I, Andrew S Collins, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctoral of Musical Arts in Conducting, Choral Emphasis.

It is entitled:
Poetic Structural Devices as a Consideration When Analyzing and Interpreting Choral Scores

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Poetic Structural Devices as a Consideration When Analyzing and Interpreting Choral Scores

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the connection between poetry, choral composition, and choral performance, specifically how an understanding of the constructive elements of poetry can influence the interpretation of a choral score. The focus is on secular, English-language, accentual-syllabic poetry written in the United States and set to music by composers from the United States; free verse is not included in this document.

Most studies of the interconnectedness of poetry and choral music have focused on either the meaning of the text or on “text painting.” By contrast, this study focuses on poetic constructive devices such as meter, form, and punctuation, and the implications such devices can have for choral performance, especially in regard to tempo, phrasing, articulation, and dynamics. Understanding these implications and incorporating them into one’s preparation of a choral score can lend insight into the compositional process, and can also aid the conductor in achieving an interpretation of the score that serves the intentions and interests of both poet and composer.
DEDICATION

For Julie
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No work such as this is created “in a vacuum.” It is the product of one person’s time, work, expertise, and energy, but with the help and support of a great many others. I am indebted to the following mentors, colleagues, family, and friends for their patience, support, and encouragement. Many of them know far more than I, and I am as indebted to them as I am fortunate to know them.

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lent in the process. Their combined expertise helped provide invaluable insight and guidance. Dr. Earl Rivers not only helped shepherd the document through the process, but lent important insights into the choral art as pertained to my topic. Mr. Kenneth Griffiths played an essential role in translating certain concepts and techniques common to the solo voice field to the choral art. Dr. Don Bogen of the English Department lent insight into the aspects of poetry discussed herein, and also helped greatly with the style of my academic prose.

It is apropos to recognize that my interest in this topic can be traced to two conductors in particular: Dr. René Clausen and Mr. Brian Jones. Their approaches to choral expression are heavily textual, and singing for them served as the spark that would ignite my intense interest in the connection between text and music.

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As a composer myself, I have had the privilege to study with and discuss music with many fellow composers. Their influence on my thinking in regards to this topic is worth noting. Similarly, I have had the opportunity to publish works with a number of publishing companies, and have learned much from their editorial committees and staffs.

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PREFACE

The interpretation of a musical composition could be defined as decisions based on thorough research and analysis of the printed musical score. In vocal music, there is an additional consideration: the text being sung. Incorporating textual elements into the analysis of choral music can lend powerful insight into both the author’s original meaning and the composer’s interpretation of the text when composing the musical setting. In turn, decisions made about performance can and should be affected by understanding the poet’s and composer’s constructive elements.

With little exception, compositions in vocal genres combine text and music. When the text for a piece of choral music is poetry, there are special considerations when analyzing the composition and preparing it for performance. Presumably, the music correlates to the text in some dynamic and indelible way; indeed, the music was most likely inspired by the text rather than the other way around. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of a poem’s construction, style, and content will likely yield a better understanding of the composer’s interpretation of the text and thus his/her possible intentions for the musical composition. In this way, the conductor can begin to achieve an interpretation that balances the music with the text, without neglecting one for the other.

Poetry may include an array of constructive devices such as meter, rhyme scheme, and form. Such devices can have musical implications that go beyond meaning and text painting. Understanding these implications and incorporating them into the preparation of a choral score can lend insight into the compositional process, and can also aid the conductor in interpreting the score in a manner that serves both the music and the text, resulting in a more expressive and communicative performance.
Like all performers, conductors should strive to serve the interests of the composer. For choral conductors, that responsibility includes the author of the text. Gaining an understanding of the structural and stylistic devices used in the creation of poetry will lead to a greater understanding of a musical composition, and will certainly have musical implications for performance.

In the study of a vocal score the extent of textual exploration is often limited to the meaning of the text and the compositional device of text painting. However, literary devices used to fashion the text of a choral composition can influence an interpretation of that setting. This study focuses on poetic constructive devices such as meter, rhyme scheme, and form, and the implications such devices can have for choral performance.

It is surprising how little research is dedicated to the impact of poetic constructive and expressive devices on choral performance. While some excellent work has been accomplished, there is much more work to be done. This topic area—the relationship between textual elements and musical elements in choral music—is a complex one, and draws on a variety of fields. My research and conclusions stem largely from a combination of established ideas, especially historical connections between words and music, including declamation, prosody, versification, and rhythmic modes; and solo vocal repertoire, especially settings of German and English texts. Based on this research, I draw my own conclusions about how these ideas can be applied specifically to contemporary choral settings of American poetry.

Historically, great emphasis has been placed on the connection between music and poetic devices. This is perhaps especially true among composers and theorists. I am not attempting to lend new insight into historical practices, but will at times reference historical practices with an
eye toward practical application to modern choral music. A historical context will be offered in Chapter One.

In regards to the connection between solo vocal repertoire and performance techniques to choral music, the following quote from Robert Toft is particularly revealing. Though Toft is speaking of solo vocal music, conductors can certainly draw upon this mode of expression for performances by the choral ensemble:

From Domenico Corri in 1810 to Manuel Garcia in 1857, the method of preparing a song for performance was remarkably consistent. Singers first studied the meaning of the words to gain insight into the leading passion of the piece. Each particular sentiment developed in the text was then examined, and this enabled them to decide which sentiments should be prominently exhibited. The punctuation was observed, and the most important words were marked so that one would know where the emphasis lay. This process allowed singers to make the sentiments of the words their own, the spoken declamation of the text revealing what sort of expression should be given to the song itself. The goal was to make the delivery seem spontaneous, and a careful regulation of the singing voice, through contrasts of forte and piano, tempo rubato, changes in the tonal quality, and so on, gave each passage the degree of energy or pathos the subject demanded.¹

All of these topics will be discussed in the following chapters, with particular application to the choral medium. This is a vital topic area to the field of choral music that has yet to receive the attention to which it is due. It is the author’s hope that other studies will be done in a similar vein: perhaps of texts in other languages, non-poetic texts, free-verse, and other forms, other compositional time periods, and poets from various countries.

While at times I may delve into meaning of text, text painting, or expressive poetic devices, these are not the topics at hand. Much could be written about these three topics, but I haven chosen here to focus on devices common to poetic construction. I will first distinguish among these to clarify what will and what will not be covered.

- **Meaning of text** — Understanding a poem’s subject matter, characters, and symbolism. Such a focus answers the question, *What is this poem about?* It is essential for the performer to understand the meaning, and to let that understanding enter into the interpretation and the rehearsal process. But this document has a different focus.

- **Text painting** — Text painting or word painting is a centuries-old musical tool wherein the composer attempts to depict musically a word, phrase, and verse. Much attention has been paid to this compositional device in choral research and performance, and it is certainly important for the choral director to understand the composer’s intent in regards to musical depiction of text, but it is not the topic of this document.

- **Expressive poetic devices** — Some poetic devices are expressive, others are structural. The line between these cannot be drawn too thick, as all or most expressive devices have constructive qualities, and *vice versa*. For purposes of this document, I am considering expressive devices to be allusion, metaphor, onomatopoeia, personification, simile, symbolism, and other similar devices. These may be referred to in this document, but only in passing.

My focus will be on the correlation between the structural elements of a poem and musical settings for chorus of that same poem.
This study focuses on texts that fit within narrow parameters: the text must be (1) a poem (as opposed to prose, scripture, or other non-poetic texts); (2) accentual or accentual-syllabic (see Chapter Two); (3) in English; (4) written by an American author; and (5) set to music by an American composer. However, the basic principles discussed herein may apply to texts outside of these parameters.

No comments or observations about a particular composition should be misconstrued as criticism. No examples were drawn from pieces that I believe to be in any way inferior or lacking; all works included in this document are works I believe to be in all regards worthy of performance.
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CHAPTER ONE: MUSICAL TOOLS FOR A TEXT-CONSCIOUS INTERPRETATION OF
THE CHORAL SCORE

Drawing a connection between constructive elements of poetry and choral performance requires an understanding both of the constructive elements themselves and musical techniques that can represent those elements in sound. This chapter will briefly introduce some of these techniques, which will then be used throughout the rest of this document. Choirs of all ability levels may easily apply some of the musical techniques, while others operate on a more advanced level requiring mature singers capable of nuanced comprehension and singing.

Temporal Elements

The tempo of a piece will affect its articulation, phrasing, diction, metric stress patterns, and many other performance issues. Erwin Stein writes, “[Tempo] must allow the music to sound characteristic…If the tempo is wrong, everything is distorted.”

Tempo will affect the communication of the text. Conversely, it is also true that textual considerations can play a role in interpreting internal temporal issues. For this study, I limit my exploration to graduated changes (e.g., ritarde, accelerandi, stringendi, and allargandi), fermate, and caesurae.

1 Edwin Stein, Form and Performance (New York: Knopf, 1963), 53.
Marked Ritarde and Accelerandi

The terms “ritard” and “accelerando” are inherently ambiguous, as they do not themselves determine a rate of change, goal tempo, or an ending point. When these terms are encountered in a score, the performer is left to determine how drastically to slow down or speed up, whether to do so steadily or with increased acceleration/deceleration, what goal tempo a particular ritard or accelerando should reach, and by what point in the score. Composers will sometimes dictate this clearly; other times these issues are left to the conductor’s discretion. There may be instances where such determinations may be made using, at least in part, textual means.

For example, the major structural points of a poem and the music that sets it may coincide. When one stanza ends and another begins (“stanzaic division”), a major compositional turning point would certainly be appropriate. In Sara Teasdale’s poem, “There Will Be Rest,” the line “The music of stillness holy and low” is the fourth and last line of the first stanza. The poem is only two stanzas long, so this stanzaic division is the most significant structural point in the poem (see Appendix A for full text of the poem). At this point in Frank Ticheli’s setting, the composer represents the stanzaic division with several musical changes: tempo change, texture change (fugato), greater rhythmic interest, and a modal shift. (see Figure 1.1).
Figure 1.1 Measures 44-51 of Frank Ticheli’s There Will Be Rest, poem by Sara Teasdale. The tempo marking in brackets originally appeared earlier in the score.

The ritard marked in measure 48 certainly lasts only until the new tempo marked three beats later, in measure 49. As the starting point and ending point have been made clear, the conductor can be certain of the duration of the ritard. The goal tempo is also clear: $q=60$. The only question yet remaining is the rate of the ritard. In this case, the ritard lacks a qualifier such
as “molto” or “poco,” and there is no “a” (Italian: “to”) to let us know that the ritard should lead steadily and directly from the old tempo (q=72) to the new tempo (q=60). For such a moment, conductors have two possible courses of action, either of which could be considered a plain-text reading of the score. The first option is to ritard to slower than q=60 over the three beats of the ritard, then assume the new tempo as marked. The second option is to treat the ritard as a “ritard a...,” which would result in a smooth and steady transition from q=72 to q=60, never slowing beyond q=60. Arguments could be made for or against either course; among those arguments should be the importance of the stanzaic division. Since the composer has used so many devices to clearly delineate between the two stanzas (see previous paragraph), slowing down beyond q=60 could be a bridge too far. On the other hand, it could underscore the intention of both composer and poet. Slowing precisely from one tempo to the other might keep the performance from getting “sappy,” or it might come off sounding dry and calculated in an otherwise emotionally rich poem and musical setting.

Again, in this example, either of these two options is justifiable from a musical and textual standpoint. This study asserts that the poem’s structure can and should play some role in this kind of interpretive determination. This concept easily transfers to other pieces, as well as to accelerandi.

Unmarked Ritarde

For purposes of this document, implied (unmarked) ritarde and accelerandi are distinguished from rubato by frequency and occasion. Rubato will tend to be a generalized approach used in an entire piece or large formal section within a piece, expanding or contracting the meter at any point in the musical or textual phrase. This is typically left to the performer
rather than being carefully notated by the composer. By contrast, an unmarked ritard occurs in isolated instances, while the majority of any one phrase is in relatively strict tempo. Such instances include phrase or period endings, beats immediately preceding a fermata or caesura, beats or measures immediately preceding a sectional break, significant harmonic events, and the final beats or measures of a piece. Ritarde that lead into fermate and caesurae will be discussed in the next section.

A ritard may be used to underscore important structural points such as a break between formal sections, a return to the tonic, or a final cadence. Composers may clearly indicate such moments, or they may feel that such a marking would be redundant to the musical evidence already present in the score.

As will be discussed in Chapter Two, there is often a correlation between a phrase of text and the music that sets it. As Geoffrey Chew notes, phrases became equated with the literary sentence or line of poetry over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries:

Phrasing theory developed out of 17th-century rhythmic theory which [sic] was conceived in terms of poetic metrical theory. The 18th century, however, introduced into it the rhetorical analogy of punctuation: Couperin drew on this notion in the foreword to his Pièces de clavecin, iii (1722), to justify his use of a comma in the notation of his pieces; and in Mattheson (1737) the idea of phrasing explicitly appeared. These and later writers show the modern reader that various different degrees of articulation were required (even at this date) to make phrases, sentences and so on perceptible: least for the ‘comma’, more for the ‘colon’ and still more for the ‘period’.

This tendency has been maintained through succeeding eras and has particular relevance for this study. When speaking, we tend to punctuate statements by slowing the rate of speech, 

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decreasing volume, and lowering pitch. Decreasing volume and lowering pitch have parallels in composition, while slowing the rate of speech of the final words of a sentence, paragraph, stanza, or line of poetry has parallels in musical performance. Whether in spoken word or musical performance, these techniques send a clear signal to the listener that an ending point is approaching.

*A ritard* may also heighten significant harmonic events. These may include a particularly lush sonority, a chord with a sudden change of textural density, or a moment when all voices move in parallel motion by large leap. In Lane Johnson’s *Snowflakes*, the effect of the *crescendo* that begins at measure 46 is heightened by the *molto ritard* indicated in measure 49, climaxing into “This is the secret of despair” (see Figure 1.2). This is an example of a composer-indicated instance of this technique, but the technique may also be applied in similar instances where no such published indication exists.
Figure 1.2 Measures 45-52 of Snowflakes, composed by Lane Johnson on a poem of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

One such example is René Clausen’s setting of Walt Whitman’s “Quicksand Years” (see Figure 1.3). The score indicates no ritard at any point; however a ritard starting in measure 32 would certainly underscore the rhetorical stress of the words “strong-posess’d” and “soul,” already underscored by the composer’s metric expansion from 3/4 to 4/4. (Rhetorical and agogic stresses will be discussed further in Chapter Three). Additionally, the words “eludes not” end a
line of text capped by an end-stop. In Clausen’s setting, a comma is found at this point, but in Whitney’s original publication, a semicolon is found. The semicolon is a more defined punctuation mark that more firmly delineates two lines of poetry and is of greater structural significance (punctuation will be discussed further in Chapter Four). Consulting the poet’s original text would serve the conductor well in interpreting such transitional moments.

Considering rhetorical stress and line structure/punctuation, therefore, a conductor could justify a ritard at this point, even though one is not marked. Indeed, examining a recording of a performance with the composer conducting reveals that he prefers a ritard starting at this exact point.³

Fermate and Caesurae

Poems, like music, have climactic and structural points. These include stanzaic divisions and certain types of punctuation. Hopefully, the composer has somehow represented in the musical setting the climactic and structural points of the poem. At times this representation may include stopping the metric flow, either with sound (fermata) or without sound (caesura).

There are three questions regarding fermate: how to approach them, how long to hold them, and how to leave them. Unless the composer is explicit, the performer is left to make these determinations. Constructive elements of poetry can help the conductor determine answers to these three questions.

Unless the composer’s preference is clearly indicated, the burden is on the conductor to determine how best to approach a fermata. It is generally assumed that a fermata should be preceded by a ritard even when no such score direction is indicated, so much so that composers who prefer no tempo change tend to notate “non ritard” rather than give no indication at all.

Words like “lunga” or “breve” may be added in an attempt to clarify a fermata’s duration, but even these are ambiguous. There seems to be only one guideline: “the time value of a note with a fermata must be longer than it [would have been] without it.”4 Beyond that, how long should the fermata be held? More to the point, what musical or extra-musical criteria are germane to making such a determination?

The release of a *fermata* may or may not be clearly indicated. Should it be followed by a breath, *caesura*, break-no-breath, or should it be carried over with no stoppage of sound? If the composer does not provide an answer to this question, the conductor must.

In Figure 1.4, the composer has indicated a *fermata* in measure 28. No qualifying information is included about the approach (e.g., “ritard,” “poco ritard,” “non ritard”), duration (e.g., “breve,” “lunga”), or departure (e.g., a breath mark, *caesura*, dashed slur). This ambiguity leaves the conductor to ponder these three issues. The *fermata* comes between the lines “And a feeling of sadness comes o'er me” and “That my soul cannot resist.” A review of the poem’s structure reveals that these are lines three and four of a quatrain. Line three ends without punctuation (that is, the two lines are enjambed, a subject that will receive further attention in Chapter Four), which indicates that the poet considered them a unified thought. These two text-based evidences indicate that the *fermata* should be approached with little or no *ritard* (the *fermata*, after all, does not come at a major structural point in the text or music, but rather comes in the middle of a thought), should last a short amount of time (again, it is placed in the middle of a thought that will continue with the next line), and should continue without a breath into the next line (the two lines were enjambed by the poet).
An examination of a recording by The Singers: Minnesota Choral Artists supervised by the composer reveals that, indeed, the fermata was handled just this way.\(^5\)

The answer as to how any fermata should be handled lies in the composer’s intention for including the fermata. Many of the issues surrounding fermata are applicable to caesurae. In choral music, the fermata or caesura may have been indicated for purely musical or textual reasons, or some combination of the two. If the conductor concludes that the fermata or caesura was assigned primarily for musical reasons, then considering musical elements may be the most appropriate way to determine how best to approach, sustain, and depart from it. If the performer concludes that the inclusion of the fermata or caesura is more for textual reasons, a text-based

interpretation may be best. In the end, considering both musical and textual elements when making these determinations may make the most sense. In Chapter Two, I will discuss using poetic constructive devices to help make these types of determinations.

**Dynamics**

Every dynamic marking is related to the text, the music, or both in combination. Part of the interpretive process is determining the impetus behind each dynamic. Poetic constructive devices may lend insight into such a determination.

Any time in this document that it is suggested that a marked dynamic be somehow changed, it is intended that such changes be made on the micro level. That is, the author would never advocate so severe a change as turning one dynamic into another without the composer’s consent. But, rather, a piano marking could be changed to meno piano or più piano.

**Unmarked Dynamics**

Composers may harbor assumptions about certain musical elements such as metronome markings, articulations, and dynamics.\(^6\) If the piece is published, the editorial process hopefully was sufficiently rigorous so as to catch such omissions from the manuscript stage. However, editorial practices vary from one publisher to the next, and accuracy cannot always be assumed. More often than not, however, missing dynamics are not due to negligence on the part of the

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\(^6\) Author’s note: The author has served as editor, senior choral editor, and choral consultant for three publishing companies (see *Curriculum Vitæ*, the final pages of this document). This statement is made from personal experience and conversations with colleagues from other publishing houses.
composer or editor. Rather, they may be missing because the composer and/or editor felt that the desired dynamic could be gleaned from evidence in the score or that choirs and conductors would perform a passage as intended simply by instinct. However, this leaves ambiguity for the performer attempting a plain-text rendering.

Tradition, a definitive recording, direct contact with a composer, or other means can often decipher such instances. Still others can be determined based on range, the previously marked dynamic, melodic contour, and rhythmic momentum. Lexical, rhetorical, and metrical stresses of a poem may also provide clues in such cases.

In the case of Randall Thompson’s *The Road Not Taken*, the composer gives only one dynamic for the entire third verse: a piano at the outset (see Figure 1.5a-c). Yet the quasi-sequential pattern from phrase to phrase (compare the first two pitches of the first three phrases, as well as the highest pitches of the first three phrases) will elicit a natural increase in dynamic from the choir. Should the conductor direct the choir to resist this temptation, or allow the natural dynamic build-up to occur on its own? An argument may be made that, despite the lack of explicit dynamics, Thompson preferred a natural dynamic build-up, since the dynamics in the successive verse (measures 52-59 in Figure 1.5d) are so precisely and purposefully reiterated at the start of each phrase, though no such reiteration is seen in verse three.

