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CHORAL THEATRE

by

Albert Joseph Wolfe Jr.

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
and the School of Music
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

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May 2016

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ABSTRACT

CHORAL THEATRE

by Albert Joseph Wolfe Jr.

May 2016

Jamaica gained its independence from Great Britain in 1962, after some 300 years of colonization. Prior to Independence, the standard arts education curriculum was decidedly British and Western European. That which was labeled Caribbean or Jamaican “folk” by the British was deemed inferior and was not taught, demonstrated, or performed in formal settings. Thus, generations of Jamaicans never observed or imagined a Caribbean aesthetic in the visual and performing arts. Instead, pre-Independence Jamaicans were taught British and Western European music and performed it the “British” way.

Today, Jamaicans boast a number of artistic developments that are instantly recognized across the globe as being “Jamaican.” One such development in choral music is choral theatre, the performance style of The University Singers of The University of the West Indies in Kingston, Jamaica. Through its choral theatre performances, The University Singers has established itself as a cultural ambassador for Jamaica and the entire Caribbean region. This performance practice incorporates the use of lighting, instrumentation, staging, costuming, and gesture. The University Singers presents its diverse repertoire—including choral standards from Western Europe and choral arrangements of Caribbean and Jamaican popular music—in the choral theatre style during its annual concert season in its campus home, the Philip Sherlock Centre for the Creative Arts.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife, Karen, as it concerns a choir in Jamaica, which is Karen's native country. Had I not met her, I would not have met her father. Had I not met her father, a former member of the choir, I would not have known about The University Singers. Had I not known about The University Singers, I would not have known about choral theatre. It all begins with Karen.

She and I met and fell in love just before I started doctoral work, and we married just one semester into the process. She has been on this journey as long as I have—walking alongside me, encouraging me, prodding me (which was certainly necessary), and taking care of me. She has extended to me considerable grace and immeasurable patience, enduring many nights and weekend afternoons alone while I have read, researched, and written. Her support and belief in me have provided needed energy and motivation, particularly on days when I have been tempted to do anything but write.

The space of this page is insufficient for expressing to her my unending love and gratitude. These humble words will have to suffice, for now:

Karen, I love you and thank you. This is for you.

Our parents also deserve mention. Though not college professors, Joe and Dianna Wolfe—my parents—have been my most important teachers. From the day of my birth to the present, they have stood behind me, never letting me quit or be less than my potential. In fact, the word *can't* is not in my vocabulary because of my father and his fondness for making my brother and me do push-ups whenever we used it.

Neither of my parents attended college, but they saw the value of it and insisted their children would earn college degrees. As a testament to their belief in education and

learning and to their sacrifices for their children, I record today, for the sake of posterity, that the completion of this degree marks the seventh higher education degree earned, in total, by their children. Additionally, all three of their children by marriage have a combined six more higher education degrees. That is a total of thirteen degrees between the children of Joe and Dianna Wolfe and their spouses.

Undoubtedly, future generations of Wolfes from this family will climb higher heights because my parents envisioned new and different experiences and lives for their children. I know I speak for my brother and sister when I express my deepest thanks and respect for our parents. There has never been a day—not a single hour—that we have ever doubted their love, even though our lives look very different from theirs. I love you, Dad and Mom.

Known by her daughters and her sons-in-law with love and respect as “Mummy,” Norma Cooper, my mother-in-law, has been a prayer warrior throughout this process. In the nearly six years that I have known her, she has been sacrificially generous. Her house has always been home base when my wife and I spend time in Jamaica, and that has been enormously helpful throughout this research process. Mummy, I love you.

My father-in-law, Howard Cooper (“Pops”), and his wife, Karine (“Moms”) have also been incredibly supportive and helpful throughout this research process. They have demonstrated their love and care in countless gestures—fetching a permission letter, introducing me to key people associated with The University Singers, loaning their spare car to me so that I could move freely about Kingston to conduct research, and taking me to hear observe choral theatre in action for the first time. Consummate hosts and guides,

Pops and Moms have provided a wealth of information about all things Jamaica. Pops and Moms, I love you.

Soli Deo Gloria.

Joey Wolfe

January 20, 2016

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Many people helped shape and guide my thinking about this work, and I acknowledge them with sincere appreciation. Without the following people, this dissertation would not have been possible:

Dr. Greg Fuller has been a mentor, teacher, counselor, confidant, and friend. He is, in my humble estimation, one of the finest conducting pedagogues in the country. It has been a privilege to learn from him about conducting and operating a successful collegiate choral program. If, at the end of my career, I have been a quarter of the conductor and musician that he is, I will have had a rich and rewarding career indeed. His investment in my life can never be measured. Dr. Fuller, thank you.

Likewise, Dr. John Flanery has been a teacher, sounding board, and encourager. At a time in my life when I doubted whether or not a career in choral conducting was feasible for me, Dr. Flanery was there with words of reassurance that I needed to hear—words that helped keep me on this path. Observing Dr. Flanery balance his full career with his devotion to his family has been an inspiration. Dr. Flanery, thank you.

Dr. Chris Goertzen, Dr. Joe Brumeloe, Dr. Jay Dean, and Dr. Webb Parker all served on my doctoral committee along with Dr. Fuller. At each step along the way, they provided sound guidance. They challenged and affirmed me, and I am all the better for both. Additionally, Dr. Goertzen, Dr. Brumeloe, and Dr. Dean taught me in various courses; and my understanding of music and my skills have been sharpened by them. Dr. Goertzen, thank you. Dr. Brumeloe, thank you. Dr. Dean, thank you. Dr. Parker, thank you.

It has been an honor to get to know Noel Dexter, the former musical director of The University Singers, through this project. In Jamaica, he truly is a living legend. His contributions to the cultural life of his beloved country are considerable. I hold him in high regard and am indebted to him for all of his help. Mr. Dexter, it has been a sincere pleasure working with you. You have my humble gratitude.

An unexpected surprise in researching choral theatre was meeting Lilieth Nelson, the former musical director of The University Singers who helmed the choir before Noel Dexter. “Auntie LilNel,” as I have come to know her, is a formidable scholar-musician whose enthusiastic pride in The University Singers is immediately evident when she begins talking about the choir. She is currently working on a book that details the history of the choir, and I look forward to reading it. Thank you, Auntie LilNel.

Franklin Halliburton is the current conductor of The University Singers. He was hand-selected by Noel Dexter to be his replacement, and there is no question that Mr. Dexter’s confidence was well-placed. Franklin—or “Halliburton,” as he is referred to by many friends and associates—is an excellent singer, dancer, and composer/arranger. He was unfailingly gracious and professional in every response to my numerous questions about the choir. I have enjoyed getting to know him and anticipate future opportunities to learn from him. Thank you, Halliburton.

Rex Nettleford died before I knew about choral theatre or The University Singers. I read a lot by him and about him during this research, and I regret that our paths were not meant to cross. However, Kevin Moore, Nettleford’s successor and protégé, provided insights into the mind of his mentor that no book or article could. It was a pleasure to

spend an afternoon with Kevin learning about the use of movement in the choir's repertoire. Kevin, thank you.

The Southern Chorale of The University of Southern Mississippi has twice toured Jamaica. As one of Dr. Fuller's graduate assistants, I had a hand in planning both of those tours. I became acquainted with Chris Benjamin while assisting with the plans for the first tour, and I have gotten to know him better as I have worked on this dissertation. Chris is public relations expert, and his list of contacts is extensive—something that has proven to be enormously helpful. His work is usually behind the scenes, but I must take this occasion to shine the spotlight on him for all he has done to assist me. Thank you, Chris.

Althea McKenzie, past president of The University Singers, and Stefan Morris were instrumental in helping me acquire photos of the choir that illustrate choral theatre. Althea, thank you. Stefan, thank you. Also, Shawn Wright, Mr. Dexter's assistant, made himself available to me for questions at different points while I was writing. Thank you, Shawn.

Dean David Keith hired me as the Visiting Instructor of Church Music at Mercer University while I was in the middle of my writing. This was a good thing! Writing while employed surely beats writing while jobless. Working at Mercer for this year has been a blessing, an answer to prayer for provision. Dean Keith and the entire music faculty of the Townsend School of Music have been very encouraging and interested in my work. Dean Keith, thank you.

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Eric Benoy, the music librarian at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, has been a friend for almost a decade. I always know that Eric will give sound counsel when I need it, and he is always ready with a word of encouragement. He possesses a keen intellect, and his list of degrees is impressive. He also served as a reader for me, and my writing is stronger as a result. Eric, dear friend, thank you.

Finally, I take these last paragraphs to mention the other music teachers in my graduate and doctoral work who have invested in my life and education. I did not make it to this point without their training and guidance. From my days at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, I thank Dr. Michael Sharp, Dr. Darryl Ferrington, Dr. Ed Steele, Dr. Chris Turner, and Dr. Clint Nichols. Additionally, I thank Dr. Ken Gabrielse for introducing me to the craft of conducting. Dr. Becky Lombard, thank you for setting high standards in your classes and through your musicianship. Dr. Benjamin Harlan, you have been a friend and a cheerleader and have followed my journey through Southern Miss closely and with great interest. Thank you, Benjie.

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Hafer's lecture on Beethoven's Ninth Symphony stands out in my mind as the most inspiring lecture I have ever heard. I can only hope to inspire students in the same way Dr. Hafer did that day in class. Dr. Hafer, thank you. Dr. Danny Beard (music theory pedagogy), thank you. Dr. Susan Ruggiero-Mezzadri (performance practice), thank you. And to the departed Dr. Dana Ragsdale (performance practice), thank you. It was a privilege to learn from you, even if only for a semester.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As it is known today, the island of Jamaica was first colonized in the sixteenth century by the Spanish and later by the British in the seventeenth century. The original inhabitants of the island, the Taino and Arawak, were eventually replaced with Europeans and slaves from Africa. After centuries of British rule, Jamaica gained independence from England in 1962 and embarked on its path of self-determination.

Around the same time as Jamaican Independence, The University Singers was founded on the main campus of The University of the West Indies (“the UWI” or “the University”) in Kingston (Mona).¹ Over the ensuing decades, this choir has grown to become a de facto cultural ambassador for the country, traveling and performing for Jamaicans on the island, the Jamaican diaspora, and the larger Caribbean community. This choir has developed a unique performance style that its directors have branded *choral theatre*.² Choral theatre is the combination of staging, lighting, movements/gestures, costuming, and instrumentation; it is the performance aesthetic of The University Singers (“The Singers” or “The UWI Singers”).

Jamaican artists such as Bob Marley, Shaggy, and Sean Paul have achieved worldwide fame and have helped draw attention to their country. It would be a disservice, however, for Jamaica—or any other nation—to be stereotyped merely by its pop music

1. Throughout this document, it will helpful to note that references to The University of the West Indies concern, specifically, the original campus in Mona, Jamaica. Mona is a community outside of the formal city limits of Kingston. It was once the site of a large sugar plantation.

2. For the purposes of this research, the British spelling “theatre” will be used.

contributions. Through the tireless work of Rex Nettleford, Noel Dexter, The University Singers, and other arts and performing groups in the country, the art music culture is being nurtured in Jamaica.

Problem

Jamaica is a small nation, slightly smaller in land area than the state of Connecticut. Despite its small size, Jamaica has had a significant impact on the world stage through cuisine (jerk), athletics (track and field), and music (ska and reggae). In the Caribbean region, Jamaica is the largest English-speaking nation and is a key member of the formal Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM).

Choral artists associated with the Caribbean's largest tertiary institution, The University of the West Indies, have developed a performance style called choral theatre, which involves singing, coordinated movements/gestures, instrumentation, costuming, and staging. Currently, there is no formal research document that describes and defines choral theatre in Jamaica (or anywhere else in the world).

Hypothesis

Known as the performance style of The University Singers of The University of the West Indies, choral theatre is a unique choral art that draws upon the African and European heritages of the Jamaican people. This research provides a description and definition of choral theatre and its elements.

Delimitations

In August 2012, Jamaica celebrated fifty years of self-rule. As the country has grown, The University Singers has worked ceaselessly to share the nation's culture with the world. Applying the choral theatre performance style to choral arrangements of

Caribbean folk songs, Jamaican and Caribbean popular music, Western European and British art music, and Jamaican art music, the ensemble has promoted Jamaica to Jamaicans and the rest of the world as more than merely a tropical paradise on the cruise ship circuit.³ A national institution, The University Singers has been a cultural ambassador for Jamaica since the group was founded in 1958; and for over five decades, it has embarked on tours to various parts of the world. To date, there has been no scholarly account detailing the history of The University Singers—its origins, early mission, founding singers, notable singers, repertoire, and concert tours.

This research seeks to uncover the origins of choral theatre and its development into a mature performance style. This study will not be a formal history of The University Singers. Instead, historical information about the choir will be presented as it relates to the development of choral theatre. Certainly a proper accounting of the history of the choir is both warranted and encouraged, but such an accounting is beyond the scope of this study.

Noel Dexter was a member of the choir in its early years and was later the director, a position he held for over twenty-five years (to date, the longest tenure of any director of the choir). He is widely credited for raising the musical standards of the group during his time as director. Because the country was a British colony for generations,

3. Throughout this document, the terms *folk song* and *folk music* (or any variation thereof) refer to the music of Jamaica that, during the days of British colonization, was deemed inferior to the music of Great Britain and Western Europe. As will be discussed later in this work, the British colonizers generally held a low view of any music on the island that was not composed by Europeans. As a result, those subjects of the British crown who were born of African descent were not taught, in a formal setting, any music that would have been brought from West Africa during the slave trade. This would also include any music created on the island that incorporated musical elements from West African cultures.

Dexter's formal music training followed the English model, which later helped shape the sound of The Singers under his baton. He has been a musical force in his country, establishing choirs and composing and arranging choral music that has gained acceptance outside of the Caribbean.

