

ANALYZING THE CHORAL REPERTOIRE PERFORMED AT THE
TMEA & ACDA CONVENTIONS (2011 - 2018)

by

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TMEA & ACDA CONVENTIONS (2011 - 2018)

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to catalogue and analyze the choral repertoire performed by invited choirs at the TMEA annual convention from 2011 to 2018 and compare that data to similar data from the ACDA biennial national conference. This will inform readers of what music is being performed by “the best” choirs in Texas as a part of their convention programs and how that compares to a national conference. This study will also provide useful information and discussion topics to the organizations that sponsor these concerts. A database of TMEA Invited Choir Repertoire was collected from publicly available information and analyzed for trends. Primary findings include a lack of balance between musical genres with a heavy reliance on new music, a lack of racial and gender representation in both the composers of music and the ensemble directors, and a majority of performing ensembles coming from large, metropolitan areas in Texas. The researcher plans to continue cataloging the TMEA choral repertoire and expand this study in the future with 10 to 15 years of data. Extensive further study will be required to contextualize and better understand many of these findings and topics discussed throughout.

Keywords: choral repertoire, TMEA, ACDA, diversity in music, choral convention

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INTRODUCTION

For many in the realm of choral music education, having a choir invited to perform at a state-wide, regional, or national convention is one of the highest achievements. Two such conventions include: the Texas Music Educators Association (TMEA) annual Convention and the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) biennial National Conference. These organizations carry a membership of 12,500 and 20,000 members respectively, with regular convention attendance figures that reach approximately 30,000 attendees (TMEA, 2019; ACDA, 2017). These conventions program clinics on pedagogy and philosophy, sponsor product showcases, include access to exhibit halls, and feature the aforementioned performances with programming focused for an audience of music educators at diverse levels in mind. Because of these conventions' position and esteem in the community, research indicates that these convention offerings, both the concerts and the clinics, have a reputation as being valuable and useful in choral classrooms across the nation

In the choral classroom, the repertoire that choral directors select generally serves as their curriculum for the school year (Perry, 2007). Perry stated that "the repertoire is the vehicle through which musical and vocal concepts will be learned. (Their) choices inform and influence students in their knowledge of choral music from many periods and genres" (p. 57). She also contended that repertoire can activate "the power of music – ...that experience that choral directors know can be life changing" (p. 57). Ruth Whitlock (1991) conveyed this message even more directly: "we are what we sing!" (p. 39). As such, multiple researchers have identified repertoire selection and careful curriculum planning as some the most important processes necessary to craft an effective learning experience in the music ensemble classroom (Richmond, 1990; Apfelstadt, 2000).

In a 2001 study, Guy Forbes also recognized the great importance of repertoire selection and completed a study that explored the repertoire selection practices of high school choral directors. Out of a group of six leading methods for repertoire selection, he identified that workshops/clinics and live performance attendance were used the most. Furthermore, directors that were nominated as *outstanding* as a part of the study were even more likely to utilize methods that were related to an organization like ACDA. Another similar study by Reames (2001) echoed similar results to Forbes with live performances and choral reading sessions being ranked as the most influential. These results suggest that organizations like TMEA or ACDA hold significant weight with choral directors and that sessions or concerts promoted by those organizations can influence what other choral directors program for their ensembles.

On the topic of cataloging and analyzing the repertoire performed at choral conventions, there are only broad analyses of repertoire performed by ACDA Invited Choirs that are published. One of these analyses was a broad study conducted by Robert J. Ward and Leila Heil (2017) that catalogued all of the repertoire performed at ACDA National Conferences beginning at its first conference in 1960. This study examined the percentage breakdown of the repertoire by genre and extrapolated this statistic by decade, thus highlighting the changes over time. Furthermore, the study discussed questions about how the data relate to the mission of the organization. Another similar study by Debra Spurgeon (2009) catalogued the music performed by Women's Choirs at ACDA National Conferences from 2001 to 2009 with the goal of understanding the trends of women's choir programming in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

There are no published analyses of the choral repertoire performed by TMEA Invited Choirs. As such, the purpose of this study is to catalogue and analyze the choral repertoire performed by invited choirs at the TMEA annual convention from 2011 to 2018 and compare the

data to similar data from the ACDA biennial national conference. This will inform readers of what music is being performed by “the best” choirs in Texas as a part of their convention programs and how that compares to a national conference. This study will also provide useful information and discussion topics to the organizations that sponsor these concerts.