Certain text-based elements may be considered in making this determination. In terms of meaning, this is the moment when the speaker makes a decision between the two paths that have been under consideration from the poem’s outset. The exclamation point drives this home. (Punctuation will be discussed further in Chapter Four.)
Figure 1.5a Measures 28-35 of “The Road Not Taken” (from *Frostiana*) by Randall Thompson, poem by Robert Frost. The *piano* marking in m. 32 is the only dynamic marking of any kind to appear in the choral parts for the entire third verse (mm. 33-43).
Figure 1.5b Mm 36-41 of "The Road Not Taken" (from Frostiana) by Randall Thompson, poem by Robert Frost.
Figure 1.5c Mm 42-51 of “The Road Not Taken” (from *Frostiana*) by Randall Thompson, poem by Robert Frost. The *pianissimo* marked in m. 51 is reiterated in mm. 55 and 57 (see Figure 1.5d), as well as phrases beyond the pages included herein. This purposeful and explicit marking by the composer may be a clue that verses without such precise dynamic indications are more open to the natural dynamic tendencies of the sequential melody.
Figure 1.5d Measures 52-59 of “The Road Not Taken” (from *Frostiana*) by Randall Thompson, poem by Robert Frost.
Graduated dynamics are a different matter. *Crescendi* and *diminuendi* are often implied. For example, a *piano* dynamic may be indicated, then, eight bars later, a *forte* dynamic. In this hypothetical situation, should the *forte* be performed *subito* or does the composer assume a *crescendo*? In Figure 1.6, an example of such an instance may be seen. There is no explicit indication telling the singer how to transition between the *mezzo forte* in measure 17 and the *mezzo piano* of measure 20. The two options are either to impose a *decrescendo* between the two dynamics or to make a sudden change (in essence, treat it as a *subito mezzo piano*).

![Figure 1.6](image)

*Figure 1.6* Measures 17-21 of *Sure On this Shining Night* by René Clausen on a poem by James Agee.

Sometimes, musical clues such as sequences, a change of harmonic rhythm, thickening or thinning of the texture, widening or narrowing of ranges, increased or decreased rhythmic activity, and registral changes may direct the conductor’s thinking. Structural elements in the text may offer additional clues. In this case, the composer is ending the musical thought by
repeating the last line of text and could be said to be amending the poem with a sort of
parenthetical modification (discussed below in the section “Reduction of Forces” and again in
Chapter Four), an aside of sorts. The conductor is left to determine, then, whether this is
justification for imposing a *decrescendo* between the two dynamics, or if a plain-text reading of
the score should be rendered.\(^7\)

There may be times when stanzas run into one another without any special musical
treatment or score indication. Continuing with James Agee’s poem “Sure On This Shining
Night,” the line “The late year lies down the north” is the first line of the second stanza. (See
Appendix A for full text of the poem.) As was true in the Ticheli example above in Figure 1.1,
this is a significant structural point in the poem. In Samuel Barber’s setting, when the sopranos
and tenors begin singing the first line of the new stanza, the alto and bass parts are still singing
text from the previous stanza in a way that obscures the first line of the new stanza (see Figure
1.7). While there are musical elements that do signal a structural shift, the stanzaic division is
slightly blurred by the textural overlap of the alto and bass. The soprano entrance at measure 10
will certainly be heard, if for no other reason than its tessitura is high compared to that of the alto
and bass. But the principle I am attempting to illustrate here is the effect of textural overlap on
the listener’s experience of the form of the music and the poem. Were additional clarification
desired in such a circumstance, the conductor could ask the altos and basses to *decrescendo* in

\(^7\) Author’s note: In this case, a review of the full score reveals extreme attention to detail by the composer and editor,
especially in regards to dynamic nuance. It is unlikely that this moment constitutes the single editorial oversight in
this regard. This is evidence enough that in this case, the dynamics are intentionally terraced rather than graduated.
However, when excerpted, these bars provided a convenient example of this point for purposes of this study.
measure 10 and/or ask the tenors to begin their crescendo on the last beat of measure 10 and arrive at the mezzo forte a beat earlier than marked.
Figure 1.7 Measures 7-12 of Samuel Barber’s *Sure On This Shining Night* on a poem by James Agee.
Microdynamics

Microdynamics are small fluctuations within the frame of a marked dynamic. They may be considered “dynamics within dynamics.” In a phrase marked with a single dynamic, there is great possibility for slight increase and decrease of volume within that dynamic. Microdynamics may be the result of text stresses, musical stresses, or causes outside the scope of this study. Consideration of these stresses can greatly increase the expressivity of a performance.

As Lampl puts it,

…dynamic inflections…not only do not disturb but are a vital and integral part of the performance.\(^8\)

For example, the alto and tenor parts in Ticheli’s *There Will Be Rest* are marked *piano* (see Figure 1.8a). If this were observed strictly, the dynamic contour would simply be a flat line (see Figure 1.8b). Taking into consideration the textual and musical stresses that will be discussed in Chapters Two and Three, the melody’s dynamic contour achieves much greater dimension (see Figure 1.8c).\(^9\)


\(^9\) Author’s note: This contour is a result of the Comprehensive Musico-Linguistic Stress Analysis, an original analytical tool conceived and developed by the author which combines and coordinates textual and musical stresses with the goal of more effective, expressive and communicative choral performance.
Figure 1.8a Measures 28-31, Frank Ticheli’s *There Will Be Rest*, alto and tenor parts only.

Figure 1.8b Measures 28-31, Frank Ticheli’s *There Will Be Rest*: Dynamic contour of *piano* dynamic without consideration of textual and musical stresses (“microdynamics”).

Figure 1.8c Measures 28-31, Frank Ticheli’s *There Will Be Rest*: Dynamic contour of *piano* dynamic with textual and musical stresses (“microdynamics”). While it does fluctuate, the dynamic stays within the *piano* range. The factors that determined this contour will be discussed in Chapters Two and Three (see Footnote 9 above).
Phrasing

“Phrasing” is an ambiguous and encompassing term. It could refer to the determination of phrase length, the handling of phrase endings, stylistic elements within a phrase, the dynamic contour of a phrase, or other aspects. For purposes of this study, however, I will limit focus to the length and demarcation of phrases.

In the case of poetry, composers often set one line of poetry to a phrase of music. This is true of just about every phrase in every piece excerpted in this document. In Thompson’s The Road Not Taken, each musical phrase sets exactly one line of text (see Figure 1.9). The musical phrases, each approximately two measures long, are not separated by rests, and there is almost no punctuation to assist the conductor in determining whether breaths should be taken and, if so, where. In Frost’s original publication, only lines one and five end with punctuation (N.B. the first line of poetry as published by Frost originally ended with a comma after “wood,” but the comma does not appear in Thompson’s setting; see Appendix A for the poem as it appeared in Frost’s original publication). In this way, Frost enjambled lines two, three, four, and five. The question then becomes whether the comma Frost inserted at the end of line one serves a structural or grammatical function. Understanding the purpose and function of this comma may answer the question of whether a breath after “yellow wood” would be appropriate. Composer Thompson worked with Frost on the choral cycle Frostiana from which this movement is drawn, so it may be that Thompson’s missing comma and lack of rest after “yellow wood” had the poet’s blessing. An examination of a recording of Frost reading this poem reveals that the only pauses heard in the first stanza were after “yellow wood” and “be one traveler,” the only two

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instances in the stanza where commas appear in the original text. So there are legitimate textual arguments both for and against a choral breath after “yellow wood.”

As for the remaining line endings, they are enjambed, which has been mirrored musically by the composer in the absence of rests. The most appropriate phrasing solution, therefore, is probably to perform them all without a break (i.e., the choir should stagger breathe to achieve a seamless performance). Issues of punctuation and the effect on phrasing will be addressed in Chapter Four.

![Figure 1.9](image)

*Figure 1.9* The melody of “The Road Not Taken” (from *Frostiana*) (mm. 4-14) composed by Randall Thompson on a poem of Robert Frost.

### Phrase Endings

How a musical phrase ends is often determined by musical factors. Unless a rest is presented, the conductor must decide between (1) shortening a rhythm to allow for a breath of a

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defined amount of time such as a prescribed number of beats or seconds; (2) shortening a rhythm to allow for a breath of an undefined amount of time; (3) adding time to the bar so as to allow the choir to breathe before reassuming the meter; or (4) not allowing any part to breathe at that point, thus eliding one phrase to the next.

A breath in rhythm may be employed by shortening the rhythm of the note before the breath (usually one beat or half-beat) in order to allow time for the breath without disrupting the pulse of the piece, adding beats to the meter, or coming in late for the succeeding entrance.

A breath out of rhythm adds no beats to the meter and does not disrupt the pulse of the piece, but is not prescribed by the conductor as a particular rhythm. When employed with a choir, this approach to ending a phrase depends on the clarity of the conductor’s gesture. In reality, this type of breath will have some rhythmic value to it. However, the distinguishing factor here is that it is not prescribed, but rather is dependent on visual communication between singer and conductor.

A third option is a breath that adds time to the meter (such as interpolating a beat’s worth of breath after beat two in 4/4, in essence creating a 5/4 bar). The legitimacy of this technique is dependent on stylistic considerations.

A final option for ending a phrase is to elide it to the next phrase without a break in sound or suspension of pulse. This technique is especially applicable when both poet and composer give clues that two lines comprise a single unbroken thought. Enjambment—when two lines of poetry are spoken (or sung) without pause or breath—can have tremendous impact on phrasing decisions, and will be discussed in Chapter Four. One example of this, given in the previous section, is the excerpt from “The Road Not Taken” above (see Figure 1.9). Another example is the second stanza of Longfellow’s “Snow-flakes:”
Even as our cloudy fancies take
Suddenly shape in some divine expression,
Even as the troubled heart doth make
In the white countenance confession,
   The troubled sky reveals
   The grief it feels.\textsuperscript{12,13}

In this example, some lines end with punctuation (comma or period), while others do not. Taking as an example the third and fourth lines, the absence of punctuation at the end of the third line and the syntactical context of these lines indicates that the poet has intentionally enjammed these two lines.

Figure 1.10 shows Lane Johnson’s setting of these lines. If consulting only musical evidence, the conductor may be left to the mercy of his or her own subjective preferences about how the moment between “make” and “in the” should be handled. However, when taking into account textual considerations, it is clear that the poet has enjammed the two lines—a poetic device that the composer has represented musically by leaving out a rest—which indicates that the best course of action here is probably to connect the two musical phrases as they would be in spoken delivery: without a breath or break. Thus, this text-based consideration has a potential impact on how measure 30—and similar moments in this and other pieces—could be handled.


\textsuperscript{13} Author’s note: “Snow-flakes” is from Birds of Passage (Flight the Second), first published in 1845. The previous citation is from an anthology, and not the first printing of the poem.
Figure 1.10 Measures 27-33 of *Snowflakes*, composed by Lane Johnson on a poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.
Microphrasing

Two types of phrasing happen so fleetingly that they exist in a category all their own: microphrasing. Both techniques have the capability to clarify text, but since they affect the melodic line, they fall into the broad category of phrasing. They are the break-no-breath technique and glottal stroke. I will discuss them in this order.

Norman Luboff and Dale Warland collaborated in 1976 and 1977 on a recording project. The two luminaries had each independently been working on a way to clarify text in a specific way. During the recording project, they discussed, combined, and refined their ideas. The resulting technique was the break-no-breath.14 In his instructional video, *Attention To Detail*, Warland talks about this tool:

One subtle alternate to taking a breath for phrasing purposes is simply making a break or stopping the sound. We commonly say, “Break, no breath.” […] It is so common for us as singers to stop the music…[to] break the phrase by taking a breath, and not having a sense of the overall. […] Another purpose of the break is to assist in making the text very clear.15

This technique adds shape to the melodic line without interrupting its contour, trajectory, and “flow.” But more importantly, at least for the topic of this study, is how it can aid in communicating certain constructive elements of the text.

14 Author’s note: This is based on a phone conversation with Dale Warland. There is no evidence or documentation to suggest the origin or originator of the break-no-breath phrasing technique. I became familiar with the technique through Dr. Warland.

The second technique is the glottal stroke. The glottal stroke can lend definition to a word that starts with a vowel sound, especially if the phrase begins with a vowel sound, or if a word that ends with a vowel abuts a word that begins with a vowel.\(^\text{16}\)

In addition to clarifying text, both of these techniques can be employed to represent certain types of comma or emphasize rhetorically significant words by adding space between them.

**Articulation**

When it comes to both text and music, the word “stress” may be taken to mean emphasis by means of relative volume, duration, or forcefulness.\(^\text{17}\) The various textual and musical stresses will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Three. However, for the purposes of this chapter, a cursory introduction is appropriate.

Textual stress may be broken down into three types: lexical, rhetorical, and metrical. Lexical stress, often referred to as “syllabic stress,” has to do with the natural stress of certain syllables in multi-syllabic words. Rhetorical stress, by contrast, refers to the importance of a word or words in a line of poetry or in a sentence. Metrical stress in text (not to be confused with metrical stress in music) is specific to metered poetry, and occurs as a result of a poet’s use of feet in a certain sequence or repeating pattern. When speaking, these emphases are accomplished

\(^{16}\) Author’s note: It is the author’s opinion that glottal strokes should not be attempted unless the conductor can coach the healthiest application possible. Even then, the technique should be used sparingly so as to reduce wear on the voice.

much as they are in music: by relative volume, highness or lowness of pitch, articulation, duration of important words or syllables, etc.

Musical stresses influence the performance of text in sung works, because words and syllables assigned to musically stressed notes are themselves stressed by proxy. Musical stress may be broken down into many types, but this study will focus on five: dynamic accent, agogic accent, pitch accent, tonal stress (or tonic accent), and metrical stress. Dynamic accent is that which is achieved through relative volume. Pitch accent refers to ornamentation, melismas, etc. Tonal stress is the emphasis a note receives due to its relative highness or lowness of pitch compared to the pitches around it, or in relation to the particular instrument’s range. Agogic stress is the emphasis a note receives by duration. Metrical stress (in music) refers to the natural inclination of the performer to emphasize certain beats in certain meters.

Each type of stress can influence how a syllable or word is sung. Some of these fall under the composer’s purview (e.g., rhythm, marked dynamics, rests, pitches, marked articulations, etc.). Other elements are at the conductor’s discretion, and may be considered elements of interpretation (e.g., microphrasing, microdynamics, unmarked dynamics, and unmarked articulations).

An analysis of the poem, “Let Down the Bars, O Death,” reveals how Emily Dickinson constructed her poem:

18 Author’s note: The term agogic accent may also refer to lengthening a note beyond its printed value in order to accent it within the context of rubato. This definition will not be discussed in this document.

19 Author’s note: The scansion was completed by the author with the help of Dr. Don Bogen. All poetic analysis, as with musical analysis, is to some degree subjective.
Let **down** the **bars,** O **Death!**

The **tired** **flocks** come **in**

Whose **bleating** **ceases** to **repeat**

Whose **wandering** is **done.**

**Thine** is the **stillest** **night,**

**Thine** the **securest** **fold;**

Too **near** thou **art** for **seeking** **thee,**

Too **tender** to be **told.**

There are many ways text stresses can be represented musically, either in a composer’s setting or in a performer’s interpretation. Throughout this document, I will revisit Barber’s excellent setting of this poem, as it is rife with material exemplifying how composers can represent textual stresses using musical means. I will further show how the conductor can clarify in performance the poetic construction using certain performance techniques.

**Marked Articulations**

Articulations marked by a composer may have purely musical or textual motivation, or both. The conductor is left to determine why the composer indicated a particular articulation, and how it should be represented in performance. A marked **marcato,** for example, may be performed with various degrees of force depending on stylistic and dynamic context. The same may be said of any score marking. Consider these thoughts of Lampl:
...indications of tempo, dynamics, and articulation are only approximate. They are among the variables of performance, their exact levels and nuances determined only by the performer.²⁰

The specific dynamic values will always depend on the context. For example, \textit{sforzato} in a \textit{piano} passage will be the equivalent of \textit{MP} or \textit{MF}, while in a \textit{forte} or \textit{fortissimo} context it will be more like \textit{FF}, respectively, \textit{FFF}.²¹

In Figure 1.11, the conductor is left to determine how the \textit{tenuto} and \textit{marcato} markings should be performed. Was the composer’s motivation for these markings text-related, music-related, or a balance of both? In what manner and to what degree should these articulations be actuated? The answer may in part lie with a study of the text: the three types of text stress discussed in Chapter Three, and elements of poetic construction such as meter (as discussed in Chapter Two).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{snowflakes.png}
\caption{Measures 4-7 of Snowflakes, composed by Lane Johnson (pub. Walton Music) on a poem of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.}
\end{figure}

In terms of degree, should the \textit{marcato} be as extreme as a \textit{sforzando}, or much more mild? Does the marking pertain to the vowel, the consonant, or both? How should it interact with the


²¹ Ibid., 75. The dynamics appear here as they did in the original publication.
next note: connected (\geq) or with a space (\Rightarrow)\? The answers to these questions may be discovered in part with careful analysis of the text. The articulation of a note can be linked to the stress of the text.

Unmarked Articulations

The conductor may encounter a score with relatively few articulations. Perhaps the composer feels that the articulation that he or she had in his or her “mind’s ear” during the process of composition will simply be accurately assumed by all who attempt a performance of the work, and therefore does not need to be indicated. It may be the desire of the composer or publisher to produce a “clean” score to help facilitate sales. Or it may be that the composer wants an unarticulated phrase and indicated no articulation because none is desired. Finally, the composer may want a well-styled phrase, but prefers to be vague, purposefully leaving it to the conductor to determine the articulation of each note or phrase.

Whether or not the composer has been specific about his or her indication, most phrases will require some kind of articulation. When articulations are not marked, the conductor is left to make such determinations. A text-based means of making such determinations involves understanding the structural elements of the text. Determining the lexical, rhetorical, and metrical stresses of a poem can have musical implications, including matters of articulation.
Special Choral Techniques

Reduction of Forces

There are certain instances where temporarily reducing performing forces could contribute to an effective communication of the text. Parenthetical modifications, typically identifiable by the use of nested punctuation, are the most obvious instance.

Parenthetical modifications are internal to a sentence. They interrupt a thought while simultaneously clarifying it, and are typically found nested between punctuation marks that are the same.

There are two types of parenthetical modifications of interest to this study: appositives and nonrestrictive clauses. Examples and definitions from *The Modern Writer’s Handbook* and *Analyzing the grammar of English* respectively follow:

| Appositive | “A word or group of words that defines or renames the noun that precedes it.”<sup>22</sup> | “The pretrial phase of the litigation, like all pretrial work, lasted longer than the trial itself.”
| Nonrestrictive clause | “…does not limit or restrict its antecedent.”<sup>23</sup> | “The suspect in the lineup, who owns a red car, committed the crime.” |

*Figure 1.12* These two types of nested punctuation could have an impact on choral performance.

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Encountering parenthetical modifications when speaking often results in the voice changing in some significant way for the nested text: the volume may increase or decrease, the nesting punctuation may be represented by pauses, the speech articulation may change (e.g., more forceful, separated, or smooth), the rate of speech may increase or decrease, the word stress(es) may be exaggerated or all syllables may be stressed equally, timbre may be changed to include whispering or shouting, etc. All of these can be represented musically.

When singing a line of text that includes a parenthetical modification, special attention may be paid to the modification in order to achieve the clarification desired by the text’s author. Composers may represent such textual phenomena in a number of ways: using rests to represent punctuation; changing articulation, tempo, or meter; increasing the rhythmic energy or harmonic rhythm; and indicating a change of scoring (such as use of soloist or semi-chorus).

From a performance standpoint, there is one additional effective way to perform parenthetical modifications that is unique to vocal ensembles. That is to change the forces slightly. For example, in a choir of forty-eight voices, decreasing forces to thirty-six for a few words may be barely perceptible by an audience, but the effect may be enough to deliver the text more accurately and expressively. The effect of reducing the number of singers is quite different from simply reducing the volume of the choir as a whole.

In the final stanza of Longfellow’s *The Day Is Done*, the words “that infest the day” are nested between two commas, and constitute a nonrestrictive clause:

> And the night shall be filled with music  
> And the cares, that infest the day,  
> Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,  
> And as silently steal away.
Depending on the musical setting, reducing the forces for these few words may add dimension to the performance.\textsuperscript{24}

Altered Timbre

Altering the vocal timbre may be justified by certain elements of the text. In addition to the composer’s indications, the conductor may choose to change the vocal timbre of the choir, even when the composer has made no such indication. These techniques are applicable to all vocal forms, including solo voice. Stein and Spillman point out:

One aspect of musical sound that usually has no specific instruction by the composer is that of timbre, meaning tone quality or tone color. […] The instruction “expressivo”…might be considered a request for tonal color;… In some places a composer may ask for “dolce”…which might suggest certain types of sounds to performers.\textsuperscript{25}

For purposes of this document, only the tone of the choral performers will be considered.\textsuperscript{26} For the choir, such alterations include brightening the tone, adding nasality, or using a breathy tone. The conductor may also experiment with vibrato rates, asking singers for \textit{non vibrato}, mannered vibrato, or even a warble tone.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{24} Author’s note: In the case of Stephen Paulus’ setting, the application of this technique at this moment would detract from the musical composition. It is for this reason that Paulus’ setting is not included here as an example.


\textsuperscript{26} Author’s note: Instrumental timbre is fascinating to consider, and can play a wonderful role in augmenting the singers’ communication of the text. However, this topic is outside the scope of this study. Briefly, such timbral alteration may include \textit{una corda} (piano), bow closer to or further from the bridge (strings), issues of registration (organ), hand muff (drum), mallet choice (keyboard percussion), etc.