The focus of this research will be Noel Dexter's work in developing the choral theatre style of performance for The University Singers. Some brief biographical information will be provided about Dexter, but the purpose of this dissertation is not to present a full biography of the musician. There has been one completed dissertation on the vocal art songs of Noel Dexter.⁴ Melissa Davis focused one chapter of her dissertation on a choral piece by the composer and included an excellent, if not complete, synopsis of his background.⁵ Also, a study of selected choral anthems by Dexter was recently completed in which some biographical information about the composer was included.⁶

Since Jamaican Independence in 1962, perhaps no single person has done more to promote the nation's culture than the late Rex Nettleford. From his founding of the National Dance Theatre Company to his involvement with The University Singers for over twenty years, Nettleford was a tireless advocate for Jamaican culture. In his work with The Singers, he collaborated with Dexter in the development of choral theatre. In

4. Byron Johnson, "Presenting Jamaican Folk Songs on the Art Music Stage: Social History and Artistic Decisions" (DMA diss., The University of Southern Mississippi, 2010).

5. Melissa Anne Davis, "Jamaican Composers in the Classical Tradition: Three Vocal Works by Dexter, Ashbourne, and Marshall" (DMA diss., University of Illinois at Champagne-Urbana, 2013).

6. Desmond A. Moulton, "A Jamaican Voice: The Choral Music of Noel Dexter" (DMA diss., The University of Southern Mississippi, 2015).

keeping with Nettleford's aim of bolstering Jamaican art expressions, choral theatre has been—and remains—a key tool in the preservation and transmission of the country's cultural heritage.

The writings and works of Nettleford are abundant and easily accessible in Jamaica and elsewhere. His influence and impact on the nation have been studied and chronicled in great detail. This research will focus on Nettleford's influence and direct involvement with the choir in the creation of choral theatre.

Methodology

This research endeavored to discover the roots of choral theatre primarily through first-person interviews conducted in Kingston, Jamaica. Additional research included reviewing existing scholarly literature for information about the creation of the performance style.

An interview with Mr. Dexter was conducted in January 2015. The aim of this interview was to gather information regarding his work with the choir as it related to the creation and development of choral theatre. Others goals of the interview were to have him define choral theatre and its elements and to describe its application to the choir's repertoire. This interview was recorded.⁷

In addition to speaking with Dexter, an interview was conducted with Lilieth Nelson, his predecessor as the group's conductor. For decades, Nelson has been an advocate for the folk arts in Jamaica, particularly folk music. The conversation with Nelson was unplanned, the spontaneous result of the scheduled interview with Dexter. She was a wealth of information and insight as both a former director of the choir and a

7. See Appendix D for a full transcript of this interview.

long-time singer in the group. Nelson sang under Dexter's leadership after she passed the baton to him. Ms. Nelson was able to illustrate her explanations of the elements of choral theatre through the use of a video recording of a recent concert performance by the choir. This interview was recorded, as well.⁸

The current director of the choir is Franklin Halliburton. Like Mr. Dexter, Mr. Halliburton was a singer in the choir before he assumed the mantle of leadership. He is an attorney by trade and a musician in his own right—singer, arranger, and composer. Though face-to-face communication with Mr. Halliburton was not possible due to the demands of his schedule, he was readily available via a text messaging service and provided timely responses to inquiries.⁹

Rex Nettleford died in 2010. He was a prolific writer and speaker, and his works are readily available in print. Nettleford was succeeded by Kevin Moore as the movement coordinator of The University Singers. Moore was a protégé of Nettleford's and began choreographing works under the watchful eye of the Jamaican dance icon, and he agreed to be interviewed for this research. As with the Dexter and Nelson interviews, the interview with Moore was recorded.¹⁰

Perhaps the most important part of the research included attending and observing performances of The University Singers, beginning with a full concert in the 2011 season (May 2011) at the Philip Sherlock Centre for the Creative Arts on the Mona campus of The University of the West Indies. The choir performed its annual Christmas concert in

8. See Appendix E for a full transcript of this interview.

9. See Appendix G for a full transcript of these digital communiques.

10. See Appendix F for a full transcript of this interview.

December 2014 and a benefit concert in March 2015, both at the University Chapel (also on the Mona campus). The researcher was present for those performances. In addition to these live performances, a DVD recording of a live performance at the Sherlock Centre was studied.

State of Research

There is currently no formal academic document that describes and defines choral theatre as a general term or specifically as the performance style of The University Singers. At the time of this writing, a search for the term on ProQuest Dissertations yielded only ten results. None of the theses or dissertations directly investigated the choral theatre style.¹¹

A 1987 dissertation by Edward Martin uses the term *choral theatre* as a recommendation for further research into a possible avant-garde theatre development but not as a device to enhance choral arrangements of Caribbean folk songs.¹² Another dissertation, written in 1969 by Jean Nordhaus, also uses the term in conjunction with the theatre and essentially describes it as a group of people speaking in unison (not singing)

11. An additional search was conducted of The British Library's EThOS [e-thesis online service], which serves as the repository for dissertations published in Great Britain. For more information, see the About EThOS page at <http://ethos.bl.uk/About.do>.

12. Edward Lee Martin, "A Comparative Study of Non-Traditional Vocal Compositional Techniques Which Have Been Incorporated into Selected Dramatic Choral Works by Composers of the United States of America" (DMA diss., University of Missouri-Kansas City, 1987), 96.

for dramatic effect.¹³ A third dissertation uses the term only once to describe likely melodramatic religious practices of the cult of Osiris in ancient Egypt.¹⁴

Only one dissertation mentions choral theatre in relationship to a performance style, but the connection is distant. A 2001 Duke University dissertation by Robin LaPasha mentions an experimental choral presentation style in Soviet-era Russia. This presentation style combined folk songs with dances and poetry readings.¹⁵ A 1991 dissertation mentions the term as a staging technique in the performance of the choral works of Robert Starer, but it offers no description of the technique.¹⁶

While no attempt has been made to formally define choral theatre, there have been documents that referenced the term *choralography*. For example, a 1984 article in *The Choral Journal* by Danny Green states that Frank Pooler and Gail Shoup conceived of choralography in the 1970s as a means of enhancing choral pieces.¹⁷ Green's article points to Pooler and Shoup's 1975 book that provides background on American choirs

13. Jean F. Nordhaus, "The *Laienspiel* Movement and Brecht's *Lehrstücke*" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1969), 50.

14. Kimmika L. H. Williams-Witherspoon, "Puttin' on a Show: Rituals and Traditions in African-American Theater Deconstructing the Hidden Transcript in Public Discourse (PhD diss., Temple University, 2002), 37.

15. L. Robin C. LaPasha, "From *Chastushki* to Tchaikovsky: Amateur Activity and the Production of Popular Culture in the Soviet 1930s" (PhD diss., Duke University, 2001), 90.

16. Kristin Wendland. "The Major Choral Works of Robert Starer and Their Place in American Music" (PhD diss., City University of New York, 1991), 123.

17. Danny Green, "Choralography: Expressive Movement for Choral Singing," *The Choral Journal* 25 no. 3 (November 1984), 19.

using movement with choral pieces.¹⁸ In her 2011 dissertation, Glenda Crawford attributes the genesis of the term to Yvonne Farrow, a choreographer and actress.¹⁹ Farrow's business website states that she has been working with choirs for some twenty years on adding movements and staging to choral works.²⁰

Perhaps the clearest definition of choralography is found in a dissertation by Alan Alder: "... minimal movement below the waist (no kicks, or great deal of travel from one place to another, etc.), and mostly utilizes facial expression and hand/arm gestures."²¹ This is not full-on choreography that requires the ability to move one's feet in a coordinated fashion. Rather, choralography is the use of simple movements as a means of enhancing any piece of music for the sake of programmatic variety. The movements may or may not convey the meaning of the text.

18. Frank Pooler and Gail L. Shoup, *Choralography: An Experience in Sound and Movement* (New York City: Walton Music Corporation, 1975), 1.

19. Glenda Crawford, "A Conductor's Guide to Selected Concerted Madrigals from Madrigals Book 8 (*Madrigali Guerrieri et Amorosì*) by Claudio Monteverdi" (DMA diss., University of Cincinnati, 2011), 81.

20. Yvonne Farrow, Got Choralography?, accessed February 3, 2016, <http://www.gotchoralography.com>.

21. Alan L. Alder, "Successful High School Show Choir Directors: Their Perceptions About Their Teaching and Administrative Practices," (DA diss., Ball State University, 2012), 11.

CHAPTER II

THE UNIVERSITY SINGERS

Songs honoring Taino *caciques*.²² *Kumina* music. Buru. Revival songs. Quadrille. *Jonkunoo*. *Bruckins*. Pantomime. Mento. Ska. Rocksteady. Reggae. Dancehall. From pre-colonialism to post-Independence, music has been the very sinew of life on the island of Jamaica.

Music as an autonomous art form, pursued for its own sake, and divorced from everyday social life—as in the Western classical tradition (or at least a large part of it)—is a concept foreign to all but the Europocentric elite sectors of Caribbean societies. As should be evident from the preceding description of specific musical traditions, Caribbean folk music is almost always embedded in some larger social context, whether this be a religious ceremony, an afternoon of communal labor, or a weekend dance where young men and women seek out prospective lovers. Music is more than mere accompaniment to such activities; in many cases, it is central to them, and their successful completion depends upon it.²³

Music served as the connecting tissue for slaves between their homes in West Africa and their new lives in the West Indies. Music was a tool employed by the British in their attempt to remind their colonial subjects that Europe was superior to Africa. For those longing for self-determination in the 1950s and '60s, music became the platform upon which Jamaican nationalism would find its voice.

22. The Taino term *cacique* translates as “chieftan” in English. In Jamaican history, the Taino people were among the first settlers of the island. Though the terms *Taino* and *Arawak* are used interchangeably in many discussions about Jamaica, it is important to note that there are two competing theories regarding the evolution of Taino. The Taino people spoke a derivative of the Arawakan language and were present on the island at the time of Christopher Columbus’s arrival in 1494. For a discussion of the two theories as well as other information, see Lesley-Gail Atkinson, ed. *The Earliest Inhabitants: The Dynamics of the Jamaican Taíno*. Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2006.

23. Kenneth Bilby, “The Caribbean as a Musical Region” in *Caribbean Contours*, ed. Sidney W. Mintz and Sally Price (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1985), 201.

Jamaica's use of music in the work of forming itself into a nation demonstrates the unique idiom of choral theatre and how it came into existence. At first glance, this idea may seem peculiar: music as nation-builder. Were one to create a list of necessities in order to create a nation, music would likely not be in the list. An economic foundation, a plan for border security, an understanding of infrastructure—these might be considered rudimentary in fashioning a national identity ... but not music. Yet, for the founders of Jamaica, the arts—music, specifically—were seen as essential in giving their countrymen a sense of self, without which there could be no national identity or nation itself.

Drawing upon the traditions of England, Western Europe, and West Africa, Jamaican political, cultural, and academic leaders presented to the people of Jamaica a self-portrait that was holistic. They were descendants of Africans, no longer mere slaves: people who had their own cultures, governments, religions, and economies.²⁴ They were people who were proud, industrious, and resourceful—flourishing despite being an outpost of the British Empire. They could master the European aesthetic and blend it with their experience to give birth to a unique Caribbean choral expression. Not simply the sons and daughters of slaves and subjects of the Queen, they were Jamaicans, capable of self-government and prepared to assert themselves as a people in the region and the world.

Against this backdrop, two Jamaican arts community icons collaborated to originate the singular Caribbean choral style known as choral theatre. Noel Dexter and Rex Nettleford were both born and raised at the end of colonial-era Jamaica and oversaw

24. H. O. L. Patterson, "Slavery, Acculturation, and Social Change: The Jamaican Case," *The British Journal of Sociology* 17, no. 2 (June 1966), 153.

the evolution of a Caribbean choral performance practice not found elsewhere in the world—a fusion of singing, movement, and theatrical elements. With Dexter as musical director and Nettleford as artistic director, The University Singers helped establish choral theatre as a unique Caribbean style of choral performance.

A Brief History of The University Singers

The University of the West Indies was originally the University College of the West Indies and was affiliated with the University of London. The University College was founded in 1948 as a result of the British seeking to provide higher education in its colonies locally.²⁵ In 1962, the year of Jamaican Independence, the institution became a full-fledged university and was re-named The University of the West Indies. Today, the UWI encompasses four campuses in three Caribbean nations: Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad & Tobago. It is the regional Caribbean institution of higher education where students can earn degrees in law, medicine, engineering, and a wide range of other disciplines.

In 1957, a group of students gathered at the University College and formed what would later become The University Singers. The sole motivation for this gathering was the students' love of choral singing, and their first concert was presented during the

25. Prior to this movement in the British Commonwealth, Jamaicans had only one comprehensive tertiary education option on the island, a private institution: the West Indian Training College, known today as Northern Caribbean University. The Mico University College, founded in 1836, also existed; but it was strictly a place where individuals learned to teach. Most Jamaicans seeking education beyond the secondary level would have studied abroad, whether at one of the few Caribbean universities, in the United States, or in one of the Commonwealth institutions.

Christmas season (a program entitled *Words and Music*).²⁶ The University did not offer a music degree; and to date, this remains true. Hence, the original choir was not formally organized within any academic music unit. Today, the choir is organized under the auspices of the School of Continuing Studies.²⁷

A number of people have directed the choir since it was founded in 1957. Robert Henry, a Jamaican, was the first director of the group. Sir Colville Young, the current Governor-General of Belize and also a Jamaican, directed the group in its early years.²⁸ Arguably, the most consequential director of the group has been Noel Dexter, also the group's longest-serving director.²⁹

Post-Jamaican Independence

The University Singers has played an important role in the arts community in Jamaica. Stretching back to its pre-Independence origin, the choir was a vehicle through which interested singers could engage in higher-level choral singing, as is typical of most vocal ensembles sponsored by colleges. By incorporating folk songs into its standard repertoire, the choir took on a more significant function as Jamaica moved into self-rule.