METHOD

Research Questions

In completing this study, the following research questions were developed to focus and contextualize the project:

- What is the genre breakdown of the repertoire during the researched period?
- What is the demographic breakdown of the repertoire and composers during the researched period and how does it compare to ACDA?
- Is there a relationship between director gender or race and the music they programmed?
- Who are the top 5 performed composers during the researched period? What are the top 5 works?
- At the TMEA high school level, what is the breakdown of groups by UIL division? Are small schools represented at the TMEA convention?
- Does artificial intelligence software detect any relationships that were not initially seen?

Procedures

The foundational work of this project was constructing a database of TMEA Invited Choirs and the choral repertoire they programmed from 2010 to 2018. This database captured demographic data about the performing ensembles and their school, the works programmed, and the composers under the following categories (see Figure 1).

Database Categories:

- Ensemble Level
- Ensemble ZIP
- School TEA Code
- UIL Division (if applicable)
- Director
- Director Gender/Race
- Work/Movement
- TEA Campus number
- Primary Composer/Arranger
- Primary Composer Gender/Race
- Birth/Death Year
- Genre
- Year of Composition/Publication
- Year of Arrangement
- Publisher

Figure 1. Database Categories for cataloging information about TMEA invited choirs 2010-2018

The genre portion of this database was constructed with partial influence from Ward and Heil's 2017 ACDA study, as their work in determining the different genres into which works were categorized was the basis of this study's genre categories. However, this study departed from their categories by adding genres and adjusting the qualifications for works. This study organized pieces into the following eleven genres: Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Early Modern (composers born before 1935), Late Modern (composers born after 1935), Folk Songs (of all world cultures), Pop/Jazz, Spirituals/Gospels, and Unknown. For the first five genres, standard dates and categorization practices were used to identify these works and Dennis Shrock's *Choral Literature* (2009) was used to classify these historical works. For the Early Modern and Late Modern genres, the dividing date of 1935 was set because the oldest composers that were still alive and active late into the researched period, such as John Rutter, Arvo Pärt, and John Tavener, were born around 1935. Additionally, there was a greater socio-cultural awareness and more developed practices that emerged around the time of World War II. The grouping of all music of folk traditions into the Folk Songs category served to fight a Western-centric perspective in deciding what was considered "world music." This genre also included works with known composers that are often considered "tradition" such as *How Can I Keep From Singing?* or *Angel Band*. The Pop/Jazz genre included pieces that were identified by

the composer or publisher as popular music and movements from musicals. This category served to include music from these styles that have a different canon than standard choral repertoire. The Spirituals/Gospel genre was separated from the Folk Song genre because of its unique American history and continuing influence in the choral realm. Additionally, I wanted to track the inclusion of this specific genre in the researched period. Lastly, music that could not be categorized due to a lack of appropriate information were placed in the Unknown genre.

There were additional rules that were set in place as this database was constructed. These were written for the sake of specificity and so that undue influence could not be exerted on the data. These include the following:

- In order to prevent unintended influence of multi-movement works, a multi-movement work with more than three movements was listed as one entry if it was performed in its entirety or more than three movements were performed.
 - See Britten's *Choral Dances from 'Gloriana'* and Johnson's *Considering Matthew Shepherd* versus three movements of Poulenc's *Sept Chansons*.
- If an editor is listed on a score, they are considered as an arranger for the purpose of this project because it specifically denotes from which score the choir performed. The republished date is under Arrangement Date.
- For works with multiple composers, the Primary Composer/Arranger was taken from the first credited on the score.
- For music that was composed by an ensemble and credited to the ensemble or was a traditional tune with no arrangement, the Primary Composer was "N/A."
- Arrangements were considered to maintain the original compositional ideas of the composer, and thus were included in the original genre.