\textsuperscript{27} Author’s note: Any such altered vocal production should not be attempted unless the desired tone can be taught and modeled in such a way as to avoid unhealthy production. As singers can easily misunderstand the conductor’s
In Dickinson’s “Let Down the Bars, O Death,” using a brighter or more nasal vocal production may more effectively communicate the poem’s third line. In the line “Whose bleating ceases to repeat” the poet uses assonance (recurring vowel sounds within a line of poetry, phrase, or sentence) to paint a sonic picture of the bleating of a flock: the recurring [i] vowel sound in “bleating,” “ceases,” and “repeat” is intended to subtly mimic the sound of sheep. In Barber’s setting, were the choir to add the slightest hint of nasality to the vocal production, the content and construction of this line of text could perhaps be even better communicated, and constitute a reading of the text closer to the poet’s intention (see Figure 1.13).

If attempted, such a choice would need to be so subtle as to be barely perceptible to the listener except, perhaps, on a subconscious level. The conductor should seek to make the technique unique to this one phrase, discontinuing the use of the artificially bright tone for the remainder of the piece.

intent, they may end up producing the tone in an unhealthy way, which could lead to temporary or lasting vocal damage. The conductor is encouraged to research the healthy production of such altered timbres thoroughly. Experts in vocal pedagogy or cross-cultural vocal production can be invaluable resources in this endeavor.
Figure 1.13 Measures 1-11 of *Let Down the Bars, O Death*, composed by Samuel Barber on a poem of Emily Dickinson.
CHAPTER TWO: POETIC METER

In poetry, the term ‘meter’ refers to the rhythmic structure of a poem, or of an individual line or stanza. This rhythmic structure helps the poet organize the natural stresses of language into designs of purposeful intent.¹ These two linguistic perspectives are at once in cooperation with and opposition to one another:

Versification involves a continual reconciliation of two apparently opposed elements. One is rhythm, in the sense of the fluid and shifting movements of live speech. The other is meter, in the sense of a fixed, abstract pattern according to which those movements are organized. […] The two elements are engaged in a spirited dialectic that is always expressing itself in new ways and is always expanding and enriching the relationship without breaking it.²

The musical representation of textual elements is to some degree the purview of the composer, and to some degree that of the conductor. This document operates under the premise that an ideal performance of a choral score for which the text is a poem is one that respects the intentions of both composer and poet.

Understanding a poem in terms of its meter can greatly influence the performance of a choral setting of that poem. In this chapter, I will discuss how analysis of a poetic text can influence the interpretation of the musical elements in a choral score.

Metrical Systems

In *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form*, Paul Fussell contends that there are four major metrical systems in use in English language poetry.³

Fussell defines syllabic poetry as measuring “only the number of syllables per line without regard to the stress of the syllables relative to each other.”⁴ Each line has a fixed number of syllables without regard for rhyme scheme, feet, etc. An example of this is haiku, which prescribes three lines of 5, 7, and 5 syllables respectively. It is also popular in Romance languages. Again, Fussell states: “…syllabism is not a natural measuring system in a language so Germanic and thus so accentual as English.”⁵

In accentual poetry, the number of accented syllables per line is prescribed, but the accents may fall in any pattern. The number of syllables is irrelevant. “If syllabic meter seems naturally appropriate to Romance poetry, it is accentual meter which is the basis of most Germanic poetries—including Old English—and of most poems in Modern English in which the number of syllables varies from line to line.”⁶

In accentual-syllabic poetry (again, Fussell’s definition), “…both the accents and the syllables are measured and numbered, and the mensuration is often conceived of in terms of feet, that is, conventional patterns of units of stressed and unstressed syllables.” Fussell continues, “Of all metrical systems in English, the accentual-syllabic is the most hostile by nature to impulse, irregularity, and unrestrained grandiosity.” As a result, “Accentual-syllabic meter seems to be

⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid.
⁶ Ibid.
fashionable during ages interested in classical rhetoric and committed to a sense of human
limitation and order.”

Quantitative poetry divides the poetic line into feet based on relative duration of the
syllables without regard for accents or stresses. It does not lend itself to English poetry because
stresses in English are achieved by relative volume rather than relative duration; that is, English
is by its nature accentual.

The most common metrical systems for English-language poetry are accentual-syllabic
and accentual.8 This study will discuss a variety of approaches to poetic meter, with particular
focus on these two metrical systems and the analytical techniques associated with them.

Other metrical systems such as alliterative verse and free verse are not included in this
study. Alliterative verse is really a subset of accentual verse. Free verse is beyond the scope of
this document.

**Formal Divisions**

Most of the poems explored in this study are divided into stanzas, a group of lines set
apart on the page by a line of empty space. Stanzas may comprise any number of lines, and a
poem may comprise any number of stanzas. Compare Dickinson’s *Let Down the Bars, O Death*
with two stanzas of four lines each, Longfellow’s *Snow-flakes* with three stanzas of six lines
each, and Sears’ *Calm on the Listening Ear of Night* with five stanzas of eight lines each (see

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7 Ibid.

8 Timothy Steele, *All the Fun’s in How You Say a Thing* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999), 54.
Appendix A). When written in printed form apart from the musical setting, major structural divisions are often indicated by a line of empty space when printed and by a pause when read aloud. However, formal divisions may also be enjambed.

Temporal and Phrasing Considerations

There are three considerations for the composer and conductor at these major structural divisions. When a stanza is coming to an end, the composer may represent this major structural division musically in a number of ways: a ritard leading to the final words of the stanza, a fermata on the final word or syllable of a stanza, or a drawn out cadential sequence.

The pause associated with a stanza break when a poem is spoken can be represented musically in a variety of ways: a group breath, a caesura (i.e., a musical caesura), or an instrumental interlude. The conductor may determine the length of a caesura or grand pause by taking into consideration the punctuation with which a stanza ends. A period or exclamation point constitutes a more significant change, for example, than a comma or semicolon (this will be discussed further in Chapter Four).

Going from one stanza to the next may also be represented musically by some significant change, often of key, mode, or tempo (see Figure 1.1 above). All of these are compositional devices. However, there may be times when a conductor can employ performance techniques to underscore the formal division. For example, the composer may have desired a ritard but not marked one, a point already touched on in Chapter One. The compositional devices employed may not on their own result in a significant enough textual division for the listener; or the composer’s markings may contain enough ambiguity that taking into consideration textual elements may allow the conductor to clarify what the composition may not.
If a fermata is marked in the music at the point of a poem’s formal division, the conductor may include this fact in his or her thinking when determining the approach, duration, and departure from the held note (as discussed in Chapter One). The handling of a caesura within a single line may be similarly influenced. Conversely, if a fermata or caesura is marked at a point where no formal division of the poem is found, that will certainly influence the interpretation as well.

For example, in Vachel Lindsay’s poem, “Two Old Crows,” there is only one time an empty space demarcating a formal division appears (see Appendix A). In Norman Dello Joio’s setting of Lindsay’s poem, titled Of Crows and Clusters, he marks a fermata at this exact point in the text, the only time in the entire piece a fermata appears (see Figure 2.1). Given that this is the only formal division represented visually in the written poem, the handling of this fermata is vital to the communication of the text. Indeed, the story takes an important turn at this point, so the fermata has dramatic implications. The rallentando poco marked in measure 63 answers the question of how the composer prefers the fermata be approached. The conductor only needs to decide how long to hold it, and how to handle its release. Holding the fermata too long, or following it with too long a pause may hint at melodrama, which would surely go beyond the intent of both poet and composer in this case. While the composer does not specify whether the fermata should be lunga or breve, a short hold (perhaps extending the half-note to three beats) should be sufficient. In terms of the fermata’s release, a plain-text reading of the score dictates that the cut-off of the held note should coincide exactly with the entrance of the piano in measure 65. This would also serve to illustrate the first two words of the next line of text, “Just then a bee
flew close to their rail.” This solution is mirrored in a recording conducted by Dale Warland.\textsuperscript{9,10}

This way of handling the \textit{fermata}, then, would seem to serve the interests of poet and composer.

\textsuperscript{9} The Dale Warland Singers, Dale Warland, conductor, "Of Crows and Clusters," \textit{Fancie} (Minneapolis: DWS Collections CD1001, 1994).

\textsuperscript{10} Confirmed via e-mail correspondence with Dr. Warland; see Appendix C.
Figure 2.1 Measures 61-66 of *Of Crows and Clusters* by Norman Dello Joio on a poem of Vachel Lindsay.
An example of a poetic formal division without a marked *ritard or fermata* is Lane Johnson’s setting of Longfellow’s “Snow-flakes.” The stanzaic division occurs after the line “descends the snow” (see Appendix A to examine the full text). In measures 20-22, the composer represents this formal division using a five-beat *decrescendo* and held note at the end of stanza one. A full choral breath follows, representing the pause that would occur with spoken delivery. The new stanza then begins with a change in meter, tempo, rhythmic energy, dynamic, and texture (see Figure 2.2). The composer has clearly represented this major poetic structural moment using musical means. However, no temporal change is indicated anywhere in measures 16-22. Despite the absence of such a marking, textual justification exists for a *ritard* beginning anywhere measure 16 or later, as the lines “Silent and soft and slow / descends the snow” are the final lines of the stanza. A recording of a composer-collaborative performance conducted by Ronald Staheli includes a *ritard* at this point, implying that such a *ritard* may be preferred or at least sanctioned by the composer.¹¹

Figure 2.2 Measures 16-23 of *Snowflakes* by Lane Johnson on a poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Implications for Rehearsal

In 2006, I conducted an interview with Dale Warland in preparation for my doctoral lecture-recital, which was on a similar topic as this document. In that interview, Warland provides this insight in regards to how the text influences his rehearsal process: “I invariably tear apart/organize the rehearsal [of a piece] in sections of music according to the structure of the text.”
This may be a revelation to those who rehearse strictly by musical phrase or form. As discussed above, musical form and poetic form frequently coincide. However, this is not always the case.

It is recommended that major formal elements in the poem be marked in a special way in the score. This way, the conductor has a visual reminder of where the structures of the poem and its musical setting coincide and where they do not. Having this notation in the score would allow the conductor greater spontaneity in how to execute temporal moments such as the rate of a ritard or duration of a fermata. It would also remind the conductor to heed Warland’s advice rehearse a section of music according to its musical form, as well as according to its textual form. This will further ensure that, even when the two do not coincide, both are represented in performance.

Poetic Meter

There are two considerations in analyzing the meter of accentual and accentual-syllabic poetry: the type of foot or feet used and the number of feet (or syllables) per line.

Feet

Poetic feet consist of one, two, or three syllables, in various combinations of stressed and unstressed syllables.\textsuperscript{12} The common types of poetic foot are shown in Figure 2.3. The most

\textsuperscript{12} Author’s note: Technically, there are feet comprised of four syllables, but these are rarely used. None are used in any poem exemplified herein; the scope of this document is limited to three syllables and fewer.
common foot in English verse is the iamb. By extension, this means that most English-language poetry can be said to be iambic:

Iambic measures are so prevalent in our verse precisely because they flexibly accommodate the structure and stress patterns of English.\(^\text{13}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One Syllable</th>
<th>Two Syllables</th>
<th>Three Syllables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>monosyllable</td>
<td>pyrrhic</td>
<td>tribrach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iamb</td>
<td>anapest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>spondee</td>
<td>antibacchius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>trochee</td>
<td>dactyl</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(\text{Figure 2.3}\) The principal types of poetic foot. Unstressed syllables are indicated with a breve (˘), stressed syllables are indicated with a grave accent (˚).

However, as will be discussed in Chapter Three, an iamb reflects only two levels of stress as opposed to spoken English, which involves a much wider range of stress. Stresses in spoken English are achieved primarily through relative volume. Historically, however, the stresses of spoken language have been represented in relative duration and pitch when set to music. The thirteenth-century treatise *De Mensurabili Musica*\(^\text{14}\) explained the system that had already been

\(^{13}\) Timothy Steele, *All the Fun’s in How You Say a Thing* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999), 29.

\(^{14}\) Commonly attributed to Johannes de Garlandia, but now believed to be of anonymous authorship.
in use for some time, though the rhythmic system described also had application to melismatic passages notated using modal notation (see Figure 2.4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Original Notation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Poetic Symbols</th>
<th>Poetic Equivalent</th>
<th>A Modern Rhythmic Equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>long-short</td>
<td><code>  ˘</code></td>
<td>trochee</td>
<td>Q E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>short-long</td>
<td>˘ `</td>
<td>iamb</td>
<td>E Q</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>long-short-short</td>
<td><code>  ˘  ˘</code></td>
<td>dactyl</td>
<td>Q. E Q</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>short-short-long</td>
<td><code>  ˘  ˘</code></td>
<td>anapest</td>
<td>E Q Q.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>long-long-long</td>
<td><code> </code> `</td>
<td>molossus</td>
<td>Q. Q. Q.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>short-short-short</td>
<td><code>  ˘  ˘ ˘</code></td>
<td>tribrach</td>
<td>E E E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.4 The rhythmic modes in use from 1170 A.D. or earlier. The treatise *De mensurabili musica* equates poetic stresses to rhythmic values.¹⁵

The idea of equating linguistic stress to relative duration is still a viable tool for modern composition. This type of stress, called “agogic stress,” was introduced in Chapter One and will be covered in greater detail in Chapter Three.

Emily Dickinson uses iambics to structure her “Let Down the Bars, O Death” (see Figure 2.5a). Maintaining the iambic pattern throughout this verse creates certain problems that must be parsed when applying one’s scansion of this verse to a performance of Barber’s setting. First, “tired” must be scanned as comprising two syllables, though Barber sets this word as a single,

¹⁵ The rhythmic mode chart is based on that found in *Unsuspected Eloquence*, but has been expanded by the author: James Winn, *Unsuspected Eloquence* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981): 92.
elided syllable. Second, the relatively unimportant preposition “to” (in line three) and the auxiliary verb “is” (in line four) would each receive stress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Let</th>
<th>down</th>
<th>the</th>
<th>bars,</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>Death!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The</th>
<th>ti-</th>
<th>red</th>
<th>flocks</th>
<th>come</th>
<th>in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whose</th>
<th>bleat-</th>
<th>ing</th>
<th>ceas-</th>
<th>es</th>
<th>to</th>
<th>re-</th>
<th>peat,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whose</th>
<th>wan-</th>
<th>der-</th>
<th>ing</th>
<th>is</th>
<th>done.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2.5a** Scansion of the first stanza of Emily Dickinson’s *Let Down the Bars O Death* maintaining strictly an iambic pattern throughout. The right-most column lists the number of syllables per line.

Taking into account the other types of linguistic stress—not just metrical, but rhetorical and lexical as well—creates a more varied contour (see Figure 2.5b).
Figure 2.5b  Linguistic stress analysis of the first stanza of Emily Dickinson’s *Let Down the Bars O Death*, reflecting the varying levels of textual stress. The three types of linguistic stress will be discussed in Chapter Three.

In setting this stanza, Samuel Barber incorporates all three types of linguistic stress in his rhythms, metric assignations, and other musical stresses (see Figure 2.5c). For example, he observes the iambic nature of the text by awarding the metrically stressed syllables (such as
“down,” “bars,” and “death” in the first line) the longest rhythmic durations in each phrase almost without exception (see Figure 2.6). However, he ignores the iambic pattern in how he sets three important syllables. The first such instance is the assignation of the very first word, “Let,” which appears on a downbeat, and occupies a full beat. Had Barber felt compelled to represent the iambic pattern using musical means, he would surely have set this word on an anacrusis, and may even have assigned to it a shorter rhythmic value. Barber also deemphasizes less important words such as “to” and “is,” both of which would receive stress in a purely iambic reading, by assigning them short rhythmic values and to weak beats or off-beats. Barber’s reading is thereby revealed: he substitutes a spondee for “Let down,” reflecting the imperative nature of the verb “Let;” creates an anapest feeling on “to repeat;” and a dactylic feeling on “wandering” (in line four, isolating and negating “whose”). The performance implications of this realization are explored below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Let</th>
<th>down</th>
<th>the</th>
<th>bars,</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>Death!</th>
<th>(6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The</td>
<td>tired</td>
<td>flocks</td>
<td>come</td>
<td>in</td>
<td></td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whose</td>
<td>bleat-</td>
<td>ing</td>
<td>ceas-</td>
<td>es</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>re-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whose</td>
<td>wan-</td>
<td>der-</td>
<td>ing</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>done.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2.5c** Scansion of the first stanza of Emily Dickinson’s *Let Down the Bars O Death*, reflecting Barber’s setting. This takes into account the various types of musical stresses discussed in Chapter Three. Differences between this reading and the strictly iambic reading of Figure 2.5a (in boldface) are “Let,” “tired,” “to,” and “is.”
Figure 2.6 Measures 1-11 of *Let Down the Bars, O Death*, composed by Samuel Barber on a poem of Emily Dickinson. These measures set the first stanza.

Some poetic feet may have certain implications associated with them that affect how they would likely be read aloud:

“...the choice of rhythm and meter influences the speed at which a text can be spoken and consequently how a text can be set to music. Lines with spondees, for example, with their single- or double-stressed syllables, tend to move slowly and
can feel labored, while lines with anapests and dactyls, with the several short unstressed syllables, lend themselves to swifter movement.”16

This quote speaks to the relation of feet to rhythm and meter for the composer in setting text. The sentiment, however, can be transferred and applied to the interpretive process, particularly in terms of articulation.

A conductor who understands this principle may find that considering texts in terms of feet may influence the articulation of a note, phrase, or motive. For example, the “labored” feel of a spondee can translate to a heavier articulation, such as marcato, ben marcato, or marcato-tenuto (≥). The “swifter movement” of an anapest or dactyl may receive a lighter articulation such as staccato, portato, leggiero for a separated effect, or messa di voce (as applied to short notes) for a connected, “string of pearls” effect.

In “Let Down the Bars, O Death,” the very first foot is iambic, but in his setting, Barber seems almost to treat it as a spondaic foot by putting “Let” on the downbeat. He then lends import to “down” via agogic stress (counteracting through agogic stress the metrically weak beat two). This is an example of a composer glossing the text using musical means. The conductor is then faced with the choice of whether to purposefully de-emphasize “Let” in order to retain Dickinson’s iambic framework, or let it naturally achieve the amount of stress Barber seems to prefer just by its falling on a downbeat. The author’s preference is to ask the choir for poco marcato on both “Let” and “down,” thereby allowing the agogic stress of “down” to be the only distinction between the two in terms of emphasis.

16 Stein and Spillman, Poetry Into Song, 39.
The opposite is true of Randall Thompson’s setting of Robert Frost’s “The Road Not Taken.” In this case, the first two words of the poem (“Two roads”) comprise a spondaic foot, as both are stressed (see Figure 2.7). However, Thompson sets “Two” as an anacrusis. In this way, Thompson mismatches the strength lent this syllable by the poetic meter with a weak position in the musical meter, in essence making it an iamb. When performing Thompson’s setting for choir (see Figure 2.8), the conductor again faces a conflict between musical stresses and textual ones. A weighty articulation such as marcato-tenuto will counter the effect of the weak beat to which this syllable has been assigned.

```
\[ \text{Two roads di-verged In a yel-low wood} \]
```

*Figure 2.7* The first line of Robert Frost’s “The Road Not Taken” with scansion.

In contrast, the same line by Frost features a dactyl: “in a yel-.” Contrasting this with a lighter articulation (*portato* or similar) on each of the eighth notes may help set this substituted foot apart (too separated an articulation would disrupt the melodic arch, which was surely intended to be performed *legato*).

Such articulation—heavier on spondees, lighter on dactyls—is in keeping with Stein and Spillman’s assertion (see above). Such attention to detail will result in a performance more respectful of the intentions of both poet and composer.
Figure 2.8 Measures 4-7 of Randall Thompson’s “The Road Not Taken” (from *Frostiana*) on a poem of Robert Frost. Vocal parts only.

Line Length

Feet are strung together in regular patterns to form lines of poetry. The number of feet per line is called, appropriately, line length. The terminology used to refer to how many feet are in a line is shown in Figure 2.9. One and two feet per line are uncommon in English-language accentual-syllabic verse. Seven and eight feet per line are also rarely used and border on being prose since the pattern of feet (as well as rhyme scheme) is too easily lost for the typical listener. The most common line lengths are three, four, five and six feet per line.
The relevance of line length for the topic of this study is found in both the analytical process and in determinations surrounding phrasing. As mentioned briefly in Chapter One, line length will typically be represented musically in phrase or period length. Therefore, breaths may be determined in part by knowing whether and how the poetic line and melody correlate. Generally, it is more appropriate for a choir to breathe at the end of a line than in the middle.

Dickinson structured her “Let Down the Bars, O Death” in two quatrains (see Appendix A). Barber, in turn, sets each phrase of text to a single phrase of music, separated by rests (see Figure 2.6 above).