26. Lilieth H. Nelson, "Revisiting the Concept of Aesthetic Strengthening Through the Creative Arts" (Sir Philip Sherlock Lecture, The University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica, February 25, 2014) accessed February 3, 2016, <http://lowrie-chin.blogspot.com/2014/03/dr-lilieth-nelson-2014-sir-philip.html>.

27. The School of Continuing Studies is the modern-day version of the Extra-Mural Department of the UWI. The Extra-Mural Department was established within the original University College for the purpose of outreach to the wider community.

28. Nelson, "Revisiting the Concept of Aesthetic Strengthening Through the Creative Arts." The majority of the group's directors have been Jamaican.

29. Rex M. Nettleford, ed., "Cultural Action in Independence" in *Jamaica in Independence: Essays on the Early Years* (Kingston: Heinemann, 1989), 322.

Along with other choral groups, like the Jamaican Folk Singers and the Cari-Folk Singers, the choir's use of folk song arrangements demonstrated to the citizens of newly-independent Jamaica that their own music was no longer seen as inferior to the music of Britain and Europe.³⁰

The University Singers has garnered a large and loyal following in the nation. The ensemble packages its performances into a concert season that is regularly sold out each year. Since the UWI represents the entire Caribbean, The University Singers has toured various Caribbean islands, expanding its audience along the way. Additionally, the group has toured farther abroad at the invitation of various communities within the Jamaican Diaspora.³¹ As such, it has become a de facto ambassador for Jamaica and the wider Caribbean group of nations. Though the choir receives no financial support from the government of Jamaica when touring, it does have the government's blessing and unwavering support while abroad.

A Unique University Choir

Throughout the Caribbean, there is no collegiate choir like The University Singers; and there are few college choirs in total. The reason for this is apparent: in a relatively poor region like the Caribbean, there simply are not enough resources for multiple, large higher education institutions that grant music degrees. Small island nations, such as those found in the Greater and Lesser Antilles, must direct capital toward infrastructure and economic development. That the choir exists on a college campus that

30. Noel Dexter, interview by author, Mona, Jamaica, January 6, 2015.

31. The Jamaican Diaspora (or simply "the Diaspora," as it is known in Jamaica) refers to the widely held and often-touted belief that there are as many Jamaicans living abroad as there are in living on the island itself.

does not have a music faculty is a testimony to the dedication of the choristers and their love of ensemble singing.

The choir members are not paid for their participation nor are there stipends or scholarships for student singers. Likewise, the artistic director and musical director, as well as any other auxiliary personnel such as movement coordinators (choreographers) and costumers and instrumentalists, receive no financial remuneration for their contributions to the choir. This is a vastly different paradigm when compared to the typical college choir in the United States where, at the minimum, the director is a member of the music faculty; and many student singers may wish to receive some financial assistance for participation. Another distinguishing feature of The Singers is that many of its members are former students—singers who have already graduated but, for the love of the group and of singing, are welcomed to continue to be a part of the choir. A typical college choir in the United States will be comprised of current students. The spirit of volunteerism exhibited in The University Singers is representative of the arts community throughout the nation.³²

Noel Dexter

Composer, arranger, singer, and pianist, Noel Dexter is respected throughout Jamaica as one of its preeminent living musicians. Church choirs and congregations

32. “Professional artists are no less public spirited for having to eke out a living from their art. Many of them still give of their services freely and generously—instructing, donating works of art to charitable causes, designing for the theater (drama and dance), and volunteering assistance of their time and energy to projects intended to improve the quality of cultural life in the new Jamaica. It is this spirit of volunteerism that has informed much of Jamaican cultural life for over 100 years and which marks off the young independent Jamaica from many of its peers not only in the rest of the Caribbean but also in the Third World Commonwealth.” Nettleford, *Jamaica in Independence: Essays on the Early Years*, 303.

regularly sing his arrangements of Psalms and other sacred texts. Both Westminster Choir College and Augsburg Fortress Press in the United States have published his original compositions, and at least three doctoral dissertations have been written about some of his works. Jamaica has bestowed its Order of Distinction on Dexter, and he is also the recipient of an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from The University of the West Indies.

Noel Dexter is an exemplar of a common musical phenomenon in Jamaica: the “polymusician,” a musical jack-of-all-trades described by Kenneth Bilby:

This has led to the development in many areas of a phenomenon that may be referred to as polymusicality. In a musical environment in which it is possible for one to encounter virtually back to back the buoyant strains of string bands and the complex drumming of possession cults, the call-and-response of field gangs and the layered harmony of a Bach chorale, it is not surprising that many individuals acquire competence in more than one tradition. In the Caribbean, the individual musician who specializes in a single form or style to the exclusion of all others is a rarity; just as the instrumentalist who limits himself to a single instrument is an exception.³³

In particular, Dexter has developed a fluency in a variety of vocal genres and styles. He is at ease arranging a reggae tune for choir. Just as easily, he can compose a work that conforms to common practice rules of harmony. He has written music for the theatrical stage, and he has composed works for solo voice. Bilby further explains, “the polymusical individual—and almost all individuals are polymusical to at least some degree—moves across the stylistic continuum with no sense of discomfort or disjointedness.”³⁴

As mentioned earlier, Noel Dexter was musical director of The University Singers. He served in that capacity for approximately twenty-five years (1977 to 2002).

33. Bilby, 202–3.

34. Ibid., 203.

His first encounter with the choir was as a student: he was a member of The University Singers, then under the direction of Carol Gascoigne-Smith.³⁵ Dexter took over the reins of the choir from Lilieth Nelson, an accomplished musician, performer, and academic. During his tenure as musical director, he asked Rex Nettleford to take on a more formal role with the group as artistic director.

Rex Nettleford

Former Prime Minister Michael Manley was but one person in a large crowd of Jamaicans who held Rex Nettleford in the highest regard. According to Manley, “To discuss Rex Nettleford with any hope of adequacy, one has to bear in mind that this is artist, historian, social analyst, explorer of the psychology of identity and, critically, a philosopher.”³⁶ Indeed, Nettleford’s voluminous intellectual, cultural, and artistic output ranks him among the most influential and important Jamaicans of the twentieth century.

Rex Nettleford was the quintessential Renaissance man: Rhodes Scholar, founder of the National Dance Theatre Company (NDTC), teacher of politics and government, Director of Extra-Mural Studies, choreographer for the National Pantomime, Vice-Chancellor of The University of the West Indies.³⁷ He was one of four Rhodes Scholars selected to be awarded an honorary Doctor of Civil Laws degree from Rhodes College on

35. Dexter, interview.

36. Michael Manley, “Rex Nettleford: A Revolutionary Spirit,” *Caribbean Quarterly* 43, no. 1/2 (March–June 1997), 96.

37. In the British Commonwealth, the Vice-Chancellor is the head of the school both academically and administratively. This is unlike the American system, in which a chancellor or a president is the head of a school.

the Centennial Anniversary of the Rhodes Scholarship, and the Rhodes Foundation also established the Rex Nettleford Cultural Fellowship in Cultural Studies in his honor.³⁸

As early as the late 1950s, Rex Nettleford—“Professor” or “Prof” to friends and students alike—worked with The University Singers. His role was limited to occasionally providing some movement to one piece in the choir’s program: “I started putting movement to folksongs because most of the folksongs are *action* songs, and all of this has followed me right through to choreography.”³⁹ Later, his role was enlarged and made permanent.

Performance Style

No tangible evidence remains of the musical life of the Taino people who were present at the time of Columbus’s arrival. However, there is at least one reference in writing to some type of staged performance. This performance, it was observed, included singing and dancing in service to recounting an episode in the life of a chief.⁴⁰ Additionally, this performance type relied on both percussion and melody instruments to help tell the story of the local *cacique* (chief).

Although the Taino danced just as a pastime, on ceremonial occasions, they combined music, dance, and song to produce Jamaica’s earliest indigenous theater. Drums, timbrels, flutes, and trumpets accompanied these festivals that celebrated the heroic deeds of caciques (headmen), and were related in a sort of

38. Rex M. Nettleford, *Rex N: Rex Nettleford - Selected Speeches*, ed. Kenneth O. Hall (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2006), xxv.

39. David Scott and Rex M. Nettleford, “‘To Be Liberated from the Obscurity of Themselves’: An Interview with Rex Nettleford,” *Small Axe* 20, no. 2 (June 2006): 107.

40. Henry Fowler, “A History of Theatre in Jamaica,” *Jamaica Journal* 2, no. 1 (March 1968): 53–4.

poem-song. They set an example that Jamaican theater would begin to emulate 450 years later.⁴¹

This early example of combining music with drama and dancing was, in a sense, a precursor of choral theatre and shared similarities with it.

The concept of developing a performance style for a choir is rather unique in the world of choral music—particularly in academic settings. It is, especially in the US and throughout Europe, more common for a choral director to work toward a tonal ideal or for a choir to specialize in a certain repertoire. For example, the now-defunct Moses Hogan Chorale was dedicated to performing the arrangements of Negro spirituals by its late namesake director. The St. Olaf Choir of St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN is known throughout the United States for its “Lutheran” tonal approach—collectivist in nature, striving for evenness within each section and across the entire ensemble, maintaining a consistent *mezzo forte* dynamic. Even for choirs in other countries (England, South Korea, Estonia, and Sweden, as examples), what is typically a distinguishing factor is a tonal approach or some bent toward nationalist compositions. It is almost unheard of for a choir, instead, to be known by its aesthetic style.

By all accounts, Rex Nettleford coined the term *choral theatre*. Noel Dexter has stated that the first time he ever heard the term was when Nettleford used it. The term is not, as has been suggested in various sources, the creation of Dexter, though he certainly was a driving force behind the style itself.⁴² Likewise, Nettleford coined the term *choral orchestra* to describe the NDTC (National Dance Theatre Company) Singers, the vocal

41. Martin Mordecai and Pamela Mordecai, *Culture and Customs of Jamaica* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 157.

42. Dexter, interview.

ensemble that accompanied the dancers in his troupe.⁴³ He used the term to describe the work of both The University Singers and the Jamaican Folk Singers, a choral ensemble founded by Olive Lewin after Independence.⁴⁴ As will be discussed in Chapter III, the style truly became the signature of The Singers; and the term *choral theatre* has become synonymous with the choir.

43. Pamela O’Gorman, “From Field to Platform: Jamaican Folk Music in Concert 1,” *Jamaica Journal* 20, no. 1 (February–April 1987), 49.

44. Rex Nettleford, “The Caribbean: The Cultural Imperative,” *Caribbean Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (September 1989), 5.

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CHORAL THEATRE

The earliest known inhabitants of the island known today as Jamaica were believed to be the Ciboney people who settled there between 5,000 and 2,000 BC. They likely migrated from modern-day North America. These were cave-dwelling people and had only basic tools for hunting and gathering, and they did not make any sort of pottery.⁴⁵ No evidence has been unearthed to suggest any form of arts culture for the Ciboney.

Following the Ciboney, settlers migrated up from modern-day South America along the Lesser Antilles and Greater Antilles island chains. Known as the Taino, the group was part of the larger Arawak people group of South America; the Taino even spoke an Arawakan dialect. Though the Taino were generally peaceful, they did have enemies: the Carib people—a more aggressive group inhabiting neighboring islands such as present-day Dominica. The island’s name, Jamaica, was derived from the Taino term *Xaymaca*, meaning “land of wood and water.”⁴⁶ Consequently, Taino figures were included on the Coat of Arms as a means of honoring these pre-European inhabitants of the island.

The Taino migrated to Jamaica starting in AD 650 and were present when Christopher Columbus arrived on the island in 1494. When the Spanish explorer landed near Discovery Bay, he did so to the sounds of the Taino singing in welcome, according to some accounts. Little evidence remains of Taino cultural practices because they were

45. Archaeologists label them as “pre-ceramic.”

46. Atkinson, 1.

completely decimated by subjugation and exposure to European diseases. Though there is academic interest in learning more about the Taino, the nation simply has not been able to devote scarce resources toward a deeper investigation of archaeological sites and artifacts.⁴⁷ Interestingly, though almost none of their culture was preserved, at least one record suggested that they incorporated singing, dancing, and poetry as a theatrical means of recounting the deeds of their leaders.⁴⁸

African Influence

The decline and eventual extinction of the Taino from the island led the Spanish to begin importing slaves from West Africa. Thus, much of the folk culture of the nation is rooted in Africa.⁴⁹ Though the British eventually drove out the Spanish, claiming Jamaica as their own and ruling over the island as a colony for over 300 years, many leaders and scholars looked to Africa as the source of many of Jamaica's longest-held traditions. As Jamaicans moved toward self-government in the late 1950s, they increasingly began to embrace their African ancestors while turning away from their

47. "The past decade has seen increased interest in Jamaican Taino archaeology and promotion of it via international archaeological associations. Despite these advances, research in Jamaican prehistory is negatively affected by limited resources, a shortage of personnel, poor attitudes toward conservation, the improper monitoring of the island's archaeological resources, and the great evil—ignorance." Atkinson, 7.

48. Mordecai and Mordecai, 157.

49. Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *The Folk Cultures of the Slaves in Jamaica* (London: Villiers Publications Ltd., 1981), 6–7.