- In arrangements of traditional tunes with no primary composer, the arranger was considered the composer and their demographic data was collected.
- The gender and race of individuals researched were determined using the best possible information in biographies and online information

Lastly, the data were collected from three primary sources: TMEA Convention program guides and website; Mark Custom Recording Service, Inc. catalogs; and school, composer, and music publisher websites and other resources. Starting in 2014, TMEA began publishing Invited Choir repertoire in their Convention program guide and on their convention website. These are the only complete, official listings of all repertoire performed at the convention. However, the website links are not permanent and are overwritten after several years, thus leaving the paper program guides as the only permanent listing. The ensemble name, work, and composer data for 2014 to 2018 was taken from this source. Prior to this, TMEA did not publish this data in an accessible manner, thus leaving the most complete listing to other entities. Mark Custom Recording Service, Inc. is the exclusive audio-video recording contractor of the TMEA convention. As such, they come into contact with every concert and their catalog serves as the un-official repertoire listing from the convention. The ensemble name, work, and composer data for 2010 to 2014 was taken from this source. Lastly, the remainder of the data was collected from school websites, musicological websites, composer professional websites, music publisher websites, scores, and communication with the composer/director themselves. If data was not found through any of these sources, it was simply labeled as “unknown.”

In order to compare the above TMEA Invited Choir Repertoire database to data that would represent the national climate, a similar database of ACDA Invited Choir Repertoire was obtained from Dr. Marvin E. Latimer and Dr. Andrew Minear from the University of Alabama, researchers working in conjunction with ACDA in order to collect a complete history of the

organization and its conferences. This database included data from the 2011, 2013, 2015, and 2017 National Conferences and was the data of all repertoire performed. This database included extraneous data for this project such as repertoire from professional choirs, church choirs, and adult community choirs, so that data were filtered out. Additionally, this database did not include the exact same categories as the TMEA database described above, so the researcher expanded the received database to better match the TMEA database. However, one major omission that was not rectified was the missing ensemble information in the ACDA database. After work to reconcile the databases as best possible, these databases were compared.

Analysis

The data analysis portion of this study was completed in collaboration with the DecisionEd Group, a K-12 data analytics firm headquartered in Irving, Texas. They provided access to and assistance with IBM Cognos 11, the data-reporting standard software, to analyze, compare, and contrast both databases. The databases were edited from cosmetic organization into the format needed for the software program and were uploaded into the software. The databases were analyzed separately, exploring the same research questions, and then the results were compared afterwards. In order to add an additional layer of analysis, DecisionEd generously provided access to the artificial intelligence (AI) analysis software IBM Watson. This tool was used to identify any hidden trends or relationships between the data that were previously unconsidered. Because of changes in the number of Invited Choirs at the TMEA Convention starting in 2013, convention years 2011 and 2012 were not analyzed in the TMEA dataset. All four years of the ACDA Conference (2011, 2013, 2015, 2017) were analyzed in full.

RESULTS

The first group of results defined the gender demographic information of both the composer and Invited Choir directors in the TMEA sample. As illustrated in Table 1, the

majority of repertoire in the TMEA sample (n = 521) was composed by male composers (83.9%). By contrast, repertoire by female composers was programmed at 15.1%. The same analysis with the ACDA sample brings significantly different results. Repertoire by male composers made up 92% of the sample, while repertoire by female composers made up 6.9%. The difference between these statistics indicates that TMEA Invited Choirs programmed more music by female composers than ACDA Invited Choirs did. The ratio between Invited Choir director gender was relatively balanced at 51.5% female to 48.5% male. When previous statistic about composer gender was further broken down by director gender, it indicated that female directors programmed more repertoire by female composers (18.5%) than male directors did (11.2%).