However, there are times when the phrasing is less overt. Poems and their musical settings do not always coincide. In these cases, the conductor may need to make a determination. Hopefully, a solution that respects the intentions of both poet and composer can be reached.
Two examples will illustrate this point; both are drawn from Joseph Byrd’s setting for choir of Edna St. Vincent Millay’s “Song for a Lute” (see Figure 2.10). The poet ends each of the first two lines with a comma. However, starting with the third line, commas begin appearing in other points of the line, or not at all. This presents a challenge for the composer, who needs to choose between setting an entire line of poetry and maintaining the rhyme scheme, and forgoing the rhyme scheme in order to set the groups of words as they would be were they prose (e.g., “Alter this dulcet eye, forbear” versus just “Alter this dulcet eye”).

![Figure 2.10](image)

Byrd chooses to group the lines by comma rather than represent the poetic structure by setting each line of poetry as a musical phrase (See Figure 2.11). The chiastic keystone of the rhyme scheme is the fifth line (indicated by the boxed ‘b’). Of the two words that end this line, the first ends with “–ly,” continuing the quasi-consonant rhymes (indicated with ‘b’ throughout Figure 2.10), and [ˈɪər] (continuing the rhymes indicated ‘a’ throughout Figure 2.10) respectively. It is here that Byrd makes his first major structural shift, opting to end his musical phrase with “wholly,” saving “wear” for after the instrumental interlude.
Because of the prose-like structure of Millay’s poem and how Byrd chose to set it, there are two phrasing issues that the conductor must address (see Appendix A and Figure 2.11). The
first occurs in measure 2, between the words “utterly” and “and.” In the written poem, a comma appears between these two words. Byrd has represented the comma with an eighth rest. The conductor has two options about how to actuate this moment: (1) have the choir breathe on the rest; or (2) observe the rest as written, but without a breath. The second option achieves the best of both worlds: the comma is represented, and the phrase is not disrupted.

The second issue occurs in measure 6, between the words “eye” and “forbear.” In the written poem, a comma appears between these two words (see Figure 2.10). However, the comma is used for grammatical rather than structural reasons, in that it is used as it would be used in prose, rather than at the end of the line as it would in a “typical” poem. Commas such as this (the different types of commas will be discussed in Chapter Four) may be equated with silence, or may be ignored for musical purposes. In this case, the composer has not indicated that a breath be taken here, but also has not mandated via a dashed slur or similar marking that a break must not be taken. Thus, the conductor is faced with four alternatives: (1) deliver a plain-text reading of the poem by having the choir carry over from “eye” to “forbear” (employing this option will not represent the comma); (2) have the choir “fade the dot” by going to half-volume on beat two, but without stopping the sound; (3) have the choir take a breath on beat two, replacing the dot with an eighth rest to represent the comma (considering that the composer represented a comma with a rest in measure two, but purposefully did not do so at this point would seem to negate this possibility as going against the composer’s intention); and (4) have the choir represent the comma with a sliver of silence, but not with a breath: that is, have them employ the break-no-breath technique.

In a telephone interview, the composer stated that these decisions may vary from conductor to conductor, and that he has no preference about how these moments should be
handled.\textsuperscript{17} The ambiguities in the score at these two moments confirm this license. It therefore becomes the conductor’s responsibility to determine the best way to handle these instances. For both of these two phrasing issues, the option presented last would seem to be the most respectful of both the poet’s and composer’s intentions.

\section*{Poetic Meter and Choral Performance}

Traditional methods of poetic analysis ("scansion") result in a binary approach to stress: that is, a syllable is either stressed or unstressed. Trying to represent this binary understanding of speech in song will result in a “sing-song” style of performance that will be counter to natural speech rhythms. In reality, the English language has seemingly infinite levels of stress.\textsuperscript{18} This is why I propose in this document a more nuanced approach to verbal analysis that incorporates all three types of textual stress.

Understanding the poem is so important to a score’s analysis that scansion is recommended as an early step in the score study process when the text of a choral score is poetic in nature. The poetic meter may have influenced the composer during the creative process, and may be represented musically in the composition. Understanding the composer’s approach to the poem from a technical standpoint will undoubtedly influence the conductor’s interpretive approach.

\textsuperscript{17} Telephone interview between Drew Collins and Joseph Byrd on 11 August 2010.

\textsuperscript{18} Steele, \textit{All the Fun's in How You Say a Thing}, 31.
As mentioned above, Dickinson constructs her “Let Down the Bars, O Death” in iambic trimeter and iambic tetrameter. The iambic pattern of weak-strong is steady throughout the line of text. The three most important syllables of the third line, “bleat-,” “ceas-,” and “-peat,” have been expertly set by Barber so as to receive the three longest rhythmic values of the bar. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this is an application of agogic stress. But clearly, the fourth iamb places a stress on the preposition “to,” a rhetorically unimportant word (rhetorical stress will be explored further in Chapter Three). Yet, in a strictly iambic rendering, it would be given equal emphasis as “bleat-,” “ceas-,” and “-peat.” By assigning “to” to beat four, a traditionally weak beat in common meter, and by assigning it to shorter rhythmic values than the other three syllables, Barber decreases its importance. He essentially equates this word with some of the unstressed syllables of the line (see Figure 2.5a-c and 2.6). In this way, Barber essentially substitutes Dickinson’s iambic foot for a pyrrhic foot, which results in an anapest or dactylic feeling. Applying the principle pointed out previously by Stein and Spillman that, “lines with…several short unstressed syllables, lend themselves to swifter movement.” It may be appropriate, therefore, to ask the choir to speed slightly through the anacrusis. Again, this should be on the most nuanced level.

The other three metrically stressed syllables, “bleat-,” “ceas-,” and “-peat,” have already been lent agogic stress by the composer as discussed above. The conductor may feel that no more emphasis is necessary. If, however, some kind of distinction is desired, a slight emphasis on each of these (e.g., singing these syllables slightly louder or messa di voce) may put a nice polish on the performance.

When a composer chooses rhythms that complement the meter of the poem, as Barber does in the previous example, the conductor may choose to add musical accents that reinforce the
composer’s setting, or may prefer a plain-text rendering. However, when a composer chooses rhythms that do not reinforce the poem’s natural stresses, the conductor has a slightly harder task. This is the case with Thompson’s setting of Frost’s “The Road Not Taken.”

First, the conductor must decide whether the composer intended a performance to be unaccented or for the conductor to communicate the poem’s structure in spite of the musical setting. Unless the composer is alive and available for consultation or has made his or her preference known in some researchable way, the conductor must make this determination.

In the Thompson, microphrasing can lend a spoken quality to a sung performance. For example, the first words of the opening line “Two roads diverged” are set almost entirely to quarter notes. If the conductor considers exclusively the melodic line, the result is a quite pleasant arch-shaped phrase in which dynamics mirror the melodic line (see Figure 2.12a). Such a reading ignores the subtle nuances of the text, including lexical stresses of multi-syllabic words and rhetorically important words. In fact, if approached this way, the peak of the phrase occurs on the rhetorically unimportant words “in a.”

However, if text stresses and musical stresses are consulted in addition to the melodic shape, the result is a contour with greater nuance and dimension that respects poet and composer in equal measure (see Figure 2.12b). The peak of the phrase is highest at “-verged,” the stressed syllable of the rhetorically vital word “diverged.”
Figure 2.12a The dynamic contour of “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood” from Frost’s “The Road Not Taken” if only melodic contour were taken into account. The peak occurs on the rhetorically unimportant words, “in a.”

Figure 2.12b The dynamic contour of “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,” if both textual and melodic stresses are taken into account. The greatest stress occurs on the second syllable of the rhetorically important word, “diverged.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT</th>
<th>two</th>
<th>roads</th>
<th>di-</th>
<th>verged</th>
<th>in a</th>
<th>yel-</th>
<th>low</th>
<th>wood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MUSICAL</th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dynamic</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agogic</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>27.5</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>22</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2.12c** Figure 2.12b (above) is based on this chart, which assigns point values based on the three types of textual stress received in a poem, and the five types of musical stress that syllable receives in a particular musical setting. This type of chart will be explained in Chapter Three.
CHAPTER THREE: TYPES OF TEXTUAL AND MUSICAL STRESS

“Stress” of a syllable, word, or note may be defined as emphasis as a result of any factor that can set it apart from those around it. Such factors may include relative loudness, duration, pitch, or articulation.

Of the four types of textual stress, the three with particular relevance for the topic at hand will be discussed and applied to this study; of the nine types of musical stress, six with particular relevance will be discussed. Each of the stresses explored herein can play a vital role in the interpretation of a choral score. Being able to identify and distinguish between them allows the conductor to make text-conscious decisions about a wide variety of performance issues.

When speaking a poem aloud, a fluent English speaker will stress words and syllables naturally, informed by a lifetime of hearing and speaking words and sentences in the English language. When a poem is “set” as part of a musical composition, compositional devices, musical presuppositions on the part of the performer, and other factors can serve to reinforce or contradict these stresses. When textual and musical stresses are considered in combination, the result is declamation, the “relation between verbal stress and melodic accent in the [musical] setting and delivery of a text.”

When an ensemble performs a musical work, certain specific issues arise in regards to achieving a common approach to textual issues. The composer prescribes many elements of a text’s interpretation, especially temporal ones (tempo, meter, and rhythm) and inflective ones

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(melody, dynamics, and articulation). One challenge for the conductor and choral singer is to achieve an interpretation that respects the intentions of both poet and composer, even when musical and textual elements seem not to complement one another. This chapter presents the types of musical stress and textual stress and discusses how they interact with one another in a choral score.

Textual Stresses

Gordon Paine suggests that the choral conductor ask, “What is the natural stress of the words and how can this inherent contouring of the text be used to help shape the musical line?”² The discussion and the methods in this document, and in this chapter especially, seek to answer this and other related questions.

There are four types of textual stress: lexical, metrical (this term is used both for a type of musical stress and a type of textual stress), rhetorical, and contrastive. The first three of these are given the greatest attention in this study; contrastive stress is introduced but is treated as a special type of rhetorical stress. These may be employed individually or in combination to heighten the performer’s communication of the text.

Different languages stress syllables and words using different means. Stress in spoken English is achieved primarily through relative loudness. That is, a stressed word or syllable will be slightly louder than the unstressed syllables in the same word or sentence. The principles and

techniques discussed herein may be used to help determine what syllables and words in written
English would be emphasized when spoken aloud. Understanding them and applying them in the
choral rehearsal process will result in a far more sensitive, expressive, text-conscious choral
performance.

In a musical setting, textual stress can be communicated by several means: relative
duration, pitch, accent, and dynamic. The composer prescribes duration and pitch. The composer
may prescribe accent, or the conductor may determine it. Relative dynamic on a syllabic level,
while possible to communicate to the performer via notation, is left almost exclusively to the
performer’s discretion.

Changing the rate of speech, pitch, vocal timbre, articulation (e.g., over-enunciation), and
volume can also assist in a more expressive delivery; all of these components of spoken delivery
have musical parallels.

Lexical Stress (or “Syllabic Stress”)

Lexical stress refers to the stress given to each syllable of a polysyllabic word. In
dictionaries (or, “lexicons”), polysyllabic words are divided by syllable, with accents placed over
syllables that receive natural emphasis when spoken. Choral conductors often refer to this
informally as “syllabic stress.” Lampl summarizes the importance of this particular type of
stress:

3 Joseph Powell and Mark Halperin, Accent on Meter (Urbana, Ill: National Council of Teachers of English, 2004): 16. Author’s note: This nomenclature has not been codified across the field. For example, some authors use the term
“lexical stress” to refer to the stress of important words, which others refer to as “rhetorical stress.”
A line of text may be read in many different ways, depending on the concepts of the actor or speaker. One element, however, will always remain constant: the pattern of syllabic accents. The word “father” for example—with the accent on the first syllable—will never become “fathér,” or the word “grandfather,” “grandfâther” or “grandfâther”. When the difference between accented and unaccented syllables is not maintained, the delivery becomes monotonous. The words become almost unintelligible and for the listener the meaning of the text is all but lost.4

When dictionaries divide words into syllables, the syllable that is to receive the primary stress receives a boldface acute accent (´). Two-syllable words have one stressed syllable and one unstressed syllable. In line eleven of Thomas Ferril’s “No Mark,” for example, lexical stress applies to only three words, because only three words have more than one syllable:

Then o´ • cean cross´ • es ver´ • y still

For words with three or more syllables, one syllable will receive the primary stress, one or more of the remaining syllables will receive secondary stress—each notated with a plain-type acute accent (´)—and the remaining syllables are considered unstressed. Here is another example from “No Mark,” in which the three-syllable word “sassafras” receives a primary stress on “sas-” and a secondary stress on “-fras”:

Scrub´ • oak grows and sas´ • sa • fras´

Though this system denotes only three levels of stress—primary, secondary, and unstressed—it is important to note that English actually has as many as four levels of significant spoken stress.5 Later in this chapter, I will present an original system for determining and

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combining the various levels of textual stress in a way that achieves a contour closer to how the poem would be spoken aloud, with ready application to a piece of choral music.

Metrical Stress (Textual)

Syllables (or single-syllable words) receive metrical stress due to the meter in which a poem is constructed. This type of stress, which applies only to poetry, was discussed at length in the previous chapter.

The first determination must be whether the syllabic emphasis alternates between weak and strong in any kind of repeating pattern. Drawing again on Ferril’s “No Mark,” there are four such feet in the line that follows. Therefore, the line is in iambic tetrameter. Using the traditional approach and symbols of scansion, the metrical stress would be notated thusly:

\[ \hat{\text{Then}} \quad \hat{o-}
\hat{\text{cean}} \quad \hat{\text{cross-}} \quad \hat{\text{es}} \quad \hat{\text{ve-}} \quad \hat{\text{ry}} \quad \hat{\text{still}} \]

However, if read while overemphasizing the stresses, the result is absurdly robotic:

\[ \text{then O cean CROSS es VE ry STILL} \]

Analyzing a poem using this binary method can be a helpful first step in understanding its structure, but the poem certainly was not constructed with the intention of a binary rendering. Meter is merely a framework of expression, not the expression itself. This is why observing only one type of text stress will result in an incomplete interpretation of a text. All types of text stress must be considered, and done so in cooperation with one another if the speech-like contour envisioned by a poet is to be realized for choral performance.
Rhetorical Stress (or “Word Stress”)

Rhetorical stress emphasizes those words in a line of poetry that provide the greatest interest, visceral response, or imagery; a focal point toward which and away from which the other words seem to flow. In the prosodic hierarchy developed by phonologists, these are called “content words,” in contrast with “function words.” Content words could be considered the most important of a particular line, and may even serve to summarize the emotional thrust of the line.

Lerdahl summarizes the distinction this way:

At the lowest levels of the prosodic hierarchy are the syllable and the word. Words are characterized as either content words, which carry major semantic content, or function words, which mainly fill a syntactic role.6

Choral conductors often refer to this colloquially as “word stress,” because it refers to entire words rather than to syllables.

Rhetorical stress is most often given to the most evocative or dramatic word(s) in a line such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Line three of Dickinson’s “Let Down the Bars, O Death,” reads, “Whose bleating ceases to repeat.” One might choose to emphasize any of the five words, depending on one’s perspective:

**Whose** bleating ceases to repeat,

| Emphasizing the word “whose” would change this declamatory into an interrogatory. That is, making it sound like a question, as in “**Whose** bleating ceases to repeat?!” Considering the previous two lines and the absence of a question mark, emphasizing this word would make no sense. |

Whose **bleating** ceases to repeat,

| An evocative word with onomatopoeic properties. This would be an excellent choice, if the poem were about sheep or bleating… |

Whose bleating **ceases** to repeat,

| …but since the poem is about death, emphasizing the word “ceases” makes more sense. Indeed, for this very reason, “ceases” is the most important word of the line. |

Whose bleating ceases **to** repeat,

| Emphasizing a preposition is rarely effective or in keeping with the poet’s intent. Contrastive stress is not applicable here. In this case, “to” is the least important word in the line. |

Whose bleating ceases **to repeat**.

| The third occurrence of the [i] vowel sound, a brilliant application by Dickinson of assonance. As far as rhetorical importance is concerned, however, it ranks lower than “ceases”. |

**Figure 3.1** Reasoning for the assignation of rhetorical stress in the third line of Dickinson’s “Let Down the Bars, O Death.”

This analysis advocates for the emphasis of the word “ceases,” with secondary prominence given to “bleating” and “repeat,” and greatly discounts the importance of “Whose” and “to.” In this case, only one word receives primary stress, which is typical. “Ceases” serves as the focal point of this line, as it encapsulates the meaning of the verse and poem as a whole far more than any other word in the line.

In choral performance, simply pointing this out to the choir may be enough to establish an emotional context, and elicit from them increased emphasis of the word without further
direction. If more explicit direction is required, the author recommends a *messa di voce* on the “ces-” note, and a *poco marcato* (without separation) for “-es.”

The author further recommends asking the choir to double-underline such rhetorically vital words (all syllables). This kinesthetic activity will reinforce the desired effect in the singers’ minds, and will provide a visual clue for future rehearsals and performances.

Contrastive Stress

A fourth kind of stress is contrastive stress. This kind of stress emphasizes words that would normally be deemphasized such as pronouns, articles, prepositions, conjunctions, and affixes. While this type of stress is rare and does not come into play in any of the excerpts involved in this study, I will discuss it briefly in the interest of thoroughness.

Contrastive stress is a form of rhetorical stress that applies specifically to syllables or words typically left unstressed in order to make a rhetorical point or to draw a distinction: “Did he stroll to Maple Street, or stroll down Maple Street?” or “It is not just a roller coaster, it is the roller coaster.”

When completing an analysis of the text and contrastive stress is encountered, such words must be considered rhetorically important. In the Comprehensive Musico-Linguistic Stress Analysis that will be introduced below, words that are to receive contrastive stress should be awarded a point in the rhetorical stress category (for all syllables of the word in question).

____________________________

7 Steele, *All the Fun’s in How You Say a Thing*, 28.
Reconciling the Three Principle Types of Textual Stress

Considering only one type of textual stress can result in an unnatural inflection when a text is read, spoken, or sung. The key to an expressive rendering of any text is to consider all three types of textual stress comprehensively.

When a poem is read aloud, such a synthesis happens spontaneously, whether or not an analysis of a poem has been completed. When analyzing a poem with the goal of performance by a choral ensemble, a more exacting tool may prove useful. An objective method for combining the three stresses is a valuable tool in the score preparation and rehearsal processes.

At the end of this chapter, I propose the Comprehensive Musico-Linguistic Stress Analysis. It is, admittedly, a narrowly logical system, but the goal is a more expressive and communicative rendering of a poem in choral performance, and one likely to be closer to the poet’s intentions.

The first part of completing the analysis is textual, and the second part musical. The two parts may be employed independently or in conjunction. What follows is the first part. It is similar to the metrical tree and grid proposed by Liberman and Prince, but tailored to suit the particular needs of analyzing a poem set for choir. Specifically, my system does not require breaking down a line of poetry into utterances, intonational phrases, phonological phrases, and clitic groups; does not specifically incorporate nuclear stress; and uses numbers instead of x’s to represent stresses, so that they can be added as a final step in the process.

______________________________

First, break down each line of text into syllables. Write each syllable as an individual unit, spacing them as evenly across the page as possible while maintaining their original order. The line of text will be the first of five lines needed (the others are for metrical stress, rhetorical stress, lexical stress, and totals), and the totals will need to be converted into a graph (see Figure 3.2a). Leave enough space between each line of text for your analysis. (To see an example of a finished product, see Figure 3.2e or Figure 3.2g.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>whose</th>
<th>bleat</th>
<th>ing</th>
<th>ceas</th>
<th>es</th>
<th>to</th>
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<th>peat</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metrical</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3.2a** Step one of the Comprehensive Musico-Linguistic Stress Analysis is to create a blank chart with labels for each line of the poem being analyzed.

Second, analyze the meter of the entire poem. Using the technique of scansion, determine what syllables (or single-syllable words) are intended by the poet to receive stress, and which should be left unstressed. Instead of the traditional symbols to denote stressed (’ or / or ¯) or unstressed (˘) syllables, award each stressed syllable one point in the “metrical stress” category (see Figure 3.2b). Award no points for unstressed syllables, and do not award fractions of a point.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>whose</th>
<th>bleat</th>
<th>ing</th>
<th>ceas</th>
<th>es</th>
<th>to</th>
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<th>peat</th>
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</table>

**Figure 3.2b** Step two of the Comprehensive Musico-Linguistic Stress Analysis is to award a point for each syllable that receives stress due to the poetic meter.
Third, go through the poem and determine what words are most important. This determination is based on the meaning of the text, and should be the product of research and contemplation; to some degree, this determination is subjective. For the most important word(s) in each line, award a ‘1’ in the “rhetorical stress” category to the whole word (to each syllable, not just the stressed syllables). If there is a word that is somewhat important, a ‘.5’ may be awarded to indicate secondary stress. Include any contrastive stresses in this category as well. (This is a very rudimentary approach to rhetorical stress. While English is not a tonal language, linguists have demonstrated that there are at least four levels of rhetorical stress in ordinary speech.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>bleat</th>
<th>ing</th>
<th>ceas</th>
<th>es</th>
<th>to</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3.2c* Step three of the Comprehensive Musico-Linguistic Stress Analysis is to award a point for each syllable that receives rhetorical stress.