British overlords, realizing that the notions of an inferior African heritage were likely the results of colonialism, not empirical fact.⁵⁰

As Jamaican thinkers, writers, leaders, and artists began to explore their African origins in the 1950s and 1960s, they discovered that, unsurprisingly, many of their traditions were fusions of African and British cultures. However, they also discovered that some of their customs were distinctly African and not British; such customs were labeled “African retentions” or simply “retentions.” Three distinct streams—theatre, dance, and folk music—have emerged from these African cultural foundations and have mingled with elements of British and European cultures to form the unique Jamaican choral approach known as choral theatre.

Adapting British Pantomime

In the 1940s, Jamaicans established two formal theatre organizations: the Little Theatre Movement (also referred to as “the LTM”) in 1941 and the Caribbean Thespians in 1946. While the latter is no longer in operation, the former grew to become an important arts entity and is still in operation today.

Perhaps the phenomenon that needs the most careful analysis is the growth of the Little Theatre Movement over the last twenty-seven years. It may well be that in their annual ‘Pantomimes’ which have developed from adapted English Pantomimes, to completely Jamaican musicals based on Jamaican song, dance, and humour, they are developing one of the valid answers to the emotional needs

50. “For central to the idea of participation in cultural life must be the primary responsibility of the participants determining that cultural life. In this sense the inherited cultural life of an imperial past or a ruling class cannot escape re-examination, analysis and that scepticism which all power structures invite by definition.” Rex M. Nettleford, *Participation in Cultural Life and Social Reconstruction: A View from the Caribbean* (Eastbourne, England: John Offord Publications, 1983), 9.

of the new Jamaican theatrical public, and a vastly increased public it has become.⁵¹

Less a company of actors and more a coordinating body, the LTM has been credited with bringing to Jamaica a unique form of theatre: the Pantomime.⁵²

In its essence, the Jamaican Pantomime was the offspring of the British Pantomime—unsurprising given England’s rule over the island for centuries.⁵³ The British Pantomime was rooted in the Renaissance Italian *commedia dell’arte* tradition and the earlier Greek theatrical genre.⁵⁴ In ancient Greece, actors presented stories that were combined with singing and accompanied by music. The later *commedia dell’arte* in Italy added stock characters such as the cunning servant and the unwitting master.

The British adapted many of the stock characters from the Italian tradition and developed the Harlequinade.⁵⁵ The Harlequinade was the main feature of the Pantomime in England for decades, but it eventually fell out of favor and was replaced by stories

51. Fowler, 58.

52. Errol Hill, “The Emergence of a National Drama in the West Indies,” *Caribbean Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (December 1972): 28.

53. The Jamaican Pantomime is also referred to as “the Pantomime,” “the Panto,” and “the National Pantomime.”

54. Olive Senior, *Encyclopedia of Jamaican Heritage* (St. Andrew, Jamaica: Twin Guinep Publishers, 2003), 372.

55. The Harlequinade was a theatrical development in England that was derived from the Italian *commedia dell’arte*. In particular, five stock characters from the Italian tradition became standard in the Harlequinade: Harlequin (Arlecchino), Columbine (Columbina), Pantaloon (Pantalone), Clown (Pulcinella), and Pierrot (Pierrot). In the British adaptation, Harlequin became the main character of the play, hence the name Harlequinade. In the standard Harlequinade plot, Harlequin was a servant and in love with Columbine, the daughter of Pantaloon. Clown and Pierrot were both servants of Pantaloon. Clown eventually became a central figure in the Harlequinade, spreading chaos with comic results.

from British folklore and fairy tales. Additionally, the British began presenting the Pantomime during the Christmas season, usually on Boxing Day (December 26).

The National Pantomime, or “Panto,” was born in Jamaica in 1941 with the presentation of *Jack and the Beanstalk*.⁵⁶ Like its British parent, the Panto included sets, costumes, singing, dancing, and acting. The Jamaican Pantomime season also started on Boxing Day (December 26), which has remained the tradition to the present day. Jamaican folk stories and episodes from Jamaican history replaced British fairy tales as the basis for Pantomime plots. In the National Pantomime, stock characters reflected the region and culture, for example, Anancy, the clever spider and central character of various Jamaican folk stories.⁵⁷

A theatrical form that satirizes current events, the Pantomime was a mixture of drama, dance, music, and set design.⁵⁸ Various dancers and choreographers have been employed to add movement to the songs for each show. The most prominent of the choreographers to work in the Pantomime was none other than Rex Nettleford.⁵⁹ Nettleford’s first foray into Pantomime choreography was in *Jamaica Way*, presented in

56. Kelly Magnus, “Jamaica’s Pantomime: Upstaging Tradition,” *Caribbean Beat*, Issue 76 (November/December 2005), accessed January 22, 2016, <http://caribbean-beat.com/issues/issue-76#axzz3xzi2LvLm>.

57. Also referred to as “Anansi,” the character’s origins have been traced to the Ashanti people in West Africa.

58. Senior, 372.

59. Mordecai and Mordecai, 169.

1959.⁶⁰ After that, Nettleford was a regular fixture with the LTM, both as a choreographer and a director.

National Dance Theatre Company

The Taino people had developed their own arts culture before the arrival of the Spanish. Early accounts from European explorers described Taino artistic expressions in the form of singing and dancing. The Taino *areito*, for example, was performance art that involved singing and coordinated movement to music and was used in religious ceremonies.⁶¹

Following the demise of the Taino because of the presence and activity of Europeans on the island, the imported slaves from West Africa brought with them their own modes of cultural expression, especially dance. The use of dance was a West African method of contacting and communing with deceased ancestors and was a mainstay in many religious ceremonies.

Jamaican dance has its main roots in Africa and Europe, and there is some East Indian influence. As with other aspects of Jamaican culture and custom, it is difficult to establish discrete categories with which to discuss dance. Nevertheless, performed dance may be broadly classified as traditional and modern. Traditional dance is heavily African in influence, with one or two exceptions like the quadrille and maypole dances. Modern dance is eclectic—a recognizably Jamaican style heavily influenced by traditional forms but embracing contemporary American techniques (Martha Graham, Arthur Mitchell, Alvin Ailey) as well as European classical ballet.⁶²

60. Scott and Nettleford, 190–1.

61. Olive Senior, 145.

62. Mordecai and Mordecai, 158.

Once the West Africans were onboard slave ships bound for the Caribbean and beyond, dance became a survival tactic, as it was both exercise for the slaves themselves and amusement for their slave masters.⁶³

Seeking to honor and promote the African roots of modern Jamaica, Nettleford in the 1960s embarked on a mission to promote the dances from West Africa while also embracing contemporary dance ideas, creating what he believed would be a unique Jamaican movement expression. Nettleford had an innate ability to add gestures and dancing to music, specifically folk songs.⁶⁴ This ability found its fullest manifestation through the creation of the National Dance Theatre Company (NDTC).

Nettleford had been a dancer with the Ivy Baxter Dance Group prior to starting his own company. With founding partner Eddy Thomas, Nettleford desired to do more than simply recreate and present the dance idioms of Europe. Instead, Nettleford's aim was to promote Jamaica and Jamaican culture through its own style of dance.⁶⁵ In 1962, Nettleford and Thomas founded the NDTC. This was the same year as Jamaican Independence; and the work of forming a national dance troupe was, to Nettleford, an

63. Mordecai and Mordecai, 146.

64. Scott and Nettleford, 108.

65. "In terms of historical sequence, Nettleford first comes to light as a rising star at the young University of the West Indies and as a brilliant and charismatic dancer with Ivy Baxter. In due course he was to strike out in two directions, both seminal. He formed the National Dance Theatre Company (NDTC) originally with Eddy Thomas and later alone, began a relentless journey with three objectives. He was intent upon the creation of a Jamaican dance vocabulary, rooted in Jamaican experience. Secondly, he was determined to create a technical environment which would give to this dance idiom a universal artistic status, founded in excellence. Thirdly, he set out to make the NDTC financially self-sustaining to ensure that both continuity and freedom of expression would be equally guaranteed. He was later to set his artistic work in intellectual context with his book *'Roots and Rhythms'*." Michael Manley, 97.

important piece in the work of nation building.⁶⁶ The NDTC was connected to the UWI through the latter's Extra-Mural Department. Nettleford was a tutor in that department, offering summer courses in dance technique and composition.⁶⁷

For an organization that gained widespread acclaim in Jamaica and beyond, it is important to note that none of the Company members were paid for their work, just as was true later for The University Singers. These amateur Company dancers were seemingly motivated by the same ideal that drove their enthusiastic, energetic leader: telling the Jamaican story through dance.⁶⁸

The NDTC was originally conceived as a dance troupe. Over time, the organization grew to include both a live band and singers to accompany the dancers. This was due to the nature of the source material for much the NDTC repertoire: West African ceremonial dance. In fact, without the aid of acoustic instruments and singers, the NDTC's best-known works, "Pocomania" and "Kumina," would not be possible as they incorporate the highly rhythmic drumming and singing styles of West African religious music.⁶⁹ The Frats Quintet was one of the first vocal ensembles to be used by the NDTC in its performances.⁷⁰

66. Rex Nettleford and Maria LaYacona, *Roots and Rhythms: Jamaica's National Dance Theatre* (New York City: Hill and Wang, Inc., 1969), 29.

67. Nettleford and LaYacona, 31.

68. *Ibid.*, 32.

69. O'Gorman, "From Field to Platform: Jamaican Folk Music in Concert 1," 48.

70. Cheryl Ryman, "The Frats Quintet," *Jamaica Journal* 22, no. 1 (February–April 1989): 7.

Around 1967, the Company formed its own choral group rather than continue to use The Frats Quintet.⁷¹ This new choral group was known simply as the NDTC Singers. Like the NDTC dancers, the singers in the Company were amateur and unpaid. They were directed by Marjorie Whyllie and did not attempt to sing in a refined, European choral style. Rather, the singing style was more closely related to the percussive nature of the drum accompaniment.⁷² Nettleford referred to the voices as his “choral orchestra.”⁷³

Pre-Independence Music Education

In pre-Independence Jamaica, music education was based on a British system in which English and European folk songs were used to teach music fundamentals. In the eyes of the British, the folk songs of Jamaica were considered inferior and unsuitable for use in a formal classroom setting.⁷⁴ As a result, most Jamaicans were unaccustomed to hearing their own folk music on a performance stage. However, the status quo changed with the arrival of The Frats Quintet.

Prior to 1962, the common practice among choirs in Jamaica was to program a single piece of Jamaican folk music as a final piece for a concert.⁷⁵ It was simply unimaginable that a Jamaican singing group would design a concert around its own folk songs. Enter The Frats Quintet. This was the first vocal group on the island to ever

71. Ryman, “The Frats Quintet,” 7.

72. O’Gorman, “From Field to Platform: Jamaican Folk Music in Concert 1,” 47.

73. *Ibid.*, 49.

74. Dexter, interview.

75. *Ibid.*

present the songs of its people in a full concert setting.⁷⁶ Performing their arrangements a cappella, the ensemble was responsible for elevating the folk genre from being considered unacceptable for the concert stage to being a focal point of performances.⁷⁷ The Frats Quintet was a pioneer in the Jamaican music scene and made it possible for ensembles such as The University Singers to be able to transform folk music into high art.⁷⁸

Post-Independence Elevation of Folk Music as Art

Throughout the corpus of his writings on the arts, Rex Nettleford repeatedly argued that the artist was both a reporter on the condition of society as well as an agent of change:

The creative imagination, then, has long been an instrument of empowerment both to individuals and societies. It has also served as an antidote to the poison of cultural and spiritual intolerance. The arts, mediated as they are by social reality, can offer persons in multicultural situations the opportunity for self-definition and action. For the arts are a form of action.⁷⁹

76. Ryman, "The Frats Quintet," 3–4.

77. O’Gorman, "From Field to Platform: Jamaican Folk Music in Concert 1," 47.

78. "The recognition of Jamaican traditional music as a valid art form has come about through a number of factors, including a government initiative in the 1960s to begin field collections of such music that was in danger of disappearing. Collection and classification of folk music has continued through the Jamaica School of Music and arrangement and dissemination through the excellent folk-singing groups that have emerged, principal among them the Jamaican Folk Singers, the National Dance Theater Company Singers and the University Singers. All of these groups have taken the traditional music to the concert stage in Jamaica and internationally with a sophistication of interpretation and choreographed performance styles, building on the popularity of an earlier group of the fifties and sixties, the Frats Quintet." Senior, 338.

79. Nettleford, *Rex N: Rex Nettleford - Selected Speeches*, 8.

Perhaps no single sentence better encapsulated the driving philosophy behind much of the work of Nettleford: “For the arts are a form of action.” In the work of building an independent Jamaica, he believed that artists were as important to the effort as politicians. His views were shared and encouraged by the artist Edna Manley and her husband, Norman Manley, the Premier of Jamaica in its final years under British rule.⁸⁰

The Manleys were instrumental in promoting the arts throughout the island as a means of helping Jamaicans find a sense of self. They sought to help the nation create a cultural space in which its citizens could cast off the polar mentality of European versus African and high versus low art. Norman Manley believed that the creolized reality of the Jamaican people yielded a unique aesthetic that was to be encouraged.⁸¹ Likewise, Edna Manley, a sculptor, used her art to promote the country by creating pieces based on Jamaican figures rather than European ones; and she urged other artists to do the same. She believed that art validated both the artist and society.⁸²

Once Jamaica was a free nation to determine its own course, its government began the process of developing infrastructure and other means of providing services for

80. The Manleys were the parents of Michael Manley, the fourth Prime Minister of Jamaica. Many of Edna Manley’s works earned her a place among the leading arts figures in the history of the nation. Though not a Prime Minister, Norman’s efforts in leading the nation toward Independence, among other exploits, earned him the posthumous designation as a member of the Order of National Hero (“National Hero”), the nation’s highest honor that has been bestowed on only six other people.

