbury girls (2004), Salisbury boys (1986) and Lichfield (1988)

The relatively powerful sound that the Salisbury girls were able to bring to the Parry was noted by one reviewer at the time, although he was less positive about the men's singing in that piece:

The last anthem, the well-known and magnificent 'I was glad' by Hubert Parry, really needs again much bigger forces than are available here. The choir do their best, and indeed the sopranos manage a good and full sound, but the lower parts need more volume and tone than is here evident. (Portwood, 2004).

In contrast, the Salisbury Boys' recording from 1986 had previously been described as 'truly satisfactorily balanced' (anon, 1986) in the pages of Gramophone magazine.

It was not only the Directors' of Music who commented in the early days about whether or not girl choristers had a different vocal timbre compared with boys. Some of the general public also gave their opinion as to whether or not girls could match expectations under the umbrella of the 'English cathedral tradition'. One interviewee described how, when the girl choristers first started singing services, members of the congregation would sometimes offer a comparison between the boys' and girls' singing. An opinion was expressed that they could not tell the difference between the girls and boys, highlighting the fact that, for them, the girls were expected to sing in the same style as the boys:

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After the girls had sung an Evensong, I would leave and perhaps one of the congregation would come up and say, 'Thank you that was lovely. You know that, if I sit there with my eyes shut, I can't tell the difference between the girls and the boys'. (Dom F 1)

Another interviewee described how, after a radio broadcast of the first girls' choir, he received many letters of congratulation from the general public, implying that authenticity (or not) in terms of a particular male quality to the choristers' vocal timbre was not an issue in these listeners' enjoyment of the sung service:

I have a folder upstairs of letters that were written after that, about 90 or 100, but normally, you get a dozen appreciative letters after an Evensong if you are lucky, which is nice, but [in this instance] it was just overwhelming. (DOM F 1)

With the introduction girl choristers, there were occasions when they were considered to be sufficiently vocally proficient to be able to sing together with the boys, such as at Wells where they would form the 'Great Choir', as on Easter Day, 2016. There are no data from interviews nor recordings to suggest whether or not the boys as a collective sang differently on such occasions. There are, however, data from psychoacoustic studies which – as reported above – found that girls can produce a boy-like quality such that they can be mistaken for boy choristers (Welch & Howard, 2002; Howard, Szymanski, & Welch, 2002). There are also interview data to suggest that girls were able to tune into the boys' sound when put together (see the following section on subsequent similarities in vocal output).

Another example of a possible similarity in sung vocal output was when the general public were invited to see if they could tell the difference between boys' and girls' voices as part of a television broadcast. One of the interviewees who directed a mixed top line of boys and girls explained that he was invited to take the cathedral choir to sing on television. Unknown to him, when he and the choir arrived, the hosts asked the boys and girls to sing separately on audio. A live phone-in was then set up for members of the public to vote for whether they thought it was the boys or girls singing. Having been completely misled about this, the interviewee was furious. He believed that it should not matter whether girls or boys sang in the accepted 'English cathedral tradition', nor that there was one particular style of cathedral singing. The television result revealed that there had been no conclusive result and that the findings were at a chance level:

I think I remember this rightly 51/49... thousands rang in ... So, actually there was this little kind of public test, completely unintentional of the sound that the girls and boys were making. Well of course, they couldn't tell the difference. (DOM F 2)

As mentioned above, some early perceptions were that girl choristers sang with a smaller sound, which could at times be produced with a breathy tone. At Liverpool cathedral, Mackey (2015) reported how, for the first two years of the introduction of girl choristers, they sang services infrequently and their sound was comparatively weaker than the boys':

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In the first two years of the girls' choir, the new choristers were breathy and hesitant, and they sounded nothing like the boys. (Mackey (2015) p.136)

In time, the girls were reported to have improved because the Director of Music trained them to produce 'stronger' sounds that were more in keeping with the boys:

He worked hard in the early days of his post to train the tone the girls were making: to form tall vowels, support the sound properly with the breath. (Mackey, 2015 p.133-134)

One interviewee reported his perception that, compared to the girls, his boys sang very positively in a higher register, and in repertoire that they found exciting. He believed that the difference in their response was something which was instinctive and not down to their training:

I think people used to voice it to me that the girls had a slightly softer sound, if you like. Not softer in dynamics, not breathy. I don't mean that, just a slightly maybe [a] warmer, softer sound, still with ping in the upper register. The boys had a more decisive sound ...the boys used to really love the repertoire and would really go for the high notes – you know, sort of rugby player approach almost, and they used to sing the sensitive stuff nicely too, but there is just something which was a bit more gritty and earthy about the boys' approach, which I think[has] got a slightly more harder edged sound, I think. (DOM F)

This comment about possible differences in the production of vocal registers in singing was echoed in the questionnaire data. The respondents offered contrasting views of girls' and boys' vocal register competency, being prompted to consider three register areas: upper, middle and low. With regard to achieving a 'good sound' in the upper registers, questionnaire respondents stated that 15% of boys could achieve this, with 7% being good, and 7% being very good. In comparison, the proportion of girls achieving a good upper register sound was higher with 30%, and 23% being reported as very good. In terms of the middle registers, questionnaire respondents stated that 38% of boys could achieve this, with 15% being good and 7% being very good. In contrast, 30% of girls were regarded as producing a very good middle register sound. Concerning a good sound in the lower registers, questionnaire respondents stated that 30% of boys could achieve this, with 15% being good. Girls were rated slightly lower, with 23% achieving this and 7% being good.

Another perceived difference for one interviewee related to the formation of vowel sounds:

It was the sort of quality of the vowels and it was this curious thing, and particularly the 'Ooh' sound, and I found that a lot of the girls, when I had heard the junior school choir for instance at the school, the tendency was always to sing 'yew' and getting them out of that. (DOM F 3)

Related to a perceived distortion in the formation of vowels, another interviewee commented on the ways that choristers spoke, including a tightness of the jaw from one girl whose father was Australian. In his opinion, this also influenced the sound that she made:

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There was a girl...that I had to remind constantly when we had to sing the word 'but' with a Scottish accent, and here there are girls who sang it the same way, but have English accents. So, I don't know really, I think it's partly just the way girls speak sometimes. I mean and, similarly, the way boys speak makes all kinds of difference (and) can influence the way they sing. There is one girl who sings with quite a tight jaw and it's not a very open sound and her father is Australian and Australian's speak like that and her mother's French and so one of the things I am trying to get her to do is open up the sound... all kinds of things can have an influence. (DOM 1 b)

According to Mackey (2015), the Director of Music at Durham believed that vowel sounds can become distorted through a lack of confidence:

When they know a piece well, they make a really wonderful sound. When they feel edgy and nervous, the throat closes up – they don't open the vowels, they don't yawn, and you get a slightly edgy sound. (Mackey, 2015, p.110)

Earlier within the same report, Mackey (2015) explained how the Director of Music at York had described the girls as having a pleasing tone quality without requiring much effort. Nevertheless, the Director (Sharpe) believed that girls needed to be trained exactly like boys in order to achieve the sound of 'the English cathedral tradition':

He discovered that, with a group of bright girls, who naturally have a very pretty tone, it would be easy to just let them sing through without putting in much of an effort; a 'lazy' sound was still a pleasant one. Compounded with this is their amiable nature and intelligence, and very soon the sound could easily become lazy. A 'true, treble sound' must be produced, and is different from the natural untrained girls' singing voice: it is not as light, it is supported with proper breathing technique, and vowels are formed consciously with the aim of a fuller, brighter sound. (Mackey, 2015, p.92)

Mackey's informant believed that, for a girl to produce a true treble sound, 'proper training' was required, and that this took effort:

In Sharpe's words, it is the difference between 'producing the sound, rather than just pruning it'. In his experience, the trained boy treble sound makes a more natural 'bloom' to the sound, particularly in the last year or two before the voice changes. In those years for a girl, the voice naturally starts to transform from a child's treble to a woman's soprano tone, and care must be taken to blend this sound with the younger members of the choir. With proper training, the girls can go through their full time in the choir and still sound quite similar to a boy trained in the same way. In the director's view, it simply takes more effort for a girl to become a treble than for a boy, but that does not mean it cannot be done. (Mackey, 2015, p.92)

Chorister age could also be a factor, as implied in the previous quote. At Ely cathedral, originally there was an older age range of girls who sang only twice a week. Mackey records how, for him, their sound was more mature and not at all similar to a boy treble sound:

The girls' sound is distinctly non-treble; these are young sopranos, most are no longer trebles. It would be much easier to mistake the sound of this choir for a group of young women than a group of children. They have a warm, robust sound. It is not childlike and not yet fully matured. They have strong breath support and approximately half of the girls have, or are developing, a natural vibrato. In addition, they seem to be aware of their vocal range and are beginning to utilise chest, mixed, and head voice for

different tone production, which is not a typical skill of younger singers. (Mackey, 2015, p.124)

5.2.2 Later similarities and differences between girl and boy choristers

One strong characteristic of the Anglican Tradition is its persistence over time across a wide range of settings, despite changes in personnel and liturgy. New ('novice') choristers are inducted into an expectation of how, when and what to sing in terms of the sacred repertoire and related annual ritual of services. These expectations apply to any new choristers, whether male or female.

Furthermore, the people leading this induction process are professional musicians (usually male) with years of professional experience in the performance of cathedral music – as highlighted above in the case of Wells cathedral. Interview data suggest that the macro community of cathedral musicians across the UK have similar expectations of their music culture, and that these are likely to be reinforced by the expectations of the local communities (clergy, laity, congregation) in each setting. Consequently, new girl choristers, as exemplified in the different case studies of Salisbury (Chapter 3), Lincoln and Lichfield (Chapter 4), are expected to follow established local, national and cross-national daily and weekly 'rules', such as concerning the regular scheduling of rehearsal and performance, of categories of musical repertoire such as for Matins and Evensong, and of what counts as appropriate musical behaviours in each instance. Choristers will normally spend hours each week in rehearsals, often morning and afternoon, as well as in regular sacred music performance on several weekday afternoons and weekends. It is not surprising that, with increasing experience, all choristers, including girls, will become more expert in choral performance. Expertise will embrace knowledge of repertoire, stylistics and vocal technique.

For example, twenty years after the introduction of girl choristers at Salisbury, the Director of Music in 2011, who formerly had been the Assistant in 1991, commented on the way that the sound of the girl choristers had developed. He explained that, to start with, the sound had been small, but over time had become stronger, although not as 'robust' as the boys'. Although he believed that there were some differences in sound between the two choirs, they were still part of the accepted culture:

It was quite a thin sound. Now if you hear the girls who sing here daily in 2011, they make an absolutely huge sound. It's a bit different to the boys' sound. I always think the boys sound has a robust density quality, particularly from the older boys whose voices are about to change. Of course, we don't get that with the girls, but we do get the spread of ages in the girls, so that we have got the young almost adult sound and the little girls, eight or nine years old, and the mixture produces a very exciting sound. (A1.1)

Alongside such individual perceptions of the impact of girl choristers gaining in confidence, knowledge and technique, the empirical data from experimental perceptual studies (reported in 5.2.1 above) suggest that girls were able to sing in the same style and with a perceptibly similar

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vocal timbre as boys. Because the adults responsible for managing the activity system have been inducted into a shared community and musical culture, the tools (mediating artefacts) that they employ as Directors of Music and deputies will also have common features, such as in rehearsal techniques that include vocal warm-ups, regular sight-reading, an expectation of individual acknowledgment of mistakes by raising a hand without interrupting the flow of the rehearsal, choristers using pencils for interpretative marking of musical scores, as well as opportunities for solo, part- and group (Decani/Cantoris) singing. This persistent collective activity will shape all choristers, irrespective of sex, towards particular choral outcomes, especially if the choirs have senior chorister role models from which the novices can learn. At Wells, for example, novices are spaced out in rehearsals between senior choristers who provide expert vocal modelling, and individual assistance if needed for the novice to follow the musical score as the rehearsal unfolds.

The case study and interview data suggest that girl choristers were being provided with the same kinds of vocal education as the boys in the cathedral choir and were gaining in experience of the repertoire and its place in the sacred ritual. It seems unlikely, therefore, that the girls would dilute or radically change the dominant musical timbre (as an output) associated with the 'English cathedral tradition', notwithstanding the fears of some traditionalists. The interview data, for example, support a sense of collective envisioning:

It's not a sound that we would think immediately by listening to it that it sounded anyway girlish, and I think they simply picked up the sound. (DOM F 5)

'Picking up the sound' is likely to be part of an induction process and this aspect was commented on by other participants:

I had to work quite a lot on vocal technique with them, and because I was working with them quite a lot... all the same people were working with the boys and the girls... we soon found that they started developing similar traits, similar vocal traits, and that the sounds that the two choirs made were not dissimilar after a while. The girls started sounding very much like boys, or much more like boys. And I think it was because we worked hard on their head register, opening up the top of their voice, which is the sort of thing we do with boys, and getting that nice 'heaven' sound, and I think that that's the sound that people associated with the sound of a boys' voice. And it meant that, when we wanted to, we could actually put boys and girls together, and we were guaranteed that the sound would blend. (DOM F)

On occasions when girls were rehearsed with the boys, the same participant reported that the girls' vocal tone started to strengthen, giving a 'boost' to their vocal timbre (as implied by in the example LTAS analyses reported earlier):

I discovered that, once we started rehearsing for these things and rehearsing the boys and the girls together, the girls' tone strengthened quite amazingly. It was just that, being in a rehearsal room with the boys and having them alongside, they unconsciously picked up that sort of, you know, woof that boys gave it, and after being a sort of very restrained sound [that] they made, it suddenly had all the sort of power, and it was very

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noticeable when they were then singing on their own in the Cathedral. It gave a tremendous boost to the actual sound that they were producing. (DOM F 3)

I think that there was a basic sound, which boys were making, which – when the girls came into it – the boys on the whole were leading and the girls were copying the sound, as all the youngsters do copy the sound, they hear from the older ones, don't they? (DOM F 5)

One outcome of this collective rehearsal was the production of mixed gender commercial recordings:

We did do some mixed recordings with the top eight boys and the top eight girls, which was a wonderful sound, wonderful singing ... I defy anybody to listen to it and say there were girls singing. It just sounds like a really good top line really. You couldn't say whether it was girls or boys; it was just a lovely strong clear sound. (DOM F)

Another comparative example in the evidence base of a cultural shaping of vocal outputs for boys and girls is to be found in comparative long-term average spectra (LTAS) analyses of two CD recordings of Walford Davies' *Psalm 23* by Salisbury girls in 1994 (GMCD 7101) and Lichfield Cathedral's boys in 1982 (GCCD4064[ACA505]). This comparison demonstrates that the girls were able to produce a relatively powerful resonant sound, particularly within the spectral regions typically associated with the singer's formant cluster in choristers (indicated by the circles in Figures 5.5, 5.6 and 5.7), although with more energy evidenced by the girls in the lower and upper parts of the spectrum than the upper middle part.

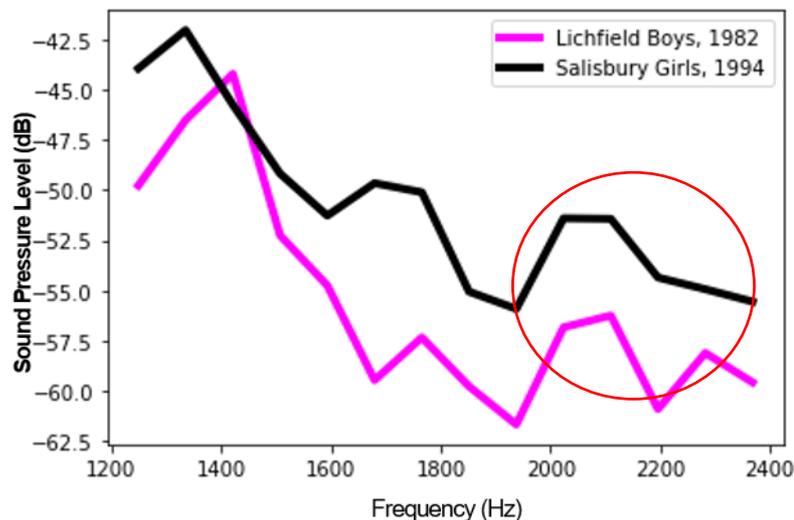


Figure 5.5: Walford Davies' *Psalm 23*: An LTAS comparison of Salisbury girls (1994) with Lichfield Boys (1982) in the lower middle frequency band of their sung spectra

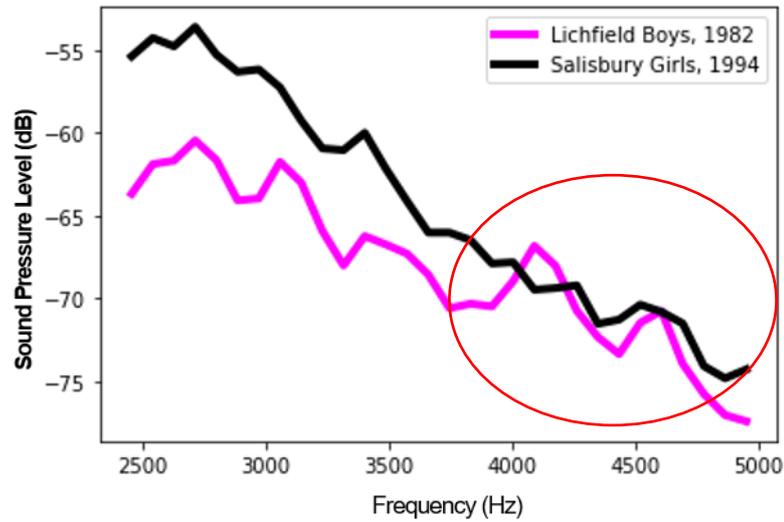


Figure 5.6: Walford Davies' *Psalm 23*: An LTAS comparison of Salisbury girls (1994) with Lichfield Boys (1982) in the upper middle frequency band of the sung spectra

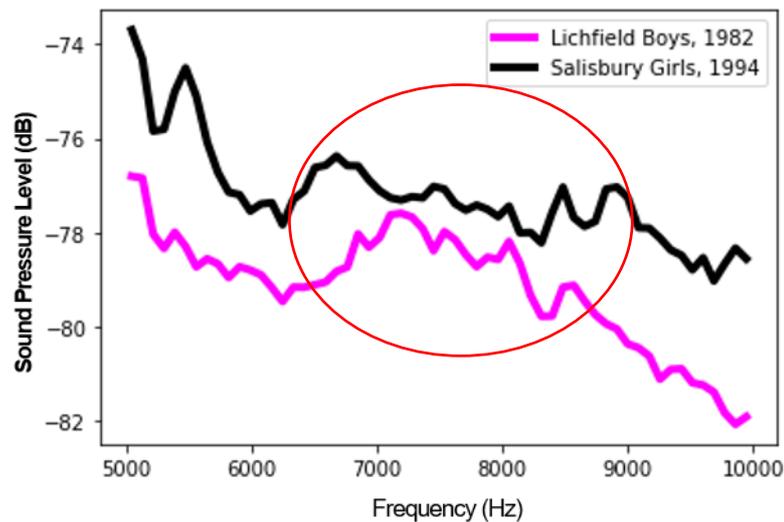


Figure 5.7: Walford Davies' *Psalm 23*: An LTAS comparison of Salisbury girls (1994) with Lichfield Boys (1982) in the upper frequency band of the sung spectra

For the critic, Roderic Dunnen, the sound produced by the Salisbury girls in this 1994 performance of the Walford Davies piece was 'uncannily similar' (n.d.) to that expected by him of boys. Another critic, Roger Wilkes agreed, noting 'the girls have speedily achieved a level of real excellence, a perfect match for the boys (if any such odious comparisons must be made)' (Wilkes, n.d.). James Hejduk (1995) offered a most fulsome account of the matter in the *Choral Journal*:

It has been revealed that the English men and boys' choral tradition is no longer assured immortality... Frankly, only the sharpest ears will be able to tell the difference. No, this is not 'getting girls to sing like boys'. Rather, it is the result of fastidious daily rehearsals in developing a natural, well-produced tone with blend, tuning, and the

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resultant projection taking the place of sheer volume... This CD proves that success can be attained even in the midst of the changes taking place in the English Cathedral tradition'. (Hejduk, 1995, p.56)

The introduction of girls to form a mixed cathedral choir also had the same positive outcomes. An interviewee who rehearsed them as a collective stated that the boys' sound did not change much, rather the girls began to sing like the boys. He explained that the girls had two different sounds. One was the 'cathedral choral sound' and the other was a more 'school girl sound' which they employed depending on the physical setting:

The sound didn't really change and very quickly. The girls were singing the same as the boys, or the boys were singing the same as the girls...the job didn't change because the job of being a choirmaster was to know these kids inside out, to know their strengths and to know their weaknesses, and they all have both, and to maximise what you have got in front of you ...I knew their voices inside out and we used the same language and so on, and so working with them as a group was like working with them as like a giant singing lesson ...the fact that they might be a boy and a girl – they were two individuals, and so I just went on the same ...(Dom F 2)

In comparing a Scottish cathedral which has a mixed choir that sing together all the time with an English cathedral with the same design, it was reported that, comparing these two choirs with a traditional single sex boys' choir, there was no detrimental effect on the sound by the inclusion of girl choristers. It was thought that the sound is non-gendered:

Which is why, I wonder, if you listen to St. Mary's Edinburgh and Manchester Cathedral you wouldn't say this is mixed or whatever, you would say this is just a treble sound. (DOM 2)

Interview data suggest that, when girls sing with boys, they are likely to copy the boys' timbre – the sound customarily associated with the 'English cathedral tradition' – and that there is little or no obvious evidence of a gender difference in the combined vocal output. However, when girls and boys sing separately, vocal differences are sometimes apparent, such as related to a particular piece of repertoire (Welch & Howard, 2002).