Fourth, identify all lexical stresses. Start with the words that have more than one syllable. There are a few special considerations.

- Multisyllabic words (three or more syllables) — In a two-syllable word, one syllable will be stressed, the other unstressed. In words with three or more syllables, there are secondary stresses. In the chart, secondary stresses should receive partial value such as ‘.5’.

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• Contractions — Take care with words that the poet intended to be contracted, or that the composer has chosen to contract in his or her musical setting. In the case of “traveler” in Frost’s “The Road Not Taken,” the poet pronounces all three syllables, but Thompson contracts it to “trav’ler.”

• Monosyllabic words — Some monosyllabic words will invariably be more important than others. Depending on their importance, it may make sense to award a monosyllabic word a point in this category. This doubles up the points given in the rhetorical stress category for such words. For example, the first two words of “The Road Not Taken,” “Two roads” are important, as they help set the visual scene for the entire poem. Of course, they are not as important as the word “diverged,” yet they are certainly of greater importance than “in” or “a.” If monosyllabic words are ignored when awarding points in the lexical stress category, the end result of this analytical approach will be skewed. This is why rhetorical stress is considered before lexical stress: for monosyllabic words, a rhetorical understanding will help inform point values when considering lexical stress.

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</tr>
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<td>Rhetorical</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3.2d** Step four of the Comprehensive Musico-Linguistic Stress Analysis is to award a point for each syllable that receives lexical stress.
Fifth, total the points for each syllable. The number for each should be between 0-3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>whose</th>
<th>bleat</th>
<th>ing</th>
<th>ceas</th>
<th>es</th>
<th>to</th>
<th>re</th>
<th>peat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metrical</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhetorical</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.2e Step five of the Comprehensive Musico-Linguistic Stress Analysis is to total the points for each syllable.

Sixth, make a graphic representation of the totals (see Figure 3.2f). Connect the data points using either a straight or curved line. The result will be a visual representation of spoken contour for the line of poetry. When spoken aloud by a group of people, this system results in a unified reading of the text apart from the musical score. In terms of practical application to musical performance, this line will convey a nuance of microdynamics within the prescribed dynamics supplied in the printed score by the composer. This visual aid can be used in rehearsal to help the choir achieve a common concept of each line.

Figure 3.2f Step six of the Comprehensive Musico-Linguistic Stress Analysis is to create a visual representation of the text’s contour based on the point totals in the previous step.
When completed for an entire stanza, the result will likely take up an entire page or more (see Figure 3.2g). This would make a convenient handout, overhead projection, or Power Point slide to aide group unison recitation.

Figure 3.2g A completed analysis of text stresses. Verse one of Robert Frost’s “The Road Not Taken.”
Musical Stresses (Accents)

According to Lampl, there are nine ways a note can stand out from those around it:¹⁰

1. Dynamic
2. Agogic
3. Metric
4. Harmonic
5. Pitch
6. Texture
7. Embellishment
8. Color
9. Phrase

Texture, color, and phrase accents have limited application to the topic of this study. The other six of these will be discussed.

According to Matthias Thiemel, the three primary musical accents are dynamic, agogic, and pitch (where Lampl distinguishes between embellishment and pitch, Thiemel combines them into one category):

The prominence given to a note or notes in performance by a perceptible alteration (usually increase) in volume (‘dynamic accent’); a lengthening of duration or a brief preceding silence of articulation (‘agogic accent’); an added

¹⁰ Lampl, Turning Notes Into Music, 79.
ornament or pitch inflection of a melodic note (‘pitch accent’); or by any
combination of these.\endnote{11}

For purposes of this discussion, one must also consider metric, harmonic, and embellishment
accents.

In texted music, the stress a note receives because of these musical accents will directly
affect the way the syllable assigned to that note is sung. The various types of musical stress can
operate independently or in combination to heighten the performer’s understanding of the
melodic line. This will affect the communication of the text.

Dynamic Accent

An accentuation by means of a volume change is called a dynamic accent. These are
indicated or implied by the composer. Such an emphasis may occur either by increasing or
decreasing volume, though, generally a stress will be the result of an increase in volume.
Examples of dynamic accent include piano, forte, and subito dynamics, and also articulations
such as marcato and sforzando.

Agogic Accent

Agogic accent refers to the emphasis a note receives due to relative duration. This is the
stress that occurs when a note has a longer or shorter duration than those around it. It may be
composer-prescribed in the form of rhythm, or may be employed by the performer as a function
of \textit{tempo rubato}.

\footnotesize
\footnotespace
\begin{flushleft}
\footnotesize
Internet; accessed 6 July 2010.
\end{flushleft}
As mentioned in Chapter Two, rhythm in sung music has long been tied to the stresses of speech (see Figure 2.4). Composers still assign strong words or syllables to notes of longer duration. Conversely, shorter rhythmic values would cause a note and any syllable assigned to it to be unaccented.

Metric Accent

Metric accent is the tendency to emphasize certain beats in certain meters.¹² For example, in 4/4 time, the first beat tends to receive the strongest emphasis and beat three the second strongest, with beats two and four considered weak beats. This tendency can greatly affect the contour of a musical line, sometimes in ways not envisioned or preferred by composers. In texted music, the metric accent of the musical setting can either reinforce or contradict the stresses of the poem. In certain musical styles, it may be appropriate for metric accent to take precedence over text stresses.

In my DMA Lecture Recital, which touched on these topics, I used as an example of metric accent Paul J. Christiansen’s setting of Carl Sandburg’s “Prayers of Steel.” In this work, Christiansen marries Sandburg’s industrial-themed poem to an angular melody that is very beat-oriented. In measures 17-20, Christiansen assigns rhetorically important words to beats one and three, the strongest beats of the bar. This emphasizes the important words “Lay,” “an-“ of anvil (twice), “God,” “Beat,” “ham-“ of hammer, and “spike” (see Figure 3.3). (The established pattern of motoric eighth notes does result in the relatively unimportant “-to” of “into” being reinforced, but this is certainly not objectionable.)

Figure 3.3 Measures 17-20 of Prayers of Steel by Paul J. Christiansen on a text of Carl Sandburg, alto part only, a variation of the opening melody.

These same words and syllables have also been emphasized using pitch accent, which will be discussed below. Christiansen uses agogic and embellishment accents to emphasize “an-“ of anvil. Other than this, the motoric eighth notes are relentless for all but the final word of each line. This gives the line an appropriately mechanical, inhuman feel which certainly serves the poem better than if the composer had chosen to further underscore the important words and syllables using elongated rhythms.

Christiansen has indicated no articulation here, neither for individual notes assigned to important words or for the melody as a whole. The metric stress, melodic shape, and content of the text would seem to imply a generally marcato approach, with especially strong accents on beats one and three. Indeed, examining a recording of a performance with the composer conducting confirms that this articulation is preferred.

**Harmonic Accent**

A harmonic accent is the result of any vertical sonority that distinguishes a melodic note, beat, or word from those around it. This may take the form of:

- tension and release due to traditional use of dissonance and consonance (N.B. when performing a Comprehensive Musico-Linguistic Stress Analysis, non-chord tones may either be awarded a point in the Harmonic Accent category or the Embellishment category, but not both for the same syllable);
• an expansion of chord voicing (i.e., the number of total pitches sounding);
• going from major-minor chord structures to more unusual harmonies such as jazz-inspired chords, cluster chords/stacked sonorities, augmented and diminished triads, and seventh chords;
• a sudden return to root-based harmonies.

Pitch Accent (or Tonic Accent)

Pitch accent is the tendency by the performer to emphasize or de-emphasize certain notes based on their relative highness or lowness. Consider the ramifications of tonal stress for declamation. An unimportant word, such as an article, assigned to a note that has leapt upward will tend to receive an unintended accent of that word by the singers on that voice part. (This includes the melody as well as accompanimental voices.)

Conversely, when important words are not accompanied by a significant change in pitch, the syllable or word may be deemphasized. In such cases, the conductor may choose to impose alternative ways of emphasizing such words or syllables to ensure that declamation occurs, even in the absence of tonal stress.

Effinger in his “No Mark” (from Four Pastorales) employs an arced melodic contour for several lines. Each begins with repeated tones, and includes a marked crescendo-decrescendo (see Figure 3.4).
In measures 7-12, the melodic highpoint of each of the three phrases is reached on “Jones,” “sas-” of sassafras, and “stone” respectively, lending tonal accent to each of these. This is appropriate, as these are certainly stressed syllables, and an argument could be made that these are the most important syllables or words of their lines.
The crescendo-decrescendo reinforces the pitch accents, but contradicts the emphasis that words and syllables like “wreck,” “Scrub-” of Scrub-oak, “-round” of Around, and “shad-“ of shady would likely receive if spoken. Take the last of these as an example. The iambic tetrameter line “Around the shady stone you pass” would be stressed thusly: aROUND the SHADy STONE you PASS. This, of course, is a strictly binary approach to the iambic structure of the line, without regard for rhetorical stress. But the composer seems to reinforce only one moment in each line: the three words/syllables to which the highest pitches of their musical phrase are assigned. The crescendo that starts each phrase would seem to counteract the other stressed syllables of the line such as “-round” of Around. If taken literally, this crescendo (in measure 10) indicates that the three syllables “a-,” “-round,” and “the” should get progressively louder rather than following the iambic contour of the poem. Of these three syllables, one would expect “-round” to be assigned to a higher or lower pitch, a longer rhythm, or on a strong beat; or, at the very least, to have an articulation marked on the pitch assigned to it. But the composer indicates none of these. This raises a question for the conductor: observe the crescendo strictly, or modify the crescendo to allow the natural text stress to come through in the singers’ performance? It is difficult to imagine, after all, encountering such evocative words such as “wreck” and “killed” without giving them some kind of special treatment. Would emphasizing such textual moments contradict the composer, or did the composer rely on the conductor to demand such special treatment of the singers? Each conductor may arrive at a different conclusion to these questions. But such questions must be wrestled with if a text-conscious performance is to be achieved.
Embellishment Accents

Embellishment accents include ornamentation, melismas, grace notes, heterophonic decoration, etc. Award a point whenever this compositional tool is used. When analyzing a piece of music using the Comprehensive Musico-Linguistic Stress Analysis, non-chord tones (e.g., escape tones, suspensions, and appoggiaturas) should be awarded with a point in either the Harmonic or Embellishment categories, but not both.

Integrating Musical and Textual Stresses in Choral Performance

When setting a poem to music, composers approach texts from any number of perspectives. For example, they may favor one type of musical stress over another when representing the textual stresses. At times, a poem and the music that sets it seem to “gel,” and a wonderful symbiosis takes place that is greater than the sum of its parts. Other times, the musical and textual stresses seem to be in contradiction. When writing choral music, composers are constantly faced with decisions about whether to favor the text or the music.

The conductor is faced with similar decisions when devising an interpretation and bringing the piece to performance. This will sometimes mean applying to a score the tools outlined in Chapter One to the concepts in this chapter and Chapter Two. This will result in a text-conscious performance.

Samuel Barber’s setting of the third line from Emily Dickinson’s “Let Down the Bars, O Death,” “Whose bleating ceases to repeat,” has been used as an example at several points so far in this document because it takes into account all three types of textual stress and represents them musically in some way. In Barber’s setting of this line, he seems to give the most weight to the
word “bleating”: a crescendo leads into the word, the first syllable is lengthened rhythmically giving it agogic stress, and the succeeding words are assigned to a series of descending pitches (see Figure 1.13). However, as shown earlier in this chapter, given the context of the poem, the greatest rhetorical stress should probably be given the word “ceases.” Yet the only special treatment afforded this word by the composer is the first instance of the dotted eighth-sixteenth rhythm on the moderately strong third beat. The conductor, then, is faced with a decision: Should the word “ceases” be performed with some kind of special inflection, such as a change in articulation, a “hairpin” on the first syllable, etc.?

In this section, I will look at ways the conductor can reinforce moments where text and music coincide, and also at ways to handle moments when text and music seem to contradict one another.

When Poetic Constructive Elements and the Musical Setting Correlate

The first theme of René Clausen’s setting of Walt Whitman’s “Quicksand Years” exemplifies the musical application of several types of textual stress (see Figure 3.5). Before exploring these stresses, however, I will first consider the text painting devices built into the melody, as the two are indelibly linked.

The melody enjoys an upward trend and gains rhythmic momentum as it goes. These traits help capture the affect of the text, resulting in a melodic contour that seems to whirl unpredictably. That this becomes the subject of a fugue adds an additional layer of text painting, as the fugue has the effect both of gusts of swirling wind and also of one who is confused (“I know not whither”).
Let us now consider matters of text stress. Strong syllables such as “Quick-” of Quicksand, “years,” “whirl,” “me,” “know,” and “whither” are all on the beat.

- “Quick-” — The strong syllable of “quicksand” is assigned to the downbeat. Any note found on the strongest beat of a bar will receive metric stress. By extension, any word or syllable assigned to such a note will be emphasized.
- “-sand” — The weak syllable of “quicksand” is assigned to a lower pitch on an off-beat, negating any textual or musical stress it might receive.
- “years” — An important word, but not the most important in the line. It is on beat two, which gives it secondary importance to “Quick-” in terms of metric stress. However, it is also given the longest rhythm of the bar.
- “that” — Just about every word in the line is a content word, but there is one that is purely functional: the conjunction “that.” There are no articles or prepositions in the entire subject, but there is one conjunction. Therefore, this is the least important word in the entire subject, and Clausen, appropriately, assigns it to the shortest rhythmic value of any word in the entire theme.
- “whirl” — The word “years” may have the longest single note in the subject, but the word “whirl” is the only one that occupies a full beat. Plus, the melismatic sixteenth notes act as an ornament (though certainly with text painting attributes), giving the word an embellishment accent as well. And, since it starts on the highest pitch so far heard, it
receives a pitch accent as well. So, “whirl” receives metric, agogic, pitch, and embellishment accents, four of the six types of musical stress.

• “me” and “I” — These two pronouns share the weak beat of the bar. And, since they lead by scalar motion to the more important “know,” the effect of this beat seems to be anacrusic, leading to the next bar. In fact, singers may instinctively crescendo over these four notes to the downbeat of the next bar. Neither word receives significant agogic, metric, or embellishment accent, and the pitch accent is negated by the anacrusic nature of the scalar motion. Since no accent or dynamic is indicated, the only dynamic accent would result from the instinctive crescendo likely imposed by the singers.

• “know not” — Metric accent is afforded “know,” but “not” falls on an off-beat. “Not,” however, is an important word, and the conductor would be well advised to lend it just enough emphasis to make sure the meaning of the text is clearly understood.

• “whither” — Multiple sixteenth notes on each of this word’s two syllables give it embellishment accent, but minimally so compared to “whirl.” As the syllable is on the weak beat of the bar, the metric accent is minimal as well, though having the strong syllable “whith-” on the beat and the weak beat “-er” off the beat is certainly appropriate. The one indicated dynamic other than the initial one is assigned to this word, and it is a decrescendo. However, the pitches on this word are the highest of the entire theme, giving it pitch accent.

In all, the musical stresses make it clear that the composer believes the word “whirl” to be the most important in the theme. It is also clear that this is an excellent example of text setting, with important words stressed musically, and less important words deemphasized.
When Poetic Structural Elements and Musical Settings Are in Opposition

The opening lines in Effinger’s “No Mark” (from *Four Pastorales*) are an example of how a good text setting (that is, one in which the musical and textual affects are closely matched) can still contain some moments where constructive poetic elements and music do not match. This is not intended as criticism. Such moments do leave the conductor with a decision: Should he or she observe a plain-text reading of the score or impose certain text-inspired performance techniques designed to highlight the stresses of the text?

In the opening melody (mm. 5-12), which the chorus sings in octaves (see Figure 3.6), some stressed syllables are emphasized using tones lower in relation to those in the rest of the melody (e.g., “corn”), while others use higher tones (e.g., “Stonewall”). This is an application of pitch accent. Still other stressed syllables receive no reinforcement due to musical stress.
Another example of a musical setting contradicting the poetic meter is Randall Thompson’s “The Road Not Taken” (from *Frostiana*), in which the composer uses quarter notes almost exclusively to set the opening line of text. In this way, Thompson deliberately shuns agogic stress in favor of an even rhythm that conjures the image of someone walking, as alluded to in the text:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mf</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corn grew where the corn was spilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-round the shady stone you pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That Saturday at Chancellorville.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.7 The melody of “The Road Not Taken” (mm. 4-14) composed by Randall Thompson on a poem of Robert Frost.
This compositional approach may pose a contradiction to the text’s poetic meter by using quarter notes almost exclusively and an arced melodic line that seems to lend no reinforcement in terms of tonal or agogic stress. However, this is not to imply that the composition is somehow flawed. Indeed, the composition sets the general affect of the text very well. Thompson’s understated approach is used to great effect, illustrating both the walking motion of the speaker and the arching of the tree branches over the paths. The challenge is how to perform the work with attention paid to the text stress in a way that befits Frost’s text while not diminishing the effect of the melody’s arch shape.

The author’s suggestion is to have the entire choir speak the first stanza as a unison recitation. Rehearse this as you would music, working toward a group concept of the poem. Have them speak the text once with attention to the poetic meter (the result might sound robotic, since the stress levels would be binary). Then, read again thinking only rhetorically (again, the result will be ridiculously robotic, as important words are emphasized and unimportant ones are de-emphasized). Once a common concept is achieved, apply it to the music. The result will be a nuanced microdynamic contour within the dynamic indicated by the composer.

In Figure 3.8, I have charted the textual and musical stresses for measures 7-22 of Ticheli’s *There Will Be Rest*. Notice how the textual stresses and musical stresses are in almost perfect agreement; that is, the two lines follow the same contour almost without exception. In cases where the text has more stress than the music (in this case on “O-” of Over), the conductor may wish to add some kind of special musical treatment in his or her interpretation to ensure that this important syllable is heard and understood in terms of its textual relevance. In an opposite instance, where the music receives significantly more stress than does the text (in this case on the
word “and” near the end), the choir will need to be especially conscious in their de-emphasis of this word.

Figure 3.8 Comparison of textual and musical stresses in mm. 7-22 of Ticheli’s *There Will Be Rest*.

The Comprehensive Musico-Linguistic Stress Analysis: An Original Tool For Vocal Styles

For a choir to deliver a text-conscious performance of a choral composition, the conductor must find musical manifestations for the various text stresses presented by the poem. The following is a step-by-step procedure for creating and completing a Comprehensive Musico-Linguistic Stress Analysis of a piece of vocal music.
First, using graph paper or a computer-based spreadsheet program, set up a blank chart like the one in Figure 3.9a. This chart is intended for one line of a poem. For a thorough analysis, a chart like this will be required for each line of the poem. The number of columns should equal the number of syllables in the line. To see an example of a completed chart, refer to Figure 3.9d.

![Figure 3.9a Blank chart with row and column headings](image)

As the analysis is completed, values will be entered on the chart. Use the point-value guide in Figure 3.9b to ensure that minimums and maximums are observed within each category.
|                | Possible value or
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEXTUAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Metric Stress</td>
<td>0-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Rhetorical Stress</td>
<td>0-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Lexical</td>
<td>0-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MUSICAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Dynamic</td>
<td>1-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Agogic</td>
<td>0-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Metric</td>
<td>0-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Harmonic</td>
<td>0-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Pitch</td>
<td>0-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Embellishment</td>
<td>0-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3.9b** The possible values for each category. The numerical equivalents for dynamics may be found in Figure 3.9c.

1. Enter the text along the top row, one syllable per column.

2. Metrical Stress (Text) — Perform scansion on the entire poem. Based on the principles outlined in Chapter Two and the section “Metrical Stress (Textual)” above, assign a ‘1’ to all stressed syllables in each line.

3. Rhetorical Stress — Study, research, and contemplate both poem and poet. Determine the most important words in terms of the meaning of the text. Be aware of possible contrastive stresses. Assign a ‘1’ to the most important word(s) in each line.

4. Lexical Stress — For all multi-syllabic words, determine what syllable should receive primary stress (award ‘1’ point) and which should receive secondary stress (award ‘.5’). For single-syllable words that received a point for rhetorical stress, award a ‘1’ in this category as well.