81. “We have, in Jamaica, our own type of beauty, a wonderful mixture of African and European, and it is for our artists and writers to discover and set the standards for the national loveliness in the national gift of thought and expression.” Norman Washington Manley, “National Culture and the Artist (A Speech Delivered 20 January, 1939),” in *Caribbean Essays: An Anthology*, ed. Andrew Salkey (London: Evans Brothers Limited, 1973), 72.

82. Nettleford, *Rex N: Rex Nettleford - Selected Speeches*, 250.

its people. In 1966, the government established the Folk Music Research Unit.⁸³ The purpose of the Unit was to identify, record, and collect as many folk songs as possible. This work was a direct response to the British-era belief that the folk music of the island was not worthy of study and was inappropriate for use in a music classroom. The government named Olive Lewin, a Jamaican musician and musicologist trained in the United Kingdom, as the head of the Unit; and she worked for decades to preserve the musical heritage of her fellow countrymen. This formal collection of the folk music heritage of Jamaica helped to elevate the status of this music in the eyes of Jamaicans: folk music was no longer unsuitable for the classroom or the stage.

As has been mentioned previously, The Frats Quintet first brought folk music to the stage as legitimate concert music. The group was able to do so because it demonstrated what Jamaican folk music could be through its a cappella arrangements.⁸⁴ The arrangements captured the rhythmic and melodic vitality of the source material but were also “sanitized” of their lewd lyrical content, which was a common feature in many songs.⁸⁵ When the ensemble performed, the music itself was on display—not the singers. Groups that followed in the footsteps of The Frats, such as The University Singers, introduced various performance practices that would become standard—in particular, the use of movement while singing.

83. Olive Lewin, *Forty Folk Songs of Jamaica* (Washington, D. C.: General Secretariat of the Organization of American States, 1973), 5.

84. Ryman, “The Frats Quintet,” 5.

85. *Ibid.*, 6.

The University of the West Indies quickly became a leading institution in the years following Independence. This was true both in academics and in the arts. In fact, Nettleford described the UWI as “a major cultural agent.”⁸⁶ The University Singers formed at the UWI and, in time, established itself as the premiere choral organization on the island.

According to Noel Dexter, whose first association with the choir was as a singer, The University Singers approached Jamaican music like most other groups: a folk piece, if incorporated into the repertoire at all, was relegated to the end of a program almost as an afterthought. The use of choreography, if any, was limited. The majority of the choir’s repertoire was the choral music of Britain and Western Europe. In keeping with the new nationalism that swept the island after 1962, The University Singers used Jamaican folk and pop music with increasing frequency.⁸⁷

86. Nettleford, *Jamaica in Independence: Essays on the Early Years*, 297.

87. Dexter, interview.

CHAPTER IV

ELEMENTS OF CHORAL THEATRE

The words costumes, staging, gestures, instrumentation, and lighting are more easily associated with theatrical genres like Broadway or opera than with choral music in a university atmosphere. Through the vision and imagination of Rex Nettleford and Noel Dexter, such associations changed in Jamaica and the Caribbean. These elements have been mixed with choral singing in a Caribbean cauldron to create choral theatre.⁸⁸

Choral theatre is a choral performance style that has been uniquely explored and developed by The University Singers of The University of the West Indies, under the direction of Dexter and Nettleford. Over the years, it has become a holistic aesthetic applied to choral singing in a Caribbean context. Choral theatre is multi-disciplinary, incorporating dance (movements), instrumentation (drumming), choral music, and drama (singing and acting).⁸⁹

Caribbean choirs have been integrating movement and singing for decades. As far back as the 1970s, The University Singers, under the direction of Lilieth Nelson,

88. “Dexter and Nettleford have, to my mind, pointed the way to what could be a new Caribbean tradition in folk performance in which music, movement, iconographic symbols, gesture and facial expression are united into an organic style of expression that has few parallels – anywhere.” Pamela O’Gorman, “From Field to Platform: Jamaican Folk Music in Concert 2,” *Jamaica Journal* 20, no. 2 (May–July 1987): 48.

89. Lilieth Nelson has defined choral theatre as “the presentation various genres of music by this choir [The University Singers], within the framework of dramatic performance, where the choristers communicate the music and words of songs while taking on the role of actors to transmit behaviour, attitudes, feelings, perceptions and cultural nuances through their body language and with the enhancement of the elements of drama such as staging, lighting, costuming and instrumentation to augment sound.” Lilieth Nelson, Unpublished Paper, The University Singers of The University of the West Indies, 2015, 2.

coordinated their songs with movements.⁹⁰ This was also true of other choral groups that presented folk music of Jamaica and the wider Caribbean. According to Dexter:

These, while fulfilling the requirements of sound, are still inadequate for measuring the groups' total impact in terms of performance, for all over the Caribbean a great deal of attention is now given to the visual aspects of performance. Folk songs are now "staged". Performers are now appropriately costumed, and a whole new dimension has been added, as they no longer merely stand in formal choral pattern swaying from left to right, but present their music with appropriate "movements". This seems quite a logical performance technique when one is dealing with work-songs or songs which are derived from, or are a part of, a particular folk-dance form. But this treatment is now successfully used for lullabys, topical gossip-songs and others, with the aim of highlighting and complementing music and words, and not being, in itself, a separate input. Some groups, as one might expect, have gone overboard to create movement sequences which stand out apart from the songs themselves. In spite of this, one sees the addition of movement as a very necessary and relevant ingredient of folk song performance in the Caribbean where, in the folk tradition, the two elements are so naturally integrated that it is difficult to say where movement begins and song ends.⁹¹

Yet, it was not until Dexter and Nettleford began collaborating that the performance style matured and was formalized. According to Dexter, Nettleford coined the term.⁹²

Nettleford also fashioned the term *choral orchestra* to describe his own National Dance Theatre Company Singers. Nettleford also claimed credit for the term in at least one interview.⁹³

90. Lilieth Nelson, interview by author, Kingston, Jamaica, January 6, 2015.

91. Noel Dexter, "Folk Song Performance in the Caribbeana," *Caribbean Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (March 1983), 66.

92. In her interview, Nelson gave credit to Dexter for labeling the art form as choral theatre. She later amended her assertion in follow-up correspondence and agreed with Dexter that it was Nettleford who conceived the term.

93. "Now I was greatly influenced by much of what I'd done at Oxford: the integration of music, dance, and words. So I brought that to the LTM pantomime. And I must say that's not written up anywhere, but I think that's a positive contribution that I

Regardless of the authorship of the term, it is clear that both Dexter and Nettleford were strong partners in guiding the development of the style. Nettleford brought a theatrical and nationalist focus to the group that was complemented by Dexter's exceptional music skills and artistry.⁹⁴ The choir, under the direction of their artistic director and movement coordinators, applies the style to most songs in its repertoire—British, Western European, and American choral music, Caribbean folk songs, South African and West African folk and religious music, and popular music from Jamaica and the Caribbean. This chapter shows what the elements of choral theatre are: costuming, staging, gestures, instrumentation, and lighting. This chapter also compares and contrasts the practice to the American show choir, choralography, and other Jamaican choirs to provide a better understanding.

Costuming

The members of The Singers wear three, sometimes four, different costumes in the course of a full concert.⁹⁵ Their costumes change as the choir progresses through the sections of its program.⁹⁶ The first costume is formal. The men wear black suits with

made to the Jamaican musical form. And what I call the choral theatre, the sort of things done by the NDTC singers, the University Singers, the Jamaican Folk Singers, and everybody else in that genre for which I staged the musical numbers.” Scott and Nettleford, 193. See also O’Gorman, “From Field to Platform: Jamaican Folk Music in Concert 1,” 49.

94. O’Gorman, “From Field to Platform: Jamaican Folk Music in Concert 2,” 45.

95. A full concert is one that has been prepared for the concert season of the choir.

96. The attire of the choir has changed over the years. As fashion has evolved, the ensemble has adapted its look to reflect the times. Undoubtedly, the fashions of the group will be updated and refreshed with each new generation. It is not the aim of this portion of the paper to suggest that the current costuming choices of the choir will be what its

white shirts, vests, and red ties. The women wear floor-length black skirts and long-sleeved tops that coordinate in color with the men's red ties. The men are clean-shaven, and the women wear their hair pulled back out of their faces (long hair pulled into a bun). The presentation is formal, uniform, and professional—a standard approach to choral attire.



Figure 1. The University Singers in formal attire (photograph by Christopher Benjamin, used with permission).

members wear in the future. Instead, the main point is simply that there is an attire program that is an element of their performance style.

The second costume is not formal. The garments are brightly colored, and the choristers are dressed in color blocks.⁹⁷ The men wear solid white pants, leather sandals, and tucked-in long-sleeved shirts in solid colors with the collars open and the sleeves rolled up. Additionally, the men wear plaid sashes around their waists.⁹⁸ The women wear the traditional quadrille dress—a long skirt with ruffles along the hemline, a blouse with ruffled sleeves, and a piece of cloth that sometimes is wrapped around the head with the ends gathered into a bow or a knot (also plaid).⁹⁹ This attire is festive and reminiscent of standard Jamaican clothing in the nineteenth century.

97. In fashion terminology, color blocking involves wearing separate garments that are solidly colored (no patterns—geometric, floral, or otherwise). The colors may or may not coordinate with one another, and they are generally over-saturated hues.

98. Known as “native woman plaid” to some, the traditional Jamaican plaid was either red and white or maroon and white; yellow might also have been incorporated. The plaid was made of cotton material and sold in fabric squares, which were fashioned into bandanas. As the fabric was later sold by the yard, it was incorporated into other garments such as a woman’s headdress or an apron. See Senior, 43.

99. The quadrille dress (also known as the “bandana dress”) refers to the quadrille dance, which was popular in England (and its colonies) in the 1800s. The dance was divided into five parts and included four couples arranged in a square formation.



Figure 2. The University Singers in quadrille/bandana attire (photograph by Christopher Benjamin, used with permission).

The choir members, for their third costume, don all-white attire—a stark contrast to the formal black and red and the bright colors of the quadrille. This costume is based on the clothing of the Revivalist cults in the Jamaican countryside.¹⁰⁰ The men wear loose-fitting white trousers and an untucked white shirt with long sleeves. The men may also wear a dark vest, scarf, or sweater. Likewise, the women are dressed in white ruffled

100. Revivalism refers to the Great Revival of 1860-61 in Jamaica. Out of this period of great religious fervor, two distinct sects emerged among the emancipated slaves in Jamaica: Zion Revival ('60) and *Pocomania* ('61). Zion Revival is generally believed to be the more Christian of the two sects with its emphasis on the Holy Spirit. *Pocomania* focuses on communing with ancestral spirits, similar to the West African religious practices brought over by the slaves. For more information, see Olive Senior, *Encyclopedia of Jamaican Heritage* (St. Andrew, Jamaica, W.I.: Twin Guinep Publishers, 2003), 417; and Cheryl Ryman, "Heritage in Dance: Developing a Traditional Typology," *Jamaica Journal* 44 (June 1980), 5.

skirts and blouses. There is no standard head covering, and some women do not have their heads covered at all. Some may wear aprons over their skirts. The garb is simple, not meant to draw attention to the wearer.



Figure 3. The University Singers in all-white attire with accent pieces (photograph by Christopher Benjamin, used with permission).

The fourth and final costume is unlike the other three. It is modern and uniform for all choristers, regardless of gender. Both men and women wore black slacks and shoes, and they all wear colorful dashikis—tunic-like tops with V-necks and short sleeves, usually printed in bold patterns. As the dashiki is a traditional South African garment, the clothing choice is meant to express a connection between the Caribbean and Africa, particularly solidarity with South Africans living under apartheid. In previous seasons, the choir members have also worn soccer jerseys and polo shirts.



Figure 4. The University Singers in dashikis (photograph by Lilieth Nelson, used with permission).



Figure 5. The University Singers in football (soccer) jerseys (photograph by Christopher Benjamin, used with permission).

Staging

The choir's use of its performance space is dynamic rather than static. The ensemble does not merely “stand and deliver” its repertoire. For each piece, decisions are made regarding the placement of each voice section of the choir (soprano, alto, tenor, bass). Within each voice section, additional decisions may be made about the locations of specific singers—for example, where first tenors stand in relation to the second tenors. These placement decisions are both for voicing/tuning purposes and for visual impact.



Figure 6. Use of steps for vertical staging (photograph by Christopher Benjamin, used with permission).

When the choir is singing standard choral works, the positioning of the sections resembles a general choral formation: singers standing en banc in voice sections. The group does not use risers on which symmetrical rows of singers stand at different heights.

Instead, it uses large wood steps that are painted black. Choir members stand on these steps, creating a visual element to the standing formation that is punctuated and vertical. From piece to piece, the choristers may be arranged differently in front of and around the steps.



Figure 7. Standing in an X-formation (photograph by Lilieth Nelson, used with permission).

Another way in which the choir uses the performance space is the placement of groups of choristers in contrast to one another. For example, when the tenors are featured prominently in a piece, they may stand apart from the rest of the choir—to the side, upstage, or downstage. The altos may stand opposite from the sopranos, both sections on either side of the conductor, while the men are arrayed in two rows directly facing the audience. The voice sections may also be arranged in symmetrical or asymmetrical geometric configurations—for example, the men arranged in a square formation while the women are standing in diagonal formation positioned upstage or downstage from the men. Some of these standing considerations may be related to the song texts, or they may be the result of a desired aural and visual impact.



Figure 8. Standing arrangement variation (photograph by Lilieth Nelson, used with permission).

Gesture/Movement

Closely related to the use of space is the use of movement. It is important to clarify the term *movement*. Movement is not to be confused with choreography, a point that has been repeatedly emphasized by Nettleford, Dexter, and others responsible for staging the performances of the choir. Rex Nettleford was a trained, accomplished, visionary dancer in his own right; but he insisted that what The University Singers did was not choreography. Choreography, according to Nettleford, was the language of the dancer and placed the body at the forefront of the performance.¹⁰¹ For The University Singers, movement was intended to enhance the presentation of the voice. The beauty of the vocal line was predominant; gestures were never to interfere.