Table 1

Gender of Composers Performed at the TMEA and ACDA Conventions

	TMEA (n = 521)		ACDA (n = 609)	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Male	437	83.9%	560	92.0%
Female	79	15.1%	42	06.9%
Not Applicable	5	01.0%	7	01.1%

The next group of results explored the racial demographics of both the composers and Invited Choir directors in the TMEA sample. When examining composer race, the TMEA sample showed that white composers were programmed more (88.5%) than composers of all other races combined (5.2% black, 3.5% Hispanic/Latino, 1.4% unknown, 0.9% not applicable, and 0.5% Asian). The statistical breakdown of composer race in the ACDA sample closely matched its TMEA counterpart with 86.7% white, 4.8% black, 2.8% Hispanic/Latino, 2.8% Asian, 2.1% unknown, and .08% not applicable. When the TMEA sample size was adjusted to only include the music of the Late Modern genre (the newest music), there was no major change

between in the racial breakdown. Additionally, the racial breakdown of the distinct TMEA Invited Choir directors also was relatively similar to the composer racial breakdown as Table 2 illustrates.

Table 2

Race of TMEA Composers vs. Race of TMEA Invited Choir directors

	Composers (n = 521)		Directors (n = 72)	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
White	442	88.5%	60	88.2%
Black	47	05.2%	4	05.2%
Hispanic/Latino	18	03.5%	3	04.4%
Asian	7	00.5%	1	01.5%
Unknown	5	01.4%	--	--
Not Applicable	3	00.9%	--	--

The next group of results was related to the repertoire that was performed in the TMEA sample and how it compares to the ACDA sample both in demographics and distinct count. First, the TMEA sample was broken down by the genres described earlier in this paper. The genre that was most performed was the Late Modern (composers born after 1935) at 45.7% of the total sample (n = 521). This clear majority was echoed by the same analysis of the ACDA sample (n = 609) with Late Modern making up 46% of the repertoire performed. However, the top five genres in each sample were not the same and did not feature similar percentages in the same categories. The top five genres in the TMEA sample were (1) Late Modern - 45.7%, (2) Folk Songs - 16.1%, (3) Early Modern - 11.7%, (4) Romantic - 7.9%, and (5) Baroque - 5.2%, whereas the top five genres in the ACDA sample were (1) Late Modern - 46%, (2) Early Modern

- 15.6%, (3) Folk Songs - 10.2%, (4) Pop/Jazz - 6.6%, and (5) Spirituals/Gospel - 6%. The rest of the genre analysis of both samples can be seen below in Figure 2.