Another contextual artefact relates to the performance location within the cathedral, to the part of the cathedral in which they are singing, and how the local acoustics affect the sound – which will also impact on the listener's perception. One interviewee, for example, explained that the sound of his two choirs were similar and yet also different. From a physical distance, it was difficult to be sure of the gender, whereas being located closer to the choir it was easier to hear whether it was girls or boys:

I think what you could say is that the way the two sounds were similar, they were also different as well, in that I think that if you were any distance away from both choirs, you would find it hard to say which was which, but actually when you got a closer distance to the two sounds, there was a difference. (DOM F)

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In one cathedral, the Director of Music was reported by Mackey (2015) as describing his perception of the timbre as very different between the two sets of choristers. The boy choristers reportedly produced a bigger, stronger sound, more capable of filling the cathedral compared with the girls who sang with a softer dynamic. There were also differences for him in the level of excitement in their singing:

The boys' [tone] is quite a strident, well-focused sound. The girls, it's not breathy, but it's quieter. It doesn't fill the building in the same way... With the girls it's generally 'mp' or 'mf', the excitement level is about the same, about middle. They never really rise to the occasion and excite you; it's very rarely boring. With the boys, it's either exciting or it's incredibly boring and there's hardly anything in the middle. Volume-wise, the boys tend to sing loudly, it's very difficult to control them. (reported in Mackey, 2015, p.140)

The sound produced by boys' choirs within the 'English cathedral tradition' as a concept may imply that all male cathedral choirs are perceptually identical. As reported above, the vocal training is reported to be generally the same (see 5.5 below), the number of boy choristers in each choir is similar, and the repertoire is somewhat standard. Yet there are differences in recordings in the sounds made by different groups of boy choristers, partly attributable to personnel and also to the acoustic characteristics of the individual building, as well as the preferences of the current Director of Music. Anecdotal experience and local observations as part of the thesis fieldwork suggests that, generally, sung services in a cathedral customarily take place with the choir placed in the chancel, although in more recent times, they may also sing some services at the end of the nave nearest the chancel. This change of choir position may depend on the nature of the service, such as Holy Communion rather than Evensong. One interviewee explained that acoustic differences were perceived between the choir stalls and the nave, and how he aimed to train voices in order to produce a focused clean sound to counter this. In addition, the position of the choir stalls in cathedrals can vary considerably, with some being quite close together, creating more of a close-knit ensemble, whilst others are relatively far apart, where it may be more difficult for singers to hear the other side. In addition, some choirs may rehearse in a different location rather than in the chancel where they sing the services, and this can also result in different acoustic characteristics in the perceived vocal output:

They [the choir stalls] are far apart, and we always rehearse downstairs except on very rare occasions. Sometimes, you know the ensemble downstairs is fantastic, and then you get in the stalls and it's 'Why isn't it as good as when we were downstairs?', but there's nothing you can do about it really. All you can do is make it very, very clear [about how the choristers need to adapt]. (DOM F)

Such differences in location would be likely to have an impact, irrespective of the chorister gender, and imply that Directors of Music faced the same challenges and reliance on the development of an excellent vocal technique in both boys and girls in order to maintain their version of the choral tradition.

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With regard to the question of balance and blend within an individual cathedral choir, one interviewee explained that it was not very good at that moment due to some girls who made a very big sound and that, without them singing, the overall sound of the choir was different:

At the moment, the blend with the girls is not very good ... there are a couple of big personalities in the girls' choir making too much noise, but that will all change [when they retire]. (DOM SM 1)

He continued that the boys probably had a better blend. When the older boys were not singing, the sound was still good, although it lacked confidence and the diction was poor:

It's probably a better blend ... but again they sang last night without the Year Eights, the eldest ones, it sounded great. The blend was good, the sound was nice, the intonation was good, but it didn't have the confidence and the diction was poor, diction goes when you are not confident. (DOM (SM) 1)

Questionnaire data from a larger group of respondent Directors of Music, however, reported their perceptions that slightly more girls' choirs tended to achieve a better blend (33%) than boys (28%) and better diction (30% vs 23%) at that time.

In terms of how the men sang with each choir, one interviewee explained that they adapted their singing according to which choir it was:

I think the men are very skilful because they do adapt to the two choirs ... I do think they have done that for years, whoever they are. You know, I think they sing slightly [differently] within a different piece. (DOM SM 1)

On the question of balance and blend on each side of the choir stalls, the interviewee explained that one side could be stronger due to older boys or girls. To prevent this, he tended to move older boys and the girls around to spread their voices, with the overall sound coming from the middle of each stall:

Well, we move them around a bit, yeah, inevitably, particularly with older girls or older boys ... What we try and aim for with a choir ... to spread those voices around so that the overall sound in the middle where you are conducting is about right, but it's not always possible. (DOM SM 1)

With regard to breathing and phrasing, the same interviewee explained that he taught both choirs about these in exactly the same way, and that he believed that they were equally successful with it:

Phrasing is difficult to teach children. I would teach them both exactly the same. I would ask for the same results, and they would probably give me the same results, providing you keep the quality. (DOM SM 1)

Overall, the interview data suggests that Directors of Music were generally positive about the addition of girls as choristers – as evidenced by the major shift across the community over the past thirty years to create additional girls' choirs, although not to replace boys, nor necessarily singing

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together with boys except on special occasions. There was also a sense from their comments that—as professionals who were working with the choristers, usually on a daily basis—they could perceive a difference in the collective vocal timbre between the sexes in their choirs.

I do think there is a difference between girls' voices and boys' voices. It doesn't mean to say one is better than the other. (DOM 4)

It's a subtle difference—between girls and boys voices—but the difference is there. (Dom F 1)

I think it's often difficult to mistake a boys' choir for a girls' choir ...but it's easier to spot a girls' choir, because sometimes they sing with that sort of breathy kind of West End of London show type sound – you know, with the wrong vowels. (DOM 1 b)

I've got a Year Seven boy who is singing really well at the moment and you can tell it's a boy. I don't think I have ever heard a girl sound like that. It's quite a characteristic voice in its own way anyway and he's musically pretty good, vocally good. (DOM 1 b)

One interviewee also remarked on their perception of differences in the sung vocal registers of girls and boys. They suggested that 'the girls have very accurate upper registers and can sing higher in the register than the boys. The boys are better at the lower vocal range around middle C, D, E' (DOM SM). This may be a product of particular girls being well-established in this particular choir, as the questionnaire data suggested something opposite, at least in terms of Directors' early experiences of girls' choirs, with 53% of boys being reported as having a wide vocal pitch range compared with 45% of girls.

However, such a perception of difference may be less evident if both girls and boys are rehearsed by the same person. One interviewee who rehearsed both their boys' and girls' choirs of identical age and was, by implication, likely to be very experienced in hearing them sing regularly, questioned his own ability at times to be able reliably to tell the difference between them:

but actually, here it's probably, if you shut your eyes and you didn't know, it would be pushed to tell, I think, probably those with very finely tuned ears could tell. (DOM 1 b)

Another interviewee, commenting on his knowledge of two cathedrals where the same person trained both choirs, described the sound as being very similar, making it very difficult to distinguish between the two:

I think the argument which supports that is, if you look at places such as Salisbury and Wells where ...the same person conducts both choirs and trains both choirs, it's often very difficult to distinguish between the two choirs. There was that classic thing on I think it was Radio Four interview when they played two recordings of Wells Cathedral choir, one with boys and one with girls, and asked professional musicians to say exactly which was which and most people got it completely wrong. It was just pure guess work. (AO F 2)

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That point was echoed by an interviewee who stated that he thought both his choirs sang in a very similar way, and it was difficult even for him to hear the difference. He went as far as explaining that, after hearing a short recording, he was unable accurately to say which sex were singing. He continued by saying that in other cathedrals where each choir were trained by different people, it was easier to tell the difference between the boys' and girls' voices:

I think the two choirs made very, very similar sounds and I think it's because we trained them [in the same way] ...Graham observed the boys and the girls a lot and I do know that he did some recordings in Evensong, and he once played me an extract and even I couldn't guess whether it was the boys or the girls. There is a tiny clip of the Piccolo Responses which he recorded on a Monday and a Tuesday and this little clip I thought, well, you know 'Is that the boys, or is it the girls'? I really had to think about it, which almost sort of proves the point, but I don't think that's the same with all Cathedrals, because there are a lot of Cathedrals you have got somebody different training the girls and that's why you get a different sound. (DOM F 4)

5.3 Is age a factor in the vocal sound of girl and boy choristers?

In terms of the 'rules' concerning the expected upper age range of choristers, customarily for boys this has been driven by the onset of their voice change at puberty when male vocal pitch lowers around the age of 13 years (as exemplified in Jenevora Williams' longitudinal doctoral study of n=11 boys within a larger cohort of N=34 at St Paul's cathedral, 2010), but also dependent on the level of vocal 'comfort' in sung voice production rather than absolute chronological age (Williams, Welch & Howard, 2020.) Typically, the youngest entry age for choristers is around the age of 7–8y, usually by audition. Consequently, when girls began to enter cathedral choirs, this customary overall age range for boys of 7-13y was the model, although as mentioned earlier there were often local differences. In terms of older choristers, voice change during puberty effects girls' vocal timbre differently from boys, with the female voice exhibiting the beginnings of vibrato, some vocal instability, and then a wider pitch range (Gackle, 2019). It is possible for girl choristers to remain in the choir if this is the local rule because they are still capable, generally, of covering the pitch range of the repertoire, unlike the boys with changing voices. However, the changes in the female voice become more noticeable, as evidenced in the Directors of Music' questionnaire data analyses: almost half (46%) of respondents felt that girls produced a very different sound, particularly if they were in an older age range, whereas around a third (38%) felt that the sound was similar. Amongst the questionnaire free text comments were 'having the same singing teacher means that they blend exceptionally', contrasted by 'the boys having the keener tone and the girls providing the 'older' tone'.

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One interviewee reported that girls aged seven and eight can sound like boys, but as the girls had been allowed to continue singing in his choir to Year 13 (aged 18), they had developed more mature soprano voices, unlike a girl's voice, and not in the same style as a boy:

Well, in the very early days, the girls' choir was a lot smaller, so there were some very good voices in it. There were three girl choristers at the beginning in particular ...and they all had really, really good voices and they went right through the school until the Year 13. They had a good sound, a very strong sound, it was going to be a small overall sound than the boys and not particularly the same style. I think young girls sound quite like young boy's sound about seven and eight, but you know the closer you get to puberty, unless you work to make it anything else, I think the girls will start sounding differently the older they get. So, our ... now only Year 10 sounds like a very mature soprano; doesn't sound like a girl at all. (DOM F)

This does not imply necessarily that the age ranges for girls and boy choristers should be identical, although some felt that this was appropriate, such as is the current policy at Wells, where they have experimented with different upper ages up to 18 years over the past two decades, but have decided currently that Year 9 is the upper age limit for their senior girl choristers.

As mentioned in the opening of this section, the age of thirteen is around the time when boys' voices change. It is also considered to be a special time when the boy's voice has a solo quality that is particularly valued within the culture (a perception that formed the basis of Kingsley Amis' 1976 historical novel 'The Alteration that was centred around the Catholic Church's need to castrate a boy chorister to preserve his wonderful voice quality).

There were several related comments on the distinctive vocal timbre of the older boy chorister. For example:

A boy's voice really at thirteen, or just before it breaks, has a very creamy sort of sound. (AO F)

A boy's voice, as we all know, just before it breaks, there is about six months where there's immense power, which very few girls' voices have. (DOM SM 1)

A boy's voice in the last year two years has a very carrying quality to it and I don't think I can define that acoustically at all, but it does, and it has enormous power on the high notes which they love using. You can see it's written on their faces when they go for that, and a girl naturally is not going to have that at the same age. (DOM 4)

In terms of just sort of general so-called sound ...I don't think intrinsically there are huge differences of sound [between girls and boys] if the choir director doesn't want there to be. I think there are occasions when you can just tell there's a boy's voice singing. There is just something about the particular slightly older boy's voices just before they break. But generally, I don't feel there is a huge distinction between the sound that boys and girls make, particularly you know if they are the same age. (AO F 2)

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According to the interview data, this special vocal time in the career of a senior boy chorister is also when girl choristers can begin to flourish. One interviewee, for example, felt that this female development implied that there were distinctive benefits in having an older age range for girls.

I think the characteristics of the voice are different. The girl's voice, as I say, will be starting to come into its own and the boy's voice is obviously on the verge of breaking, so obviously the boy will just stop and the girl will be able to keep going ... I lost several very good girls ... (because) it was policy that they went, and I fought quite hard to keep them, and I did keep a few; I mean, I managed to keep two or three on for another two years, but eventually it came to the point where ... they had to go.
(AO F)

It would seem to be a balancing act for a Director of Music if they have both girls' and boys' choirs and they are seeking to encourage a particular type of vocal timbre within their conception of a choral tradition, such as is characterised by the older boy chorister voice, but which may not be quite attained yet by girl choristers of the same age.

However, if an older age range of girl choristers are maintained, then their voices may sound too mature against the boy timbre model and almost womanly. Mackey (2015), for example, reports how the Director of Music at Bristol cathedral describes his older girl choristers aged 15 – 16 as sounding more as sopranos and feminine:

The girls alone have a distinctly feminine sound. The most confident and experienced singers who influence the overall sound, and indeed make up approximately half of the girls' numbers, are aged fifteen and sixteen, closer to sopranos than to trebles by this point. (Mackey, 2015, p.118)

Mackey (2015) also reports that the older 11-18 age range for girls at Norwich cathedral was deliberately chosen by the Precentor, Jeremy Haselock. He explained the reason being that he did not like to hear young girls and boys of the same age singing together on occasions where there might be a combined service. Haselock believed that older girls could be trained to sing like boys, but younger girls of the same age as boys could not:

I didn't like the sound of [a young age range of boys with a young age range of girls] together. I think adult girls, older girls, can be made to sing like boys and sound like boys, but I don't think little girls can. (Mackey (2015) p.195-196)

The girl choristers at Ely cathedral have, until very recently, been aged 13-18 years. It is only from September 2020 that the age range has been lowered to 11-15 years. The vocal timbre of the older choristers was reported to be very different in style to expectations of the boy treble:

The sound of the girls is 'distinctly non-treble', the sound of a 'group of young women', 'not childlike'. Almost half of them 'have, or are developing, a natural vibrato'. (Day, 2018, p. 238)

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There is also a challenge for cathedrals which recruit a very wide age range, in that the youngest girls may not sing confidently because the oldest ones have voices which are naturally more dominant and powerful at this age:

Another problem was that the younger girls were having to compete with the older girls. The span of years in the girls' line was eight to sixteen. Girls in Year Four were too afraid to sing up; one may not have heard a sound from them until Year Seven or Eight. (Mackey (2015) p.166)

A relationship between age, sex and vocal colour was also evident in the comments of another interviewee concerning how to manage age differences in his two choirs.

...but the girls do make a slightly different sound, partly because the age range is slightly different. Girls voices, they tend to have a small, more natural vibrato perhaps than boys. The way they sound, they have a rather softer gentle sound; boys perhaps more piercing, so unless you sort of train them [girls] to deliberately make the same sound, they will have a separate sound and, therefore, that's one reason perhaps not to mix them up all the time. (DOM F)

Further data were gathered comparing the vocal quality of boys and girls as they progressed through the choir as probationers, junior choristers and established singers. It was suggested that, in reference to boy and girl probationers, both groups sounded very similar (in contrast to the Mackey report from the Norwich Precentor, cited above):

I think perhaps the voices are rather more similar at that stage, and then I guess it's natural that as they grow up, in particular with a boy, things begin to change, which really affects the shape of the voice. I think if I put a load of probationers together, put them behind a screen, I probably couldn't tell the difference. I suspect they are rather similar. (DOM 1)

Such a perception of commonality is supported by experimental research into young children's untrained singing voices, where young boys up to the age of eight were consistently mis-perceived as girls (Sergeant, Sjölander, & Welch 2005).

However, other reports were contradictory. One interviewee believed that the sex of probationers could be detected, as the girls could be heard to sing with slightly distorted vowel sounds. Also, it was suggested that the boys at that age sometimes might seem to sing reluctantly and not to want to be heard singing:

One of the very interesting things is the vowels sounds. Now, if you ask a girl to sing a word like 'love', she will sing it as though it is spelt 'lurve'. A boy won't do that ... and it's the same with 'Ooh' as well. The girls ... if you ask them to sing the word 'tune', it will become 'tuooone' and that is a very obvious difference between the girls and the boys. I don't know why they do it, but it does happen. I think that the probationer boys would not sing or not want to be heard as early as a probationer girl. I have found very often with boys that they will keep quiet, almost to the extent that [in] their first year, you don't hear anything apart from when you are taking them individually, and suddenly you will become aware in a service or a rehearsal, you think, 'Oh, so and so's making a noise. I can hear that' (AO F)

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The age of starting as a chorister was also significant in the development of sound quality for another interviewee, being different 'when they begin to start at 8, or 9, or 10' (DOM (SM).

Furthermore, according to Mackey (2015, p110), the Director of Music at Durham believed that differences in vocal timbre between boys and girls arose because of underlying physiological differences in the voice mechanism. (However, this is not strongly supported by empirical research into children's anatomy and physiology at least until puberty (Kayes, 2019),

In terms of the relative vocal strength of each choir, the questionnaire data analyses indicate a tendency for boys' choirs to be considered to be stronger, with virtually four-fifths (79%) reporting an imbalance in vocal power between the choirs in favour of boys in the early days of girls' choirs, although one commented 'as they sing on separate days, they [the choristers] are unaware of the comparison'.

With regards to the nature and impact of vocal training, caveats emerged in several of the interviewees' comments. One reported that, when some girls had received singing lessons, they could start to sing with a 'false vibrato'. Moreover, he also felt that boys could be over-trained and lose the true treble sound:

I think actually you can over-develop a boys' voice and over-train it and I don't like it. I just like them to sing naturally and would encourage them to use their voice in a natural way, and then sort of mix and match among them, and try and make some singers louder and some softer to try and get a blend along the line. (DOM 4)

At York Minster, where boys and choristers have the same age ranges, Mackey (2015, p82) reported that the Director of Music (Sharpe) deliberately did not train his choristers to produce what he termed as a traditional English Cathedral sound. Instead of the usual 'straight' sound, he encouraged them to sing with a slight vibrato:

the choristers sing with a healthy and supported tone, and some older choristers are developing a natural vibrato. The director encourages a natural vibrato that blends well with the other voices in the large space. In a solo context, a voice with vibrato will be heard in the Nave: no small task for even a mature voice. Sharpe does not hold to the traditional notion of the Anglican choral sound, recognisable by a delicate straight tone. In York Minster Choir, a straight tone is used occasionally only for effect, such as in a pianissimo section, or to convey a certain mood of the text.

These comments continue to illustrate how the intended musical 'outcomes' in terms of a characteristic, ideal chorister vocal timbre within this Anglican community of musicians is not a single, unified entity, but rather more of a family of related timbres, bound together by the common musical repertoire and ritual, and where diversity is normal.

For example, Halls at Salisbury (also talking to Mackay, 2015) compares the difference in vocal outputs between his boy choristers and those at Winchester and Chichester. He puts this perceived difference down to each choir having a different Director of Music, as well as the local cathedral

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environment. He further compares his own boy and girl choristers by saying that, at times, they will sound similar, but at others they will not:

On the other side of the argument is, if you went today to hear Winchester boys sing, tomorrow Chichester boys, and Sunday my boys, [and] these are all boys of the same age, will they all sound the same? No. Why they don't doesn't matter. They'll sound different because the choir director wants different things, or the space is different, all sorts of things. They will sound different. So, someone says 'Do your boys sound different from the girls?' I'm saying, on the one hand, sometimes, on the other hand, sometimes not. It's nothing I do; I just do what I do! ' (Mackey (2015) p.65)

5.4 Summary

These comments from interviewees imply that a perception of difference between the sounds of girl and boy choristers is not consistent across the community. Some report clear differences and cite particular features of the sound which, for them, are different. These perceived differences may relate to the ages of the choristers, particular parts of the vocal range, the formation of vowels related to speech habits, the nature of the training regime – including the provision of a consistency of approach in the girls' training, such as from the same person working with both choirs. Some differences are intentional on the part of the Director of Music who does not feel necessarily constrained by one dominant model of chorister vocal timbre. The acoustic and psychoacoustic analyses suggest that differences between girls and boys may have been more evidenced when the girls' choirs were relatively new, but perhaps became less evident with experience and the development of choral expertise. It may be that the training can override any gender differences, assuming that the make-up of each choir is similar in terms of age and experience.

Chapter 6: Similarities and differences in working with girl and boy choristers

6.1 What is the experience of working with girl and boy choristers?

As suggested earlier, there is no evidence of boys being influenced negatively by the sound of girls. Such evidence as is available from participants indicates that girls singing was more likely to be shaped towards a customary expectation of vocal timbre which was a product of an interaction between the basic human design of the child voice (Welch & Howard, 2002) and the cathedral's established musical culture, including the mediating artefacts inherent in its sustained annual cycle of rehearsal and performance (Barrett & Mills, 2009; Welch, 2011).

A newly appointed interviewee explained that his boys' choir could be very good tonally, but that on occasions was less so. He wondered whether this might be connected to the cathedral having a girls' choir. As he had a responsibility to train both choirs, he did not see as much as the boys as those Directors of Music who only train one choir, and this reduction in rehearsal time for him could be detrimental to the boys' development:

I don't know whether it's just the boys I've inherited, or whether it's in the nature of boys' choirs more especially where there are girls' choirs around. Tonally ... they can be great, but then often it just cannot be good. (DOM 1 b)

He also explained that, having recently been appointed to a cathedral, he wanted to change the sound of the girls' choir by training them to sing more strongly and not sound like girls. He explained that he was not aiming for them to sing like boys, but to sing with a more positive, richer sound quality:

Well, strengths are, they (the girls) are musical; they are quick and they sound good. I mean, there are various things in the sound I'd want to do that I am working on. Just to get them to sing with a bit more body and not sound like girls, but that's not because I want them to sound like boys, and I actually said this to them the other night and I said, 'No' because one of them actually said, 'Is that because you want us to sound like boys?' I said, 'No, I just want you to sing properly'. (DOM 1 b)

Despite a commonality of training approach towards 'singing properly' within the tradition, other Directors of Music were aware of subtle differences between girls and boys voices if they had both types of choir in their own cathedral. The subjective language being applied to such perceived differences emphasises the individuality of this experience:

They (the girls) produce probably a more transparent lighter sound, generally. It's got a slightly different feel to it, [a] less dense sound. (DOM SM 1)

The boys produce, as you know, a rounded focused [sound], it's not aggressive. It has more depth to it, automatic depth. If you could weigh the two sounds, you weigh a girls' voice against a boys' voice, a boys' voice would be heavier. (Dom F 1)

The questionnaire data analyses support individual interviewee comments that 'singing with good vowels' was a particular focus for the choir trainer within the tradition. Boys tended to be rated more highly (38% vs 23%) in this regard, with individual comments suggesting a perceived tendency for girls to need more development in shaping vowels appropriately, based on a perceived gender bias in underlying speech patterns.