Movement is the seed from which the mature choral theatre style sprang. In the earliest days of The University Singers, it was standard programming form to include a

101. Kevin Moore, interview by author, Kingston, Jamaica, March 3, 2015.

few folk arrangements (or even a suite of arrangements) at the end of a concert.¹⁰² As a reminder, prior to Independence, Jamaican folk music was not considered legitimate for the stage; it was not perceived as high art because it was not British or Western European in origin. It was, though, acceptable to close a program with a “crowd-pleaser.” A young Rex Nettleford was already fully engaged in the blossoming dance movement in Jamaica, working with the Ivy Baxter dance group and choreographing for the LTM Pantomime. He was asked to provide gesture suggestions for the single folk arrangement/folk suite that would conclude the choir’s concert.¹⁰³ Later, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Dexter would ask him to take a more active and comprehensive role in providing movement suggestions for the choir’s repertoire.



Figure 9. Stepping with raised arms (photograph by Lilieth Nelson, used with permission).

There is a broad spectrum of movements and gestures on display in any given performance of The University Singers. A gesture can be simple: a slight turn of the head on a single word or a subtle lean in the middle of a phrase. A gesture can involve more of

102. This practice would be akin to the present-day use of a Negro spiritual arrangement, a pop arrangement, or a world music arrangement to close a choral concert on a “high note.”

103. Dexter, interview.

the body—for example, a step in a direction or a turn. More elaborate movements may be used, including footwork and handwork—i.e. dancing and arm gestures while singing. Movements and gestures, whether simple or more involved, are all coordinated and timed carefully to have maximum impact on the delivery of the text. In rehearsals, the movement coordinator may experiment with different movements and gestures until arriving at what will work best. Rarely is there forethought about the level of movement prior to the movement coordinator hearing a piece in rehearsal.¹⁰⁴



Figure 10. Swaying in opposition while singing (photograph by Christopher Benjamin, used with permission).

104. Moore, interview.

Instrumentation

The choir does sing some a cappella choral music, particularly in the first part of its program. However, the majority of its repertoire is accompanied. The accompanying instruments are atypical for a university choir: rhythm guitar, bass guitar, keyboard, drums of various kinds, and auxiliary percussion. Of particular interest is the strong presence of the drum in all but the formal section of a full concert.



Figure 11. Use of drums as accompanying instruments (photograph by Christopher Benjamin, used with permission).

The use of the drum harkens back to the African roots of Jamaicans. Once forbidden by plantation masters because they were a means of communication (possibly for revolt), drums became a cornerstone of Jamaican sacred and secular music. Types of drums typically heard in a concert include the side drum (from the *Jonkunnu* tradition),

the bass drum (from Revival), the funde (or *fundeh* from the *Buru* tradition), the bongo, the djembe, and the conga.¹⁰⁵



Figure 12. Rhythm section and drums accompanying The University Singers (photograph by Christopher Benjamin, used with permission).

Lighting

Another element of the performance style of The Singers is the use of lighting. Lighting can be excluded from a performance without any grave impact on the aesthetic. In fact, in many other venues other than the home of the choir, the use of lighting as a theatrical element is not possible.¹⁰⁶ For example, when the choir performs in the Chapel of the UWI, there are no stage lights or colored gels that can be used to create various

105. Senior, 161.

106. The choir rehearses in the Phillip Sherlock Centre for the Creative Arts. The Centre has a performance theatre where The Singers present its annual concert season.

lighting backdrops.¹⁰⁷ When the group travels abroad, it travels with a lighting technician in the event that they are in a performance space with a lighting board.

As an element of choral theatre, lighting is best employed when the group is on its home turf. There is a scrim on the stage when the choir performs, and that scrim is illuminated with various colors and shadings throughout the concert. The colors generally coordinate with the costumes of the choir members, creating a cohesive visual presentation.¹⁰⁸



Figure 13. Lighting to complement formal attire (photograph by Lilieth Nelson, used with permission).

107. A gel is a transparent colored material that is placed over a stage light to create colored light.

108. Demonstrating the strong influence of Rex Nettleford on the development of choral theatre as a performance style, it is noteworthy that the National Dance Theatre Company, founded by Nettleford in the 1960s, also uses lighting extensively in its presentations in the Little Theatre in Kingston. See Nettleford and LaYacona, 110.



Figure 14. Lighting to complement quadrille/bandana attire (photograph by Lilieth Nelson, used with permission).



Figure 15. Lighting to complement Nine Night re-enactment ceremony (photograph by Lilieth Nelson, used with permission).



Figure 16. Lighting to compliment pop music selections (photograph by Lilieth Nelson, used with permission).

Concert Season

The University Singers presents its repertoire in a concert season that starts in late May or early June and lasts four or five weeks. In this concert season, the choir presents its full program, which includes repertoire from a variety of genres. Fans, patrons, and concertgoers pay to attend these often sold-out performances. Sometimes, the season has to be extended to accommodate the numbers of attendees.

The full concert program divides into four segments. The first segment of the program is formal. The choir sings standard British, Western European, and Caribbean choral music such as anthems, madrigals, part songs, and motets. In this segment, the choir members are staged in their standard choral formation. The use of movement is restricted to minimal gestures involving the head and hands. Occasionally, the choristers may also take a step or two in one direction or another; they might also rearrange their standing positions for impact.

The second segment of the full concert program is comprised of folk song and popular song arrangements. This literature is not exclusively Jamaican; arrangements of folk songs from around the Caribbean are included in the repertoire of this segment. These folk arrangements, many of which have been composed by Noel Dexter, are often satirical in nature and provide commentary on current events.

The attire for this segment of the program is the colorful quadrille dress mentioned earlier in the discussion about costuming. The staging in this segment is meant to help convey the story of each song. For example, if the song is about gossip, the women might be arranged to stand in a circle in order to spread the story from one person

to the next. Movements in this segment are generally more animated so as to enliven and illustrate the narrative of each song.

Songs from various religious traditions make up the repertoire for the third segment of the program. This segment of the program offers the audience a look at Jamaica's slave roots since many of the songs come from spiritual practices that are tied to West African belief systems. Common in the segment are songs and rhythms drawn from religious rituals and practices such as Revival, *Kumina*, and Nine Night.¹⁰⁹

Staging for these religious song arrangements depicts various aspects of associated religious ceremonies. Likewise, the gestures, movements, and costuming for these pieces are chosen to reflect various aspects of these ceremonies. For example, the costuming in this segment of the program may present the members of the choir all dressed in white with colorful accent pieces worn sparingly. This costuming is evocative of the clothing worn by Jamaicans in the countryside, where many of the folk religions are practiced.

A full concert usually ends with arrangements of Caribbean popular music, including calypso from Trinidad and Tobago and reggae, arguably Jamaica's greatest cultural export. Throughout the years, the choir's repertoire of Jamaican popular music has grown to include the music of each generation: ska (late 1950s), rocksteady (1960s), dancehall (1980s), and reggae fusion (1990s).

109. Nine Night is a Revival ceremony and celebration observed on the ninth night after a person dies. According to tradition, the spirit of the deceased leaves the earth on this night, after first passing through the celebration grounds. For an in-depth account of a Nine Night ceremony, see George Eaton Simpson, "The Nine Night Ceremony in Jamaica," *The Journal of American Folklore* 70, no. 278 (October–December 1957), 329–335.

In this segment, the choir members wear modern clothing. At times, the attire in this segment has included clothing that is generally found in Africa, including the aforementioned dashiki. The staging in this segment is, by far, the most dynamic and intricate of the entire concert program. The full stage is employed as singers move upstage, downstage, stage left, and stage right. The movements for these pieces could be considered full-on dance choreography.

The University Singers Compared to the Show Choir in the United States

In the United States, choirs at colleges and universities do not identify themselves by their performance styles, as most collegiate choral directors do not develop a performance style as much as they embrace a tonal concept (individualist/collectivist, straight-tone/use of vibrato) or a performance practice based on the era in which the piece was composed (Baroque transparency of line, Classical restraint). Perhaps it is more helpful to consider the American show choir genre that has been popular for at least the past two decades.¹¹⁰ There are high school, community college, and even university show

110. In this section of this research document, no attempt has been made to define show choir in a formal manner. The general show choir characteristics described here were provided by Dr. John Flanery, the Director of Choral Activities at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, NM. In addition to over a decade of collegiate choral conducting, Dr. Flanery has considerable experience as a high school choral director, including nine years of directing high school show choir in Iowa.

In Iowa, Dr. Flanery started with one show choir and grew his program to include four show choirs (junior high and high school levels). Both his mixed and women's show choirs competed regularly and consistently placed in finals every year, and they often won Grand Championship trophies along with awards for best vocals, best choreography, best soloists, and best performers. At the peak of Dr. Flanery's high school experience, over 160 students (out of a student body of 550) performed in his show choirs; and an additional fifty-five students performed at the middle school level. He created and hosted a show choir invitational in 1999 and administered it for six years. The invitational is still running and will host its eighteenth contest in 2016.

choirs. (There are fewer university-level show choirs than high school or community college show choirs.) All share a set of characteristics that, in some ways, are similar to the choral theatre performance style. In this section, choral theatre will be compared to the United States show choir in the following areas: genre, demographics, instrumentation, concert season, staging, choreography, costuming, finances, and music.

Genre

The primary music genres for a show choir are American pop music, musical theatre, ragtime, Broadway, and even Contemporary Christian Music (CCM). While the show choir director may occasionally deviate into another genre, these genres are standard. The members of The University Singers also perform popular music, albeit from Jamaica and the Caribbean. Likewise, the choir's repertoire may include a show

Dr. Flanery has worked with nationally-renowned arrangers and choreographers on a regular basis. He and his show choirs have been frequent participants in various show choir camps, including the Butler County Community Show Choir Summer Showcase in El Dorado, Kansas and the Show Choir Camps of America at Milikin University in Decatur, Illinois. Show choirs under Dr. Flanery's direction have also been active competitors throughout the Midwest.

While the Assistant Director of Choral Activities at The University of Southern Mississippi, he created the Southern Experience Show Choir and Choral Camp and directed it for seven years. Under Dr. Flanery's leadership, the camp hosted over 1,000 junior high and high school students and their teachers from Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Tennessee, Georgia, Kentucky, Iowa, Nebraska, Colorado, and Texas. The camp employed many of the top choreographers and vocal clinicians from Texas, North Carolina, Iowa, Nebraska, Illinois, Wisconsin, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, and Indiana. In addition, nationally-known choral composers and arrangers Mark Brymer, Kirby Shaw, Andy Beck, Michael Spresser, and Valerie Mack were clinicians for Southern Experience.

As a show choir judge and adjudicator, Dr. Flanery has been an adjudicator in Nebraska, Iowa, Indiana, Florida, Ohio, Alabama, Mississippi, and South Dakota. The year 2016 marks the second time in three years that he will be judging the Indiana State Championships in Indianapolis. He has also judged show choirs at Festival Disney for six years in a row. Also he has been a show choir clinician in Minnesota, South Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska, Indiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and New Mexico.

tune on occasion. Generally, the repertoire is wide-ranging: British anthems, Latin motets, opera choruses, Negro spirituals, part songs, British folk songs, original settings of Psalms and hymns, Caribbean and Jamaican folk songs, and Afro-Jamaican cult song arrangements.¹¹¹

Demographics

Most show choir performers are teenagers in either middle school or high school, with the majority of show choir performers being high school students. Once a student graduates from high school, she is no longer allowed to participate in high school activities, per the rules of many state high school activities associations. A small percentage of show choirs are found in colleges (and those mainly in community/two-year colleges). In the college-level show choirs, the performers are in the typical college student age range: ages eighteen to twenty-two years old.

Some, but not all, members of The University Singers are college-aged, which is to be expected of an ensemble housed in a university. One of the distinguishing characteristics of the choir, however, is that there are choristers who continue singing in it after matriculating. Neither the choral organization itself nor the UWI has any rule that restricts membership only to current students. So it is not uncommon to have several who are still members of the choir a decade or longer after graduating from school. In fact, the current students-to-alumni ratio of vocalists is 50:50.¹¹²

111. Former director Noel Dexter and current director Franklin Halliburton are among the most notable of the composers who write hymns and Psalm settings for The Singers.

112. This is according to Franklin Halliburton, current director of The University Singers, in a text message sent on Monday, October 26, 2015. See Appendix G.

Instrumentation

Most show choirs perform to live instrumental accompaniment.¹¹³ The primary accompanying ensemble for a show choir is a band (keyboard, rhythm guitar, bass guitar, auxiliary percussion, drums, synthesized sounds, etc.). Many show choirs also incorporate other instruments, including brass, according to the needs of their performance pieces. If resources are limited, a show choir will use a show track, which is a studio-produced audio recording that is used in place of a rhythm section. In the South, many middle school show choirs use tracks.

A cappella pieces are standard in the repertoire of The University Singers. The choir is as comfortable and adept singing a madrigal as it is singing a reggae arrangement. Its repertoire is not limited to pieces accompanied by instrumentalists. In addition to typical rhythm section instruments, the choir is accompanied by a variety of drums because many of the pieces in its repertoire have African roots; and the drum is a primary accompanying instrument in African vocal music.

Concert Season

A show choir operates on an academic year basis. The major focus of the academic season is preparing for and participating in festivals and/or competitions. Most show choirs will perform multiple shows in the year—a fall show, a competition show, a spring show, and a holiday show (usually around Christmas). Competition season falls in the months of January, February, and March. It is becoming increasingly popular to schedule competitions as late as April. Competitions are ticketed events, and the

113. If a show choir performs a cappella, it is usually only in a limited portion of one piece.

competition finals require a separate ticket at an additional charge.¹¹⁴ Most show choirs will perform a spring show once competition season has ended.