5. Dynamic Accent — Using the chart below (Figure 3.9c), assign a number to each syllable and word based on the dynamic indicated in the score by the composer. This will almost always be by far the largest number for any category: the high number
ensures that all syllables appear within the correct dynamic range on the graph. For graduated dynamics and dynamic shadings such as crescendo, decrescendo, meno, etc., exercise best judgment. Note that composers may also use softer dynamics to accent a word or portion of text, setting the interpretively climactic word, phrase, or stressed syllable that has been preceded by an obvious build-up to a subito pianissimo, for instance. In such cases, the analysis of the linguistic stress and of the musical will disagree. That moment may resemble the syllable “o-” of “over” in Figure 3.8 above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dynamics</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FFF and above</td>
<td>70+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FF</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MF</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPP and below</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silence</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3.9c** Numerical equivalents for dynamics for use in constructing the Comprehensive Musico-Linguistic Stress Analysis.

6. **Agogic Accent** — For each syllable or single-syllable word, award a point value to reflect its duration. The author suggests awarding the tactus one point, and deriving other point values from that, using decimal points as necessary.

7. **Metric Accent (Music)** — For each syllable that appears on a downbeat, award one point. For syllables that appear on beats of medium stress, award a half point. For syllables assigned to weak beats, award zero points.
8. Harmonic Accent — Award a ‘1’ to any word that is accented as a result of a change in vertical sonority. Non-chord tones (e.g., escape tones, suspensions, appoggiaturas) should be awarded with a point in either the harmonic or embellishment categories, but not both.

9. Pitch Accent — Any note that receives emphasis due to a change in pitch should receive a point, for example, the peak of an arch-shaped phrase, the highest note in a melody, the note that changes after a string of repeated tones, or a leap in a melody of otherwise stepwise motion.

10. Embellishment Accent — Ornamentation, melismas, grace notes, and melodies decorated heterophonically. Award a point whenever such a compositional tool is used.

11. Total each column (see Figure 3.10a).

12. Using graph paper or the “Create Chart” function in a computer-based spreadsheet program, create a line graph to represent the combined textual and musical stresses (see Figure 3.9e). To see a chart contrasting textual and musical stresses (as in Figure 3.8), total the textual and musical stresses separately and create a line graph citing the totals for each as the data sources.
Figure 3.9d  Completed analysis using the Comprehensive Musico-Linguistic Stress Analysis. Measures 7-22 of Ticheli’s *There Will Be Rest*, the first stanza of the poem by Sara Teasdale.
Figure 3.9e  A contour chart based on Figure 3.9d. Note the peaks on important words such as “rest,” “shin-” of shining, “roof-” of rooftops, “reign,” etc. Appropriately, the lowest valley is on the article “the.”
CHAPTER FOUR: PUNCTUATION

Punctuation is to writing what facial expression, body language, tone of voice, and inflection are to speech. Punctuation can serve a number of grammatical and/or structural functions in a poem. Understanding the motivation behind a punctuation mark can lend important insight into a poem’s construction and interpretation.

One of the functions of punctuation is to break the flow of words into meaningful segments. When speaking a poem aloud, certain punctuation marks are associated with rising and falling of the voice, and the occasional silence.

Many of the punctuation marks with aural application for speech can be represented in musical performance. The ideal perspective for deciding how a punctuation mark should be represented musically is to find a solution that respects the intentions of both poet and composer.

Thomas Williams writes:

…to become an Orator in Song, it is indispensably necessary that the true sense and meaning of the words should be strictly attended to, and the breath be taken according to the proper punctuation, just as if the vocal passage, instead of being sung, were read by [one] adept at elocution.¹

This chapter will distinguish between the two functions of punctuation in poetry—structural versus grammatical—and will suggest application for the choral performer.

¹ Williams: “A Treatise On Singing” London, 1834, 2
Some Musical Implications of Punctuation

In this section, I will discuss the impact punctuation can have on phrasing. Specifically, the rhythmic and arhythmic treatment of punctuation will be discussed.

Many punctuation marks have musical parallels. One of the conductor’s tasks is to analyze the text and determine the function of each punctuation mark used by the poet. Another step is to decide if that function should be expressed musically, and, if so, how. As I will show, some punctuation marks may be manifested musically by articulations, dynamics, phrasing, and other means.

In order to best illustrate this concept, I will discuss each of the punctuation marks commonly used in written English that have musical parallels. Among the punctuation marks that do not have direct musical parallels are apostrophe (except when used as nested punctuation such as an internal quotation), hyphen, brace, and slash (also known as solidus, virgule, backslash, and several other names).

In general, the principle that I adhere to for this study is that terminal punctuation marks (period, exclamation point, and question mark) should receive the most clearly defined phrase break, while internal marks indicating that a thought will continue should receive less definition. According to John Lennard:

There are four stops: the full-stop, colon, semi-colon, and comma. The full-stop (US, period, Latin punctus, whence ‘punctuation’) is the heaviest, ending classical periods and modern sentences; in reading aloud it normally enforces a substantial pause. […] The colon is the second heaviest stop. […] The semi-colon is the second lightest stop. […] The comma…is the lightest stop, but adding, or omitting, them affects pace tone logic and clarity [sic]. The solidus (/) and dash (—) are cousins of the comma…2

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Therefore, a period or other end punctuation will most often receive a full beat of silence, while a comma or similar would only receive a half beat of silence. Such determinations will vary depending on a variety of factors, including tempo, function of the particular mark, content of the text that follows, rhythm of the note in question, amount of time between the end of the phrase and the beginning of the next, etc.

There are certain musical circumstances, however, which supersede textual considerations. These include any indications that the composer intends two lines to be sung without a break in sound despite the presence of some kind of stop between them. At times, a composer may use a clear indication such as a breath mark, rest, or dashed slur to communicate a preference for whether to break or continue a phrase. However, overt indications are not always present, leaving the conductor to rely on textual or musical indications, or a combination of the two. Such indications may include melodic contour, harmonic progression, and activity in the accompaniment. Similarly, when a crescendo or decrescendo spans a stanzaic division (or similar), the composer may intend the two lines in question to be sung contiguously.

**End Punctuation (Period, Exclamation Point, and Question Mark)**

Terminal punctuation readily translates to musical performance. Periods, exclamation points, and question marks are most commonly used in written English to end a thought. So, a composer, when encountering one in a text, is likely to end the musical thought as well.
This does not necessarily mean that silence must follow each and every terminal punctuation mark. There are plenty of instances where one point or thought is immediately followed up with another, without pause or special treatment. When this occurs, it becomes the conductor’s task to determine the intentions of the author and/or composer.

All of the marks discussed in this section, when encountered in music, may translate as a full beat of rest or more.

Period

When encountering a period (or “full stop”) in a poem, the composer will often represent it musically in some way, such as a beat or more of silence, a formal division, key change, tempo change, meter change, fermata, or ritard. Many of the compositional and performance issues presented in Chapter Three in the section “Formal Divisions” apply to the handling of periods.

A composer has several choices for handling phrase transitions, such as a rest, an indication of no breath (e.g., a dashed slur), or a breath mark; alternately, he or she may make no clear indication at all. If the composer has indicated a rest or that no breath should be taken, then no interpretation is required to delineate the end of one line of text from the beginning of the next using musical means. However, if the music continues without a clear indication of how the phrase transition should be handled (e.g., a breath mark), the conductor must then determine how the phrase transition is to take place. In such an instance, inserting a full beat of silence (“rest”) to represent the period may be the best way to give closure to the previous line before beginning a new thought. As mentioned before, this is dependent on a variety of factors; this premise must be adapted depending on the circumstance.
Exclamation Point

For text intended to be spoken (or sung) with emphasis, surprise, or strong emotion, an exclamation point may be used. As with any ending punctuation, the composer is likely to represent the exclamation point by following it with a musical change such as silence, an instrumental interlude, or a significant change in dynamic, key, or tempo. For the exclamation point specifically, the composer may add to this an intensified articulation, dynamic, scoring, dissonance or chord voicing. After all, when we encounter a printed exclamation point when speaking, our voices tend to adopt a more strident tone or articulation, a change in pitch (either higher or lower), more pointed cadences marked by a definite downward drop in pitch for the final syllables, and/or an increase in dynamic.

If a louder dynamic or more aggressive articulation has not been indicated by the composer, the conductor must determine if (1) this was an oversight or was assumed on the part of the composer; (2) the composer did not consider the exclamation to be so important as to warrant such a change; or (3) the composer is achieving the effect of an exclamation by other means, such as pitch level (e.g., highest sounding pitch of the phrase), scoring (e.g., divided vocal parts), harmony (e.g., dissonant chord or expressive use of chromaticism), or instrumentation (e.g., cymbal crash or brass flourish).

In the fourteen lines of Edna St. Vincent Millay’s “God’s World” six exclamation points are found. Each time an exclamation point appears in Millay’s text, a crescendo, forte or marcato appears in Stephen Paulus’ setting. To end his setting of this text, Paulus reiterates the first line much as Barber had done with his setting of Dickinson’s “Let Down the Bars, O Death” (see Figure 4.1). This allows him to end his setting on more of a high point, as the poem’s final line does not contain an exclamation point (see Appendix A for full text of the poem).
Question mark

The two uses of question marks are rhetorical and interrogative. Interrogatives expect a response, while question marks used in a rhetorical statement do not. Both will be described below.

In American speech, interrogatives typically end with a rise in pitch. Given this, a composer might choose to represent the end of the textual phrase by rising in pitch at the end of
the musical phrase. In the case of an interrogative, if the response came quickly or adamantly, the dynamic, articulation, texture, and/or forces might change suddenly to indicate a change in speaker or a decisive moment.

Whether or not a composer chooses to end the phrase with a rise in pitch, however, the only questions of interpretation for the conductor are whether to (1) end the phrase in a buoyant manner as to suggest that a response is desired; or (2) make a musical change. Achieving a buoyant release requires a sophisticated ear on the part of the conductor, a rehearsal vocabulary that will communicate the intended effect, a certain amount of vocal acuity on the part of the singers, and a gesture from the conductor that will encourage and enable the singers to achieve the desired effect.

The interpreter may choose to augment the score with details not included by the composer. Such augmentations might include adding a *poco crescendo* or *poco decrescendo* to the note(s) containing the final words or syllables of the interrogative. The decision to add such markings to the score might be influenced by the response to the interrogative, who is “speaking” the line of poetry, and/or the textual or musical mood of the moment.

Question marks that are rhetorical in nature do not expect a response, and often end as would be expected for a period or exclamation point: downward in pitch. An example drawn from the familiar is the last lines of the first stanza of Francis Scott Key’s “Defence of Fort McHenry” (better known as “The Spar-Spangled Banner”):

O! say, does that star-spangled Banner yet wave,  
O’er the Land of the free, and the home of the brave?³

³ Francis Scott Key, “Defence of Fort McHenry,” (Baltimore: [broadside published by anonymous printer], 1814).
In Walt Whitman’s “Darest Thou Now, O Soul,” the first stanza poses the question,

Darest thou now, O Soul,
Walk out with me toward the Unknown Region,
Where neither ground is for the feet, nor any path to follow?

One hallmark of Whitman’s style is the rhetorical address to the speaker’s soul. This is the case here; in fact, in the first line, the soul is addressed by name. Therefore, these first three lines should be considered rhetorical rather than interrogative.

William Schuman demonstrates this in his setting of this text, titled “The Unknown Region” (from Carols of Death). Were this question interrogative, one might expect to see a rise in pitch at the end reflective of the rise in inflection as would be heard when a question is posed aloud. However, as the question is rhetorical—in that the speaker is addressing his or her soul—we instead see a fall in pitch.

As for the representation of the question mark itself, Schuman has indicated a significant amount of silence after the question mark. Not including the tied eighth note on the downbeat, there are two full beats of silence. A full beat or more is appropriate, as the question mark is one kind of ending punctuation, and is akin to a full-stop in its musical application. (See Figure 4.2).
Figure 4.2 Measures 76-84 of William Schuman’s “The Unknown Region” (from *Carols of Death*) on a text of Walt Whitman.
Internal Punctuation (Comma, Semicolon, Colon, Dash)

In this section, I will discuss how to determine whether an internal punctuation marking should be observed with a rest (and if so, its duration), an articulation, microdynamics, or other techniques; or ignored altogether. The way any punctuation mark is handled in musical performance depends on its *raison d’être*.

When shortening a note to represent any punctuation mark, the silence should be equivalent to the degree of finality that the mark holds. In the case of a comma, colon, semicolon or dash, a full beat would likely sound too final. These marks indicate to the reader that the thought will continue, so opting instead for less than a full beat of silence (i.e., half a beat, break-no-breath, or *staccato*) would be more appropriate.

Of the comma, colon, semicolon, and dash, the comma will be discussed first, as the musical manifestations of commas are roughly analogous to that of the other three.

Comma

In written English, commas can serve a variety of functions. Those that are most applicable to choral music are separating coordinate elements (between two independent clauses joined by a conjunction), separating coordinate adjectives not joined by a conjunction, preceding a quotation, enclosing a parenthetical reference, and separating repeated text (often imposed by the composer). For each of these, there is a potential musical parallel that can influence the interpretation of a choral score. Whenever a comma is encountered, the conductor must determine its function, whether it should be represented musically, and, if so, in what way.

As in spoken dialogue or oratory, a comma may be interpreted as a fall or rise in pitch followed by a break in sound. The composer may incorporate either of these into the composition
itself simply by altering the pitch or inserting rests. When the composer does not indicate a rise or fall in pitch, the conductor cannot achieve this without altering the composition. However, if the composer has not incorporated a “rhythmicization” of a comma into the composition, it can still be achieved in the rehearsal process by one of two means: shortening the rhythm via rhythmicized rests or a *staccato*, or using the vocal instrument (specifically, a break-no-breath or glottal attack). Dale Warland comments, “Depending how sensitive the composer is to the punctuation of the poetry, punctuation is the critical guide to phrasing. Commas are 'clues' to that phrasing, but they do not necessarily 'require' one to breathe at each and every one.”

Commets also serve to separate repeated text, a common use in vocal music. The repetition of text may be of the composer’s devising rather than the poet’s. It is important to note that separation of text with a comma, even when no comma appears in the original text, is common editorial practice. The function of the comma may or may not need representation in sound.

**Colon and Dash**

Colons mark a major division in a sentence. Text that follows a colon is an elaboration, summation, implication, etc., of what precedes it. When spoken, colons are represented by a slight pause, in order to cast the text that follows in greater relief.

By extension, the composition or performance of music that sets text following a colon should vary in some way from the music that precedes it. The interpreter may choose to have that

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4 An Interview with Dale Warland conducted by Drew Collins, 14 March 2006. Full text of the interview is included as Appendix B.
line of text sung at a different dynamic or articulation, have more or fewer singers sing the line, or use a slightly altered vocal timbre.

Like commas, dashes have a variety of application in the written word. Dashes may be used singly or—for nested punctuation—in pairs. When used singly, there are two functions with particular application to this study. The first is as a substitute for a colon. When this is the case, the musical application for dashes may be thought of as being the same as for colons. Due to this interchangeability, the reader may consider all of my comments about colons as applying to dashes when used in this way.

The second function of single dashes is when they appear at the end of a sentence, phrase, or line to indicate a sudden interruption in thought (similar to an ellipsis), or to add an air of surprise or other emotion (like an exclamation point).

In Figure 4.3, there are two phrasing issues for the conductor to consider. The first is the dash after “out of me” in measure 119. The second is the line break following “let fall” (note the capital letter of “No” following this text, which often indicates the beginning of a new line, even when the previous line does not end with punctuation) (see Appendix A).

In regard to the dash, should the conductor represent it musically as a full-stop by shortening the third half note in this bar to a quarter note followed by a quarter rest; as the equivalent of a comma by shortening the note only enough to allow an eighth rest’s worth of breath; or ignored altogether (a viable option given the crescendo marked in the previous measure)?

In regard to whether the choir should phrase after “let fall,” it seems clear by Millay’s use of punctuation (or, in this case, the lack thereof) that she intended these two lines to be
enjambed. A breath at this point would represent the structural significance of a line break, but would muddy the enjambment that is such a part of the poet’s style.

The first twenty-one measures of Stephen Paulus’ “The Spring and the Fall”—from *Four Songs on Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, the same cycle from which “God’s World” is from—are excerpted in Figure 4.4. These measures contain six commas and periods. Some are the poet’s, some are the composer’s. Here are the considerations when handling each:

- m. 4 (“year, in the”) — This comma is used to separate repeated text, and was inserted by the poet. There is no indication from the composer about a preferred manner in which to handle this moment. Therefore, this phrasing decision is the conductor’s alone. First consideration must be paid to musical factors: in this case, there is no notable activity in the harp, no *crescendo* in the vocal parts, and no dissonance awaiting resolution. So, the only relevant considerations are textual ones. This comma may be represented (1) by a quarter rest, though this would likely have the aural effect of a full stop (i.e., a period); (2) by an eighth rest with a breath on the off-beat of beat two; (3) by an eighth rest at this same spot with a break but no breath; (4) by a break-no-breath, but with the silence equaling only a sixteenth rest ( ); (5) with a glottal attack on “in” with no other silence or breath; (6) the comma may
be ignored, carrying through with no breath or break (and no crescendo); or (7) the comma may be ignored, carrying through with no breath or break (with a crescendo). There is no musical or textual justification that gives weight to any of these options more than another; it is the conductor’s preference.

- m. 6 (“year”) — The same seven options exist for the handling of this comma as were presented for measure 4. However, the harp part introduces a non-textual consideration for its handling. Matthew Culloton conducted the premiere recording of this work in consultation with the composer. In a phone interview, he explained that the decision was between a breath lasting a quarter rest and one lasting an eighth rest. The decision was dictated by a nontextual consideration: activity in the harp part at the same moment. According to Culloton, “Whereas normally a comma would equal an eighth rest breath, the activity in the harp needed as much space as possible to be heard. So, a quarter rest was employed instead in order to keep beat three clear.”

- m. 11 (“dear”) — A period would normally elicit as distinct a break as possible: a beat or more of rest always accompanied by a breath. In this case, however, Culloton pointed out that the needs of the music again trump the needs of the text: “A full beat of breath would truncate the five-beat decrescendo to four beats, whereas a half-beat breath would shorten it less.”

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6 Phone interview between the author and Matthew Culloton, 30 July 2010.

7 Ibid.
• m. 15 ("wet") — The choices for how best to musically represent this period are the same as for the comma in measure four (see above). There is no harp activity, dynamic change, or composer indication about how best to handle this phrase ending, all of which again place this phrasing decision in the conductor’s purview. The previously stated premise that an unrhythmicized comma generally equals a half tactus, and a period generally a full tactus barring any extenuating circumstance applies here: a full beat’s worth of breath would be the choice most respectful of both poet and composer.

• m. 17 ("yet") — The comma following the word “yet” would serve no necessary grammatical or syntactical function. Millay uses it here to set off the word “yet” as rhyming with the previous line’s final word, “wet” (this rhyme pattern continues throughout all three stanzas of the poem; see Appendix A). In this way it serves a structural function. Thus, a break in sound could be justified, despite it being in the middle of a line. However, if read aloud, this comma would almost certainly be ignored, so the best textual solution here is to ignore the comma and carry through with no breath or break in sound (or with perhaps a glottal on “in,” if desired). And, given the presence of a crescendo marked by the composer, this solution would support the music as well.

• m. 20 ("year") — The poem has a period at this point, which is itself justification for a full beat of rest. The harp accompaniment has no moving notes or exclusive pitches, the decrescendo in the vocal parts ends before the barline, and there is no phrasing indication from the composer. However, the composer has indicated a ritard in measure 19 and an a tempo in measure 21. Paulus’ use of tempo here coincides with a
notable formal event in Millay’s poem: the moment when the quatrain-couplet rhyme scheme changes from “aaba” to “cc.” This is not as significant a formal event as a stanzaic division, but is worth noting and worth mirroring in the form and structure of the music, which Paulus does. Because this is an internal structural moment of the poem, the ritard marked in measure 19 need not be exaggerated to a molto ritard.
Figure 4.4 Measures 1-21 of “The Spring and the Fall” (from Four Songs on Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay) by Stephen Paulus on a poem of Edna St. Vincent Millay.

Nested Punctuation (Parentheses, Dashes, Commas, Brackets and Quotation Marks)

There are thirteen uses for parentheses in written English, but only one has implications for musical performance. That is when “parentheses are used in the same manner as commas and
dashes to set off amplifying, explanatory, or digressive information contained in…a sentence.”

However, this same general function may also be served by dashes and commas, and, to a lesser extent, brackets. Miller and Taylor suggest the various uses of each in regards to the written word:

> If the parenthetical material is closely intertwined with the rest of the sentence, use **commas**. If it is desired to forcefully emphasize the information, use **dashes**. When the…material is used as if it is a whispered aside to the reader, employ **parentheses**.

Because an idea within commas, dashes or parentheses is subordinate to the main idea, special treatment may be in order. The above quote by Miller and Taylor suggests a hierarchy of these three marks, a useful perspective that may translate into practical application for the choral conductor when analyzing a poem. If holding Miller and Taylor’s perspective, parenthetical commentary nested between commas should receive little or no special treatment by the choir, material between dashes should be somehow “forcefully emphasize[d],” and material in parentheses should be “whispered” using a breathier tone, softer dynamic, or decreased forces. This should certainly not be considered a “rule,” but rather one possible approach. Each instance will demand creative application.