(Independently, there are gender differences reported in the experimental literature for both speech and singing in children, with successful identification rates around 70-80% for speech and 71% for singing (Sergeant & Welch, 2009). These imply that perceptions of differences in the speech of girls and boys are based on verifiable acoustic data of differences the spectra.)

I think sometimes girl's vowels can be a bit unfocused. I'm not quite sure why that is, but it's certainly something which we've had to work at with girls' choirs, whereas I think boys naturally make slightly clearer vowel sounds, and thinking about, if you think the classic one which I picked up on at one stage with the girls at ... was in the Gloria at the end of the Psalm, or whatever, just a few of them would end up singing 'Glory be tew the Father and tew the son' – that slightly odd 'ew' sound, rather than a real 'to'. But I think really in terms of that's actually almost not a vocal difference, but a training thing, which it's just one of the differences. I think it's as much as anything how they speak rather than necessarily anything musical. (AO F 2)

Another distinguishing feature put forward by Mackey (2015) was regional dialect and how this could differentiate between a boy and a girl:

Millington also has a theory on the vocal differences between the boys and girls. He posits that they have very similar sound, and indeed if one stood at the back of the cathedral whilst one group was practising one might not know which group it was. But he also thinks there are factors other than gender than have an impact on the sound, regional dialect to name but one. During his time in Guildford, the southeast dialect of the choristers made the tone slightly 'edgy' in his words. Where they sing and who directs them, he says, are perhaps more weighty factors in explaining the difference in tone. 'I could show you two boys with very different voices and two girls with very different voices and there'd be as much contrast there as there could between a boy and a girl. (Mackey, 2015, p.155)

Two interviewees speculated on the potential benefits of rehearsing boys and girls together, which could build on the perceived musical and vocal strengths of each.

That the benefit might well be that you still had the 'ping', the excitement, the roller coaster, the unexpectedness of the boys, with a greater consistency of the girls, and so actually the musical model of having them paired up, as it were, might be quite fun, and give a slightly more of an even sound to it. (DOM F 2)

The boys are, when they know the music, much more thrilling and probably more powerful. The girls learn quicker, take fewer risks, but are pretty accurate but lack passion. Is that fair? (DOM SM 1)

Benefits also emerged for another interviewee based on his experience of working with an established mixed choir. He commented that the variable impacts of puberty, which were evidenced with boys in particular, could be mitigated by blending voices in a mixed choir setting. He was also aware that having voices changing at different times required careful vocal training to maintain an evenness in the choral sound, which was felt to be easier with boys and girls in the same choir.

So just guiding a boy through that process of puberty, particularly when they are singing as much as they are in Cathedrals, can be quite an exacting thing. But it does mean then that the sort of the average of your sound is actually changing ... The girls of course provided a much steadier background sort of sound as it were. I think my experience was that the choir was easier in terms of sound with the mixed group than it was with just the single boys, where you could get some quite major swings quite quickly. I remember some years when you would have come limping through [to] the end of the Summer just with, if you were unlucky, and all your sort of senior boys were shifting at the same time and, indeed, actually having to actually retire people. (DOM F 2)

The onset of puberty was also picked up by another interviewee as something that needed to be managed when working with boys' voices. In this instance, he had over a third of the boys leaving at the end of the summer term and their voices had already started to change. However, this provided an opportunity for renewal which would not be the case if the choir were girls.

Yes, and that's a tremendous thing and recreating it. I you know everybody says, 'Oh, marvellous this year'. It's over the top now, it's over the hill, my choir, my boys, with over a third of the choir leaving. It's an uncommon experience to have that sort of thing and they say 'Oh it will be terrible for you in September' and I say 'No actually it won't, it will be a change and it will be a shock to the system'. But, at the moment, it's all going downhill vocally. In September, I've got to start building it up again and that's exciting because every day you go in and you can see how it's got better. (DOM 4)

With girls, the challenge of puberty will relate to the vocal timbre becoming less characteristic of a skilled choirgirl and becoming more adult-like and womanly in sound. The variable developmental trajectories of boys and girls is something that needs continual management. Sometimes equal sex 'retirement' age policies within a cathedral may impact negatively on the musical aims of the Director in maximising the girls' competences, because girls may be producing their most accomplished sound as they leave the choir.

The Head (girl) Chorister is singing particularly well at the moment and whether, I mean her equivalent in the boys isn't anywhere near vocally or musically as good as she is, but then you are talking about individuals, and so whether you can then generalise from that [is] difficult to say. (DOM 1 b)

...the girls tend to sound more mature than the boys. (DOM SM)

I think, obviously, as girls' voices develop particularly kind of at age thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, obviously that is the point of which you start to get the sort of alto voices developing, and certainly we used to find the Monday Evensongs when if you are doing a three-part set of responses, or something, to have that richness of the alto voice starting to come through, which you obviously don't get so much with boys voices. I suppose that's perhaps one of the biggest differences. The down side of cutting down the girls at age fourteen for argument's sake is that it is a completely arbitrary cut off point, and you know I feel it's actually [that] girls' voices are just coming into their prime age thirteen or fourteen, so you know every set of circumstances is different and what we have here in [cathedral X] I think works really well. I can see why at ... they have had to do the set up that they have with making the cut off where they have. I mean, it's very much circumstances that dictated that rather than musical considerations, I think. (AO F 2)

There can be a downside to this maturity, as mentioned by the same interviewee concerning the powerful voices of two older girl choristers:

Well, we sang this week, I conducted them on Monday without those (older) girls and the sound was quite different, smaller [better] but in terms of blend. (DOM SM 1)

Another difference highlighted in the comparison of the vocal sounds of boys and girls was a belief that boys could sing with a wider range of dynamics than girls. The comment was that girls tended to sing with one dynamic, somewhere between forte and piano. This may reflect the particular individual interviewee's experience, as the psycho-acoustic analyses reported in the opening section of this chapter suggest that vocal power is equally accessible to both girls and boys if desired:

the boys would probably sing that piece ('I was Glad') rather better than the girls simply by singing the louder bits louder, and the softer bits softer. Girls seem to settle for somewhere in between. (DOM SM 1)

The question of whether one choir was better than another received a mixed response. One interviewee responded by saying that it was difficult to answer as they were similar, yet different. He suggested that sometimes the boys would be more likely to give an electrifying performance, whereas the girls would sing more consistently at a high standard. The boys would sing more energetic music better, whereas the girls would sing gentler music better:

If you want an electrifying performance, and a performance which you know will only happen a few times because of the length of time the boys' voices last, then really you would go to Evensong with the boys singing. I think if you want a consistently high standard and an easy life then maybe you would turn towards the girls. (AO F)

Another interviewee agreed with the proposition that girls tend to produce a more consistently high standard of singing and, even if they were tired, they would still be reliable in performance. If the boys were tired, they were not as reliable and their singing could fluctuate more from a good to a bad performance. However, if the boys were singing well, he believed that they would always sing better than the girls, which he put down to them having an edge vocally, allied to the older boy's quality of sound prior to voice change:

The boys have the ability to do really well, but they also have the ability to do really badly if they sang on a Friday afternoon after games and they are absolutely exhausted, whereas I think the girls produce a much more consistent standard perhaps. I think because girls are what they are, in that they are actually much more aware of the finished product some of the time. So, even if they are feeling exhausted and whatever, I think their standard is always reliable. Having said that, I think boys when they are really on top form outperform girls. I think there is something about the boys' voice which actually just has that edge vocally. It's difficult to put one's finger on it, I think it's probably particularly [in] the last year before they break where they take on that really rich direct sound which just seems to suit particularly some pieces of music, whereas I think I say the girls, it's just more of consistent standard. (AO F 2)

The days of the week were reported to influence both choir's energy levels, with services on Friday before the weekend for the boys, and Monday after the weekend for girls, being times when their energy levels were perceived to be lower:

...days of the week made for very different musical performances. I think that certainly a Friday Evensong, which of course is fairly low key because Friday being a penitential day, you often did unaccompanied music, or with chamber organ or something, that period of music... I would say both choirs, but more the boys, found very boring. And so also, of course, they were aware that it was the weekend on Saturday morning, they could have a lie in you know, and so, on a Friday Evensong, it could be quite a difficult day to get a good performance. And I think that the weekend was the weekend, and usually there was some quite big music with big organ parts, and the organ would be crashing away you know and it was usually stuff they liked with good tunes and high notes and all the rest of it, so the weekends were usually fairly safe. So, I think sort of either end of the week were conceivably slightly flat spots. I mean Monday the girls sang on their own because it was after the weekend, Friday because the weekend was coming and so I think that there was far more energy needed in the sense of the person conducting if it was a Friday service, and because it was the boys, there were times when you felt you had to wring every note out of them, you know. (AO F)

6.2 Did girl choristers require different kinds of choir-training techniques from boys?

As stated in Chapter 1, a central feature of cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) is to provide a focus for the contextualisation of behaviour, of how context and behaviour are intertwined, including how rules, roles and expectations can shape activities (Edwards, 2011). According to Edwards (2011), CHAT is often employed to analyse activities in workplaces and, in this particular case, the cathedral can be seen as a place of worship that nevertheless is a workplace that requires significant organisation, including of its music. The musical object – 'the true motive' (Edwards, 2011) – of this cultural activity has been the systematic and regular performance of sacred choral music by professional standard musicians (as defined by the demands of the repertoire), including both children and adults. This is the cultural world to which girls have been admitted as choristers. Although the birth of this initiative appears to have been driven publicly by prevailing wishes to address an issue of perceived inequality of opportunity, the musical impact of such an innovation was not clear, not least as to whether or not these newly established girl choristers could successfully

achieve the customary musical 'object'. There were forerunners, such as in the mixed choirs in Edinburgh and Manchester, but very few examples, if any, existed solely of a choir of girls and men in the regular performance of cathedral music. A related question, therefore, arises as to what was required of the activity system, and the Directors of Music, in order for this transformation to happen. Would girl choristers require different training to boys in order to achieve the same object? And, if they did, would (male) Directors of Music who had usually grown up in an all-male musical tradition be able to adapt to the needs of the new context?

One interviewee reported that, when the girl choristers were admitted, perhaps unsurprisingly, given the strength of the tradition, they were trained in the same way as the boys. He explained that, to start with, the girls needed to embark on a regular singing routine in order for them to become accustomed to using their voices. As they became more familiar with singing and the choral repertoire, he encouraged them when they produced the sound that he wanted, and discouraged them when they produced a sound that he did not like, in the same way as when he rehearsed the boys:

They learnt their own way of singing. I had very little to offer in the way of choir training experience, [nor] voice production experience, I'm not really clued up on that ... so I was feeling my way, and I suppose I trained them in much the same way as I trained the boys, which was to let them find their own voices and for them to come up with the goods as best they could. I knew when they produced a sound that I didn't like, and I knew when they produced a sound that I did, and one would play one up and the other down, but it was the same for them both. (Dom F 1)

An interviewee who was one of the first to work with girl choristers in the early 1990s reported that he never intended for the girl choristers to sound identical to the boys:

It was never my intention to produce a top row of girls who were going to sound anything like the boys. They were there in their own right. (DOM F 1)

Another interviewee similarly explained that he did not have any fixed idea in his mind as to what sort of sound he wanted with the newly formed girl choristers. He commented that he had heard other people who, on listening to girl choristers, compared their sound to boys, whereas he did not think there was any necessity for them to sound like boys. He believed that if girls made a different sound, it should still be equally acceptable:

People were saying, 'Oh, I went to hear so and so and heard the girls singing. Very good, you could hardly tell that they were not boys' and I used to think, 'Why shouldn't you be able to tell they are not boys? Why shouldn't they make a different sound and it be an equally valid musical sound? (DOM F)

Another interviewee with a background as a trained singer suggested that having girls or boys was not the prime concern, as his prime focus was on vocal technique, something that he sought to demonstrate regularly during rehearsals.

I didn't set out for them to sound like boys, or to sound like girls. I just set out that I wanted them to sing with a good technique, and I think I have always worked on this idea of unlocking the head voice, and bringing the head voice down, which I think gives freedom to the sound, it gives more body to the sound. It means that you have got a lovely open sound at the top. It doesn't restrict the use of the middle register and having richness there, but—you know—teaching properly and overlapping the registers, it gets a lovely fullness, and I think that's what I have always done that with boys and girls. (DOM F 4)

In comparing the perceived calibre of girls who turned up for their voice trial compared with the usual standard of the boys, one interviewee thought that the girls were a little better. He explained that, when he started the girls' choir, it was a new venture and there was a lot of competition, and that the girls were extremely keen. With boys, in some cases a boy may not be particularly keen, but his parents might see the choristership as a reduction in the school fees. But there was no financial incentive for the girls.

I think probably, I would say that the calibre was probably a bit higher than we would normally have at a boys' trial. For that reason because it was quite a novelty and it had attracted a lot of interest, and so we had a lot of very dedicated girls who had been longing to do this and this was their great opportunity ... one thing one always has to be on the lookout for with the boys is that the parents were pushing them into it as a way of getting a bit of cheaper education and, occasionally, we would talk to one of the boys in private and find out he was not very keen at all 'but my Dad wanted me to try for it'. So, I mean there wasn't the financial incentive...for the girls, there weren't those pressures. So, in a way I suppose, a slight blessing in disguise, but the standard was good. I think we could have taken more than we did, but we had to sort of limit it. (DOM F)

The newly recruited girl choristers had no equivalent role models as novice boys, and so the choir trainer had to educate and develop all their voices at once. One interviewee explained how he started by working on the vowel sounds and then aimed to strengthen the overall sound. He explained that he did not wish to force and strain their voices by pushing them too hard and aimed for a more natural voice production:

Well, with the girls, it was a case of starting from scratch and particularly sort of developing the vowel sounds, I think. That was probably the hardest job in the initial stages, and then it was gradually sort of strengthening the sound because the Cathedral being a big building to fill, even if they were in the choir, they would make quite a good sound, but it would be quite a small sound, and the fact that one didn't want to push them too hard and cause them to strain their voices in trying to force the sound, it had got to come naturally (DOM F 3)

He went on to explain that, at times, he rehearsed boys and girls together and the result of this was that he found that the girls started to copy the sound they heard from the boy choristers:

and that was ... the remarkable thing that I found. This business of rehearsing with the boys that they [the girls] unconsciously, they just sort of aped what the boys were doing, and so it evolved quite naturally. (DOM F 3)

Similarly, another interviewee reported the same phenomenon of the girls starting to develop a similar sound to the boys:

I wasn't trying to sort of turn them into clones of the boys at all, but sort of see how it evolved. But in fact it evolved on very similar lines to the boys. I think the sound that they made – and one of the interesting things – was that, of course, we did a number of concerts and big occasions where we put them altogether and with extra men, so we would have a choir of about forty plus boys and girls and fifteen-sixteen men, which meant that we could do really big works and so on. (DOM F)

This perceived ability to copy sounds and styles has echoes of Phillips's (1980) account of George Guest's argument that 'boys are great imitators'. It would seem that girls are too:

I think that there was a basic sound which boy were making which, when the girls came into it, the boys on the whole were leading and the girls were copying the sound, as all the youngsters do copy the sound they hear from the older ones, don't they? (DOM F)

This shaping of the chorister timbre towards an existing boy model could be a serendipitous result of the girls being put into a context where they heard the boys and had a Director of Music who followed his usual pedagogic practices. It could also be an outcome of deliberate practice. For example, David Halls, Director of Music at Salisbury, suggested to Mackey (2015) that both of his choirs sounded very similar because he trained the boys and girls in exactly the same way and in the same environment:

Certainly, here you've got the same people training both choirs. So, I'm treating the girls and the boys, vocally, the same. So, we've got same equipment, same people, same space. I think that's important, they're singing in the same space generally. Singing with the same organ, same song room, same music room, all the same. So, therefore, you take that logic and think: Is it a great surprise that they sound more or less the same? (Mackey (2015) p.64-65)

Forty years earlier, Phillips (1980) had presciently reported a view that, if girls were trained in the same way as boys, they would produce a very similar sound, especially if the same Director of Music is working with both choirs.

Commonality in output was also likely if an Assistant's behaviour was shaped by the model provided by the Director of Music. For example, at one cathedral in the early days of the introduction of girl choristers there were a number of different people who were responsible for their training in a short space of time. One interviewee explained that, on occasions when it was his turn to rehearse the girl choristers, he was happy to train their voices in the same way as the person who trained them most of the time. He thought that they both had the same idea of what they wanted in vocal production and, even if they had not, it would have been wrong if he had attempted to try and change it:

it worked out very nicely we both wanted basically the same sound from the choir, but I knew right from the moment that I arrived there that, actually, it was his choir and you have got to do what the boss wants. I mean there is no point in doing anything other than what he wants ...you can't go around changing someone else's choir, because actually it's counterproductive. (AO F)

However, although this shaping towards a boy-like chorister timbre may have been an outcome, it would seem that—for several of the interviewees—the prime focus was on the overall musical quality of the singing rather than a specific vocal timbre. If the two choirs differed slightly, this could be seen as a strength:

I personally feel that it's actually one of the real strengths of having two choirs when you have got girls and boys. Actually, I don't see much point in training them to both sound exactly the same. (AO F)

Similarly, another interviewee was pleased to have a different vocal timbre from his older girl choristers and to celebrate this diversity:

I think the sound is very different. The girls sound is an older sound because you have got fourteen-, sometimes fifteen-year-old girls and they sing with more polish and poise. There tends to be more vibrato with the senior girls' voices and, at the moment, their vowel sounds are different. It seems to me that that is right and proper. There is no point in training one section to sound like the other, or what have you got to celebrate? (DOM SM 2)

Overall, the interview data suggest that *four* main groupings emerged in how the Directors of Music discussed their approaches in the training of girl choristers.

- i. The first of these is exemplified by the two quotes cited immediately above. These Directors were happy to explore possible differences between their two choirs in order to enrich the available musical palette for the sung services across the week, such as might arise from having a choir with older girl choristers.
- ii. Secondly, most, if not all, assumed that a Director of Music would have the professional skills to be able to shape their chorister sound in a particular way. For example:

In terms of actually vocal quality, I personally strongly believe that you can train any choir to sound how you want and I think actually the arguments that are put forward that girls' voices are breathy and boys' voices are much more focused or whatever is actually a reflection of who's training them, rather than the sound. (AO F 2)

- iii. Thirdly, some consciously accepted that different rehearsal approaches were appropriate for the girls compared to boys in shaping their vocal output towards a preferred chorister timbre model. For example:

I was interested when an observer said to me at the end of a day, she said, 'You deal with the boys and the men totally differently than you deal with the girls and the men'. I said, 'Yes. Of course, I do. They are different people, different ages and we sing

differently together. The boys' singing is much more punchy. It's usually closer to the beat. The girls' is much more fluid and flexible. There is a greater sense of line. There's a better sense of rise and fall and flow. But a bit like a London orchestra, they're not always on the beat. They are inclined to grow into it like a string player does, and the men have to react to that and so does the organist. And so do I, and I will conduct differently because of it'. (DOM CC 1)

- iv. However, fourthly, others were more relaxed about their girls' vocal output – as long as it was of an equivalent musical quality.

...but [seeking the same sound] it's not deliberately done here. I don't think they try and keep the sounds the same. It's just a sort of they see what happens, basically. (DOM F)

6.3 Other features of the reported choral pedagogy experience with girls and boys

Some cathedrals also employed a singing teacher who might attend rehearsals and give extra help to those whom the Director of Music felt might benefit. In such cases, this added to the number of people involved in their training. One interviewee explained that he would tell the singing teacher that he wanted a particular sound so that contradictory messages were not being sent out:

One thing, personally, I want to deal with is to just knobble her away from the kids and just say, 'This is what I want. I want this sort of sound. Can we get it and make sure that we are saying the same things?'. There is an element, just talking this through, there are certain areas which sort of need to be tidied up a bit. (DOM SM 1)

A possible impact of individual lessons was also mentioned by another interviewee:

I would say no [about teaching girls and boys differently]. Certainly, in the way that I took rehearsals, the musical content was exactly the same. Whether or not anything different happened in individual lessons, I don't know. But, certainly, those of us who were responsible for rehearsing a day's Evensong music would do it in exactly the same way. (AO F)

The potential for a distinctive influence by an individual was also mentioned by another interviewee, who was the Assistant to his Director. He explained that the sound made by his girls was very different from the boys'. He believed that this was down him having direct responsibility for the girls rather than being gender-based:

Whereas, I think places such as here in ... where I run the girls, and ... my boss runs the boys, and the sounds that we both go for are actually slightly different. So, actually the voices reflect the sound that we are looking for rather than a necessary gender distinction. I know that not everyone in the music world agrees with me on that, but I certainly feel that that's the case. (AO F 2)

Other variables, such as related to the voice characteristics of individual choristers, as well as the individual preferences of the Director, could also have an influence on the nature of the chorister training. One interviewee reflected on his perception of the more soloistic sounds of one groups of boys, as well as the potential influence of who was rehearsing them:

I think the boys in my time had a few more sort of more soloistic sort of voices; the girls were fairly unanimous. But again, you see, a lot of that is down to, who is down out at the front, and what sort of sound they want, and whether they want a sort of passionate vibrato sound, whether they want you to sort of, or whether they want the more English, whether they want an English or continental sort of sound, which is more a soloist sort of timbre, somehow...He had lots of ways of getting boys to sing in different styles. He could get them to use different styles for different pieces. (AO F)

A Director's stylistic preferences, linked to an intimate knowledge of their own choristers, were reported to be key factors in creating a distinctive sound:

I have always taken the view that, if you have twenty boys and a different twenty boys, they would sound totally different if they were actually all singing in the way their voices are, the way they are built... If you played me a recording of our boys and our girls, I would be able to identify them without any hesitation, because we hear them regularly, but if you were to play me the boys of Salisbury and the Girls of Salisbury, I have no idea whether I would be able to tell them apart or not. So, what I am saying is, that they do actually have two different sounds, but I don't think that that necessarily has anything to do with the fact that they are girls or boys, or that [name] is directing one and I am directing the other. (DOM SM 2)

The Director of Music continued by stating that neither he or his Assistant trained their choirs on a gender basis, but more on the basis of the nature of the individual choristers who were in front of them:

I am not sure that either [name] or I, consciously, are thinking this is a boys' sound – I am going for a boys' sound, or I am going for a girls' sound. It's just you use what you have got, which determines it [the sound the choristers make]. (DOM SM 2)

He continued by commenting that the boys sound had changed:

And the girls' sound has stayed pretty consistent since I have been here, but the boys' sound has changed quite a bit. (DOM SM 2)

Asked about this reported change in the boys' sound, the interviewee explained that he thought it was down to the person who trained them. Although the boys' diction was reported to better than the girls, the perception of chorister gender was likely to be influenced by familiarity (as mentioned above) and whether the performance was live:

I should think it has got more to do with ... the person who trains them ... the slight change over in boys, and the effect of the Director really, and whatever he or she is keen to promote and to get out, is how they will turn out two years down the line ... The boy's diction is much, much better than the girls, for example ... If you heard

them regularly, you can tell I think like ... if you played a recording and said are these boys or girls, I would be hard pressed to. (DOM SM 2)

The idea of the sound made by a boy chorister changing due to the person who trained them was also highlighted in a different way. An interviewee – who introduced girl choristers into what was to become a mixed top line – explained that the boys on their own had a very strong sound. Some felt that, by including girls, the sound would change and the boys' traditional vocal timbre would be lost. He believed, however, that it did not matter if the sound did actually change as it was more important that, collectively, they made a musical sound:

We had, at the time, as you can imagine, quite a particular boys' sound, with this sort of fairly vigorous approach that I rather enjoyed and the sort of singing language that we kept using between us. So, we had some really quite good sounds. If you listen to some of our CD's then, they are quite macho, but and people kept saying to me 'Well the sound will change' and maybe, but I felt passionately that even if the sound did change, does that matter? Change from one musical sound to another musical sound ... (DOM F 2)

Given the bias in Directors' professional backgrounds and experiences within this choral community arising from an all-male tradition, as mentioned earlier, it was not surprising that interviewees reported training girls in the same way as they trained the boys. An interviewee responsible for one of the first girls' choirs explained that he did not know what sort of choral sound he was going to have at first, and he proceeded to train the girls' voices in the same way that he trained his boys: never straining their voices, yet being able to produce power when the music demanded it:

I didn't have any preconceptions as to what I would like them to do. I wanted them to use the voices [that] God had given them, and for them never to strain their voices, but to be able to produce power when it was needed and range, and I trained them in the same way as I trained the boys. (Dom F1)

In at least one instance, the boys were trained by the Director of Music and the girls were trained by his Assistant and they were reported sometimes to sound slightly different. However, when the same person trained them, they sounded almost identical. Given the somewhat contentious debate about admitting girls as choristers, on one recording the Director of Music did not state whether it was boys or girls singing:

I can remember once doing a recording of the boys and the girls, and I deliberately didn't put any Christian names on the choir list. So, I put T. Smith, you know, D. Jones, whatever, and I got a letter from somebody saying they could get me under the trade descriptions act, because – if he was buying a tin of soup – he would expect to know what the ingredients were in it. The fact [was] that he didn't know whether it was girls or boys. (DOM F 4)

6.4 Similarities and differences in the ways that both choirs could react in rehearsal and performance

6.4.1 Rehearsal

Seen through a CHAT lens, the established rules within the choral community are that membership requires choristers, irrespective of sex, to follow a similar pattern of regular choir practices, shorter—often daily—rehearsals (either alone or with the adult choir members, according to the daily schedule) and sung Services. These activities all have to be fitted around the requirements for the school day and weekends. The object of the activity system is common, to perpetuate the choral tradition as it is perceived and ritualised. Interview and questionnaire data, however, suggest that there are similarities and differences between boys and girls in how they undertake rehearsal and performance.