Likewise, the UWI choir operates within a season. There is a difference, though: a show choir has a competitive season; the choir at the UWI has a concert season. Late May to June is the prime concert season for the ensemble. The UWI concert season is ticketed, like the show choir competitive season.

Staging

The typical show choir employs a variety of stage effects. For example, the use of risers, equipment, props, and set pieces is common. The degree varies to which these are used. Many show choirs use risers.¹¹⁵ The typical configuration for show choir risers is four rows of four-feet by eight-feet risers at eight inches off the ground, four rows of risers at sixteen inches off the ground, four rows of risers at twenty-four inches off the ground, and a fourth row of four risers at thirty-two inches off the ground.

Beyond the standard riser arrangement, show choirs will incorporate the use of freestanding backdrops behind the risers. Sets can be elaborate—risers on hydraulics and ice-skating rinks, for example. Groups will use lights and television screens and even curtains. Boxes (for standing) and handheld props will also be incorporated into shows.

114. School shows are also ticketed, the proceeds of which help cover expenses.

115. Twenty years ago, the use of risers was optional. Today, the use of risers is standard. However, some show choirs will use risers only—no additional set pieces.

To accommodate costume changes, most show choirs will even have changing stations off-stage.¹¹⁶

The University Singers generally does not employ elaborate stage and set pieces. As mentioned earlier, in the formal choral section of its concert, choristers stand on the stage floor and on three sets of steps; but they do not use risers built for choreography. Costume changes generally take place en masse between sections of the concert, and props are few.

Choreography

A professional choreographer will design dance moves and gestures for a show choir's entire presentation. Some show choir teachers who have a dance background may choreograph their second-tier performing groups, if their schools are large enough to warrant multiple show choirs. However, the top group usually will be choreographed professionally.

The degree of complexity of the choreography is based on the ability of each group. Middle school show choirs have less complex choreography since their motor skills are less refined. Choreography for high school groups is usually more complex.

Two of the more complex choreography techniques include layering and leveling. Layering takes place when there is various activity on the risers, either oriented left to right or front to back. For example, the singers on the back row of risers will be performing a certain set of movements while singers on each descending row will be performing other movements or the same movements in the opposite direction. Another

116. When a show choir performs a run-out concert, the stage effects are reduced—fewer or no costume changes, no full set, soloists rather than the entire choir, and simplified choreography.

example of layering involves arranging singers into four quadrants on the risers with each quadrant performing different choreography. Also, layering can include having men doing something different from the women.

Leveling is choreography oriented from front to back on the risers. Different movements occur simultaneously on the stage. This staging technique is visually creative and can be complex. It is meant to constantly draw the eyes of the judges so that they cannot see everything at once, so it can serve a strategic purpose in competitions.

The process of developing choreography is multi-faceted. The show choir director generally selects the theme and pieces for the show. Sometimes, the director and a choreographer will work together on the show concept; but rarely does the choreographer alone decide on the tunes or the theme.

Based on the show's theme and music, a choreographer will create movements for the show choir. Once the choreography is set, he will work the show choir for a few days to teach the steps and gestures.¹¹⁷ The choreographer may opt to only teach one half of the show at a time in order to allow the singers to master the moves. The choreographer may visit the show choir later to clean up the choreography or make adjustments.¹¹⁸

For The University Singers, choreography does not play the same role in performance as it does for a show choir. According to Kevin Moore, the difference between choreography and movement is about the quantity of the movement. Nettleford,

117. Budget constraints will dictate many decisions regarding the level of involvement between a choreographer and the show choir, but most directors will require that the choreographer be on site for part of the learning process for the singers.

118. Some choreographers will make video recordings demonstrating the rest of the choreography and then send the recordings to the show choirs so that the dance captains can teach the moves.

Moore, and other leaders of the choir consider choreography to be continual physical action on the part of the performers.¹¹⁹ Choreography is the realm of the professional dancer, and it highlights the physique. Whereas, in choral theatre, movement is subordinate to vocal beauty. It must never overshadow the text or the voice. Movement is for the amateur performer.¹²⁰

The process of creating movements for The Singers is organic. Typically, the movement coordinator, himself a dancer in the National Dance Theatre Company, will come to a rehearsal and listen to a particular piece. Then, the coordinator will begin to experiment with various gestures based on the lyrical content of the choral piece. This process is largely improvisatory since he does not know the piece before attending the choral rehearsal.¹²¹

Costuming

A show choir performance features the use of costumes rather than formal concert attire, as with a traditional choir.¹²² It is common for a show choir to have a costume change; some have more than one. Usually, a singer wears one outfit at the start of the show and changes into a second outfit later in the show. In some cases, a show choir will have a second or even a third costume change. Often, to save money (and time during the

119. Moore, interview.

120. Dexter, interview; Nelson, interview.

121. Rex Nettleford established this process, and it remains in use today. See Moore, interview.

122. As late as the 1980s, it would have been common for a show choir to use formal wear even though it was singing popular tunes while dancing. Today, there is more variety in costuming; but tuxedos are still used.

performance), a show choir will use different pieces of an outfit to create different looks—for example, a male performer wearing a full suit with a vest in one part of the show and, later, removing the suit coat and tie but keeping the vest and rolling up his sleeves.

In a full concert as part of its concert season, The University Singers has four costumes that coordinate with each segment. The costume styles range from formal (floor-length skirts and tops for the women and tuxedos for the men) to colonial (quadrille/bandana dresses for the women and shirts and pants for the men) to Afro-Jamaican cultic (all-white for both men and women) to modern (dashikis, slacks, polo shirts). These costumes help convey the overall mood/sentiment of each segment of the concert.

Finances

The cost of participating in show choir is high compared to participating in a traditional choir. The average cost of participation in a high school show choir is \$500 to \$600 per year.¹²³ The show choir fee covers everything from the cost of hiring a choreographer to the costumes, equipment, and props to the cost of entering competitions. Additionally, the cost of participation can include transportation, lodging, and meals when traveling to competitions. In order to keep the costs under control, most show choirs either have fundraisers or use appropriated funds from their school districts.

123. For most show choirs, the minimum annual cost per singer ranges from \$200 to \$300. On the high end, costs can range from \$1,000 to \$1,500 per performer per year. Families have the options of paying the entire cost all at once at the beginning of the school year or on a monthly basis over the course of the year. For middle school show choirs, the cost of participation is low, if there is a cost at all. Many middle school show choirs reuse costumes over a period of years or even allow their performers to use articles of clothing—such as blue jeans—from their personal wardrobes.

For The University Singers, the cost of participation to the members is low. Each singer is usually expected only to purchase formal footwear. Additionally, each singer is asked to provide makeup. The choral organization pays for all other expenses out of monies raised through ticket sales for its concerts. When the choir travels, it does so at the invitation and expense of a host or group of hosts.

Music

Many show choirs use published music from major publishing companies. Those show choir directors with greater resources will either arrange their own music charts or hire arrangers to write all the music for their shows. A show choir performance lasts anywhere from fifteen to twenty minutes. However, some groups perform more of a variety show—alternating between the full choir and soloists—that can last up to forty-five minutes.

A full concert for The Singers lasts roughly two hours. The concert is divided into four segments, and each segment lasts approximately twenty-five minutes. In between each segment, the members of the choir change their costumes; and the band provides interlude music. The majority of the concert features the choir, but there may also be a solo or an instrumental feature.

Choral Theatre Compared to Choralography

The extensive use of movement/choreography as a hallmark of a choral idiom is found in the show choir in the United States. However, other choral groups also employ the use of choreography selectively in their concerts for effect or to provide a moment of contrast to their standard singing formations. This type of movement has been labeled *choralography*.

Choralography and choral theatre are similar in that both break from the traditional visual presentation mode of a choir: standing still while singing. The creators and advocates of both choralography and choral theatre argue that the use of movement creates visual variety and interest. Also, proponents of both hold that whatever gestures and movements are used must not, in any way, interfere with free, healthy, and beautiful singing.¹²⁴ That is the extent of the similarities between choralography and choral theatre.

The first mention of choralography as an enhancement to a choral piece was in a 1973 publication by Frank Pooler and Gail Shoup, *Choralography: An Experience in Sound and Movement*. In this volume, the authors describe choralography as “fairly simple movement that can be used by a choir to augment, visually, the impact of its work aurally.”¹²⁵ They traced the combination of movement and singing back to the ancient Greeks and believed that the practice could be used in the present to positively impact the presentation of choral pieces in concert settings.

124. Green, 20. See also Pooler and Shoup, *Choralography*, 2; Crawford, 81; Dexter, interview; Moore, interview; and Nelson, interview.

125. Pooler and Shoup, 2.

A decade later, Danny Green, in an article for *The Choral Journal*, expanded on Pooler and Shoup's limited definition of choralography. Green included gesture, pantomime, and expressive body movement in the definition of choralography; and he indicated that these movements must all be precise and synchronized.¹²⁶ He proposed that the visual presentations of choral pieces in various genres are static and that choralography would add a dimension of programming variety.

In the early years of the twenty-first century, Yvonne Farrow took up the cause of choralography and established a business, Got Choralography?, around the concept.¹²⁷ Perhaps her best-known work is the series of gestures and movements for the piece "Betelehemu," a Nigerian carol composed by Babatunde Olatunji and Wendell Whalum.¹²⁸ Additionally, she has created movements and gestures for dozens of other choral pieces in various genres.¹²⁹

Choral theatre, as has already been stated, is holistic. It is not merely singing while moving; choral theatre includes staging, movement, costuming, lighting, and instrumentation. It is the performance style identified with The University Singers and

126. Green, 19.

127. Respectfully, it must be noted that, in her 2011 dissertation, Glenda Crawford incorrectly attributes the creation of the term *choralography* to Yvonne Farrow. She uses Farrow's definition of the practice, found on Farrow's website, www.gotchoralography.com: "choreography specifically designed for choral groups, whereby--who are not dancers--perform movement on or off the choral risers, in any genre while preserving the choral sound." See Crawford, 81.

128. Babatunde Olatunji and Wendell Whalum, "Betelehemu" (Los Angeles: Alfred Publishing Co., 1994).

129. Farrow, Got Choralography?, <http://www.gotchoralography.com>, accessed February 3, 2016.

employed throughout its entire repertoire, regardless of genre. Choralography is confined to movement and, in some cases, staging. It is a performance device applied to an individual choral piece.

The University Singers Compared to Other Jamaican Choirs

The University Singers is Jamaica's foremost choral ensemble, but there are other choirs on the island. Some of these choirs have been in existence almost as long as The Singers, and they also use various theatrical elements in their concerts. In this section, the NDTC Singers, the Jamaican Folk Singers, and the Cari-Folk Singers and the particulars of their performances will be contrasted with The Singers and choral theatre.

Jamaican Folk Singers

The renowned Jamaican musicologist Olive Lewin founded the Jamaican Folk Singers (JFS) in 1967.¹³⁰ In the year prior, the Jamaican government hired her to conduct field research, collecting and cataloging folk songs across the island. As the name of the choir suggests, the bulk of the repertoire of the JFS has been arrangements of folk songs.

The folk music of the island was originally functional: songs about work, play, worship, and celebration.¹³¹ Lewin was born and raised in colonial Jamaica and was formally trained in music in England. As such, her choral approach was more formal, more European/British in nature.¹³² Rather than an all-encompassing theatrical presentation of choral music, the JFS concerns itself primarily with pure choral singing. The choir members wear traditional, colonial-era slave clothing; but they do not change

130. Senior, 252.

131. Ibid., 253.

132. O'Gorman, "From Field to Platform: Jamaican Folk Music in Concert 1," 47.

costumes. The choir does not sing in a wide variety of musical styles and, instead, limits itself to arrangements of folk songs.¹³³

Cari-Folk Singers

Founded in 1972 under a different name, the Cari-Folk Singers (CFS) has enjoyed a forty-year history of storytelling through choral music. The choir uses various theatrical elements—similar to The University Singers—to create “scenes” in its performances: props, costumes, and lighting.¹³⁴ They do not limit themselves to Jamaican music; rather, they present Caribbean music. Unlike The University Singers, the CFS do not perform British/European choral music (motets, anthems, etc.).

NDTC Singers

The NDTC (National Dance Theatre Company) Singers is a vocal accompanying ensemble for the dancers. Choreography is front and center for the NDTC. The choral ensemble exists simply to support the dancers, and not every piece in the NDTC repertoire is arranged for choral singing. The vocalists are most often placed on the side of the stage, so as not to obstruct the view of the dancers. The ensemble does not sing folk arrangements or British choral music, and there is no refinement in its sound. The singing is raw and percussive.¹³⁵ The choir members do not change costumes during the performance; neither do they use props.

133. O’Gorman, “From Field to Platform: Jamaican Folk Music in Concert 1,” 46.

134. O’Gorman, “From Field to Platform: Jamaican Folk Music in Concert 2,” 44.

135. O’Gorman, “From Field to Platform: Jamaican Folk Music in Concert 1,” 47.

CHAPTER V

CHORAL THEATRE: AN EXAMPLE

The range of styles which The University Singers commands is noteworthy. Classical, jazz, African, folk, pop, pantomime, popular and Jamaican “art” song (a commendable principle seems to have always been the encouragement of local composers) – all types of music have appeared in their programmes over the past five years.¹³⁶

In this chapter, a piece from the repertoire of The University Singers will be examined to illustrate choral theatre in order to demonstrate how the various elements of choral theatre—costuming, staging, gesture, instrumentation, and lighting—are utilized. The example discussed in this chapter is taken from the 2013 concert season recording *The University Singers Live in Concert Season 2013*, a privately-financed professional recording.¹³⁷

While there are members of the choir who are music readers, it is important to remember that none of the choir members (both those who are current students and those who have already graduated) are music majors at The University of the West Indies. The school does not offer a music degree. According to Noel Dexter, efforts to improve the music-reading abilities of all members are ongoing; most of the music, however, is learned by rote in rehearsals.¹³⁸ In fact, many arrangements in the choir’s repertoire are unwritten.