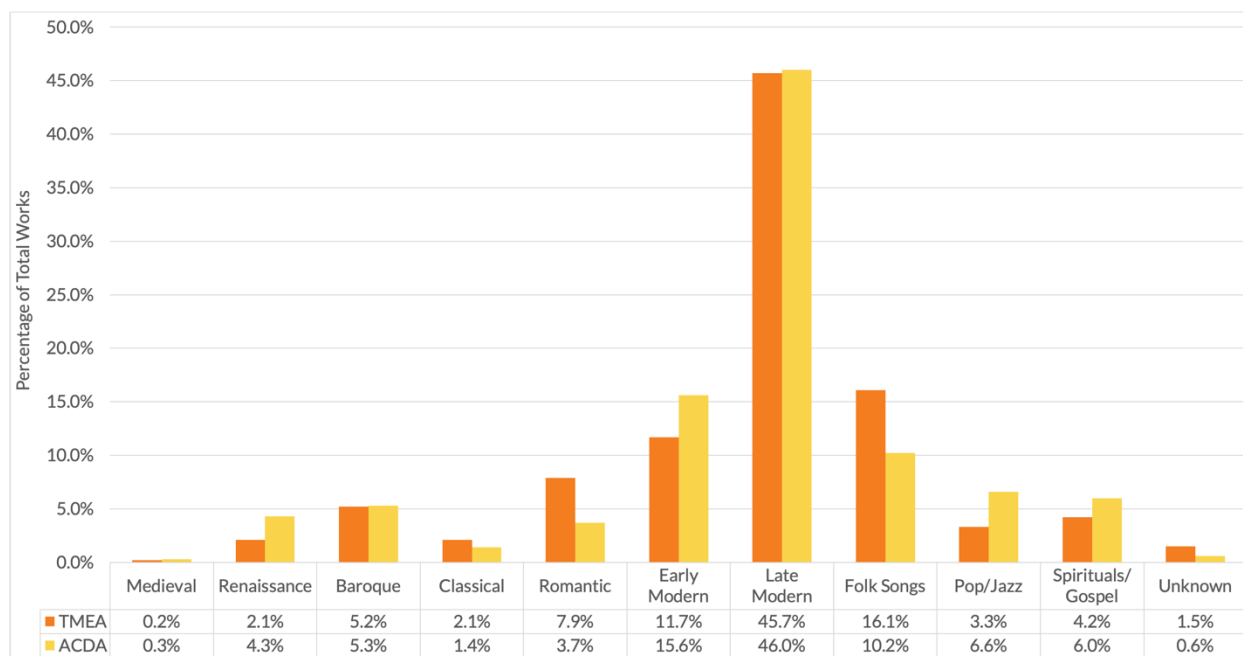


Figure 2. TMEA & ACDA repertoire by genre. This figure illustrates the breakdown of repertoire genre with a clustered-bar chart.

The next analysis regarding the repertoire programmed at TMEA explored the composers that were performed and at what frequency. There were a total of 307 composers performed during the researched period, with an average of 1.7 pieces per composer. In the TMEA sample, the top four most performed composers were Laura Farnell (10), Johannes Brahms (8), Felix Mendelssohn (8), and Z. Randall Stroope (8). After that, there were four composers with seven works performed, six composers with six works, and four composers with five works. Overall 18 composers had works performed five times or more in the sample, which makes up approximately 23% of the total repertoire performed. In the ACDA sample, there were a total of 384 composers performed during the researched period, with an average of 1.6 pieces per composer. The top three most performed composers in the ACDA sample were

Johannes Brahms (9), Eriks Ešēvalds (9), and Eric Whitacre (9) and there was a total of 19 composers that had works performed five times or more, which makes up approximately 20% of the total repertoire performed. In comparing composers with five or more works from both samples, there were eight composers that appeared on both of those lists.

Regarding the specific works performed in the TMEA sample, there was a sample population of 521 total works made up of 469 distinct works with 45 of them being performed multiple times or having multiple movements. Excluding multi-movement works with three movements, the top two most performed works during the researched period were *Gjendines Baidnalt* - Eriksson and *Richte mich, Gott* - Mendelssohn, each performed three times. After these two works, there were a total of 37 works that were performed twice. In the ACDA sample, there were 19 works performed twice and no works were performed more than twice.

Lastly, this study examined the location data of the TMEA Invited Choirs and the University Interscholastic League (UIL) conference data of the high school ensembles. As illustrated in Figure 2, the ZIP code of each Invited Choir's home school was run through a mapping software and resulted in the following heat map showing which areas in the state the TMEA invited choirs represent. As illustrated in Figure 3, the TMEA invited choirs predominately came from the large, metropolitan areas of Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, and Austin (in that order) and that rural areas across the state did not have many choirs selected during the researched period. These results were similarly echoed when the UIL conference data of the high school invited choirs were analyzed. High schools in the state of Texas are classified by enrollment in a series of conferences with the largest being 6A ($N \geq 2190$ enrolled students) and the smallest being 1A ($N \leq 104.9$ enrolled students). The 34 high school invited