One interviewee reported differences in rehearsing boy and girl choristers in the ways that they reacted. He remarked how extremely enthusiastic the girls were and, unlike the boys, would often ask to sing the music again if they thought they were not confident with the music:

...the difference in the practice room, the different atmosphere. The boys – sixteen loyal, dependable chaps who, if you wanted them to sing it again, yes, they would sing it again for you, and 'I think we ought to do it just a third time', 'all right we'll do it a third time if you really think it's necessary', so we'd sing it a third time and maybe more, but at the end of the practice – 'time to leave', 'right off we go' and off they would tumble, but the girls were different. They were ravenous, they were so hungry and for the first time ever a hand went up in the practice and she said to me 'Can we do that verse again because I don't think we are too good on it?' Well, I never ever heard a boy do that, and honest 'Please can we do that again' it was unspeakable! So, they wanted to get things 200% right. (Dom F 1)

He continued that the girls also reacted well with enthusiasm and enjoyment in rehearsal:

And there was a very different feel in the practice room, one of tremendous commitment and enthusiasm and just meeting all this music for the first time 'What a wonderful piece, Sir' you know. With boys, you might get 'I like that bit of Wesley, Sir', but not nearly so often. (Dom F 1)

Some interviewees stated that, in addition to girls having a positive work ethic, they had better sight-reading skills and, as mentioned above, were generally more animated in rehearsal:

The great thing was that they were so keen and they were so dedicated, right from the start. There was no question of [a] sort of lack of concentration, or effort, or anything. They were tremendous. (DOM F 3)

They [girls] are much quicker; their sight reading is far better; they are brighter; they are much more animated, generally. I mean, they really want to do it, generally. (DOM SM 1)

They could pick up a piece and learn it very quickly. They would very, very seldom let you down. (AO F)

There was no special treatment that the girls got from me, but there was this huge difference of atmosphere in the practice room. They were very keen in those early days, they were keen to make it work, and yes, they wanted it to work. (Dom F 1)

The questionnaire data, collected at an earlier point in the research process when the girls were still something of a relative novelty in the community, suggests that – even at that time – one of the girls' main strengths was sight-reading and that a reported concern for some Directors was boys' 'poor reading'. (Incidentally, this gender difference accords with national and international data on reading in general. For example, in every one of the 65 countries and economies that participated in the OECD 2009 PISA comparison (published 2010), girls have significantly higher average reading scores than boys. This is also the current case for England in 2020, and in all ethnic groups, DFE (2020).

Girls were often reported as being able to learn music quickly and to remember instructions, which was not always the case for the boys:

I think the girls, you would usually only have to say something once, for example: 'Breathe there'; the boys you would have to say it half a dozen times, and they may or may not remember it in the service. (AO F)

...the boys would have to be told ten times, the girls five times. (DOM SM 1)

...the girls were very good, and they were extremely accomplished and they would often learn things far quicker than the boys. That's the difference between girls and boys, but you know, their work ethic is fantastic and their power of concentration, and you know, things that you tell boys fifty times and they still forget it, you know, girls will just have it sorted, you know. You could be doing a Renaissance piece which has a particular stylistic feature in it and you say to the girls, 'Ok girls, you know I want you to do it this way, and every time that figure comes, do it the same way' and they just take it on board and do it, and the boys you have to tell them every time! (DOM F)

...I would always add the proviso of the given personality at the time, so I can only comment on now. The boys are slower. They tend to take longer to learn music, but they learn it over a long period of time in small sound bites. That's the way they do things. They are not last-minute people. You give them something that they haven't rehearsed, they will muck in, so the boys are like that; they sing usually with not much brain. I mean it almost as a compliment! They don't think too much about what they are doing. They do it generally. They do it because they have been told to do it and you have to illicit a sort of response from them, not by saying 'Oh, listen to that fantastic chord, isn't that lovely? you see where it goes from here and how he does that word or whatever'. You say to them 'If you put a crescendo on that note, that will sound good'. Mechanics yes, they don't have the imagination generally...they are like soldiers, they do the job and some of them really want to do it and some of them really don't care, but most of them just do it because they have been told to do it. (DOM SM 1)

Another interviewee who rehearsed both boys and the girls reported a marked difference in the girl's concentration and that they were extremely self-motivated:

You know, their concentration, like all boys, their concentration can be very flighty, and you have got to really work hard to get them focused and all that, and I just think that is a real, a real sort of skill and I enjoyed that. The girls were very easy to deal with, they were so self-motivated. (DOM F)

Nevertheless, despite an apparent keenness in rehearsal and sight-reading skills, differences were mentioned concerning the levels of confidence in how boys and girls approached new music:

As a huge generalisation, sometimes girl choristers will need more encouragement, especially when learning a new piece as they can be more self-conscious about getting things right. Boy choristers, I find, tend to be less phased by the 'unknown'. This isn't to say they're any more accurate or musically proficient; it just means they throw caution to the wind a little more. (Mackey (2015) p.105)

Differences in confidence were also reported in the questionnaire data. Boys were seen as being likely to recover well from making mistakes, whereas girls – perhaps because they were less experienced at that time and were having fewer opportunities to sing across the week – could become more reticent if they made mistakes.

Mackey (2015) also records his perception that girls need greater encouragement than boys to boost their self-confidence. Girls can be extremely self-critical and this can impair their confidence levels:

with girls you have to be a negotiator and facilitator and a reconciler and an enthuser. (Mackey (2015) p.133-134)

Related to the above, there was a suggestion that girls could become upset easily, which could possibly indicate a lack of confidence and relative inexperience in the requirements of performance in the English cathedral tradition'. Some interviewees reported that training girls necessitated a different approach, such as more care in the way that things were worded and the manner in which directions were given. Girls could be more sensitive than boys who were more accepting of criticism (whilst noting that the language used in such criticism was not always appropriate, and likely to be considered as unacceptable under current DFE child safeguarding legislation):

...the girls need very, very different handling to the boys, and an interesting thing is, you know, if you had occasion to say to a boy 'Oh for goodness sake, shut up and pull yourself together', the boy, you know, may burst into tears, but it would last for five minutes and it's forgotten. But if you say that to a girl, which I did to my cost, they could bare a grudge for two weeks. (AO F)

...with the boys, you can look down the line and say 'Can you start watching me? You've been looking right in your music all morning, and you need to stop'. If you try that with a Year eight girl, she'll burst into tears. They need more of 'that was fantastic, brilliant, but what would really be good is, if you give me your eyes just slightly more, it would make me happy'. The same message comes across, but from a different angle. (Mackey (2015) p.83)

Mackey (2015) reported similar comments:

With the boys ...they take criticism better than the girls here. If he says something slightly rude to a boy, he will just think it's funny, and get the underlying message. If Halls says something a little rude to a girl, she may get upset and tell her parents. (Mackey (2015) p.65)

I think you can be quite, not aggressive with a boy, but you can be very direct in a way that might really upset a girl, and that might not get you the result that you want. (Mackey (2015) p.92)

This different approach was witnessed by Mackey (2015) in rehearsals on occasion when Halls was correcting notation errors. When correcting a mistake in a girls' rehearsal, less attention by way of criticism was given to the specific girl:

If there is an obvious mistake that shouldn't have been made, such as a novice-level error in counting, he'll stop playing, which immediately stops the singing, give a teasing 'Come on!' and try it again; the choristers get it right the next time. (Mackey (2015) p.70)

With a boy, he corrected the mistake by drawing attention to the boy by way of criticism in a more humorous way:

With the boys, Halls is different in his humour and how he teases the boys for mistakes. In one rehearsal, the boys were hav[ing] difficulties correcting a certain ingrained mistuning. Once it was corrected, then reviewed, one boy made the same mistake again. Looking sheepish, he raised his hand to indicate his error, and Halls stopped the piece to say 'Who's the loser now!?' All the boys had a laugh, teasing him that he was 'dumb as a doornail' and the one who made the mistake laughed along with them. When they reviewed the section again, no mistakes were made. (Mackey (2015) p.70)

Another interviewee also agreed in on the need to be careful during a girls' rehearsal to avoid any possible emotional upset:

Those moments when somebody's in tears, you know, girls cry. God, it's traumatic. Whereas, the boys just 'Pull yourself together'. The girls just whinge and hug each other and say 'Isn't he nasty', whereas the boys well – he probably asked for it, so and 'Pull yourself together'. (DOM SM 1)

One interviewee found that, after unintentionally upsetting a girl, some of the other girls in the choir sympathised with her:

They would get into little gangs and then you would find that five of the girls had, in inverted commas, 'sore throats' and couldn't sing. So, you know they were very, very different kettles of fish. (AO F)

This contrasted with how boys reacted in a similar situation:

The strengths of the boys were that they were, I think, robust... they were easy to handle you know, in that you could more or less say what you wanted, and I would clarify that by saying, you know, not in an abusive way, but you could say 'Come on,

for goodness sake, we have got to learn this. We have got to do it now, let's get on with it' and they would do it. (AO F)

These comments concerning differences between girls and boys in how they might react to criticism have echoes in findings in the research literature on music performance anxiety (MPA). In general, adolescent and female musicians are reported to experience higher levels of performance anxiety than males (e.g., Papageorgi et al, 2013; Gonzalez et al, 2018), especially in solo performance.

A common theme in the above comments and observations is of a culture where the Directors' language, as well as associated behaviour, is (or was) gendered in rehearsal. This may reflect an underlying sense of what was expected in an all-male traditional community, and of how the Directors found their customary approaches somewhat inappropriate when working with girl choristers for the first time (as has been reported in the use of language other communities, such as sport and the military, Alcega (2017). Historically, some commentators have made the point that boys respond to being given definite instructions in rehearsals, whereas girls like to be encouraged to sing:

Boys like to be regimented, to be given orders, to be told exactly what you want them to do and then expect to do it. Girls prefer to be persuaded, and take offence if they think you are being overbearing; but handling this distinction is part of the job of a form teacher in any mixed school these days. (Phillips 1980, vol. 2, p. 191)

Mackey (2015) records how a Director of Music described the choristers as having very different personalities in rehearsal. The boys were seen as livelier, needing to be continually challenged and to have greater confidence in their performance abilities. The girls were apparently less keen to be challenged, did not feel as confident in taking risks, and were better behaved:

Generally, I find that the boys want to be challenged. They want to be goaded. You have to pep them up and get them to perform and they're very competitive. The girls are not. The girls basically don't like to be confronted, don't like to be challenged, don't like to be embarrassed for risk of failure... The boys are more willing to take risks, whether they can do it or not, they want to get stuck in. It's the testosterone isn't it? The girls in rehearsal are very quiet, unless they're singing it's just chatting. The boys are mischievous and naughty and badly behaved, and constantly you have to be on top of them, eyeballing them, keeping them busy. The girls you can let them relax a minute, very calm. (Mackey (2015) p.139)

Mackey (2015) records another instance of the differences in rehearsal between boys and girls:

...there are differences with the boys and girls, especially musical ones. The boy choristers tend to want to sing through a piece, and then put it aside, finished, and become more unruly when they have to go back and polish the piece. They must be kept constantly on a close watch and constantly working or else they become distracted and misbehave. This makes rehearsals more difficult when the goal is learning music for future services; if the boys know that the piece is not for immediate performance, they lose focus. The girl choristers when rehearsing music for the future can be a bit

more relaxed in the rehearsal pace although they tend to stay very focused throughout the rehearsal with little coaxing. (Mackey (2015) p.167)

The questionnaire data supports these interview findings reported above. Girls were more likely to have good concentration in rehearsals compared to boys, and be better at remembering instructions. General behaviours were reported to be different, as exemplified by written comments in the questionnaire:

'Boys tend to be lively, sometimes too much so. Girls tend to be quiet – sometimes too much so'. 'Girls quicker to react and to take advice, boys need more reminders in order to form habits'. 'The boys are very work directed due to the boarding school atmosphere and respond best to this approach'. 'The girls need to have a much greater sense of fun in order to achieve'. 'Girls can cope with longer rehearsals and more detailed explanations of the music'. 'Girls are sometimes more giggly and supportive of each other. Boys need more encouragement generally'. 'Boys are more resilient to criticism and respond better when pressure is put on them'. 'Girls are more focused and concentrate harder'. 'Boys are easier to focus and respond better to being challenged'.

In rehearsals, the way that boys reacted to being asked to volunteer for solo singing was reported to be more positive compared to girls who did not like to volunteer. One interviewee described his experience of this:

I was rehearsing the boys and we were doing something and while they were singing there was a sort of solo thing coming up and I, without stopping, said 'Anybody? You know, just have a go', and about six of them piped up, you know, a junior, a couple of seniors. They did it because they thought, 'Oh God, I'd better do it' and somebody else did it and just for a laugh, I don't know why, but I was rehearsing the girls and I was doing a similar piece and there was a similar piece coming up and I did exactly the same. Do you know what they did? Nobody sang. Then of course I stopped and I said, 'You, you, you' and of course they sang it, but no one came in, very interesting. (DOM SM 1)

This difference in confidence the boys had also can be seen in the way they could react in performance. Mackey (2015, p118) stated that the Director of Music of Bristol cathedral found that girls were happy to sing a solo in rehearsals, but when the rehearsals were combined with the boys, they were rather reluctant at volunteering.

6.4.2 Performance

Limited rehearsal time can lead to an anthem being slightly under-rehearsed before a Service. Despite the same vocal training, the choirs may sing differently in performance in terms of how confidently they react to this situation. Generally, it is reported that boys will sing more confidently on these occasions which could affect the sound, unlike the girls who prefer to be well rehearsed and do not like taking risks:

If you said to the boys, 'Boys we haven't had time to rehearse this' you know, 'Go out there and give me your all', they would do it. The girls would always like to know exactly what they were doing; they liked to know that everything was meticulously prepared. So, I think there was a different approach there actually, which probably affected the sound of the boys. (DOM F)

(The girls) were far more difficult to handle than the boys. They were not prepared to take risks, so you know, the very nature of Cathedral music is that sometimes, you know, you have to go into a Service, you know, pretending to everybody that you've known this piece for years, but actually you have only just picked it up and they [the girls] weren't so happy about doing that. (AO F)

They (the boys) were marvellous... some performances would be electrifying, and I think they produced a greater thrill than the girls. The flip side of that is, as I said, if they got something wrong, it would happen with spectacular aplomb and usually very loudly! (AO F)

These interview comments are supported by the earlier questionnaire findings which reported a general tendency for boys to sing at their best in Services (76% of respondents) compared to 46% of girls, who tended to be more cautious. Recovering from mistakes was similarly biased in questionnaire data, with respondents suggesting that 69% of boys recovered well, compared to 38% of girls.

With increasing experience, one interviewee reported that the girls began to behave more like the boys and were prepared to take risks, but were not as confident in doing this as the boys:

After a while they got much more like the boys at doing that. In my earlier years, they would crumple quite easily. They would lose confidence, but after a while they [the girls] got much more like the boys. (DOM F)

Another reported difference, perhaps related risk taking, was that boys were able to make an exhilarating sound, whereas, at least in the latter years of greater experience, girls made a sound that was more consistent and would tend to always sing accurately. If boys were taking a risk and made a mistake, they did so in an obvious way; girls were less inclined to take risks:

...boys will in musical terms sing, and if they get something wrong, they will do so with gargantuan aplomb, fortissimo, but the boys will take risks and the boys will at times send shivers down your spine. The girls, on the other hand, would always maintain a very constant standard and they would never let you down, but they would never take the risk that the boys would. (AO F)

They (boys) do sing with a sort of passion in a funny sort of way when they really know something well, and they have been taught it properly, and it's sounding great. It's a good occasion and they do it really, really well. And as I said, the girls don't take so many risks. (DOM SM 1)

In addition to Services, questionnaire data revealed gender differences in other singing opportunities, such as in concerts and recordings. At the time of the questionnaire (2006), just over half of the respondents (54%) reported that concerts were shared equally, but there was a 70:30 split in favour of boys with regards to recordings – probably reflecting the relative singing

competency levels at that time and also 'Boys sing more services and their repertoire is larger'. In contrast, nearly 2/3 (61%) of choir tours were shared equally between the boys and girls.

6.5 Were there differences in the repertoire chosen for boys' and girls' choirs?

The questionnaire data indicate that over two-thirds (69%) of respondents felt that boys and girls sang better within certain parts of the repertoire (such as 'Tudor and Renaissance' music for boys and more '20th Century' music for girls), although both choirs would be expected to cover the customary variety that represents the sacred choral music tradition. Indeed, one particular reported advantage according to a significant minority of questionnaire respondents (30%) was that having two choirs enabled the repertoire to expand overall, although this might mean less repertoire experience for the established boys' choir. Just over half of the questionnaire respondents (53%) reported that their boys sang less than five years previously because girls were taking over some of the Service duties. However, the reported benefits were that the boys had more rehearsal time, as well as a lighter workload overall. Nevertheless, although the repertoire was common in terms of general categories, such as settings, anthems and Psalms, the majority of respondents (93%) indicated that the detailed choice of the repertoire was different for each choir, with little commonality in choirs singing the same pieces, in part to maintain musical interest across the liturgical year (such as also reported by Mackey, 2015, at Durham and Exeter). Repertoire tends to be chosen by the Director with input from the Assistant if the latter is in charge of the girls' choir. Interview data also illustrated some of these perceived repertoire related differences, such as in the Tudor repertoire being better suited to boys:

They do different repertoire, and you see in some ways some things I think they [the boys] do better than the girls. I don't know why, but I think they do that Tudor repertoire better than the girls do. They seem to have a better ear for it, a better feel for the rhythms of it... (DOM CC 1)

In the early days of girl choristers, repertoire was in some instances seen in gendered terms:

...in my time, the girls didn't sing the same pieces as the boys. So, you had had a piece and someone would say, 'Oh, that's a boy's piece' and 'that's a girl's piece'. So, in a funny kind of way, there was the opportunity for people to hear pieces that the boys didn't know sung by the girls. (AO F)

The boy choristers [at Exeter] have a lot of the classic choral repertoire – Howells, Stanford, Bairstow, and similar; not very many pieces were taken from them when the girls' line was started. But the girls do have a few of the classic pieces, they mostly sing newer repertoire; Tanner is keen to keep the girls interested and excited and challenged. (Mackey (2015) p.153-154)

One of the original reasons for opposition to the formation of girls' choirs was because of a belief that girl's voices would not be suited to singing in the perceived style of 'the English cathedral tradition' because the music not been written for them. In one instance, when the girls' choir was originally introduced, it was made clear that they should learn their own repertoire of anthems, with boys singing the more 'traditional' repertoire:

[in the beginning of the girls' choir] a little of the existing music was used. Obviously, things like Psalms were the same, but I was encouraged to not really use [what was perceived as] boys' repertoire. They wanted the girls to learn a separate repertoire. Actually, that's really been the pattern all the way through and, even to this present day, the girls do much more in the way of contemporary music; whereas boys do much more in the way of Elizabethan, their 'Commander' if you like is particularly interested in Elizabethan Tudor music, so we do much more of that with the boys, and the girls tend to do more 20th, 21st century stuff. (DOM F)

However, an alternate view was also evidenced:

Should they be allowed to sing Purcell because Purcell didn't write for girls? Or should they be given the chance to sing Purcell because they are now allowed to and they are able to? It is a very difficult question, but we have always taken the view that, if you want to give them beautiful music and music which adorns the liturgy from any period, old right up to the present day, they can sing whatever they want really. (A1.1)

A perception of a gendered repertoire was also evidenced by choristers. Mackey reports that generally the girls and boys sing a different repertoire at Durham, although they sometimes come together. The Director of Music recounted a story whereby the boys were not keen to sing what they considered was a girls' piece:

I'll often find if we're doing a combined choir thing at another place, I'll ask if they can sing a certain anthem, and the response will be, 'No. That's a girl's piece'. (Mackey (2015) p.104)

As mentioned previously, before girl choristers were introduced, there was uncertainty as to the vocal sound that they would produce. One interviewee commented on a discussion of whether or not they would be strong enough vocally, but also of how they wanted their new girls to engage with the 'best' pieces:

Would they be strong enough vocally to be able to sing the repertoire that the boys sang because there was no intention of watering down the repertoire, just singing pretty little pieces with no guts and muscle to them and so we were keen to throw at them the best of the repertoire. (DOM F 1)

A common consideration in the early day of the girls' choir was that as the repertoire was new to them and it was important that they were not given too much and so become overwhelmed. In addition to Psalm singing, they had to learn the canticles and anthem repertoire. Even the hymns might be unknown, as many schools would not necessarily sing the traditional hymns sung in

cathedrals in their school assemblies. To ease them in gently, girl choristers would not sing services every week, but worked towards certain dates during the academic term:

They sang their first Evensong on the 7th October 1991 and they did Stanford in B Flat ...and at this very first rehearsal they sang a short anthem by Richard Sheppard... a very simple piece called 'And did thou travel light, dear Lord' ... and that also happened at the first Evensong. We did some simple responses, probably Byrd responses, Psalm 84, Stanford in B flat ... We didn't want to give them too much to do. (DOM F 1)

In introducing girl choristers into the Service schedule, it made sense in the early days to start off by keeping the repertoire simpler. This was also an opportunity for new repertoire.