Nested punctuation was introduced in Chapter One in the section “Reduction of Forces,” as that performance technique may be a useful device in such cases. Nested punctuation is used to enclose a parenthetical thought (such as this one). The two types of parenthetical

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9 *Ibid.*, 48. The use of boldface is that of the authors.
modifications of interest to this study are appositives and nonrestrictive clauses (see Figure 1.12).

When speaking, parenthetical modifications are often represented by the voice changing in some significant way. For example, the speaker may alter his or her volume, articulation, timbre, or rate of speech; represent the nesting punctuation as pauses; over-enunciate the words within the nested punctuation; or exaggerate or negate textual stresses. All of these can be represented musically:

- **Volume** — Ask the choir to sing the notes and words of the parenthetical modification more softly. If the composer does not mark a dynamic change, the conductor should alter the volume microdynamically—that is, decrease the volume while staying reasonably within the parameters of the dynamic marking provided by the composer (e.g., from *piano* to *piú piano*). Alternately, reducing the number of singers for the words inside the parentheses can provide a nice contrast.

- **Articulation** — Change the articulation of the notes and their assigned syllables.

- **Timbre** — The vocal timbre may be altered per Chapter One or as suggested by Miller and Taylor.

- **Rate of speech** — This is typically the purview of the composer, as it has to do with tempo or rhythm. However, the conductor may believe the interpolation of a *ritard* or *accelerando* is justified by the music and/or the textual elements.

- **Pauses** — Phrasing may be affected by the nested punctuation. The composer may mark a breath, break-no-breath, etc. Alternately, such phrasing may be added by the conductor.
• Over-enunciation — Increase consonant energy. N.B. Over-enunciation of text and change of articulation are two different performance tools, though inexperienced singers may easily confuse the two.

• Textual Stresses Exaggerated/Negated — Decrease or increase the degree to which the singers employ syllabic stress. Syllables that are emphasized due to principles of metrical or lexical stresses (as discussed in Chapters Two and Three) may be over-emphasized. Alternately, syllables may be sung without any differentiation in stress at all (as in patter songs).

A portion of Longfellow’s “The Day is Done” was used in Chapter One as an example of a parenthetical modification in the section “Reduction of Forces.” However, it was pointed out then that reducing the forces as a way of highlighting the appositive would not be appropriate for Paulus’ setting of this work (see Figure 4.5). This is partly due to the increase in dynamic marked by the composer. The author instead recommends either slightly increasing the consonant energy or adding a slight breathiness to the tone. If either of these techniques is employed, it should be on the most nuanced level.
During the process of score study, the conductor may discover ways the composer has tried to achieve this special treatment. There are many ways this might be accomplished, including changing the dynamic, articulation, forces, scoring/instrumentation, pitch, register, rhythm, tempo, harmony, key, or mode.

However, if the composer has not indicated some kind of change, the conductor may wish to impose a change for the text within the parentheses, commas, or dashes. When doing so, extreme care must be taken to avoid “recomposing” or over-editing the score to the point where the composer would not welcome the change.
Similar treatment may also be given when commas are used to cite a quotation internally, as in: “It is just as easy to sing in tune,” quipped the conductor, “as it is to sing out of tune.” The same could be said of colons or commas that precede a quotation. There are many ways a composer might distinguish quoted text from non-quoted text: the line might be sung by a soloist, a particular section, a semi-chorus, or a quartet; the dynamic indication might be louder or softer; or the marked articulation might change for the quotation.

However, if the composer makes no such indication, then it becomes a matter of interpretation, subject to the opinion and artistry of the conductor. To emphasize text inside quotation marks, the performer should offset it by varying the performance of it in some way. Many of the methods discussed in this document may be used, including variation of dynamic, articulation, degree of word stress, and forces (i.e., number of singers).

**Implied Punctuation**

Clearly, punctuation marks can assist the conductor a great deal with interpretation. In poems, there are times when a marking does not appear but would be represented by a pause or with vocal inflection if read aloud. This implied punctuation can play just as important a role as marked punctuation, though its very existence within a poem is much more difficult to ascertain.

Consider the ending to Barber’s *Let Down the Bars, O Death* (see Figure 4.7). The poem ends with “Too near thou art for seeking thee, / Too tender to be told.” Though the poem itself is strophic, Barber’s musical setting is different for each verse, resulting in the musical form AB. However, at this point, Barber recapitulates the opening two lines and their accompanying music, thereby altering the form to ABA´. Barber ends the piece in the middle of the recapitulation,
before reiterating the third line instead imposing a sort of musical ellipsis. This is achieved by
the voicing of the final chord (instead of a more final sounding low ‘G’, the basses sing the
higher octave for the final cadence), the ritard, the diminuendo to pianississimo, and the fermata.
This leaves the audience and singers to fill in the last two lines for themselves, and, as those lines
allude to slaughter (“whose bleating ceases to repeat / whose wandering is done”), the ellipsis
takes on an ominous quality. The conductor, therefore, can shape the ritard and diminuendo,
define the magnitude of the pianississimo, and determine the duration of the fermata with this in
mind.
Figure 4.6 Measures 12-30 of Samuel Barber’s *Let Down the Bars, O Death* on a poem of Emily Dickinson.
In *There Will Be Rest*, poet Sara Teasdale did not place a comma after the word “serene.” This indicates that she considered the adjective “serene” as modifying “forgetting,” as opposed to these two words each being a separate descriptor of “A reign of rest” (see Appendix A). Composer Frank Ticheli, in his setting, effectively inserts between these two words the musical equivalent of a comma: an eighth note rest (see Figure 4.8). This essentially changes the listener’s experience of this line from Teasdale’s original “A reign of rest, serene forgetting” to “A reign of rest, serene [and] forgetting.” In other words, the function of the adjective “serene,” by virtue of how it is set musically, stands alone rather than as a modifier to the word “forgetting.” This is an example not so much of implied punctuation, but of imposed punctuation, where the composer subtly rewrites the text and, in this case, the poet’s meaning.

![Figure 4.7](image)

Figure 4.7 Measures 28-31 of *There Will Be Rest* by Frank Ticheli on a poem by Sara Teasdale.

The conductor, then, is left to determine how best to handle the phrasing issue that the eighth rest presents. If given a plain-text and un-nuanced performance, the rest may impose a comma where the poet did not intend one, changing the meaning of the word “forgetting.” To counteract this, the conductor may ask the choir to enact the rest as marked, but to do so without taking a breath. A second issue is how to handle the quarter note of “-rene:” without dynamic change, with a one-beat *crescendo*, or with a one-beat *decrescendo?* A flat-line performance of
this quarter note may create a clipped feeling akin to the finality we associate with commas. Adding a slight decrescendo in this instance, that is, allowing the note to fade, will certainly sound like a comma. Instead, adding a slight, almost imperceptible crescendo on this one note will create a sense of continuity, propelling the phrase up and over the rest, while still observing it. Finally, the conductor must consider where to put the [n] phoneme of “serene.” If put on the fourth sixteenth note of beat three (just prior to the rest), the rest may be too long to maintain coherence between the two words on either side. However, if the [n] is voiced for the first fraction of the rest, the duration of silence is effectively reduced, thus reducing the level of disconnect. If all three of these recommendations are followed in this instance, the conductor can be assured that he or she is representing the interests of both poet and composer.

**End-stopped vs. Enjambed**

The relationship between syntax and the poetic line is an important consideration in the analysis of a poem and its musical setting. There are times when line length and grammatical phrasing coincide. This is usually marked with some kind of punctuation. And, too, a comma may be found at the end of a line of poetry for purely structural reasons, that is, even when there is no grammatical impetus for such a mark. There are other times, when grammatical phrasing spills over the length of the poetic line.\(^\text{10}\)

A line of poetry that ends with a period, comma, semicolon, dash, or colon is said to be end-stopped, while a line that ends without punctuation (or with punctuation that serves a

structural function rather than a grammatical one) is said to be enjambed. However, end-stopping can be created when a linebreak coincides with a syntactical break, even if there is no actual punctuation mark. Conversely, a line ending with a comma may be enjambed. Powell and Halperin make the distinction this way:

[Enjambment is] the continuation of line that runs over into the next one without any pause at its end. It is the opposite of an end-stopping. Two lines are enjambed when you must read the second to comprehend the first.¹¹

Some interesting observations may be made when looking at Frost’s “The Road Not Taken” (from *Frostiana*) with an eye toward the line endings. In the first stanza, Frost uses punctuation in no line except the last. Instead, he uses the conjunction “and” and the preposition “to” as the first word of four of the five lines. These indicate syntactical breaks. But the question remains whether Frost meant for these five lines to be strung together as an unbroken thought. In each of the remaining stanzas, all but one line end with some kind of punctuation. In fact, Frost uses an impressive array of punctuation, including exclamation points, periods, commas, colons, semicolons, and dashes:

> Two roads diverged in a yellow wood
>  And sorry I could not travel both
>  And be one traveler, long I stood
>  And looked down one as far as I could
>  To where it bent in the undergrowth;

> Then took the other, as just as fair,
>  And having perhaps the better claim,
>  Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
>  Though as for that the passing there
>  Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.\(^{12}\)

Taking all verses and punctuation marks into account, one can deduce the following about the above poem by Frost:

1) The first stanza creates the most problems due to the sheer number of lines without closing punctuation. Thompson provides no help, leaving us a musical enjambment as well by inserting no rests into these lines (as discussed in Chapter One). Should the choir then simply stagger breathe throughout the first stanza? One argument against this is that doing so would contradict the folk-like character of the piece. Folk music is characterized by short phrases that can be sung in a single breath, and, in fact, are separated by a breath. The full title of Thompson’s cycle is actually \textit{Frostiana: Seven Country Songs}. That the word “country” is actually in the title may indicate that Thompson may have intentionally taken a folk-like approach to aspects of the composition of these works, possibly including phrasing. If this is true, then a breath should be taken between each phrase. If one sides with the poet, however, then all lines in the first stanza should be enjambed.

2) Frost has demonstrated great care in whether or not the ends of lines are punctuated.

Therefore, most commas should elicit from the performer some treatment in phrasing or articulation.

3) In Thompson’s setting, the eighth rests in measures 20, 22, and 34—each of which has a word or syllable followed by a comma—may be performed best by use of the break-no-breath technique whereby the rest is observed at exact value but the singers do not take a breath. This will best serve the text while respecting the composer’s markings.

4) Adhering to the principle stated at the beginning of this chapter, periods and exclamation points should be represented with a beat or more of rest whenever possible. If the composer has not built such silences into the composition, the conductor is left to interpolate an appropriate amount of rest that will, within the confines of the surrounding musical elements, as accurately as possible represent the punctuation.

5) There is only one exclamation point. It comes at the end of line thirteen, at almost exactly the point of the golden mean. This is appropriate, as this is the moment when the speaker makes his or her decision; the poem until this point has been a decision-making process. So, it would make sense that some kind of special treatment be granted this line when sung. I recommend a connected *poco marcato* or *messa di voce* on each of these notes, with an arch-shaped dynamic to match the arch-shape of the soprano line for these words only.

6) The poet uses semicolons in the first two stanzas to distinguish between one road (lines 1-5) and the other road (lines 6-8), and to compare the two roads (lines 9-12). In my opinion, as these are visual cues required by the rules of grammar, it is not necessary to represent them in musical performance. Discussing this with the choir during the
rehearsal process may add to their understanding of the poem and may result in a more expressive performance. (Note, however, that Thompson changes Frost’s first semicolon to a period for his setting.)

7) The colon and dash are special here. Like the exclamation point, each is used only once in the poem. Frost is underscoring these last three lines in part by using these two marks. The colon sets them apart, alerting the reader’s eye that something special will follow, in this case a kind of summary. I would be inclined, when performing Thompson’s setting, to change the pianissimo to piano (or piú pianissimo) for the lines after the colon. The dash separates the repeated text, but does so in a way that encourages more of a pause and special emphasis than a comma would. Coupled with the repeated “I,” the resulting implication is one of hesitation or intense pensiveness. This is represented by the composer, and requires no special treatment by the conductor.

The end-punctuated lines are more easily interpreted than the enjambed ones. Frost clearly took great care with his end-stops, selecting just the right punctuation mark to convey the kind of treatment that he required to effectively communicate the mood or message of a line. In order to present a performance that takes into account the intentions of both poet and composer, observing these end-stops with a full beat or more of rest should be ensured whenever possible.

The enjambed lines present specific challenges. An examination of how the composer treats each of these moments musically will lend great insight into certain issues with relevance for an interpretation of a choral score, especially phrasing.

It is known that Frost worked with Thompson in selecting the poems for Frostiana. Did he also lend insight into their interpretation? There are four possibilities for Thompson’s musical handling of the line endings: (1) Frost influenced Thompson; (2) Frost did not influence
Thompson; (3) Thompson was being purposefully vague about how phrasing was to be handled by the performer—whenever rests are absent—to leave as many options as possible; (4) Thompson intended to be clear, but what is now viewed as vagueness was simply a limitation of musical notation that has since been rectified in now-modern common editorial practice.
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This document is the expansion of research and ideas first presented by the author in lecture-recital format. As part of my research and preparation for my DMA Lecture-Recital, which was delivered April 13, 2006, I interviewed Dale Warland about the attention he gives text in the score preparation process. Certain excerpts of that interview are particularly relevant to this study. Here are three separate quotes from Warland about the role text plays in the preparation of a score:

I always make certain that I have a copy of the poetry of a given musical work that I am studying, laid out in 'printed poetic form' and at my fingertips as I study the work at hand.1

The text affects several elements of interpretation, primarily dynamics and articulation. The more dramatic the poetry, the more contrasting…one should make the dynamics and the articulations.2

The most important effort that one should make in his or her preparation is to understand the meaning of the poetry.3

Summary

A choral performance that balances textual and musical elements does not just make a text “come alive” for the listener, it also draws them in, breaking down the barrier between

1 Interview of Dale Warland conducted by Drew Collins, 14 March 2006. Full text of the interview is included as Appendix B.
2 ibid.
3 ibid.
performer and audience, and achieving a shared experience respectful of both poet and composer.

This document touches on performance techniques of particular relevance for the effective and expressive rendering of a choral score for which the text is poetry (Chapter One), poetic meter and other large formal/structural considerations with implications for choral performance (Chapter Two), the types of textual stresses and musical stresses that can facilitate a more expressive and text-friendly choral performance (Chapter Three), and how punctuation can influence the choral performance (Chapter Four).

Understanding the connections between a choral composition and its text can influence the analysis, interpretation, and performance of a choral score. There are many facets to understanding a text, such as meaning, hidden meanings, expressive elements, rhyme scheme, and structural elements. This study has focused on the last of these: how an understanding of the constructive elements of poetry can influence phrasing, articulation, and other performance considerations.

Further Study: Satellite Topics Not Covered

Topics of potential relevance for a text-conscious choral performance that were not covered in this study include rhyme scheme, expressive textual devices (e.g., alliteration), text painting, etc. The reader is encouraged to consider these and other text-oriented sub-topics when approaching the analysis, interpretation, rehearsal, and performance of any choral work.

There are certain distinct but related areas of study that may assist the conductor in gaining facility with achieving a text-conscious performance. Learning more about responsorial
singing in worship settings and solo and ensemble singing in dramatic forms such as opera translate easily to choral performance.

Listening to, singing, and learning to rehearse and conduct homophonic psalm chants such as those used in Anglican (see Figure 5.1a), Episcopal, Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, and other worship traditions can easily transfer to concert choral music regardless of the text. Word stress is part and parcel of such genres, especially when a single note is assigned multiple syllables. In such cases where the rhythm is not specified in print, the conductor and choir are left to determine the rhythm in such cases, and word stress is a primary way choirs come to agree on a rhythm (see Figures 5.1a-5.1c).

Figure 5.1a Example of Anglican psalm-chant. The words “and the house of Jacob from a·mong the ’strange’ people.”

Figure 5.1b Example of monophonic chant, where several syllables are assigned to a single note.
Learning to interpret and conduct monophonic chant is a specialized skill, especially when singing from neumes or stemless note heads (as opposed to editions where the chant has been transcribed using modern rhythmic notation). As will be discussed further below, the conducting technique of chironomy can be incorporated into traditional beat patterns on occasion to facilitate greater expression in the gesture and thus the ensemble, especially to negate the effects of musical stresses on text and vice versa (see Figure 5.2).

Listening to great vocalists sing opera and art song will help inform the conductor’s ear about the application of textual stresses. Transference to the choral idiom will not always be
possible, but considering how a soloist might sing a line (particularly in regards to the interaction of text and music) might be useful.

**Applying These Techniques to Other Choral Genres, Styles, and Text Sources**

The focus of this document has been on secular accentual and accentual-syllabic poetry written in English in the United States and set to music by composers from the United States. However, the principles and performance techniques explored can be easily applied to almost every choral genre and language in any era. This is perhaps especially true of forms that are associated with poetic texts such as Italian madrigals, German partsongs, and other genres.

It is recommended that special care and attention be paid to settings of translations of poetry. English translations of Lorca, Rumi, Rilke, and other poets who originally wrote in a language other than English, often lack at least some of a poem’s original structural elements and nuances. In situations where both the original non-English poem and a singable English translation are included and the conductor opts to perform the latter, it is suggested that special note be made of instances where the stresses of the original text and the stresses of the singable translation disagree. Such conflicts may influence the interpretation of the musical elements, since musical stresses were intended to correspond to the words and syllables of the original text. Now that this same music is being used to set a text with perhaps a different poetic structure, creative interpretive decisions may be required.
When To Forego These Techniques

There are times when application of textual stresses—or textual and musical stresses in combination—may actually result in a worse performance of a phrase. This is true in musical styles that intentionally overshadow the text or negate it altogether.

For example, neoclassical, minimalist, and other styles for which austerity is a stylistic principle would be hindered by application of the techniques suggested in Chapters One through Four. Over-emoting on the texts in such a work would be to miss the point of that particular style.

Recommendations for Future Studies

There are a variety of topic areas ripe for future examination. One example is the representation of poetic style in musical composition and performance. This may include expressive devices such as allusion, symbolism, personification, simile, and metaphor, as well as alliteration, sibilance, consonance, and assonance. Many of these have musical parallels, and such an exploration could yield fascinating results, and practical application to choral performance.

From a general point of view, a text’s affect may find musical representation in devices such as expressive chromaticism, texture, etc. This may expand to include hidden meanings, innuendo, and some of the stylistic considerations mentioned in the previous paragraph. This is distinguished from text painting in that it pertains to a poem or large section of a poem as opposed to a word or small grouping of words. This was explored in this study in part when considering rhetorical stress, but this is a topic worth further exploration. Musical representation
of a text’s general affect has been given great attention for music of other eras, but a study on contemporary choral music would certainly serve the field greatly.

As mentioned above, rhyme scheme as a consideration in the analysis and interpretation of a choral score was omitted from this study. However, rhyme scheme can be an important factor when determining phrase length. This was touched on briefly in this document, but there is more to be considered. For example, a comparative study of specific rhyming forms (e.g., sonnet), set to music for choir could be fascinating.

Non-rhyming forms such as free verse, blank verse, and haiku were not included in this study. The techniques I propose herein are largely adaptable to these forms. However, there are certain considerations specific to these forms that could influence choral performance and so may warrant study.

As mentioned above, the conducting technique of chironomy, often used in the conducting of monophonic chant, may also be useful when conducting music of other genres. There may be practical ways for aspects of this technique to be incorporated into the traditional gesture that will help the conductor reinforce or negate textual or musical stresses (see Figure 5.2).
Conclusions

Including poetic constructive devices in the analysis of a choral score for which the text is poetry can have important positive results in performance. Gaining an understanding of a poem’s construction, independent of its musical setting, will lead to a greater eventual understanding of the musical composition as a whole. Taking into account all types of stress (both textual and musical) when analyzing a piece of choral music will enhance the performer’s ability to convey the intentions of both the composer and the poet. When both musical and textual issues are considered, a symbiotic interpretation is achieved, with music influencing the interpretation of the text and vice versa.

The Comprehensive Musico-Linguistic Stress Analysis provides an objective method for analyzing textual stresses, musical stresses, and both in combination. The numeric-based method

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presented can easily be converted into a visual aid—such as a diagram, chart, or graph—to aid in analysis.

**Final Thoughts**

Vocal music is a very “human” art. It is direct musical communication between performer and listener—that is, there is no instrument providing a barrier or buffer—using as the primary performance medium that with which most every person is endowed: voice. Whether a single singer, or a vocal ensemble, vocal music is a highly personal art form. The performer(s) tend to “wear their hearts on their sleeves.”

Composition and poetry are much the same way. All three—performance, composition, and poetry—require a balance of technique and expression. This study has examined compositional and performance techniques that combine the two.