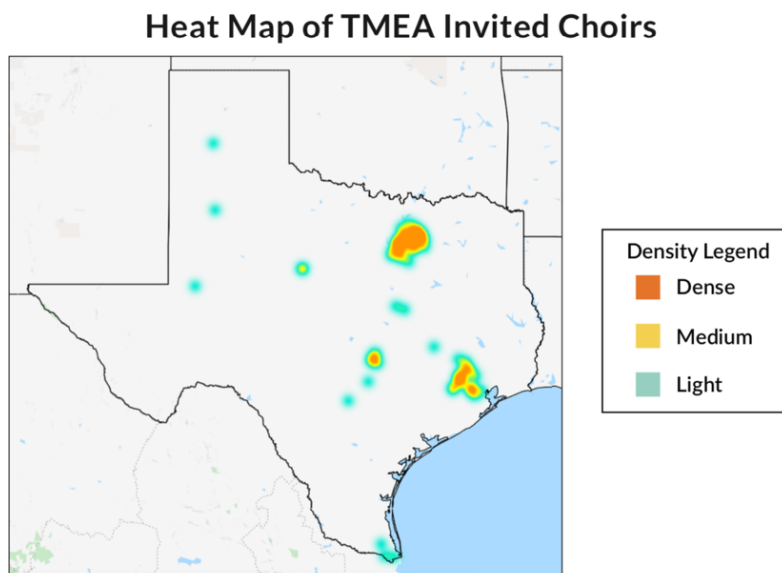


Figure 3. Heat Map of TMEA Invited Choirs. This figure illustrates from where the performing ensembles came in the state of Texas.

choirs came from schools that were in the 4A, 5A, and 6A conferences (using the 2018-20 Alignment Figures) with the following breakdown (University Interscholastic League, 2017):

- 6A ($N \geq 2190$ enrolled students): 28 invited choirs
- 5A (2189 enrolled students $\geq N \leq 1150$ enrolled students): 5 invited choirs
- 4A (1149 enrolled students $\geq N \leq 505$ enrolled students): 1 invited choir

As shown by this data, most of the invited choirs come from schools in the largest two conferences, which are most often centered in large, metropolitan areas like those illustrated above (University Interscholastic League, 2018). The smallest school to have an invited choir during the researched period was Sunnyvale High School, a 4A high school with 528 enrolled students (Texas Tribune, 2019).

As a contextual supplement, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR) was integrated into the analysis of the TMEA database. When

uploaded to the software, the TAPR data was cross-referenced using the TEA campus numbers collected in the original database. This would enable analysis of school demographics and performance data and how it interacts with the results from the other data analysis. This analysis was the primary section where the artificial intelligence software IBM Watson was used. However, this analysis did not yield reportable results.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to catalogue and analyze the choral repertoire performed by invited choirs at the TMEA annual convention from 2011 to 2018 and compare that data to similar data from the ACDA biennial national conference. This will inform readers of what music is being performed by “the best” choirs in Texas as a part of their convention programs and how that compares to a national conference. As such, the largest finding of this study related to the genre breakdown of the repertoire. By a vast majority, the most performed genre of music in the TMEA sample was Late Modern, at 45.7% of the music performed. Similarly, Late Modern made up 46% of the music performed in the ACDA sample. This genre represents music by composers born after 1935 and includes the newest music in the canon. The idea that these conventions focus on the newest music is supported by Ward and Heil’s (2017) study as they showed that the most current of genres historically were the most programmed at ACDA National Conference. However, this presents a dichotomy between these older styles of music which represent mainly white males and a newer music that provides greater representation for female composers and composers of color. Yet, even when the sample size was adjusted to only include the Late Modern music, there was no statistically significant improvement in the representation of women or people of color. The rest of the genre breakdown in this study showed that older or non-standard genres of choral music are not represented with the same frequency as the most recent choral music. The similarity in results between the two

conventions suggests that this is a philosophical issue that will need to be discussed and addressed on a larger scale, including through education institutions.

In continuing on the topic of representation in repertoire selection, the evidence indicated an important trend – in the TMEA sample, female directors programmed approximately 7% more music by female composers than their male counterparts did. Without context or further study, it is hard to determine if this is statistically significant, but it suggests that representation is a matter of concern. If people are more likely to program repertoire that represents their identity or is by composers that are look like them, representation of female composers or composers of color may increase if there is an increase in representation of those directors. There was an attempt to determine if directors of different races selected different music, but the sample size was too small for that statistic to be effective. An additional consideration would be the age and philosophical views of director. If a director was educated and began their work during a period of time when representation and diversity was heavily discussed, they may be more likely to build a program that meets those ideals. Further research into this idea is required.