The repertoire was that they shouldn't duplicate what the boys were doing. I do sometimes in my cynical moments wonder if there was a fear that they might do it better, so, therefore keep off that repertoire. (DOM F)

... the girls now sing music that the boys had never sung and possibly never would so you know there was always a positive side to it. (DOM CC 1)

Another consideration in influencing the choice of the girl's repertoire was that, for some services, the girls sang without the men and, therefore, music was needed for treble voices only:

There is a core repertoire dictated partly by the fact the girls sing treble-only stuff, so you can't just keep doing the easy stuff. There are not that many Mag and Nunc's for trebles. (DOM SM 1)

Common to both boys and girls, the singing of the Psalms is an important part of nearly every cathedral service and often performed with only a light organ accompaniment. One interviewee taught the girl choristers a Psalm in their very first rehearsal and was encouraged by their vocal response to it:

I thought Psalms are going to be the bread and butter, so therefore, from the word go, they ought to be introduced into something hard and it was literally after lunch. We just had half an hour from half past one to two and I will never ever forget it, Claire. It was one of those moments you know when something was born. (DOM F 1)

Some psalms are more difficult and some have a longer number of verses than others. It would therefore take considerable time before they had gained experience in singing all 150 psalms. However, because of the commonplace nature of the Psalms in the pattern of the liturgy, the girl choristers had to become proficient relatively quickly and they had no role models or experienced choristers from which to learn. One interviewee explained that they had to learn to sing the Psalms appointed for the day very quickly:

The main stumbling block mainly being the psalms because we didn't give in to them. If they were going to sing the Psalms, they sang the Psalms for the day. There was no mucking about, they learnt the hard way, and they did. (DOM F 1)

Other interviewees also commented on similarities and differences between the choirs in terms of repertoire, in part because of a perception that certain pieces seemed to be a better match, at other time for pragmatic reasons:

I was always careful that the boys knew their repertoire very well, it was a small repertoire which they knew extremely well and they could sing extremely well, and the girls ...they had their own repertoire and ... actually very often if it was a modern piece, I would give it to the girls rather than the boys ... because they were able to learn things so fast. (DOM F)

I suppose knowing the girls are a bit quicker, we tend to throw at them some of the more challenging stuff (DOM SM 1)

...I wouldn't say that...the boys were better at any particular piece than the girls, really. There were some pieces that the boys always did, like the Stravinsky Mass seemed to suit boys' voices very well, and we used to do the Poulenc Mass with the girls. That seemed to suit them very well. (DOM F)

There is a core repertoire of anthems and services which both choirs sing. They both sing Coll. Reg. because they are great pieces and they should know them as choristers. There are a number of pieces which one choir sings and the other doesn't which occasionally catches us out because if we get it wrong, they don't know it, it's as simple as that! And there are other ones which definitely the girls sing and the boys don't for no reason other than it happened that one of the choirs had to sing it and there happened to be a slot for the girls to do it ...the boys sing the Langlais Mass which is a real boy's piece, the girls don't sing it, they should! The girls sing the Leighton Missa Brevis which is a tricky unaccompanied Mass, the boys don't. (DOM SM 1)

Another factor on the choice of repertoire between the two choirs is the rehearsal timetable available for boys and girls. Due to the boys generally singing more services each week, girls have more rehearsal time. This gives them the opportunity of learning more challenging and demanding music which results in a different repertoire:

In terms of what music they do in identifying themselves as groups, because the boys have more to do, they are not always able to do works that are as challenging as the girls... (DOM 1 b)

The age of the choristers was another factor that impacted on choice of repertoire. In one choir, the boys and girls were similar ages, up to Year 9, but in one year they had two Year 10 girls. This allowed a new challenging piece to be introduced for these girls:

...the Frank Martin Mass, which is a demanding piece; it would be interesting to know whether the boys could do that as well. I'm sure they could do it, but whether they could do it as well is another matter. (DOM 1 b)

Another interviewee explained that with senior age girls they were able to sing far more advanced music which gave a wider and more encompassing repertoire than previously:

because they are more musically mature because of the simple fact some of them are doing GCSE and AS level and A level music, they bring into their singing a lot more experience than a twelve-year-old girl could possibly do, and actually it means we can tackle much more repertoire, which perhaps the boys wouldn't necessarily be able to pull off. So, for instance, last year we did a Mendelssohn eight-part Christmas motet, which you know wouldn't necessarily be something that the boys would tackle. (AO F)

Where the girls learned more challenging music, it was suggested that the repertoire has broadened and added more variety:

It enriched the musical life undoubtedly, it meant that the boys were less pressured obviously but it really brought in a richness and a variety to the music. (DOM F)

In all cases, Directors reported that the organisation of the musical repertoire required considerable planning, especially if the Service schedule is supplemented by tours, recordings and school curricular visit demands. Even with two choirs these factors can cause difficulties and increase pressure in order to achieve the daily service repertoire. For example:

The thing is that we have put down a lot of music which we need to keep in the repertoire because we have got a lot of music this weekend. The girls have got an exeat, one choir is stood down for an entire weekend, so the other choir sing everything. But we have also got all this difficult music, and the top boys are away until tomorrow morning, so that is a lot. You plan ahead as best you can and ...well, you only have to chuck in a couple of weddings, or a funeral, or a big service, which of course shunts everything else. It's always management of time and resources and good use of rehearsal time and trying to get the best out of the kids. The last thing you want to be doing is start worrying about breaking voices, or dare I say illness. If anybody is ill, then you are in real trouble. (DOM SM 1)

6.6 What was the impact, if any, on boy choristers following the introduction of girls' choirs?

The introduction of novice girl choristers into an established all-male sacred musical community, with associated rules, roles, conventions, practice and performance rituals, and sense of its history, is highly likely to have had an impact on the boy choristers. Singing as a collective generates a strong sense of social inclusion, of belonging and community (Welch et al, 2014), perhaps even more so where boy choristers are singing alongside men to a very high standard and with a shared object. Having to share some of their Services with girls, the girls singing with the men, the girls receiving equal or more attention than the boys (at least initially) and—in a sense—invading their tradition could all combine as an unwelcome upheaval. In addition, ultimately the girls would need to sing to the same standard or be seen to letting down the tradition. Perhaps there could also have been concern that the girls would sing better than the boys.

Nevertheless, in one cathedral at least, the boys appeared at least curious if not positive about the innovation. When the girls started singing in Services, the boys on their own accord went to hear them and vice versa:

... when the girls had their first Evensong the boys were excused, they had got free time and at least half of them came and just sat in the congregation and we found that once the girls started taking their part in the services that the boys would come and listen to them and vice versa, the girls would sometimes come and listen to the boys Evensong and so on and very soon they were just all part of the team you know and they were all doing the same job and that was another of the rather nice spin offs. (DOM F)

The above interviewee explained that, even in the initial stages, the boys and girls got on well together and they both shared a feeling of collective identity within their school and choirs:

... I think it was because it was a mixed school, so they all knew each other in school anyway, and they all had this identity that they were choristers and ... I never detected any rivalry between the two groups at all. (DOM F)

Although he was not directly aware of any rivalry, he suggested that if there had been, it could attributed that to the reaction by some of the choir parents:

I think there was probably some anti feeling on both sides between the boys and the girls which was a little bit engendered by certain adults as well. (DOM F)

It seems that, occasionally, there was a parent who might be less accepting, such as when it came to opportunities for broadcasts:

Occasionally, you know if the boys got a broadcast, or something, you know, the parents more than the children actually [would comment], 'The girls haven't had a broadcast recently' whatever it might be. But, yeah, there was that sort of thing, but on the whole, I think they got on very well. (DOM F)

There have been moments of rivalry but it's nearly always been because of parents. (DOM SM 1)

A few of them perhaps saw it as a threat, but I think that was probably mostly the ones whose parents told them this was a threat. I don't think the kids themselves were actually too bothered really, and I can certainly think of one or two choir boys who actually almost saw it as a challenge to make sure they were as good, if not better, than the other choir and vice versa. So, you know, the girls were out to prove something and, you know, 'Let's make sure we can sing as well as we can' and from that point of view, a bit of healthy competition. (AO) F 2)

The impact on boys in a mixed cathedral choir was seen to be a positive one. It was reported that the girls influenced the quality of the sound due to the boys becoming more proactive than they might have been if they had been in a boys-only choir. The boys tried harder to keep up with the girls and, therefore, the overall sound was reported to be very exciting:

... pros of the mixed line, it can be an incredible sort of fighting force really. As I say, the ones in Edinburgh were very good because the girls in one sense brought on the boys, because the boys just have to run that little bit more to keep up. Whereas, they don't within the sort of slightly boyish culture of a boys' treble line however good really ... you know boys will be boys ... there's a great sort of camaraderie about it. But, I think when the girls are there, it does have a what some people would say, as a civilising effect on the boys. I don't know whether that's true or not. I mean certainly in Edinburgh ... it did work very well as we had some extremely good girls who, you know, were bright and therefore the boys ... who were of mixed ability, but as were the girls in some cases, but it did mean that they had to work harder. So that's good and in terms of sound ... St. Mary's trebles was a very exciting sound. People often mistake it for a boys' choir because they don't really know what a boys' choir sounds like. (DOM 1 b)

A contrasting view to this, however, was put forward that the impact of competition could have a detrimental effect on a boys' confidence:

I think one of the dangers of having two choirs is the thing of competition, and that's a thing [that] boys don't like. They like to be successful. They like to be winners at that sort of age and the moment you put them against some competition in which it's not competition between them and among themselves, they shy away from it. (DOM 4)

An example of this impact on the boys' confidence was seen at Wells cathedral, where the early girl choristers were an older age range. Each year they became more experienced and proficient singers and this reportedly led to the boys becoming dispirited (Mackey (2015) p.166). One policy outcome was that the cathedral reduced the upper age range of the girls to create a more sense of equality between the two choirs.

An interviewee reported that as their boys were not singing as many services, they had more rehearsal time and the rehearsals had become more detailed and standards were higher (DOM SM 1).

Other interview data, however, suggested that there was a mixed reaction to the impact of reduced service singing and whether this had led to a loss of expertise. It was believed by some interviewees that it is essential for boys to sing regularly in order to maintain a high standard:

you have got to be very careful not to give the boys too little to do, because I think boys thrive on a lot of singing and I think if you reduce the amount of singing they do, and I've seen this happening in other cathedrals, I think their expertise goes and they end up being a poor relation to the girls and I think you always have to be careful that one choir is not a poor relation to the other, and keep an eye on things. (DOM F)

An interviewee who agreed that regular singing for boys is essential although he found that the impact of less service work has given some further opportunities in rehearsal time for learning more advanced music:

... inevitably the introduction of the girls did reduce the amount of the services that the boys were singing. In some ways, that was obviously a bad thing because one of the real arguments for maintaining the boys as they are is that what boys thrive on is the routine of just doing the job, day in and day out and, obviously, if they are doing fewer

services then potentially that is upsetting. The flip side to that is that both choirs then have more time to rehearse if they are doing fewer services. So, therefore, they can, you know, tackle more adventurous music perhaps. (AO F)

... it means that you actually have to work much harder at things because they are not doing it as often. (DOM 2)

It certainly is a concern that, if boys start singing less, then they do end up singing potentially a slightly smaller repertoire. But, as we were saying earlier on, actually given that they have slightly more rehearsal time than if they were doing all the services, then both choirs potentially have got more time to learn perhaps slightly harder repertoire. So, I think that if the question of repertoire is handled sensibly, it doesn't need to be a problem at all. (AO F 2)

... there are roughly 12 Eucharist's a term, of which the boys now do half. Now before the girls came, the boys, we had a cycle of more than 12 sung Eucharist's which we would probably get through half a year or something like that. Now if you want to keep the same number of pieces in the repertoire, they are going to sing them less often. So, either you narrow the repertoire down so that they get the repetition, which is one of the things that gets a good performance and gets it into the blood, or you have pieces that they have not sung before, or haven't sung for a year or whatever. (DOM 2)

Where the Director worked with both the girls' and boys' choirs, this was perceived as being detrimental to the boys, believing the boys were not as strong vocally as they did not have enough rehearsal time:

The boys are not as strong as they might be. They are getting better, but owing to the sort of slight collapse of the top end a year and a half ago, and also owing to the fact that, as I probably explained to you last time, I don't see them enough because of the way the system is set up. (DOM 1 b)

The boys here, it's difficult to make the progress because of not working with them every day, so that's a direct consequence in this case of the introduction of the girls, and that's not to say the girls don't deserve to be rehearsed. I mean ... [I] spent more time with the boys because I felt they needed it. Well they do, but then they are not getting parity. I mean in effect I probably do spend more time with the boys, but not as much as...[I would like] (DOM 1 b)

Prior to the introduction of girls, there was a reported national decline in recruitment of boys. The reasons for this according to questionnaire data were a decline in church attendance, reduced singing in the school curriculum, a decline in church choir membership, a reluctance due to the boys' perceived time commitment with a general decline in boarding, and—for some—the financial burden of the school fees (A3.3). With the introduction of girls, no suggestion had been put forward that they jeopardised the numbers of boys applying for places. Conversely, the impact on the recruitment of boys according to interviewees suggests that there has been a positive outcome from the introduction of girls, as parents often put both their son and daughter forward for audition:

(the boys) did take a tumble, but it was a national tumble. It had nothing to do with girls. Now, when the girls started here, I think I can put my hand on my heart and say

that there was no difference at all. After all you see, there are a number, there have always been at least one brother/sister in the choir. (DOM F 1)

I can say with all honesty that, at no point, did we feel that boys' recruitment was threatened and actually I think there were several instances where it was actually a good thing because, if they were a brother and sister, both of whom enjoyed singing, both of whom wanted to sing in a choir and because the school and the cathedral was able to cater for both kids in one family... (AO F 2)

So, we've worked hard and I would say our recruitment is about as good as it's been since I've been here. What are we getting for girls, average? Thirty for five places – it doesn't sound many, but real quality ... boys always much harder, Twenty-plus for four or five places which is not bad. I will say the quality of the boys probably is less than it used to be. We have to work harder to stay where we are. In terms of just numbers, we are doing well. (DOM SM 1)

6.7 Summary

This chapter has been primarily focused on the interviewees' perceptions of the lived experience of working with girl and boy choristers. There no evidence of the boys' choral sound – the intended outcome of the activity system – being influenced negatively by the introduction of girl choristers. Building on the evidence in Chapter 5 that the singing outputs are often either perceived to be very close or even identical to the collective male chorister vocal model, this chapter has explored possible underlying reasons for why this might be. The data suggest that Directors of Music tended to have common musical goals, irrespective of the make-up of their choirs. These musical foci – such as with accurate tuning, articulation, vowel shapes, breathing, phrasing and a collective sound – are shared by individuals within the community of Directors of Music and their Assistants. Yet the route to achieving these may differ, depending on the sex, age and experience of the choristers, as well as the demands of the particular repertoire and the stylistic preferences of the individual Director. Interviewees commented on perceived similarities and differences between the two groups in rehearsal and performance. There is a sense that Directors are likely to perceive gendered differences in the ways that each group respond in rehearsal and performance, perhaps with greater variation in the vocal outputs of the boy choristers compared to the girls. This was evidenced by comments on the need for differentiation in approach during rehearsal in order to reduce such variation, although there was recognition that some variation seemed inevitable across the working week, with Mondays and Fridays being unlikely to reach the peaks of performance that surfaced on other days. The Directors were also aware of the challenges and benefits arising from onset of puberty and its ramifications for choristers'

vocal timbre, with the majority of cathedrals typically adopting a similar 'retirement' policy for both sexes in order to have identical age groupings, with school Year 8 or 9 being the final chorister year group. The two choirs, boys and girls, would have the same musical goals related to excellence in choral performance of the sacred repertoire and the vocal technique needed to achieve this. Although the girls' musical repertoire was much simpler in the early period of the formation of the choir, customarily they would take on more of the traditional core Service music as they gained in expertise. For both choirs, not having to sing every day would have provided relatively more time for rehearsal and the growth of expertise, although some Directors' comments suggested that boys also needed the actual regular performance in Services to sharpen their technique. One unresolved variable appears to be how best to ensure that each choir has sufficient rehearsal time with the Director of Music. One possible solution offered in the interview data was for the Assistant to be very clear about the Director's intentions so that there could be a greater continuity of rehearsal experience, irrespective of who was taking which choir on a particular day. Overall, there is a sense of common purpose across the community in which the Directors drew on their experience and craft knowledge in the tradition to shape the choral output towards a common output.

Chapter 7: Discussion, conclusions and implications

7.1 Introduction

The focus for this study has been an investigation into the introduction of female choristers into Anglican cathedral choirs in England over the past three decades, drawing on a Cultural-Historical-Activity-Theory (CHAT) perspective, as previously applied by Welch (2010) to investigate the introduction of female choristers at a single site (Wells Cathedral). I have sought to develop and extend this usage in order to understand the experience of this innovation of girl choristers within three Anglican cathedrals (Salisbury, Lincoln and Lichfield) with the aim of providing a broader picture of these developments within an English context.

The specific research questions were:

- Can girl choristers sing in the style that constitutes 'the English cathedral tradition'?
- Did the girls' style of singing change over time?
- Is age a factor in the vocal sound of girl and boy choristers?
- What is the experience of working with girl and boy choristers, such as in rehearsal and performance?
- Do girl choristers require different kinds of choir training than boys?
- Are there differences in the repertoire chosen for boys' and girls' choirs?
- What was the impact, if any, on boy choristers following the introduction of girls' choirs?

7.2 Tradition and transformation

The strength of the tradition's gendered historicity has been identified as one key reason why the 'English choral tradition' has for so many years been exclusively based around boy choristers. From the year AD 597 until AD 1991—a total of 1,394 years—a tradition was established and sustained of having boy choristers to sing the daily services in monastic foundations and latterly cathedrals. Since 1991, a change has occurred with the introduction of girls and currently 37 out of 42 cathedrals also have girl choristers. These share the music programme in Services with the boys over the liturgical year. Two other cathedrals having a mixed choir (Bradford and Manchester) and only three cathedrals have retained boy choristers without additional girls (Chichester, Hereford and St Paul's). The impact of this introduction of girl choristers on the established musical culture has raised issues related to equality, tradition, recruitment, authenticity, repertoire and singing style. Opposition against the introduction of girl choristers has been driven, in part, by 'the wish to preserve exclusively a cultural tradition' (Mould, 2007, p269) and also by concerns about possible

negative impacts on boy choristers and on what critics of the policy regarded as the unique choral sound.

Nevertheless, although the sacred choral music community are all engaged in the same liturgical process across the year, with the same intended outputs in terms of the music for sung Services, the actual outcomes are not identical musically, based on the available acoustic, historic and perceptual evidence—both experimental data and as reported by interviewees, even if the musical items from the repertoire are identical. Thus, it seems sensible to consider this collective evidence base as implying that the sound of the 'English choral tradition' should be considered as more of a family of sounds, related to each other, but not identical, and open to cultural change.

Although some authors such as Mould (*ibid*) imply that 'the sound produced by a group of girls is so different from that produced by a group of boys that it is unacceptable as an alternative', the actual evidence base suggests that such comments are completely misplaced and unsupported. *Can girl choristers sing in the style that constitutes 'the English cathedral tradition'?* The thesis data suggest 'yes', such as if this is what the Director of Music wishes, but with a caveat that the term 'tradition' is very broad, with—as evidenced in the previous chapters—significant variability acoustically, although not necessarily in terms of musical quality.

The thesis' main contribution is both in (a) bringing these different forms of evidence together, and (b) using a CHAT lens to seek to unpack why it has been possible for the all-male community to induct girls into the tradition such that they can sing in a manner which can be perceived as identical to that which might be expected from an all-boys' choir.

It is a noteworthy cultural phenomenon that, across different cathedrals, boys' voices are identified characteristically as having distinctive tone colours, such as depending on the musical preferences and biography of who trains them, and also the acoustic characteristics of the rehearsal and performance spaces within their particular cathedral building (*cf* Day 2014, p, 82). There are also suggestions of gender differences that can impact on the outputs, such as in the interview findings that boys are prepared to 'take risks' in their choral performance during a Service and may produce 'thrilling' sounds at times because of this, whereas girls may be perceived to sing in a more careful manner and are reportedly more reluctant to take risks vocally. Such findings also accord with the written reflections by Matthew Owens (now in Belfast) of his experience of working with boys and girls at Manchester, Edinburgh and Wells (Owens and Welch, 2017).

With their introduction of girl choristers, some cathedrals chose to mirror the exact age range for girls as for boys, with the upper age related to the onset of adolescent male voice change. Other cathedrals chose an older age range of senior school age girls (as exemplified at Truro). These differences in chorister age profile would impact on the vocal output, although vocally, at least in terms of the reported listeners' perceptions, there are relatively few differences in the choral singing of boys' and girls' voices around the 7–13y age range (e.g., Howard, Szymanski & Welch, 2002;

Welch, 2016), although there may be differences in the ways that they are trained locally.