From one perspective it seems preposterous to reduce either choral music or poetry to such detailed analysis. And it is, if the conductor does not eventually incorporate into this objectivity the subjectivity of our own artistry and life perspective. The author encourages the reader to engage in every manner of finely detailed research and analysis relevant to any piece of music—including the precepts and techniques in this document—so long as the end result is a synthesis of same.

Through the concepts and techniques in this document, the author has attempted to provide the reader with tools that will ultimately achieve a greater understanding of how choral compositions for which the text is poetry can result in more expressive performances that respect the ideals and intentions of both composer and poet.
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Calm on the listening ear of night
Come heaven's melodious strains,
Where wild Judea stretches forth
Her silver mantled plains.
Celestial choirs from courts above
Shed sacred glories there,
And angels, with their sparkling lyres,
Make music on the air.

The answering hills of Palestine
Send back the glad reply;
And greet, from all their holy heights,
The Day-Spring from on high.
O'er the blue depths of Galilee
There comes a holier calm,
And Sharon waves, in solemn praise,
Her silent groves of palm.

"Glory to God!" the lofty strain
The realm of ether fills;
How sweeps the song of solemn joy
O'er Judah's sacred hills!
"Glory to God!" the sounding skies
Loud with their anthems ring,
"Peace to the earth; good will to men,
From heaven's eternal King!"

Light on thy hills, Jerusalem!
The Savior now is born,
And bright on Bethlehem's joyous plains
Breaks the first Christmas morn.
And brightly on Moriah's brow
Crowned with her temple spires,
Which first proclaim the newborn light,
Clothed with its orient fires.
This day shall Christian tongues be mute,
And Christian hearts be cold?
Oh, catch the anthem that from heaven
O'er Judah's mountains rolled.
When burst upon that listening night
The high and solemn lay:
"Glory to God, on earth be peace,"
Salvation comes today!

~ Edmund Sears

DAREST THOU NOW, O SOUL

1
Darest thou now, O Soul,
Walk out with me toward the Unknown Region,
Where neither ground is for the feet, nor any path to follow?

2
No map, there, nor guide,
Nor voice sounding, nor touch of human hand,
Nor face with blooming flesh, nor lips, nor eyes, are in that land.

3
I know it not, O Soul;
Nor dost thou—all is a blank before us;
All waits, undream’d of, in that region—that inaccessible land.

4
[Till, when the ties loosen,
All but the ties eternal, Time and Space,
Nor darkness, gravitation, sense, nor any bounds, bound us.

5
Then we burst forth—we float,
In Time and Space, O Soul—prepared for them;
Equal, equipt at last—(O joy! O fruit of all!) them to fulfil, O Soul.

~Poem by Walt Whitman
~Choral setting by William Schuman; published under the title “The Unknown Region”
(mvt. 2 of “Carols of Death”)
THE DAY IS DONE
The day is done, and the darkness
Falls from the wings of Night,
As a feather is wafted downward
From an eagle in his flight.

I see the lights of the village
Gleam through the rain and the mist,
And a feeling of sadness comes o'er me
That my soul cannot resist:

A feeling of sadness and longing,
That is not akin to pain,
And resembles sorrow only
As the mist resembles the rain.

Come, read to me some poem,
Some simple and heartfelt lay,
That shall soothe this restless feeling,
And banish the thoughts of day.

[Not from the grand old masters,
Not from the bards sublime,
Whose distant footsteps echo
Through the corridors of Time.

For, like strains of martial music,
Their mighty thoughts suggest
Life's endless toil and endeavor;
And to-night I long for rest.]

Read from some humbler poet,
Whose songs gushed from his heart,
As showers from the clouds of summer,
Or tears from the eyelids start;

[Who, through long days of labor,
And nights devoid of ease,
Still heard in his soul the music
Of wonderful melodies.

Such songs have power to quiet
The restless pulse of care,
And come like the benediction
That follows after prayer.]
Then read from the treasured volume
The poem of thy choice,
And lend to the rhyme of the poet
The beauty of thy voice.

And the night shall be filled with music
And the cares, that infest the day,
Shall be banished like restless feelings [orig.: Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,]
And [as] silently steal away.
  ~Poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
  ~Choral setting by Stephen Paulus

GOD’S WORLD
O world, I cannot hold thee close enough!
  Thy winds, thy wide grey skies!
  Thy mists that roll and rise!
Thy woods, this autumn day, that ache and sag
And all but cry with colour! That gaunt crag
To crush! To lift the lean of that black bluff!
World, World, I cannot get thee close enough!

Long have I known a glory in it all,
  But never knew I this;
  Here such a passion is
As stretcheth me apart. Lord, I do fear
Thou'st made the world too beautiful this year.
My soul is all but out of me,—let fall
No burning leaf; prithee, let no bird call.
  ~Poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay
  ~Choral setting by Stephen Paulus; movement one from the choral cycle Four Songs on
  Poems by Edna St. Vincent Millay

LET DOWN THE BARS, O DEATH!
Let down the bars, O Death!
The tired flocks come in
Whose bleating ceases to repeat,
Whose wandering is done.

Thine is the stillest night,
Thine the securest fold;
Too near thou art for seeking thee,
Too tender to be told.
  ~Poem by Emily Dickinson
  ~Choral setting by Samuel Barber
NO MARK
Corn grew where the corn was spilled
In the wreck where Casey Jones was killed,
Scrub-oak grows and sassafras
Around the shady stone you pass
To show where Stonewall Jackson fell
That Saturday at Chancellorsville,
And soapweed bayonets are steeled
Across the Custer battlefield;
But where you die the sky is black
A little while with cracking flak,
Then ocean crosses very still
Above your skull that held our will.

O swing away, white gull, white gull,
Evening star, be beautiful.

~Poem by Thomas Hornsby Ferril
~Choral setting by Cecil Effinger; movement one from the choral cycle Four Pastorales

PRAYERS OF STEEL
Lay me on an anvil, O God.
Beat me and hammer me into a crowbar.
Let me pry loose old walls.
Let me lift and loosen old foundations.

Lay me on an anvil, O God.
Beat me and hammer me into a steel spike.
Drive me into the girders that hold a skyscraper together.
Take red-hot rivets and fasten me into the central girders.
Let me be the great nail holding a skyscraper through blue nights into white stars.

~Poem by Carl Sandburg
~Choral setting by Paul J. Christiansen

QUICKSAND YEARS
Quicksand years that whirl me I know not whither,
Your schemes, politics, fail—lines give way—substances mock and elude me;
Only the theme I sing, the great and strong-possess’d Soul, eludes not;
One’s-self must never give way—that is the final substance—that out of all is sure;
Out of politics, triumphs, battles, life—what at last finally remains?
[When shows break up, what but One’s-Self is sure?]

~Poem by Walt Whitman (1819-1892)
~Choral setting by René Clausen; movement two of Three Whitman Settings
THE ROAD NOT TAKEN
Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

~Poem by Robert Frost (1874-1963)
~Choral setting by Randall Thompson; movement one from the choral cycle Frostiana

SNOW-FLAKES
Out of the bosom of the Air,
Out of the cloud-folds of her garments shaken,
Over the woodlands brown and bare,
Over the harvest-fields forsaken,
    Silent, and soft, and slow
    Descends the snow.

Even as our cloudy fancies take
Suddenly shape in some divine expression,
Even as the troubled heart doth make
In the white countenance confession,
    The troubled sky reveals
    The grief it feels.

This is the poem of the air,
Slowly in silent syllables recorded;  
This is the secret of despair,  
Long in its cloudy bosom hoarded,  
       Now whispered and revealed  
To wood and field.  
  ~Poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)  
  ~Choral setting by Lane Johnson

SONG FOR A LUTE  
Seeing how I love you utterly,  
And your disdain is my despair,  
Alter this dulcet eye, forbear  
To wear those looks that latterly  
You wore, and won me wholly, wear  
A brow more dark, and bitterly  
Berate my dullness and my care,  
Seeing how your smile is my despair,  
Seeing how I love you utterly.

Seeing how I love you utterly,  
And your distress is my despair,  
Alter this brimming eye, nor wear  
The trembling lip that latterly  
Under a more auspicious air  
You wore, and thrust me through, forbear  
To drop your head so bitterly  
Into your hands, seeing how I dare  
No tender touch upon your hair,  
Knowing as I do how fitterly  
You do reproach me than forbear,  
Seeing how your tears are my despair,  
Seeing how I love you utterly.  
  ~Poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay  
  ~Choral setting by Joseph Byrd; movement 1 of the choral cycle To Elinore Wylie

THE SPRING AND THE FALL  
In the spring of the year, in the spring of the year,  
I walked the road beside my dear.  
The trees were black where the bark was wet.  
I see them yet, in the spring of the year.  
He broke me a bough of the blossoming peach  
That was out of the way and hard to reach.

In the fall of the year, in the fall of the year,
I walked the road beside my dear.
The rooks went up with a raucous trill.
I hear them still, in the fall of the year.
He laughed at all I dared to praise,
And broke my heart, in little ways.

Year be springing or year be falling,
The bark will drip and the birds be calling.
There's much that's fine to see and hear
In the spring of a year, in the fall of a year.
'Tis not love's going hurt my days.
But that it went in little ways.

~Poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay
~Choral setting by Stephen Paulus; movement two from the choral cycle Four Songs on Poems by Edna St. Vincent Millay

SURE ON THIS SHINING NIGHT
Sure on this shining night
   Of star-made shadows round,
Kindness must watch for me
   This side the ground.

The late year lies down the north.
All is healed, all is health.
High summer holds the earth.
   Hearts all whole.

Sure on this shining night
I weep for wonder
wand'ring far alone
Of shadows on the stars.

~James Agee
~Choral settings by Samuel Barber and René Clausen (from the choral cycle Nocturnes)
THERE WILL BE REST
There will be rest, and sure stars shining
   Over the roof-tops crowned with snow,
A reign of rest, serene forgetting,
   The music of stillness holy and low.

I will make this world of my devising
   Out of a dream in my lonely mind.
I shall find the crystal of peace, and above me
   Stars I shall find.

~Poem by Sara Teasdale
~Choral setting by Frank Ticheli

TWO OLD CROWS
Two old crows sat on a fence rail.
Two old crows sat on a fence rail,
Thinking of effect and cause,
Of weeds and flowers,
And nature's laws.
One of them muttered, one of them stuttered,
One of them stuttered, one of them muttered.
Each of them thought far more than he uttered.
One crow asked the other crow a riddle.
One crow asked the other crow a riddle:
The muttering crow
Asked the stuttering crow,
"Why does a bee have a sword to his fiddle?
Why does a bee have a sword to his fiddle?"
"Bee-cause," said the other crow,
"Bee-cause,

Just then a bee flew close to their rail:—
"Buzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz  zzzzzzzzzz  zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz ZZZZZZZZZ."
And those two black crows
Turned pale,
And away those crows did sail.
Why?
"Buzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz  zzzzzzzzzz  zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz ZZZZZZZZZ."

~Poem by Vachel Lindsay
~Choral setting by Norman Dello Joio; published as “Of Crows and Clusters”
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW WITH DALE WARLAND

The following interview was completed via electronic mail on 14 March 2006 in preparation for my doctoral Lecture Recital, and was included in the lecture script. However, as lecture recital scripts are not published, access is limited. I chose to re-print it here in order that Warland’s viewpoints may be more readily accessed.

Drew Collins: *What are some of the ways you ask singers to manipulate the pronunciation of text in order that it might be best communicated to the listener? I'm thinking of things like substituting "hw" for words that begin with "wh." I also recall that you had the choir say "buttnhole" (with a soft 'T') instead of "buTTonhole" (with an aspirated 'T') in movement 5 of Persichetti’s Flower Songs.*

Dale Warland: The goal for any choir should always be to utilize 'correct' and 'unified' pronunciation of every word. This means being aware of the pronunciation as it is printed in any authoritative dictionary ('correct'). Only 'common usage' might change or modify that pronunciation. Once the pronunciation is set by the conductor, it is essential that each singer embrace it in order to present a unified pronunciation that will be understood by the listener as well as result in a beautiful sound.

I do not ask singers to 'manipulate' the pronunciation. We only strive for 'accuracy' and 'unity.' Perhaps I 'modify' but not 'manipulate'. EXAMPLE: "buttnhole" instead of "buTTonhole." This is subscribing to 'common usage' rather than what the dictionary says, and also underlaying the 'obvious emphasis' that can otherwise occur with sibilant sounds. It is a personal aesthetic issue for me. What may be called clear and accurate enunciation of words with the sibilants 't' and 's,' it often draws attention to itself and breaks the otherwise uninterrupted and smooth sound of a given word.
ANOTHER EXAMPLE: Substituting "hw" for words that begin with "wh." This is simple. It is a matter of insisting on aspirating the initial sound of the syllable as it is clearly displayed in every dictionary. For whatever reason, singers tend to voice an initial "w" sound rather than aspirate the correct "hw" (blow air effect). In addition to the word being mispronounced, utilizing a voiced "w" tends to give an effect of a slight burst,' disrupting the flow of the prose. Pronouncing it correctly produces a gentle quality. It is especially evident when a word with 'wh' begins the phrase.

DC: What is your preferred way of handling the vowel of final, unaccented syllables. I'm thinking here of the part of your video, "Attention to Detail" on the matter of pronunciation of "roses" in [Stenhammer's Garden of the Seraglio]: should it be "rosES" vs. "rosIZ" vs. "roSUS."

DW: Vowels of final unaccented syllables involve a rather 'imprecise science.' Perhaps the most common letter (vowel) utilized in final syllables is the letter 'e.' EXAMPLE: 'es' of 'roses.' In standard pronunciation practices, it would be pronounced as a schwa (the neutral vowel 'uh'). The alternative choices are 'ih' and 'eh.' All are acceptable but not equally aesthetically satisfactory. In every decision it comes back to -or relies on- personal preference.

In such instances the schwa ( 'uh' ) can readily sound guttural and not be as pleasant to the ear and would be my third choice after considering 'eh' or 'ih.' The use of 'eh' is presents problems of unification and accurate resultant pitch. Utilizing 'ih' is most often my personal first choice because it is closest to common pronunciation practice and involves little or no 'shaping' or excessive movement of the mouth and negatively affecting the final sound.
DC: *What role, if any, does word stress and/or syllabic stress play in your interpretation, rehearsal process or desired finished product?*

DW: Word stress and syllabic stress play an insignificant role in my interpretations, the rehearsal process or in the finished product unless the composer has made it clear that word and syllabic stresses are a major factor and desirable in that particular work.

DC: *In some of your marked scores, you sometimes indicate a no-breath mark across a rest. Some would call this a break-no-breath, others might deem this "psychological phrasing." What term do you prefer, when do you employ this technique, where did you learn it (or did you conjure it out of thin air), and how would one best describe this to a choir in a rehearsal situation?*

DW: Phrasing is key to making great choral music. Elements that figure into, or CAN figure into, phrasing are extensive in number. Breaths, where and how they are taken, are central. A variation of actually taking a breath is a 'break-no breath,' where one stops the tone but does not take a breath. I was first introduced to the concept of 'break-no breath' by Norman Luboff in the 1970's. It often can be used to assist in understanding two back-to-back words where the syllables need to be separated in order to do so. However, a break-no breath can be utilized
effectively where a composer has 'interrupted' the musical line with rests but the 'idea' of the sentence (the text) goes on.

EXAMPLES: In Persichetti’s _Flower Songs_, Movement I, ms. 7 and 9. ("a silence of stone"), the tendency for singers is to take a breath at the point of the rest. This breaks the thought of the phrase (the text) improperly. Use of the ‘break-no-breath’ technique solves this issue.

As in normal speech, there are occasions when the use of a 'break-no-breath' can be extremely effective. Those moments are arbitrary choices; subtle but give another element of variety to the important art of phrasing.

DC: _What role does text play when you are analyzing or preparing a score? For example, do you research other settings of the same text, read about the poet, memorize the text, etc.?_

DW: I always make certain that I have a copy of the poetry of a given musical work that I am studying laid out in 'printed poetic form' and at my finger tips as I study the work at hand. I do not research other settings of the same text but I do always make significant efforts to read all that I can about the poet. I do not memorize the poetry, but I read it over and over, aloud, in order to internalize it as much as is possible.

I invariably tear apart /organize the rehearsal in sections of music according to the structure of the text. The most important effort that one should make in his or her preparation is to understand the meaning of the poetry. Whenever the meaning is not clear to me, I consult the composer, poet friends, or scholars of poetry.
DC: *What role, if any, does punctuation play in your score analysis or preparation (e.g., some conductors seem to always have their choirs breathe at commas, regardless of the function of that particular comma)?*

DW: Depending how sensitive the composer is to the punctuation of the poetry, punctuation is the critical guide to phrasing. Commas are 'clues' to that phrasing but they do not necessarily 'require' one to breathe at each and every one. 'Awareness' of punctuation is the key 'watch word.'

DC: *In what other ways might the text of a piece influence matters of interpretation (e.g., tempo, dynamic, articulation, balance, timbre, how long a fermata should be held, etc.)?*

DW: The text affects several elements of interpretation, primarily dynamics and articulation. The more dramatic the poetry, the more contrasting (extreme) one should make the dynamics and the articulations. Matters of balance, timbre and tempo are usually not affected.
APPENDIX C: E-MAIL CORRESPONDENCES

Electronic mail correspondence between Dale Warland and me, 18 August 2010.

My original inquiry read:

You may recall that I am writing on the connection between poetic constructive devices and choral performance. One example I use is "Of Crows and Clusters." I am making the point that the only structural division in Lindsay's poem is exactly where Dello Joio puts a fermata. I reference your recording on the "Fancie" CD. On this recording, you release the fermata in conjunction with the entrance of the piano, with no break (exactly what the score says to do). My question is, did you consult Dello Joio about this moment, or did you simply give the score a "plaintext" reading?

Dr. Warland’s response (truncated to include only information relevant to this document):

Hi Drew......
I'm honored to be a small part of your DMA Document and will stand by to give you as much help as I can.

1 I did NOT contact Dello Joio. It would be quite common or expected for many conductors to make some sort of release after the fermata in measure 64, even a caesura, before going on. To me there are two things that happen, in a very positive way, if you make the entrance of the keyboard the "cut-off" for the choir: (1) the "flow" is maintained (i.e., the piece doesn't stop) and (2) there is a certain "spark of excitement" that happens when you pace it just right and the piano "grabs" the music away from the choir.

[...]

2 The quote from me that you wrote out for my approval looks fine. Maybe also add, someplace, this statement: Utilizing an occasional "break, no breath" when it is indeed effective, also adds a welcome "variety" to all the important elements that relate to "phrasing." In any event, the "break, no breath" alternative to taking a breath, should not be over-used if it is going to remain truly effective for the listener as well as for the singers in the choir.

[...]

All my very, very best......

Keep up the good work ..... 

.... dale
CURRICULUM VITAE

Drew Collins is Assistant Professor and Associate Director of Choral Studies and Music Education at Wright State University. Prior to his current appointment, he served as Associate Director of Choral Studies and Music Education at Augustana College (IL).

A native of Minnesota, he attended Concordia College, Moorhead, MN, where he earned the Bachelor of Music with a major in K-12 Vocal-Instrumental Music Education. During those years, he studied voice with Christopher Cock and David Hamilton, and sang under the direction of Christopher Cock, Daniel Moe, and Paul Nesheim. While at Concordia, he sang, toured, and recorded with the Concordia Choir under René Clausen, with whom he also studied conducting and composition.

He earned the Master of Music in Choral Conducting from Boston University, where his teachers were Ann Howard Jones, David Hoose, Lukas Foss, Daniel Moe, and Craig Smith.

In 2004, Collins began work on the Doctorate of Musical Arts in Choral Conducting at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. His principal conducting teachers there were Earl Rivers, Stephen Coker, and Mark Gibson. His cognate was in composition. During his two-year residency, he was conductor of the University of Cincinnati Men’s Chorus and Cabaret Singers. He was a conductor at the prestigious MusicX New Music Festival, where he worked with composer Michael Torke. While at CCM, he worked with guests such as Harry Christophers, Stephen Darlington, Dale Warland, and Eric Whitacre.

As a guest artist, Collins has appeared as festival conductor for honor choirs, guest conducted semi-professional choirs, toured domestically and internationally, and headlined in Carnegie Hall. He has conducted All-State choirs in Kentucky and Maryland.
Collins has worked as a consultant to several music publishing companies and editors, including Mark Foster Music Co., Neil A. Kjos Music Co. (for which he served as Senior Choral Editor), and Hal Leonard Corporation.

He works to support and further the choral art as a new music reviewer for Choral Journal, repertoire columnist for Choral Director Magazine, and editor of a series of innovative choral scores for Curtis Music Press.


In the field of music education, he has published articles in periodicals such as Choral Director Magazine, presented at the 2004 MENC national convention, and contributed to *Teaching Music Through Performance in Choir, Volume III*.

Collins holds memberships in several professional organizations, including the American Choral Directors Association; Chorus America; College Music Society; International Federation for Choral Music, The National Association for Music Education (MENC); and the National Collegiate Choral Organization.