The data in this study indicate that directors of TMEA invited choirs overwhelmingly programmed repertoire composed by white (88.5%), male (83.9%) composers. In comparison, ACDA directors programmed similarly when it came to race (86.7% white) but programmed significantly more music by male composers (92%). In light of contemporary discussion topics in diversity and equity in music, results like these would likely be characterized as negative. However, this information is limited by its lack of context. What is the ideal gender and racial breakdown? The TMEA composer racial breakdown closely mirrored the director racial background. Is this the idea? Is it based on the membership of an organization? The racial

breakdown of the United States? Without deeper context and further study, these statistics about racial and gender representation provide little more than awareness.

In looking at the specific repertoire performed at both conventions, it was clear that repertoire selection was vastly similar. Each convention boasted a similarly sized group of most performed composers that made up about one-fifth of the total repertoire that was followed by a long list of composers that were programmed once or twice. Additionally, approximately half of the most performed composers were identical between the two conventions. This suggests that there is great similarity between the repertoire selection practices by Texas directors and those across the United States. This similarity suggests future studies about the repertoire selection processes of TMEA invited choir directors and how they are developed. Additionally, this topic suggests study into how the repertoire selected for TMEA Convention performances differs from the repertoire selected for the rest of the year.

Lastly, the evidence indicates that high school TMEA invited choirs only represent the largest high schools in large, metropolitan areas such as Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, and Austin. It is easy to assume that this trend continues with the middle school invited choirs as well. However, it is difficult to ascertain where this trend is positive or negative. Is the goal of TMEA concerts to only showcase the best choirs in the state without regard to any other criteria? Is the process fair and accessible to schools from smaller areas? Lastly, does size, location, or any other measurable factor actually impact the quality of a choral program and why? These questions cannot be answered through this study but suggest significant further study on this topic.

Limiting Factors

The primary limiting factor of this study was the small sample size. With only six years of usable TMEA data, the sample size was limited to a short time period with similar repertoire. The 2019 TMEA Convention alone saw changes in participation of choirs that represent populations that have not been represented at TMEA in the past. Unfortunately, the inclusion of artificial intelligence in the analysis of this data did not yield any usable information, except that it did suggest that certain relationships may exist with low confidence. This lack of confidence in the results was likely due to small sample size and may yield stronger results with an expansion of this study with twice the data. Additionally, the topic that used the artificial intelligence software would benefit from a deeper investigation that this study could not justify.

Another limiting factor of the study was the identification of composer/director race and gender. With such a large data set, it was not feasible to interview every composer and director to get their clear answer to their race and gender. As such, those data points were inferred with the best available information. A limiting factor that will only continue to grow as time goes forward is the difficulty in obtaining accurate birth dates of living composers. Many contemporary composers do not share their birth year out of privacy concerns, which creates challenges in a genre classification system that relies on birthdate. Determining another genre sorting method may relieve this factor.

A final limiting factor that was on the edge of limiting this study was the genre classification system itself. The definition of the standard choral canon is problematic because factors that define the canon and the participants in creating this definition are not clearly defined. Why is Pop/Jazz its own genre separate from Late Modern? The establishment and subsequent classification create problems. Further, as the genres periods have developed, they

have grown shorter and shorter. The Renaissance period lasted about 300 years, but the Baroque period only 150. The Classical period shrunk to around 90 and the Romantic period to about 70. Each period is shorter than the last but Late Modern is approaching 70 years in length. In the expansion of this study, it might be necessary to include a third modern genre to split Late Modern into two or re-evaluate how to classify the genre system in its entirety.

CONCLUSION & FUTURE STUDY

This study revealed a great deal of information about the state of choral concerts at the TMEA Convention and the music that is programmed. However, the information obtained was limited by various factors, and thus indicates a need for future research. With each discussion topic above, there is a whole new study waiting to be completed on the philosophy, pedagogy, and purpose behind each of these topics. These new philosophical questions will hopefully inform the organizations that create these events so that deeper research and meaningful change can be supported and encouraged. I will continue compiling the TMEA Invited Choir Database and begin publicly hosting it so that by 2025 there will be 15 years of usable data with which to expand the study. Overall, each aspect of this study would benefit from (1) an expansion of this same study with twice the data or more and (2) additional studies focusing on aspects of genre, composer, and participating organizations.

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