The question of whether girl choristers experienced different kinds of training and rehearsal than boys is answered through the data collection undertaken for this study. It appears that Directors of Music tended to train all voices in a similar way in terms of their musical and performance aims, not distinguishing necessarily between girls' and boys' voices. However, some Directors recognised that features of their language of instruction needed to be adapted to differences in the ways that each choir received these, such as suggestions that girls responded differently (and negatively) to direct criticism.

Given the strength of the tradition, it is not surprising that, although a Director may not have made a conscious effort for girls to sing in the same way as their boys, after a while, girls' vocal products were shaped towards the sounds of the boys because this was the cultural expectation. Moreover, it became apparent that listeners, even highly trained musicians, could not easily identify differences in the sound between boy and girl choristers. This appears to be particularly the case where the same person was training both boys' and girls' choirs. It is likely that the resultant choral sound tended to be very similar, although the age profile of the choir could bring noticeable changes in vocal timbre, such as reported in boys' voices just before adolescent voice change (e.g., Williams & Harrison, 2019), and at an equivalent time with older girls whose voices become more womanly (having a wider pitch range, often with vibrato, and a wider dynamic variation, see Gackle, 2019). With a boys' choir, there can be the inevitable challenges presented by voice change for the older boys, whereas the sound for a girls' choir is considered to be more consistent until mid to late-adolescence.

A review of the available data explored what impact, if any, was evidenced by the introduction of girls on the sound of the boy choristers. Overall, there is no evidence that the vocal output of girl choristers had a negative influence on the vocal products of boys, nor fundamentally changed the customary psychoacoustic experience of listening to choristers in this cathedral tradition. Some Directors of Music reported being pleased with the stronger sound that emerged when the two choirs sang together, which happened on special occasions (see Chapter Six). Such a combination also provided the enlarged choir with an opportunity to sing larger scale pieces of music.

In terms of possible differences in the repertoire chosen for boys' and girls' choirs, the impact of girl choristers on the previously all-male cathedral foundations appears to have generated only a slight change in the selection of music, with some Directors wanting to match the available vocal resources to particular repertoire, particularly if they were working with more experienced and mature girls' voices.

Based on interview data gathered for this study, the music repertoire of boys' choirs appears to have remained essentially the same throughout the past three decades. Despite the introduction of girl choristers across many different sites, the findings of the case studies support those reported by

Welch (2010), who noted that, with the advent of girl choristers, boys were still singing regularly across the week. In an inevitable shift in the division of labour, boys are commonly now required to perform fewer services each week, but are often likely to have a larger proportion of the available musical work and generally to have sustained their rehearsal time.

In the current study, repertoire has emerged as a key mediating artefact in the expansion of the cathedral music activity system. As noted, boys are reported to be likely to continue to sing music that their predecessors sang before girl choristers were introduced. Yet, whilst girl choristers also sing much of the same music, in some cathedrals there is a more distinct, additional repertoire emerging for girls, which tends to represent more modern, recently composed music (see, for example, Chapter Six).

Despite all cathedrals having daily services, the number of *sung* services varies considerably between each cathedral. The tradition has changed slightly in some cathedrals, for example, where the girl choristers sing extra services, e.g., one service extra per month. A few cathedrals abolished the so-called 'dumb day' (e.g., at Wells) where, on one day a week, customarily Evensong would be said instead of being sung. This abolition provided the new girl choristers with an opportunity to sing without impinging on the boys' singing duties. Over time, as girl choristers became more proficient, they were likely to take on more of the available singing duties each week (such as at Lincoln and Lichfield, Chapter Four, for example). Whilst this would bring benefits to the girls in terms of greater opportunities to expand their expertise, some Directors of Music suggested that this may have had an adverse effect on the boys' knowledge of repertoire although not necessarily the amount of practice that they received (see Chapter 6). Also, in order to promote greater equality for all choristers, boys may not sing as many television broadcasts as previously.

7.3 Impetus for change

As modern society evolved in the latter half of the twentieth century, events unfolded that gave rise to changes and new traditions. In the 1960's–1970's, the traditional single sex grammar schools in England were subject to change (*Simon, 2000*), becoming co-educational comprehensive schools. Some independent fee-paying traditional boys' schools began admitting girls into their sixth forms and some gradually became co-educational across the age range from the mid 1970's onwards. These wider social factors presented the then existing cathedral choral tradition with powerful, aggravating contradictions to its very well-established all-male musical culture.

The introduction of girl choristers marks a key point when the 'historically accumulating structural tensions' (Engeström, 2001: p7) between the existing virtually all-male cathedral music culture—the prime exceptions being the mixed-sex choirs in Manchester and Edinburgh—and the wider social system of which it was part, were first openly acknowledged.

It can be argued that the modern movement to include female choristers was largely down to the beliefs and actions of Dr Richard Seal – hence this thesis' focus on Salisbury as a key case study. Arguably, he was well placed to both understand the nature and needs of the Anglican choral tradition of boys and men, and to use this knowledge to find a way to include girl choristers at Salisbury without this affecting negatively their boy chorister tradition. Engeström's version of activity theory stresses the importance of individuals who 'question and deviate from established norms' (ibid), but Seal was not the only such individual. As was shown in Chapter Four, Peter Allwood would be a similarly key agent for change at Lichfield some fifteen years later.

As mentioned above, just as state schools were changing in the 1970's and 1980's in the light of Government policy, such as the comprehensivisation movement, the choir school at Salisbury – which had catered exclusively for boys since the year 1100, changed from an all-boys' school to a coeducational establishment. This gave girls the same educational opportunities as the boys. However, the enactment of these opportunities highlighted the centrality of money as a key material mediating artefact in the expansion of the cathedral music activity system. Because the cathedral had no spare money to fund a girls' choir, fundraising was dependent on the support of the general public. Interviewees suggested that the relative inequality in funding between girls' and boys' choirs continues to the present day. Nevertheless, Salisbury changed the makeup and identity of cathedral choirs, not least in the public perception, and this almost inevitably provoked reactions from people within and without the cathedral community who were for and against.

7.4 Case studies of girl chorister introduction

As was demonstrated in the two cathedral case studies of Lincoln and Lichfield (Chapter Four), there were various differences in the way in which girl choristers were introduced. At Lincoln in 1995, from a CHAT perspective, these may have inadvertently aggravated further tensions and contradictions which had already emerged. The early experiences for some of the former girl chorister, as revealed through interviews, suggested that, whilst they valued the opportunity and understood the privilege of singing in the cathedral, the actual day-to-day experience was not always positive. They attributed this negativity to challenges which, through a CHAT lens, are associated with a range of mediating artefacts, including a lack of organisation, and inadequacies in the provision of music, choir robes, rehearsal accommodation and an absence of a regular singing schedule for Services.

Lichfield Cathedral in 2006 presents an interesting contrast, as the choir's formation appears to differ from all other cathedrals which introduced girl choristers. Compared with Lincoln, for example, everything was reported to be in place from the beginning, with good facilities and finance and a carefully planned programme of secular concerts, with the occasional Choral

Evensong service in the cathedral. As a result, there is evidence to suggest that the necessary changes and developments took place over a longer period, creating a sense of greater alignment with the Cathedral's choral historicity. Moreover, many of the practical challenges associated with the negativity associated with the mediating artefacts at Lincoln had already been largely overcome. From the researcher's video recordings over the course of an academic year, the girls always appeared confident, generally had good concentration skills and seemed to enjoy the experience.

The data collected in 2005 from questionnaires relating to the first girl choristers at Lincoln (who were looking back on their experiences in 1995) suggest that they felt, at times, that they were not really accepted by the congregation, nor by some of the boy chorister parents, nor even some of the cathedral clergy. It was generally expressed that they continually had to fight their corner. However, in 2006 when Lichfield introduced plans for the girls' school choir to sing occasional services in the cathedral, society had become more accepting of the concept of female choristers.

7.5 The current status of choristers in English Cathedrals

Based on the fact that only three cathedrals have not instituted girl choristers, the findings in this thesis support a view that the introduction of girl choristers in our cathedrals has been successful.

Yet, practical matters, such as the recruitment and funding of choristers have had to be overcome in the wake of the Salisbury innovation. This research has shown that the female-focused initiative has not necessarily affected the recruitment of boy choristers in cathedrals (e.g., Mackey, 2015), which appears to have remained relatively constant in many cathedrals, or increased (because sisters can now join brothers), or – if reduced at times – the reduction is likely to be due to a wider trend (as reported in *The Times*, 20th Dec, 2019). Whilst it has taken time for their acceptance, cathedral girls' choirs are now usually seen to be of equal status, at least musically, as existing boys' choirs. Yet whilst there is a likelihood that the music repertoire and performance practices are likely to be identical, the organizational and financial statuses of many girls' choirs do not yet have parity (see, for example, Chapter Two). This suggests that, in CHAT terms, we have certainly witnessed the embedding of an alternative collective viewpoint, albeit not a universally accepted one.

Previous debates over the traditional sound of boys' voices compared with girls appear to be less important within this emerged, alternate collective view. This study has sought to establish whether their styles of singing have changed or remained the same since 1991. Results suggest that, with professional training, related to the composition of their personnel, girl choristers have developed their own sound which is nonetheless often perceived to be very similar or identical to that of boys, at least in terms of independent empirical studies. The increased number of cathedrals admitting girl choristers has not led to the mixing of boy and girl choristers as originally feared by some. Each cathedral has maintained their two choirs successfully, although they may sometimes come together

for special events. Also, the recruitment of girls has not led to any reported reduction of adult male expert singers applying for positions as altos, tenors and basses. Generally, this study's interview data suggest that any difficulties in the recruitment of lay clerks are likely to be due to the historically low levels of financial remuneration. In two cathedrals, women have been appointed to sing the alto part, but such change appears minimal.

Nevertheless, for some, the debate over the introduction of girl choristers in 1991 continues. For instance, in an article in *The Spectator* (June 2nd 2018) entitled 'I dread the extinction of boys' choirs, Maxtone acknowledged that, whilst equality should extend to girl choristers in cathedrals, she believed boys-only choirs were superior:

The almost-unsayable but (I think) true fact is that those last remaining choirs of men and boys still have the edge when it comes to astonishingly high-quality singing. To dilute is usually to demoralise one faction and to damage the whole.

She quoted a Director of Music of a boys-only choir stating that the regularity of performance was crucial in maintaining this high standard with boy choristers (See Chapter Five 5):

It's the momentum of rehearsing seven days a week, and singing seven or eight services a week, that maintains the high standard of the boys' singing.

Maxtone reported that choral directors had explained to her that boys respond to the routine of performing almost every day and, with the introduction of girl choristers, the boys' regular service singing tradition has suffered. She stated:

Bit by bit, this richness of choral experience is being dismantled. When a cathedral or college starts running two top lines, each line then has half as rich an experience as the boys-only top line previously had, and something immeasurably precious is lost.

For others, however, an alternative collective viewpoint regarding the impact of the introduction of girl choristers has been accepted:

Although the prime purposes of those proposing the innovation embraced a moral imperative, they believed also (on the basis of experience elsewhere within the cathedral community) that it was possible to introduce female choristers without risk to the musical quality or repertoire expected within the sung religious service. (Welch, 2010, p. 19)

From a CHAT perspective, the findings are in accord with previous findings (e.g. Welch 2007, p. 20). The novice female choristers have been introduced into an activity system and integrated into the 'rules', 'community', 'division of labour', 'mediating artefacts', and the system's 'object', leading in turn to the 'outcome'. CHAT analysis can help us understand how the influence of the introduction and development of girl choristers at Salisbury impacts on to the wider Anglican choral tradition by posing a challenge and contradiction to the existing all-male culture. The resultant disequilibrium needs to be resolved and, arguably, this has led to more choristers overall, growing from N=1355 in 2002 to N=1476 in 2019 (The Times, op.cit.).

CHAT is particularly important when investigating a phenomenon dating back to 1991 and one in which debate and opinion still continues to be expressed. In terms of the aggravation of emerging tensions, it is possible to understand why Seal, prior to 1991, reported that having girls in cathedral choirs was unthinkable.

In terms of historicity, educationally the provision for boy choristers to receive an academic as well as musical education in England at a time when it was generally limited only to boys of wealthy parents, was possibly a great incentive. Girl choristers were never excluded on musical grounds, but on the grounds that the education of girls was not regarded as being particularly important, as girls and women were seen very much as inferior in society at the time.

The pointers towards an alternative collective viewpoint and collective envisioning show the comparative ease with which Salisbury established a girls' choir and this became a 'model' for future cathedrals. In terms of cultural aggravation, however, as a new tradition of girl choristers began, there was much controversy amongst many who were in opposition and believed that in the interests of equality, the inclusion of girls would result in the downfall of boy choristers with their tradition being in jeopardy and that it could even disappear. The divided opinions on girls singing in cathedrals—as was shown in Chapter Three—ranged from those in favour, which generally represented the clergy, cathedral musicians and girl chorister parents, to those against, which included some members of the congregations and a dedicated pressure group, the CDTCC. The reasons for the opposition typically stemmed from the enduring influence of the Anglican cathedral tradition's historical bias and also practical concerns regarding the overcoming of various matters related to re-balanced divisions of labour and related mediating artefacts. Arguments against included:

- girls will not be able to produce the same vocal quality as boys;
- boys will not want to sing if girls are allowed to;
- cathedral finances would not be able to support two choirs; therefore, the boys and girls will become a mixed choir;
- the possible negative effect that the introduction of girls singing would have on the recruitment pool subsequently of adult lay clerks who were ex-boy choristers; and
- the belief that recruitment of boys would suffer and that their singing routine would be disrupted, impacting on their competence and repertoire, and thus weakening if not destroying the boy chorister tradition.

After three decades since the introduction of girl choristers, none of these 'arguments' have materialised. In terms of historicity, there were many other people who did not see this innovation as a threat, but rather (a) as an added bonus musically by having two choirs of a high standard of singing, (b) morally in terms of equal opportunities and (c) logistically by relieving the pressure on the boy's workload.

7.6 Main findings

The aim of the research has been to examine the impact of the introduction of girl choristers on the Anglican choral tradition, following Salisbury Cathedral's pioneering initiative in 1991. The evidence suggests that the introduction of girl choristers has been successful and without endangering the boy chorister tradition, given that every cathedral that previously had a boys' choir still has one.

The reasons why girl choristers have been introduced in cathedrals appear to relate primarily to a collective sense of gender equality that was in line with general cultural expectations in contemporary society, including giving girls an opportunity to experience and gain from this distinctive form of sacred performance focused musical education. One reported benefit for the boy choristers is that they have more time to learn and rehearse the repertoire and to rest vocally between services.

The findings in this research have been analysed through the CHAT lens. This methodologic approach has provided a clear framework, enabling the collected data to be understood through the eyes of different participants, principally individual girl choristers and Directors of Music. In tracing the historicity of the Anglican choral tradition, the beliefs, assumptions and expectations of a continuing evolving community has, through the findings, suggested that contradictions emerged within the community, including the division of labour, and the learning object that needed to be resolved. Activity theory has enabled differing understandings between stakeholders to emerge in the sense of an outsider using an ethnographic approach to make sense of changes in a somewhat elitist society.

In terms of historicity, there was academic as well as musical provision for boy choristers. This type of education would have been another incentive for the parents of potential girl choristers to welcome the initiative. However, in another sense, although 1991 marked an additional set of chorister personnel, the musical rehearsal and performance culture continued virtually unchanged with a dominance of the same musical repertoire and sacred ritual. As noted by Welch (2007), the introduction of girls is emphasised by an expanded sense of community, but with similar objects and likely outcomes, and similar rules (conventions).

The pointers towards the welcome emergence of an alternative collective viewpoint and collective envisioning are signalled in the apparently comparative ease with which Salisbury established a girls' choir and in the way that this became a 'model' (at least in a mould-breaking sense) for future action by other cathedrals. In terms of the aggravation of contradictions, however, as a new tradition of girl choristers began, there was much controversy amongst those in opposition who believed, notwithstanding any concerns about equality, that the inclusion of girls would result in the

downfall of boy choristers, with their centuries-old singing tradition being in jeopardy and perhaps even disappearing.

Amongst the mediating artefacts, the chorister tradition, at least in contemporary terms, relies on significant finance and large funds built up over time to support the musical development and general education of boy choristers. One concern, therefore, was that the introduction of girls would result in financial difficulties, resulting in mixed choirs but this has not materialised.

It was also believed that the unique sound of a boy's singing voice aged 7-13 years, particularly before the onset of hormone-mediated voice change towards the end of his choristership, could never be replicated by a girl. It was thought that girls could not produce the same vocal quality as boys. However, this perspective is not supported by empirical evidence (Chapters Five and Six, and also in the experimental perceptual studies by Howard, Sergeant and Welch amongst others).

Regarding the question of equality, it was also thought that, as boys' voice changed during puberty and girls could continue singing soprano throughout their lives, this was unfair on the boys – noting that this conception has also been challenged by recent studies on female voice change around puberty (see Gackle, 2019, for example) and also by cathedrals who ensure that their two choirs have identical age ranges. Other perceived aggravations were that the recruitment of cathedral lay clerks would also suffer due to the 'inevitable' decline in the numbers of boy choristers, thus creating a smaller recruitment pool and resulting in a shortage of ATB voices; however, as stated earlier (Chapters Four and Seven) the trend in the recruitment of boys had generally been negative prior to the introduction of girl choristers and does not appear to have got significantly worse overall across the subsequent (nearly) three decades.

Over time, a division of labour perspective has seen that girl choristers have taken on more singing duties and this has been interpreted by some as positive, such as in terms of boys' families having more time together and by others negatively, believing the boys' repertoire and performance in some cases has suffered.

7.7 Variables that shape the chorister sound

In summary, as mentioned in Chapter 5, there is an *a priori* question about the uniqueness of the 'English choral tradition' sound (hence the quotation marks employed throughout the text), which leads to a related question of what amount of chorister performance diversity is acceptable within this tradition – and acceptable to whom? It is clear from the breadth and depth of choral recordings from the cathedral music community, such as illustrated in Chapter 5, as well as from the experimental research data on the perception of gender in cathedral singing, that chorister singing is not uniform acoustically, nor is the perception of chorister gender clear cut. There are a

wide range of variables reported in this thesis that have an impact on the sound of a group of choristers (as reported in Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6) and how the sound is perceived. Variables include:

- The individual biases of Directors of Music in terms of their preferred choral sound, and how these are realised in their particular musical aims (whether consciously or sub-consciously), such as in terms of their individual rehearsal techniques (part of the mediating artefacts from a CHAT perspective and also related to the local 'rules' of performance);
- Whether the girls' and boys' choirs are rehearsed by the same person or not (related to the potential impact of a division of labour in the choir preparation);
- Whether the girls and boys have opportunities to sing together (another mediating artefact);
- Whether the choirs are single or mixed-sex (related to what counts as the cathedrals' choral music community);
- The variable mix of individual voices in the choir's personnel—the individual make-up of the choir, including choristers' biographies related to age and experience (such as biases towards senior, less senior, or novice membership) which impact on the vocal outcome;
- Whether choristers also have access to individual singing lessons (another mediating artefact and a division of labour);
- Aspects of singing technique, such as choristers' vocal register expertise (also related to age), phrasing, breath control and vowel formation in singing (mediating artefacts);
- Perceptual biases within the listeners, based on their own biographies (experience of listening to choristers) and individual preferences (related to the perception of the how the intended object of the activity relates to the actual outcomes);
- The nature of the acoustic choral environment for the choir, such as in the design of the cathedral building and the locations for choral singing that are used within the building (e.g., Nave, Chancel, Side Chapel) (additional mediating artefacts);
- Singing in single sex choirs or mixed sex (related to the sense of community);
- Choristers chronological age vocally (whilst recognising that this is not always identical to their biological age) (mediating artefact):
 - Voices may possibly be more or less similar when younger, depending on how experienced the singers are as relative novices/probationers;
 - The reported vocal timbre of the older boy's voice;
 - The reported vocal timbre of the older girl's voice;
- The particular days of the week when singing the Service – with a reported greater variance in quality on Mondays and Fridays, compared to the weekend; and
- The choice of musical repertoire (another mediating artefact).

The main findings from the interview data as to what extent have girl choristers have or have not changed the Anglican choral tradition are summarised below:

7.8 Benefits and Challenges

A review of the data suggests that the benefits resulting from introduction of girls' choirs are as follows:

- Equal opportunities – girl choristers are now able to benefit from the experience of being a cathedral chorister.
- Standards have never been higher. This could be due to the fact that choirs are sometimes seen, between themselves, as being competitive in terms of the quality of their musical performances, such as evidenced on CDs and in public broadcasts. Also, with the slight reduction in the boy choristers' sung services, extra time has become available for rehearsal. This can be spent on rehearsing a smaller repertoire, concentrating on the interpretation of the music and performing it with greater musicality, rather than just simply sight reading the music without fully understanding the importance of the text or the beauty of the music. Or, with extra rehearsal time, there is an opportunity to rehearse larger scale music which had not been possible previously.
- Opportunities have emerged to have a larger choir when boys and girls sing together for special occasions, e.g., Christmas, Easter, concerts or recordings.
- Greater variety is possible in the music repertoire across the liturgical year, with the girl choristers often singing different music and—as noted above—the increased rehearsal time allows more demanding music to be included in the repertoire.
- The musical commitment can be spread between two choirs with less pressure on existing boy choristers, which has benefitted their family life.
- There is a general agreement that, for reasons of equality and opportunity, girls should be included.

Challenges resulting from introduction of girls are also reported:

- Boys may need more performance practice than girls, despite singing fewer services. It is thought by some that boys needed the challenge of daily services to keep up their work ethic.
- Boys' learning processes are reported by some Directors to be slower because they are not singing

as frequently as before. It was thought that boys' sight-reading ability was slower as they did not have the pressure to learn music to perform every day. It was suggested that the girl choristers learnt music quickly, implying that the sight-reading ability of both choirs were being compared.

- Boys are reported to thrive on a very regular singing routine in order to maintain their standard and the introduction of girls brings more non-performance time.
- Boys are not singing the Psalms as regularly and they are only singing half of the Psalm repertoire that they used to know.
- Boys may sing less regularly for special events, such as radio broadcasts and recordings.
- The cathedral environment has changed because of the pressure of maintaining equality, which can lead to problems with parents who are very keen to keep a check on equal opportunities for their children, such as concerning choir tours, solos and scholarships.
- It is a much bigger workload for the cathedral organist/Director of Music, with increased pressure not only with the organisation of the music, but also with general administration.
- The advent of girls' choirs has not been thought through properly with regard to finance.

