

# Show Choir as Popular Music Ensemble

## in Choral Music Education: A Review of the Literature

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### The Evolution of Show Choir



Marion 26<sup>th</sup> Street Singers, 1975

Winners of the first Bishop Luers Invitational  
(used with permission, Weaver & Hart, 2011)

### Genres that influenced show choir

- American patriotic
- Vaudeville
- Burlesque
- Circus performance
- Musical theater
- Jazz

(Weaver & Hart, 2011)

**Fred Waring**, with his singing band *the Pennsylvanians* and his *Glee Club*, was foundational to the rise of popular music in choral singing. Waring was **Robert Shaw's** mentor and helped to develop the **Tone Syllables** many choral directors use today. He founded **Shawnee Press** to help distribute popular music to the masses.

(Mountford, 1981 & Waring, 1997)

### Bishop Luers Invitational, Ft. Wayne, IN

is considered the grandfather of all show choir competitions and the rules and regulations established in 1975 are widely used today.

(Clark, 2010)

### Motivation and Show Choir

#### Dimensions of meaning in Choral Singing

- Psychological
- Communicative
- Integrative
- Musical-artistic
- Spiritual
- Achievement

(Hylton, 1981)

#### Dimensions of meaning in Show Choir

- Social interactive
- Dance
- Physical activity
- Musical-artistic
- Spiritualistic
- Travel

#### 93.2% of student respondents (N = 313)

indicated a strong or very strong preference for show choir. Only 50.5% of the same students responded similarly in regards to concert choir.

The **dance dimension** was the only significant predictor ( $p < .001$ ) of whether students would prefer show choir.

(Farmer, 2009)

Though show choir was not found to be a significant way to recruit males into a choral program, schools with **competitive show choirs** were significantly more successful at recruiting males than those schools with non-competitive show choirs.

(Johnson, 2004)

Males can find show choir to be a **safe place** where they can express their musical creativity and experiment with gender identity.

(Abramo, 2011 & Kennedy, 2002)

**Show choir can be a viable option for educators who want to incorporate popular music into their choral program.**

### Common Practices and Pedagogy

#### Successful show choir directors (N = 5):

- Directed more than one choir
  - Placed importance on a timeline for planning
  - Regarded vocal technique as paramount
  - Taught vocal technique the same regardless of genre
  - Placed emphasis on interviewing during auditions
- None of the successful show choir directors interviewed received training on how to create, administer, or direct a show choir.*  
(Alder, 2012)

**78% of respondents (N = 81)** who directed a show choir reported show choir had no negative effect on enrollment for concert choir.

(Schlather, 1981)

Show choir was found to be a **significant stressor** in the life a choir teacher. It was also a source of **joy** and aided in the exponential growth of student numbers and musicianship in her program.

(Scheib, 2003)

#### Rehearsal Times

The number of groups meeting for a certain number of minutes on different numbers of days each week

	5 days	4 days	3 days	2 days	1 day
25 min	2	1	-	-	-
40 min	2	-	-	-	-
45 min	10	1	-	1	-
50 min	20	-	1	1	-
55 min	5	1	-	1	-
60 min	4	2	4	4	2
80 min	-	-	1	-	-
90 min	-	-	-	4	2
115 min	-	-	-	1	-
120 min	-	1	2	-	3
180 min	-	1	-	-	-
Totals:	43	7	8	12	7

Show choirs were found to perform as much if not more than concert choirs at the same schools. Directors must be careful not to exploit students' health, time, or education.

(Schlather, 1981)