7.9 Implications for policy, practice and research

The tradition is unique to this country and, arguably, it is famed throughout the world. As each generation adapts to the changing circumstances of its age, so too have the current Deans and Chapters who are the policy makers in cathedrals with responsibility for ensuring the choral tradition not only survives, but flourishes.

7.9.1 Recruitment

Recruitment of choristers is, of course, essential for the continuation of the cathedral choral tradition. The introduction of girl choristers was felt by some to jeopardise the recruitment of boys, as perceived many years ago with the decline of the all-male parish church choir. However, the current research has confirmed Mould's (2007) view that there is no evidence to support this concern. Moreover, the impact of boys singing fewer services is believed to have possibly increased recruitment. The difficulty in recruitment is more associated with the requirements for boarding and a contemporary focus on weekend family life. Fundamentally, however, recruiting girls as well as boys has given more children the opportunity to enrich (and be enriched by) a choral tradition which is reported by participants to provide a very positive grounding for future life.

7.9.2 Funding

Funding is an essential part of the future of policy making in cathedrals. Giles, originally Chairman of the CDTCC, voiced his fears in 1998, declaring that the all-male tradition would be dead in a decade because the cost of running a parallel girls' choir. Whilst funding for girl choristers ideally should be equal to the scholarships that the boys receive, this is not as yet normally the case. Each cathedral decides on its own funding for its girl choristers according to their local financial situation, believing it is far better to give girls the opportunity to sing even on a reduced scholarship than not to sing at all, whilst—at the same time—continuing with the provision for boy choristers.

Since the introduction of girl choristers and the subsequent new collective envisioning within the community, arguably the cathedral world is now far more open to new ideas, such as outreach. This initiative was put forward by Estelle Morris in her address to the choir school head teachers of the Choir Schools' Association (CSA). Estelle Morris, at that time Minister for Education, urged choir schools to take their skills into the community, into other schools (CSA, Autumn 2001, p.1). This initiative was put into practice in cathedrals and also became known as the Chorister Outreach Programme (COP), part of the National Singing Programme in 2008-2011 (see Saunders et al, 2012).

7.9.3 Choral Training

Some would argue that there is a difference in sound between girl and boy choristers, whereas others believe the sound is attributed to the choir training given and acoustics of the building. Future Directors of Music promoted from the ranks of Assistants now generally gain experience in choir training, having experience of training girl choristers as well as boys (Chapter Two). It is important that the variables which impact on the chorister vocal output are made explicit and understood. There is still much to discover about the actual nature of chorister rehearsal and related singing pedagogy.

7.10 Strengths, limitations and suggestions for future work

The use of CHAT has helped to think clearly about how the Anglican tradition works, such as in terms who is doing what, where and how, and its impact. Whilst not used very much in music education, this theoretical framework has enabled a clearer understanding to emerge of the cathedral chorister community socially and culturally, and how it has evolved and continues through change and development. Two key people who are renowned for having used CHAT are Barrett (2005) and Burnard (2007). Barrett (2005, p. 5) used CHAT in understanding 'the rules of a specific culture' and used this model for understanding its music community. The cathedral

tradition is also a specific culture which exists through the understanding of the rules of the community. Barrett also highlights modelling in the Suzuki method of music education with regard to the 'keen observation skill on the part of the learner, both visual and aural' (2005, p. 5). This is similar to Welch's (2007) use of CHAT, whereby the novice chorister learns by observing the modelling of the senior chorister. Barrett further explains through CHAT that the results of music making can be limited due to the constraints of the situation in which they occurred (2005, p. 6). This is also true of the constraints of the cathedral tradition being somewhat limited by the regimentation of precise liturgy which governs the musical expectations.

Burnard (2007, p. 45) uses CHAT by explaining that the changing environments in music education impact music educators and researchers. This can be seen in the current research where the cultural environment changed with the introduction of girl choristers and how those within the community had to adapt to the new expectations that were being presented. Burnard continues by explaining that 'the impact of changing environments caused the myriad of systems exhibiting patterns of contradiction and tension' (2007, p. 46). This is reflected in the current research concerning the contradiction and tension surrounding the division of labour and mediating artefacts in the process of inducting and educating cathedral choristers. Burnard's research highlights the 'specific historical and cultural circumstances of the community of the learners', (2007, p. 47). This can be seen relatedly in the experiences of the girl choristers in the current research data.

This doctoral research, however, has been taken beyond the earlier music education research users of CHAT by expanding the data collection on a larger scale across three main case studies and their participants, i.e., girl choristers, boy choristers, lay clerks, Directors of Music, clergy, school staff, former choristers, parents, and the media.

Also, in this research, geographically all 42 cathedrals are spread around England and, whilst they all aim to produce the same musical outcomes in line with the original intentions over 1000 years ago, that is, to provide a choir in order to sing daily services, the data collected show that the way they do this varies from place to place. The current use of CHAT, therefore, compares the same essential 'model', but operating in different ways in each context.

In addition to this, the application of the CHAT framework suggested that the process was different in each of the three case studies. The first case study at Salisbury included the first girl choristers to be introduced into a long-established cathedral culture; in the second case study, the choristers were introduced four years later at Lincoln, by which time the phenomenon had gained some momentum; and—finally—the girls' choir at Lichfield started 15 years after Salisbury, by which time the relative newness of girl's choirs was less an issue. Also, at Lichfield, the data suggest that when the Director of Music left, there is not necessarily a seamless transition, judging by the somewhat cautious reactions from the members of the girls' choir to his successor. Furthermore, included in the data collection are interviews with two Directors of Music from a cathedral with a

mixed top line, as this was a concern amongst some who feared that cathedral finances would result in combining the girls and boy choristers together as one choir.

Additionally, the use of CHAT offers an interpretative lens, such as related to the data collected from the second case study at Lincoln where former choristers gave their thoughts ten years after the choir had first been formed. Also, some interviews involved the continuity of succeeding Directors of Music or Organists mapping the progression of the introduction of girl choristers at the same cathedrals, i.e., in both the first and second case studies and one of the earlier cathedrals. These findings present a picture of this culture which has experienced an 'expansive transformation'. Another aspect within the findings includes external factors, which clearly influenced the perception of the introduction of girl choristers, such as by parents and the media.

The reason why the findings of this research present a unique contribution to knowledge is that the thesis contains original data, collected during a unique period of time. For this reason, it has been important that the data has been allowed to speak – which also chimes with the 'multivoiced' approach of CHAT. The multivoicedness underpins the need for (sometimes) lengthy quotes from interviews. Arguably, a particular strength of this ethnographic study has been in examining the behaviour of the participants in a certain specific social situation, and also in seeking to understand their interpretation of such behaviour by collecting data through visiting sites, observing and interviewing and, longitudinally, collecting video of the rehearsal culture in one girls' choir, including with a change of Director.

One of the strengths of this study was the opportunity to gain data from Directors of Music through a specially designed questionnaire and a large number of interviews. These, particularly the latter, have allowed a broad picture of the introduction of girl choristers to emerge and its impact on the cathedral foundations, and—by implication—why a small number have remained with boy choristers only. The data collected through video analysis of the first academic year of a recent girls' choir in 2006 provided first-hand knowledge of how this choir was implemented. Other case studies also provided opportunities for more in-depth comparative study, in addition to the data collected from former girl choristers who through questionnaire were able to recount their experiences. On the other hand, interview data show that some Directors of Music felt that the introduction of girl choristers had been detrimental to the singing discipline for boys.

A limitation of this study is that no data collection was made relating to the experiences of former boy choristers with regard to the introduction of girl choristers and whether this had any effect on how they perceived their role in the cathedral tradition, and what, if any, changes they felt had impacted on their singing experience. Also, the parents of boy choristers were not contacted to enquire as to what their thoughts were and how this initiative may have affected their son's experience as a chorister. It was not possible to track down former boy choristers, nor their parents within the framework of the current study.

The aims of this thesis have been to investigate this phenomenon in more detail and to understand the innovation of female choristers on the existing Anglican cathedral culture in England. Specific research questions were to map these changes across cathedrals and to find out why female choristers were introduced, both in general and also in specific cases; to investigate the context and procedures that took place to enable this to happen; and to seek to understand the possible impacts of this innovation on cathedral music. Data and commentary throughout the thesis provide a detailed and nuanced account to answer these questions.

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Appendix 1: Supplementary materials for Chapter 1

A1.1 Transcription of Salisbury Choristers 20th Anniversary (2011)

Transcription by Claire Stewart

FC Twenty years ago, Salisbury Cathedral took what was a radical decision. A foundation was set up for the training and education of choir girls. It was the first time that girls were offered the same opportunities as choir boys who attended Cathedral Schools. To mark the first 20 years of their first Evensong in October 1991 they have held a reunion of chorister's past and present. Fiona Clampin went to meet some of the pioneers now in their 20's and the people behind the decision to break with a boy's only tradition.

I remember reading in an article in the paper; I've got one still saying, 'they *could* make a nice noise' People would sing, one person very loud and of not really blending at all and we were all trying to work out how we were going to sing together as a group, but I think by the 7th of October by the time we did that first Evensong, there was already at that point a sense of adhesiveness that then developed through the time that we were there.

DH My name is David Halls I'm the Director of Music of Salisbury Cathedral. The 20 years have gone very fast and I'm so happy that in some form or the other either as the Assistant Organist or the Director of Music all those girls have been somehow either in a choir practice, or conducted or accompanied by me.

FC There must have been people at the time though who thought girls don't sing in cathedral choirs it's just not traditional?

DH Well it's not traditional because they were not allowed to. Of course, girls it's well known that girls are supposed to be more intelligent at that age than boys, we catch them up I might say, but they hadn't been given the chance really. So, you can agree this either way, should they be allowed to sing Purcell because Purcell didn't write for girls or should they be given the chance to sing Purcell because they are now allowed to and they are able to. It is a very difficult question but we have always taken the view that if you want to give them beautiful music and music which adorns the liturgy from any period, old right up to the present day they can sing whatever they want really.

KU I'm Katharine Unwin and I joined the cathedral choir in 1991 in the first lot of girl choristers at the age of 10. When my brother and two of his male friends were doing voice trials for various places around the U.K. I could not understand why on earth I was not allowed to do it just because I was a girl. It was completely alien to the way we had been brought up in the society in which we

live and I think the girls perhaps should have been choristers sooner than 1991, but in the thousands of years that this has been a tradition it wasn't suitable to that society at the time but now it absolutely is because girls and boys should be equal.

AR My name is Amy Russell and I was one of the original choristers in 1991. There were people who were very opposed to having girls singing and there was a big debate about what we should sound like. If we should sound like girls or if there is a sound that is a sound of girls and I think we were very aware of that because people who were very opposed to it, they weren't shy of making their views known. We would even at the age of 9, we were constantly having to defend ourselves and after the first Evensong people wrote in from around the world who had heard it on the radio and many of them were very positive but some of them weren't.

DH It was quite a thin sound. Now if you hear the girls who sing daily here in 2011, they make an absolutely huge sound. It's a bit different to the boys' sound. I always think the boys sound has a robust density quality particularly from the older boys whose voices are about to change. Of course, we don't get that with the girls, but we do get that spread of ages in the girls so that we have got the young almost adult sound and the little girls 8 or 9 years old and the mixture produces a very exciting sound.

RT My name is Rachel Taego and I joined in 1995.

FC How aware were you that you were coming into a choir that had really made quite an impact in terms of the sort of politics on cathedral music?

RT At the time I think, even when I was auditioned this was the only place that I could come and it was quite unique really to be able to be a chorister and to be a female. So, I was really aware that history was changing basically.

RS My name is Richard Seal and I retired from being Organist and Master of the Choristers here in 1997 and it was during my time that we decided to introduce girls into the choir. Had you asked me early in 1989 whether girls would be singing in Salisbury Cathedral at some stage I would probably have said 'over my dead body' because I had never questioned it, but what really got me thinking was a meeting that I had at Jerusalem Chamber in London. It was a meeting attended by representatives of the Deans' Conference, the Precentors' Conference, Choir School's Association, but at this meeting somebody said, 'one of these days you know, we will have to think about girls' and there was an awful hush after that and nobody commented on it. Off we all went. I got onto the train and something just fired me into thinking, 'now supposing there were girls in Salisbury Cathedral' and by the time I got back to Salisbury I got myself very enthusiastic. It was all in the space of a day really. I wouldn't like you to think that it's all sort of tied up with the emancipation of women and women priests to come into the church family as it were. It had absolutely nothing to do with that.

FC Surely a lot of people will see it in that context?

RS Yes, maybe they do but I can say with hand on my heart that our decision to invite girls to take part in the choral tradition here had absolutely nothing to do with that. Almost the strongest argument for having girls in the choir would be that hitherto the boys over the centuries had enjoyed this unique education, this unique introduction to a vast amount of wonderful music. Why shouldn't the girls be able to enjoy this in the same way, because it is with them for the rest of their lives.

ND I'm Nicola Dragonetti and I'm one of the original choristers in 1991. That training helps you in all areas of your professional life. I mean, I am a teacher now and seeing young pupils coming through the school who have since been choristers after me, you know they are going to be organised, they are going to find time to do their music practice, they are going to contribute fully, they are going to be really lifted by what you have got there. So, teaching ex choristers is always a massive pleasure.

JL My name is Jessica Leigh although when I was a chorister it was Jessica Townsend. It was the most incredible start as a musician and even for people who have not gone on to become musicians, I think there is some sort of amazing confidence that grows in you through singing at an early age at this sort of level and for this, yes, I thank Salisbury.

FC What's this weekend been like, I am particularly keen to know what it's been like singing together again?

JL The first note we sang, I just had tears in my eyes as like now, I remember that feeling about 15 years ago and it felt exactly the same.

Appendix 2: Results of a Questionnaire Survey of Former Girl Cathedral Choristers

A2.1: demographic information and personal reflections

Respondents were the first female choristers to be introduced into the newly formed girls' choir which had previously been an all-male environment. When asked if there had been an adult female e.g. matron, member of staff who they could turn to for help (non-musical) at any time (figure 5) respondents stated not really (50%), no (25%) and yes (25%)

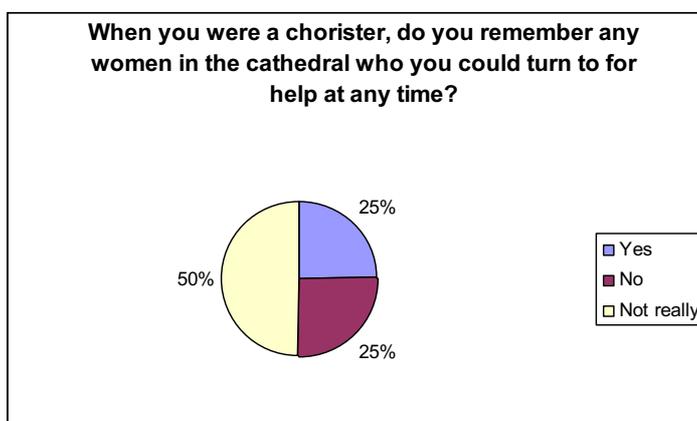


Figure 5 Girl choristers in a male dominated environment

At the time of the introduction of girl choristers there were some sections of the community who feared for the survival of the continuation of the boy choristers and therefore did not favour the opportunities given for girl choristers. Respondents found the clergy (figure 6) however were very supportive (26%). Other responses include generally supportive (25%), mixed and not very supportive (both 12%). Other comments include:

- 'generally supportive until the new Provost came along and got rid of the girls'.
- 'mixed -generally supportive on the face of it. I was aware of underlying tensions however'.
- 'I don't remember the clergy being unsupportive I think they liked having the girls around for the boring services that nobody came to on Sunday nights! Neither was there anything untoward. The clergy were always very appreciative and had great respect for the girls. The girls were older than the boys too, so there was a feeling of being a more mature group and I think that this was reflected in the way the clergy interacted with the girls.'

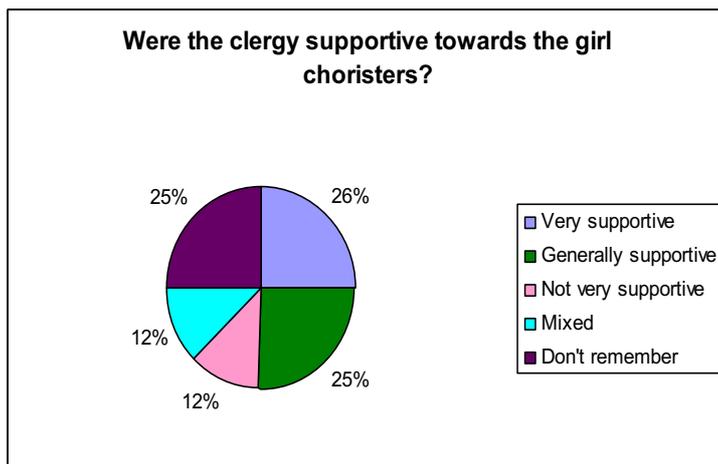


Figure 6 Were the clergy supportive towards the girl choristers?

Respondents found the parishioners / members of the public (figure 7) were generally supportive (38%) with others being very supportive (12%) and mixed (12%). Other comments include:

- 'again, mixed - fairly negative to begin with, there were notable absences of Evensong 'regulars' who attended boys' voices but shunned girls' voices. After a year or so this was far less noticeable'.
- 'I don't really know. Not many people came to the services that we sang, so whether that was because they didn't support us or that the cathedral didn't want to have the choir exposed too much I don't know. However, we always sang at Midnight Mass at Christmas and there were always lots of people there for that. I never heard anyone upset by the fact that there were girls singing and I believe that the standard was high'.

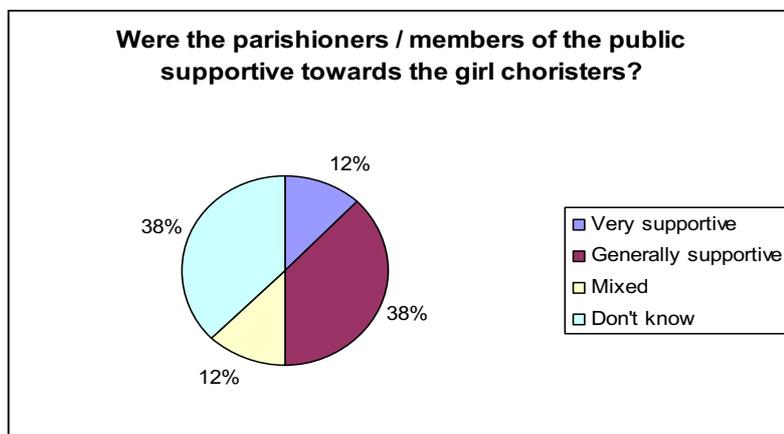


Figure 7 Were the parishioners/members of the public supportive towards the girl choristers?

Respondents found the singing men (figure 8) were generally supportive (38%) with other responses being very supportive (25%) whilst some were not very supportive (37%). Other comments include:

- 'I was aware that there was strong feeling against the girls among some of the Lay Clerks - some of them refused to sing with us, and threatened to resign if they were made to do so. Once we started singing with them and gradually improved, this died down and the men became very friendly and positive. During my last six months in the choir, I actually went

out with one of the younger Lay Clerks I was seventeen/eighteen and he was 21. We kept the relationship separate from the cathedral life'.

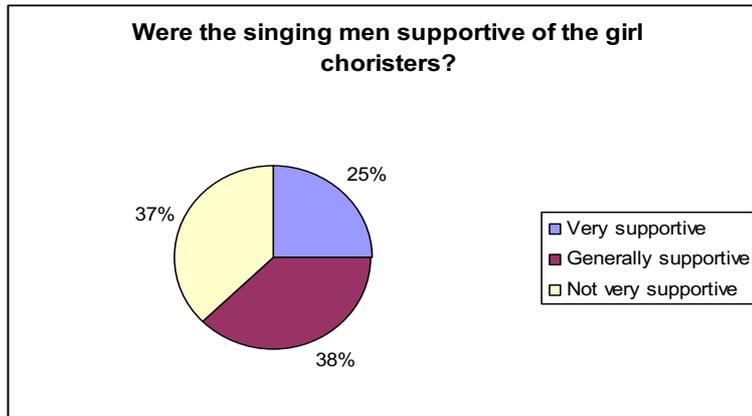


Figure 8 Were the singing men supportive towards the girl choristers?

The introduction of girl choristers was also something which was new for the boys (figure 9) and respondents stated that they were divided in their support by being very supportive and not very supportive (both 26%). Other comments include 'generally supportive', 'at first no contact was made', 'no reaction and at first not supportive but became so later on' (all 12%). Other general comments include:

- 'they were not very supportive at the beginning, but then they became indifferent as they realised that we were as good or even at times (most of the time) better than them'.
- 'they were generally supportive. It depended on their parents, particularly their mothers. If the parents were hostile then they were. Most were accepting however'.
- 'once again initially rather hostile but once we got to know each other and after the school's merger (September 1996) became very friendly with them all. A little friendly competition always existed though'.
- 'the boys and girls didn't come into contact with each other as we were there at completely different times so I don't really know. I doubt that they even really thought about it'.

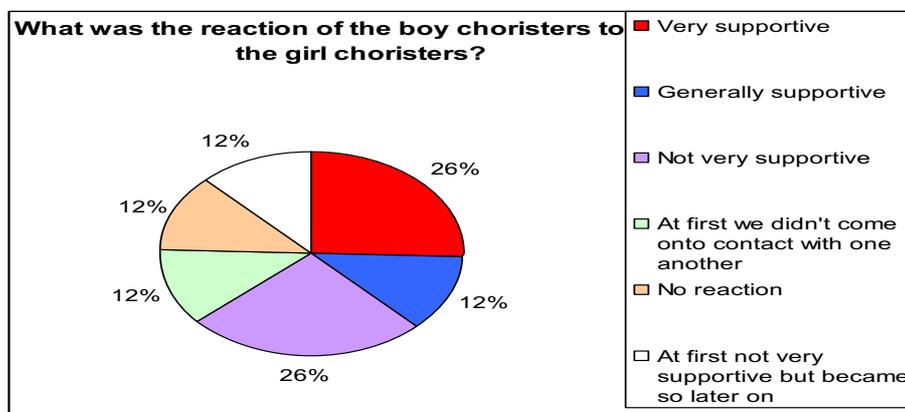


Figure 9 Reaction of the boys towards the girls

Appendix 2: Results of a Questionnaire Survey of Former Girl Cathedral Choristers

For female choristers in an all-male environment (figure 10) just over half of them did not have any problems fitting in (51%) although others found it quite difficult (37%) and some found it a daunting experience (12%). Other comments include:

- 'Had no problems fitting in, it felt perfectly normal'.
- 'I was not aware of any difficulties fitting in'.
- 'It's quite difficult for girls to work in a male dominated environment so as a young girl chorister I'd say it was quite difficult to fit in but as you grow older you become more respected by the gents'!
- 'I was rather anxious about fitting in'
- 'I was not aware of any difficulties fitting in'.
- 'I found it daunting'.
- 'Anxious to succeed and make a good impression, but at the same time exhilarated to have been given the opportunity to have such an amazing experience. There were inevitably moments of frustration when the men refused to sing with us and when we didn't have enough copies of music (or exciting/challenging music) or anywhere to rehearse ...teething problems really. It took a year or so for the routine to settle down and for the choir to become properly organised'.

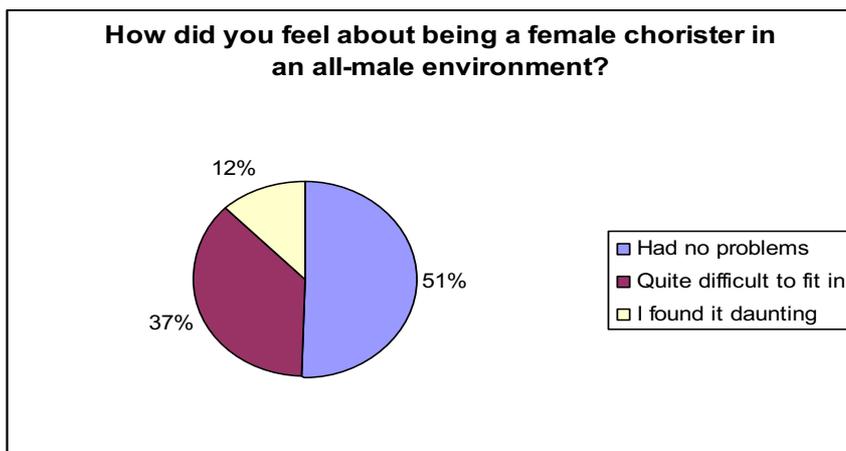


Figure 10 Identity within an all- male environment

The person who trained the choristers (figure 11) was for over half the respondents male (51%) with over a quarter having a male then female choir trainer (37%) followed by female and then a succession of six male choir trainers (12%).

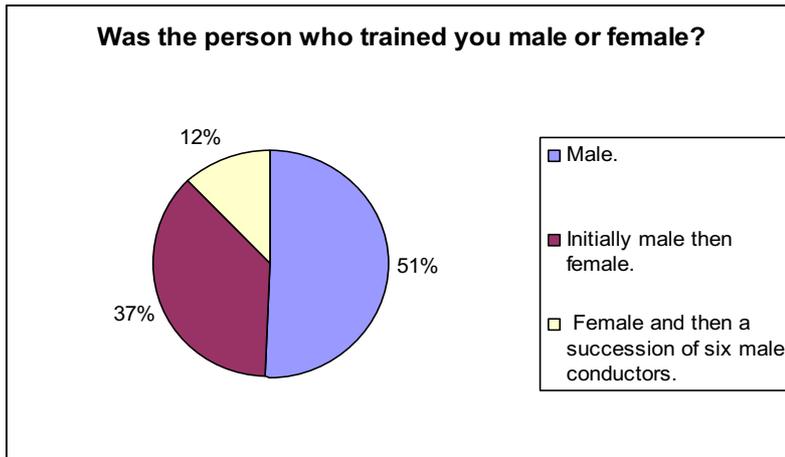


Figure 11 sex of choir trainer

In response to whether they found this person easy to talk and relate to (figure 12) over half said sometimes (51%) and over a quarter said yes (37%).

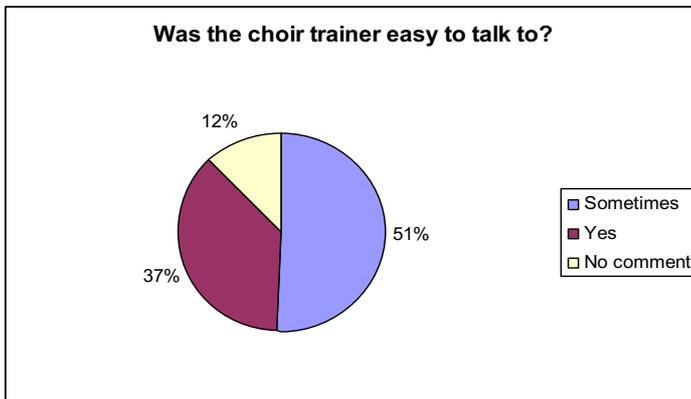


Figure 12 relationship with choir trainer

In response to whether they found this person someone they could confide in (figure 13) over a quarter said yes (38%) a quarter said sometimes (25%) and those who said no were (12%).



Figure 13 confide in choir trainer

In response to whether they found this person someone who was sympathetic towards them (figure 14) over half said yes (63%) and other said sometimes (12%).



Figure 14 choir trainer with a sympathetic attitude

In response to whether they found this person was gave them lots of personal encouragement (figure 15) over half said yes (63%) and another said no (12%).



Figure 15 choir trainer who gave lots of personal encouragement

In response to whether they found this person gave them some personal encouragement (figure 16) three quarters said yes (75%).



Figure 16 choir trainer who some personal encouragement

In relation to how the respondents felt regarding their role as a chorister compared to the role of a boy chorister (figure 17) there was an equal response of no difference and less important (both 38%) other comments were that 'they were the emerging force' and that 'they didn't think about it' (both 12%). Other comments include:

- 'the boys sang more services (e.g. more Evensongs per week) and tended to sing at the more prestigious services, but the girls were the emerging force, the boys the established force'.
- 'less important and less involved than a boy chorister most of the time'.
- 'for the first few years we felt like a third wheel on a bicycle and a sideways facing one at that! Sometimes we would be encouraged and told that we were just as important, but mostly we just heard about all of the bickering and fighting going on within the clergy ranks, or between the parents of the choirs. We weren't allowed to participate on an equal basis for some time. We had one Evensong per week, sung by ourselves while the boys and men did everything else. Indeed, we didn't sing with the men's choir for well over a year, maybe two. The result was that we sang in two to four-part harmony ourselves for a long time and honed our skills enough for people to take notice. It was a strange case of affairs; we got lots of conflicting vibes. We were refused a song school and practised on the top floor of the school for the first year or so. We didn't get a vestry for about six months and we were refused the use of the Lincoln Cathedral Choir folders for at least three years. Only the first six of us were granted chorister robes the same as the boys (myself included). The cathedral would not pay for any robes, music, music stands or anything we needed, instead the Girls' Choir came to be funded entirely by the school instead of the cathedral, and sometimes out of our choir trainer's pocket. So, you can imagine, it was hard to see yourself as being on the same level as the Boys' Choir if with no endorsement at any level", 'Very much playing catch up' - they'd been doing this for 900 years. We were trying to absorb as much of the tradition as possible without treading on their toes or taking over. So, in a way we tried not to compete with the boys and as a result were given lots of new or different music and we were taken to different types of concerts throughout the diocese and in the city. So, in a way we were trying to forge a new niche for cathedral music while simultaneously wishing to become a part of the tradition ourselves' and 'I don't think that my role was any different, both our roles were to sing for services, however, the boys were definitely seen to be the important choir'.

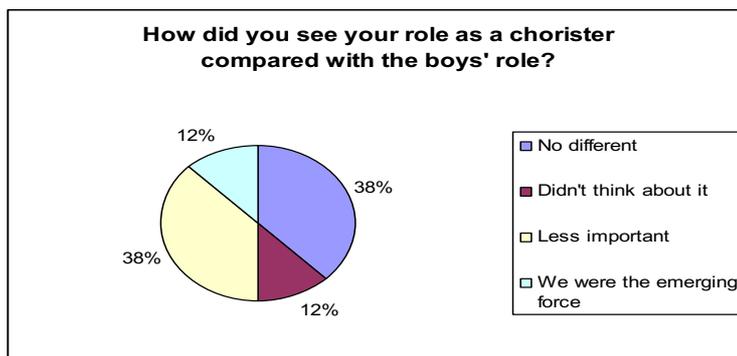


Figure 17 identity compared with the boy choristers

On the issue of whether the girls believed that they were treated equally with the boys (figure 18) over half of respondents thought no (63%) and only a quarter thought they were (25%). Other comments include:

Appendix 2: Results of a Questionnaire Survey of Former Girl Cathedral Choristers

- 'No, because of the way the congregation treated us'.
- 'No, the boys were more established so they would sing at the more prestigious services. They had things like medals, cope boys etc all worked out. It took a while for the girls to be awarded similar honours'
- 'No, we were treated differently in every way. There wasn't really a middle ground for a long time, either we were loathed or venerated. Hearing some ugly words being said about us would be quickly followed by a glossy photo shoot. Obviously, that was very confusing! We were only just beginning to be treated on the same level for the year before I left. Today there is still hostility but it has become much less acceptable to be open about it, so in effect there is a strong perception of equality now. Occasionally even now though if I run into a boys' choir parent from the old days who was against us back then, they still won't talk to me', 'Inevitably, during the first few years no - we were effectively probationers for the first term or so, and gradually built up to sing an equal number of services, sing with the men, sing an equal level of music and so on. Also, as I mentioned before, it took a long time for us to get organised - we were without a regular practice room, consistent choir trainer, music copies, music folders etc for quite a long time. It was almost make it up as you go along - we also didn't have scapula's (i.e. surplices) or medals or copes for ages. When I was made Head Chorister, I was given a medal - this has changed now so there are four cope girls or senior girl choristers. And 'Difficult one. I never felt that I was treated badly. As I said in the previous answer, the boys were paid but they worked much harder than us. The boys also had a chorister's outing, but I went to quite a few of them anyway with my Dad. The cathedral did take the Girls' Choir out to dinner once a year to thank us and I really enjoyed those nights. I think that the boys and girls were treated appropriately for the amount they did and with an appropriate gesture. I never felt taken for granted by anyone in the cathedral'.

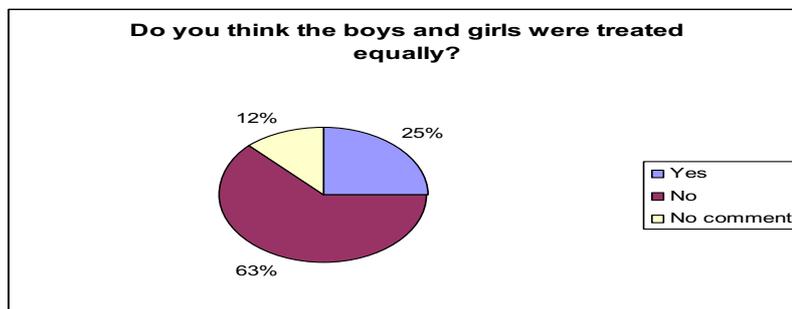


Figure 18 were boy and girl choristers treated equally

On the question of whether respondents felt that they were relatively unique as one of the first girl choristers (figure 19) over half said yes (63%) with over a quarter saying no (37%). One former chorister comments:

'Yes, very much so - it was emphasised regularly, and we attracted a lot of press interest and local comment. With my background in cathedral music, I was always aware of how this was a move away from the norm. I always felt extremely privileged - especially as I was the first Head Girl Chorister, and the first to be read out of the choir. I strongly feel that my experiences in the choir have made me into the person I am today, and inspired me to do well at school and beyond, and to keep music in my life'.

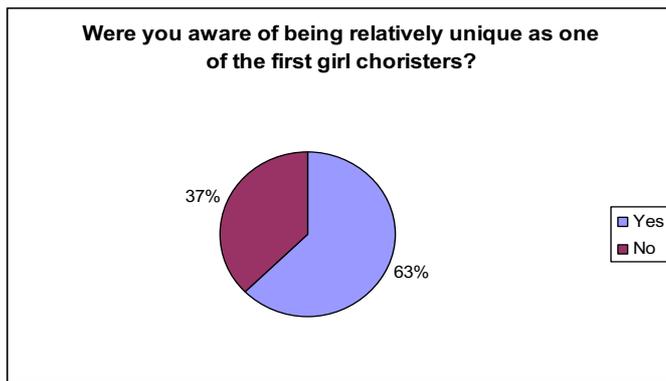


Figure 19 was there a feeling of being unique as one of the first girl choristers?

On the question of whether respondents were still singing (figure 20) over a quarter said yes (37%) with some saying no (12%). Other comments include:

- 'I have always sung since leaving and always in choirs that perform sacred music, although I am not a church goer'.
- 'Yes, I sing with several semi-professional chamber choirs and small groups for weddings. I may join the Bach Choir after Easter'
- 'Not in a choir but I am a professional musician and tour but I don't really have the opportunity to tour every week. If I were able to sing again, I would rather sing in a theatrical chorus or a pop group'.

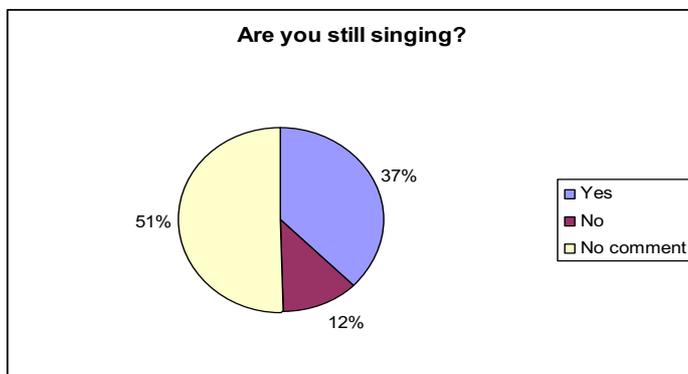


Figure 20 Are you still singing?

As for whether respondents thought that in the future former girl choristers might be able to join the cathedral choir as adults and sing soprano or alto (figure 21) just over half said yes (51%), a quarter said no (25%) and a small number said only for reunions (12%). One chorister commented:

- 'I don't really know. If I was asked I probably wouldn't as it doesn't interest me anymore. I don't entirely disagree with the all-male cathedral choir; in the discussions I have heard in my family between my father and my late grandfather who were both top cathedral choir masters it is not to do with male dominance in the cathedral but the unique sound of boys and men singing. They would often try and find choral recordings for each other to try and guess whether it was girls, boys or a mixed singing. Sometimes even they couldn't tell the difference, even though they were both as highly qualified as anyone in that area'.

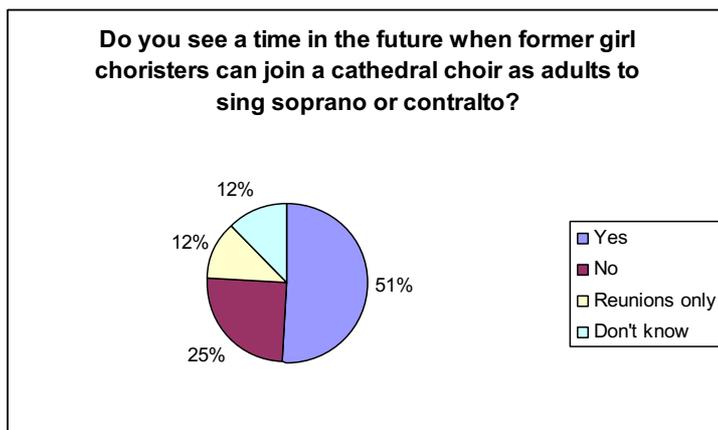


Figure 21 girls returning to sing as adults

On the question of whether respondents would like to have the opportunity to return to sing in a cathedral choir as an adult (figure 22) just over half said yes (51%), a quarter said no (25%) and a small number said for reunions only (12%). Other comments include:

- 'I live in York and envy the men who just carry from chorister to 'Minster Men' ' (and get paid 11K for doing a very part time job that they love) '.
- 'I think any inclusion of adult ex girls (i.e. post 18) would be a huge mistake unless the boys' and girls' choirs both folded - something I hope will never happen'.

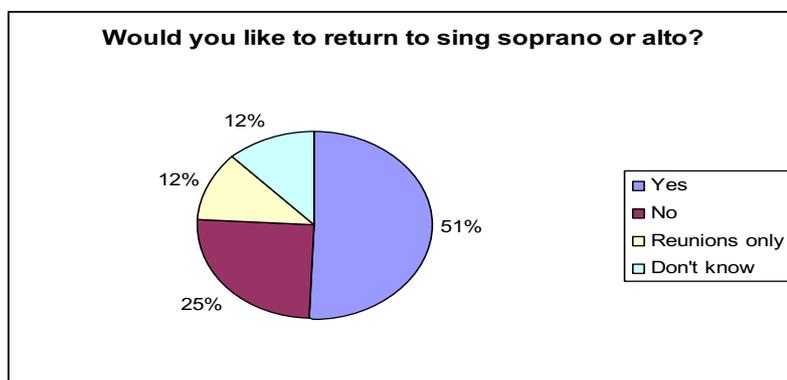


Figure 22 desire to return as adults to sing

On the question of whether respondents would like to become a Director of Music with responsibility for the boys and girls in a cathedral choir (figure 23) a quarter said yes (25%) and over a half said no (63%). Other comments include:

- 'Maybe, a lady in my choir coaches the girls at York Minster. I would love that job but not the typical organ/choirmaster dual role. I can't play the organ'!
- 'Yes, conduct the girls only'.
- 'Yes, this is one of the possibilities in my career choices'.
- 'No, I have not followed a career in music'.

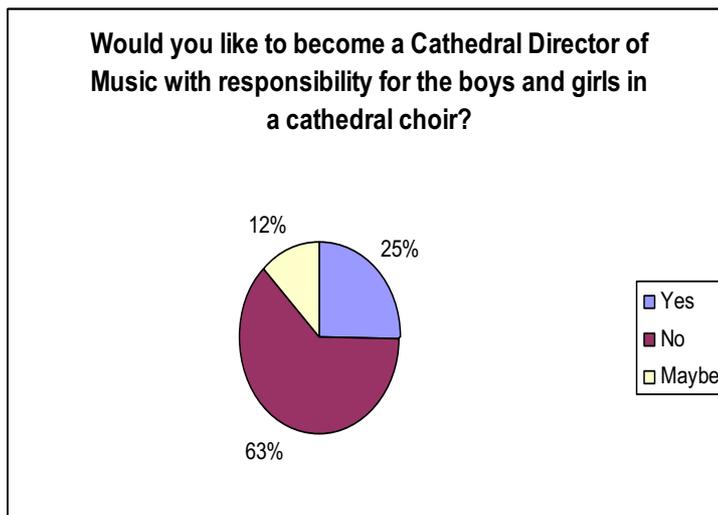


Figure 23 returning to direct a cathedral choir

When respondents were asked for their thoughts on looking back at this chorister experience (figure 24) it was felt that it had been an invaluable and unique experience, something which they had felt incredibly privileged to be able to do, one of the most defining periods in their life and that they were a good choir (all 9%). Other comments include:

- 'I have the whole of a cathedral repertoire ingrained on my brain. Music has remained very much part of me and my social life still revolves around choirs. I am honoured to have had the experience - it taught me so much, not only how to read music, but how to appreciate it and how it affects others, and how to integrate with musicians, which is not always easy'
- 'My musical ear/sight reading ability is due to the training I received. I only wish it were available to girls in all cathedrals and to children not only in the private school/choir school system but recruited through natural musicality from local primary schools'
- 'We were a very good choir but only sang at Sunday night service and there were usually only about ten people in the congregation, so there were generally more people in the choir than at the service. In a way the girls' choir was hidden singing only at the quiet Evensong while the boys' choir sang the well-attended services. We did get to sing at Midnight Mass, Christmas and Easter. I think that the choir was actually very good. Many of the girls were excellent instrumentalists and the choir deserved to be seen more. I remember when I was about eight or nine, listening to the boys singing out of tune one morning and thinking that I could have done better'... 'I think I can honestly say I would not be the person I am had it not been for the choir and the experience of being in it has significantly shaped the path my education and career took. It was mostly through meeting people through the choir - the musicians, choir parents and so on - that led me to believe that I could do much better for myself than I had previously thought - I was something of a late developer in academic and social terms. It almost hadn't occurred to me that I might be clever, or to aspire to have a greater or more academic career than the school's career advisor intimated. After joining the choir, I started getting good grades and got straight A's at A Level - in part I was inspired by the organ and choral scholars who came to us from public school and who went off to Cambridge and Oxford. I also gained much more confidence and was so much more sociably and socially able - I think being Head Chorister helped with this. Whilst I didn't pursue music professionally (I hadn't done it for GCSE so I couldn't do it for A Level and I only studied singing and theory at school), I knew that I wanted to work in art and heritage. I now have a first-class degree

in History from the University of Durham - where I sang in several chamber and college choirs - and a Masters in the History of Art from the Courtauld Institute of Art. I work now for Bonhams Auctioneers in London. I am fiercely proud of my choral background, and I am very aware of how immensely privileged I am to have played a relatively large part in the establishment of the girls' choir. I am so very proud of how they have developed into one of the best Cathedral girls' choirs in the country'.

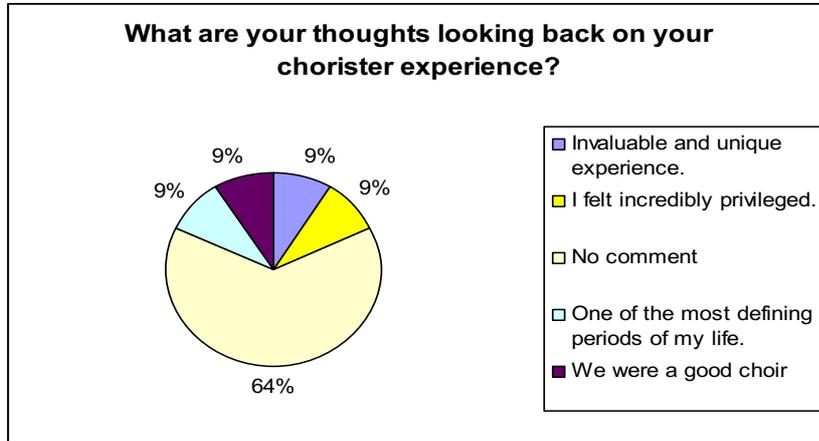


Figure 24 thoughts on a chorister experience