136. O’Gorman, “From Field to Platform: Jamaican Folk Music in Concert 2,” 47.

137. The proceeds from the sales of this recording are being used to help establish a scholarship for members of the choir who are still in school. One of the choir’s former directors, Lilieth Nelson, was the driving force behind this recording and the scholarship effort. See Nelson, interview.

138. Dexter, interview.

Likewise, the movements and gestures are not planned in advance of the movement coordinator's visit to a rehearsal. The movements and gestures that are incorporated are conceived as the movement coordinator is listening to the choir rehearse a piece. There is a trial-and-error dynamic as different movements and gestures are explored; the process is entirely organic.¹³⁹

These two factors—the lack of transcribed, notated vocal scores and the process of incorporating movements and gestures—have their roots in the aural transmission traditions of Africa. It is, then, no surprise that the pieces that are learned through this process are the folk song arrangements, the pop arrangements, and the religious cult pieces. Melodic and rhythmic music notation is a Western European convention. As such, those pieces in the choir's repertoire that are British or Western European or in a similar style are notated or professionally published. Noel Dexter's "O Praise Ye the Lord," adapted from Psalm 150, was composed in what many in Jamaica refer to as an "art" song. The piece conforms to common practice part-writing rules but incorporates Afro-Jamaican syncopated rhythms in both the keyboard and the unwritten drum parts.

"O Praise Ye the Lord"

During the first four measures of keyboard introduction, the choir is standing still, the position held over from the end of the preceding piece (the concert opener). The men are in the center of the choir with those in the very center standing on one of the steps. The women are flanking the men. The choir is dressed in its formal attire; and the lighting scheme is a combination of red, blue, and violet gels that is reminiscent of the color of the women's tops.

139. Moore, interview.

At measure six, the choir members begin moving on the word “Lord” of the refrain “O praise ye the Lord.”

The image shows a musical score for measure 6. It features five staves: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and piano accompaniment. The Soprano and Tenor parts are marked with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The lyrics "O praise ye the Lord!" are written under the Alto and Tenor staves. The piano accompaniment is also marked with *mf*. The score is labeled "m. 6" in the upper right corner.

Figure 17. Excerpt showing measure six: the beginning of the transition from the choir’s original standing position to its new standing position.¹⁴⁰

140. Marian Dolan, *Sacred Choral Music of the Caribbean*, Worldsong (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002), 14.



Figure 18. Choristers re-arranging themselves using the step-touch movement (photograph by Lilieth Nelson, used with permission).

The movement is a step-touch beginning with the right foot. Each step occurs on the half note while the shoulders of the singer are swaying at a rate of one whole note (right for one whole note, left for one whole note). This movement propels the choir members as they begin to re-arrange themselves over the course of fifteen measures. By measure twenty-one, a sustained whole note tied to a quarter note on the word “Lord,” they are arranged in their new formation: four groupings of men with three groupings of women interspersed. The three groupings of women are organized using the three steps—approximately five women on the steps with the rest standing on the stage.



Figure 19. Excerpt showing measure twenty: the end of the movement transition to the choir’s standing position for the remainder of the piece.¹⁴¹

The first stanza begins “In the firmament of His power, praise Him.” The words “praise” and “Him” each fall on a quarter note. The women alone shift their bodies from the waist up, leading with the right shoulder toward stage right. This movement is subtle and quick—one quarter note duration for the rightward shift and one quarter note duration for the shift back to center. While the women are moving, the men are standing still, facing the audience. The verse continues with the phrase “For His mighty acts, let us praise Him.” This time, on “praise Him,” the women shift their bodies from the waist up leading with the left shoulder toward stage left and then back to center. Again, the men remain still.

141. Dolan, 15.

stanza 1 RS

unis. In the fir - ma - ment_ of his pow - er, praise him!
God's God

Figure 20. Excerpt showing beginning of stanza one: women shifting right shoulders (RS) on the words “praise” and “him.”¹⁴²

LS

For his might - y acts let us praise him!
God's God

Figure 21. Excerpt showing the middle of the first stanza: women shifting left shoulders (LS) on the words “praise” and “him.”¹⁴³

142. Dolan, 15.

143. Ibid., 16.



Figure 22. Women shifting shoulders while men remain stationary (photograph by Lilieth Nelson, used with permission).

The third and final phrase of the first stanza is “For His excellent greatness, praise Him. O praise ye the Lord.” In this phrase, all choir members begin to bow from the waist at the words “praise Him.” The downward motion of the bow lasts for approximately a measure, and the returning upward motion lasts a measure. By measure thirty, they are standing upright and begin the step-touch movement as they sing the refrain “O praise ye the Lord.” The right-left step-touch continues throughout the refrain, approximately fifteen measures.

WB

For his ex - cel-lent great-ness, praise him!
God's *God*

Figure 23. Excerpt of the final phrase of the first stanza: all choristers bending from the waist (WB) on “praise him.”¹⁴⁴



Figure 24. All choristers performing waist bend (photograph by Lilieth Nelson, used with permission).

144. Dolan, 16.

m. 30 ST

O praise_ ye the Lord!

The image shows a musical score for measure 30. It consists of three systems of staves. The top system is a vocal line with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It contains the lyrics "O praise_ ye the Lord!" and a "ST" (step-touch) instruction above the final note. The second system is a piano accompaniment line with a treble clef, showing chords and melodic fragments. The third system is a piano accompaniment line with a bass clef, showing a steady bass line. The music is in 4/4 time.

Figure 25. Excerpt of measure thirty: all choristers beginning step-touch (ST) on “Lord.”¹⁴⁵



Figure 26. All choristers performing the step-touch movement (photograph by Lilieth Nelson, used with permission).

145. Dolan, 16.

The structure of the piece is strophic. Two more stanzas follow the first; each is comprised of three phrases ending with the text “praise Him.” For these two stanzas, the gestures for the men and the women are the same as in the first stanza. In between each of the stanzas, the choir sings the refrain “O praise ye the Lord. O praise ye the Lord. Praise God in His sanctuary. O praise ye the Lord.” During the refrain, the step-touch movement is used.

The ending of the piece begins at measure ninety-six. The text reads, “Let everything that hath breath. Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.” While singing the first part of the phrase, the choir has ceased the step-touch and is standing still and facing the audience. On the word “breath,” the choir members standing on the stage floor lead out on the right foot and begin taking five steps—roughly one per half note. Those choir members on the steps remain on the steps and do not move downstage with the rest of the choir. Those in motion stop on the second occurrence of the word “breath.” All are still on “praise” and “the,” each word falling on half notes.

RF LF RF LF RF

breath, let ev - 'ry - thing - thatath breath praise the

breath, let ev - 'ry - thing - thatath breath praise the

Figure 27. Excerpt of penultimate phrase: all choristers on the stage floor leading out on their right foot (RF) on beat one and moving their left foot (LF) on beat three for a total of three measures.¹⁴⁶

On the last word “Lord,” all choristers begin to slowly raise their arms with their palms open toward the ceiling. This movement continues over the course of two measures and stops at shoulder height for each singer. The piece ends as the singers remain in this pose.

146. Dolan, 24.

AR

ff

Lord!

ff

Lord!

ff

Figure 28. Excerpt of final phrase: all choristers raising arms (AR) on “Lord.”¹⁴⁷



Figure 29. Choristers raising their arms as final movement (photograph by Lilieth Nelson, used with permission).

147. Dolan, 24.

Conclusion

According to Merriam-Webster, style is defined as “a particular way in which something is done, created, or performed; a way of behaving or of doing things.”¹⁴⁸ Applied to music, the term *style* is most often associated with an era (Baroque style), an individual performer (the playing style of Benny Goodman), a genre (bluegrass-style), a composer (Mozart’s style), or a country/region (Italian-style opera). In all of these examples, style addresses the “how”—how Baroque music was conceived, how Benny Goodman played the clarinet, how bluegrass is played, how Mozart composed, how Italian opera is different from German opera. Style is a set of characteristics unique to a performer, a place, a genre, or a composer.

Concerning choirs, the term *style* is generally not applied to a particular choir, as in “the choir’s style is ...” Rather, the typical American or European choir—specifically, the typical collegiate choir in America or Europe—is not known for a performing style. Most American and European choral conductors aim for an overall tonal concept that distinguishes their choirs. It is unheard of for a collegiate ensemble to be identified by its performance style.

The University Singers has a “particular way” of performing, to use the dictionary definition. This is the style labeled by its leaders as *choral theatre*; and it is that way that distinguishes it from any other choir in the US, Europe, or the Caribbean. The choir is not the first or the only in the Caribbean to use movement with singing. There are high school choirs and other semi-professional choirs in Jamaica and elsewhere in the

148. "Style." Merriam-Webster.com. Accessed January 21, 2016.
<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/style>.

Caribbean that employ some theatrical elements in their performances; and some of those ensembles, such as the Cari-Folk Singers, have been in existence nearly as long as The UWI Singers. None of those other choirs, however, use all the theatrical elements of choral theatre or apply them to every piece in their repertoires. Furthermore, none of the other Caribbean choirs have repertoires that are as diverse as The Singers' repertoire.

The development of choral theatre can be traced from the earliest days of The University Singers, when a folk song arrangement would be included at the end of a concert program; and movement would be added to the folk arrangement for effect. This was in an era in which folk songs were rarely, if ever, performed on a public stage because the British considered them inferior to the standards of Western Europe. As Jamaica moved toward Independence, a nationalist spirit was fostered by Jamaican leaders such as Rex Nettleford and Norman and Edna Manley, who encouraged their fellow countrymen to embrace folk art, folk music, and folk culture and to reject the British notion that traditions from Africa were subordinate to those of England and Europe.

Some of the earlier directors of The University Singers, including Lilieth Nelson, laid the foundation of pairing movement and singing. Noel Dexter and Rex Nettleford partnered in the late 1970s and the 1980s to fully develop choral theatre to encompass costuming, lighting, and staging. It is during the leadership tenure of those two men that the term *choral theatre* was coined and the style was formalized as being the way The University Singers would perform, regardless of genre or era. Today, Franklin Hallburton bears the mantle of leadership and continues to keep choral theatre at the center of what the choir does.

Choral theatre is unlike the American choralography or show choir.

Choralography is mostly used to add novelty or variety to a choral concert, much in the same way movement was added to a folk song in Jamaica prior to Jamaican Independence. It is not a style, a way of doing something. No American choirs are known as “choralography choirs,” where movement pervades the entire repertoire.

The show choir in America incorporates various theatrical elements as a standard practice. A show choir performance is distinguishable from choral theatre. A show choir’s repertoire is limited usually to popular songs and Broadway tunes. The University Singers performs traditional choral anthems, Caribbean pop arrangements, and everything in between. A show choir exists in either the middle school or the high school, occasionally in a two-year school and almost never in a college. The University Singers is a collegiate ensemble. Most show choirs are competitive and exert a great deal of energy preparing for annual competitions. The Singers performs an annual concert season for its supporters.

Choral theatre defines the work of The University Singers. It is the particular way that the choir approaches its repertoire and its performances. With its elements of costuming, movements, staging, lighting, and instrumentation, choral theatre is the exclusive style of The University Singers and is an important contribution to the choral idiom.

APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
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NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 15032705
PROJECT TITLE: Choral Theater: Telling Jamaica's Story Through Movement and Song
PROJECT TYPE: New Project
RESEARCHER(S): Albert Joseph Wolfe, Jr.
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Arts and Letters
DEPARTMENT: School of Music/Choral Activities
FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 04/07/2015 to 04/06/2016

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B
LETTERS OF PERMISSION



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September 18, 2015

Joey Wolfe
5243 Riverside Drive
Apartment 106
Macon, GA 31210

Dear Mr Wolfe,

Re: Assignment of specific rights for use of images

I write to notify you that I am hereby giving you permission for the specific use of eight images to be used as part of your dissertation.

The images are described on the attached sheet and are labelled:

- PastedGraphic-1
- PastedGraphic-2
- PastedGraphic-3
- PastedGraphic-4
- PastedGraphic-5
- PastedGraphic-6
- PastedGraphic-7
- PastedGraphic-8

Yours sincerely,

Chris Benjamin



AUGSBURG FORTRESS

2 November 2015

To: Whom it May Concern

Permission is granted to Joey Wolfe to print excerpts from Noel Dexter's arrangement of O Praise Ye the Lord as it is found in Let the Peoples Sing Volume 1. This permission is for use of the excerpts in his dissertation in fulfillment of the requirements for his DMA.

Yours,

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Philip Sherlock Centre for the Creative Arts
University of the West Indies, Mona, Kingston 7
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7th January 2016

Mr. Albert Joseph Wolfe, Jr.
5243 Riverside Drive
Apartment 106
Macon, GA 31210

BY E-MAIL

Dear Mr. Wolfe:

Re: Use of print and photographic material belonging to The University Singers

As per your request, The University Singers grants you the authorization to use and include photographs included in the attached document entitled "The University Singers – Photographs", as a part of your PhD dissertation on *Choral Theatre*.

Some of the pictures included have been acquired from Mr. Christopher Benjamin (photographer) and from the 2013 Concert Season DVD produced by Ms. Lilieth Nelson; i.e., having captured individual still frames from the said DVD.

We have liaised with both Mr. Benjamin and Ms. Nelson and there is nothing fettering our authorization of your use of the photographs.

Be advised that your use of the attached photographs is strictly limited to your academic endeavours, in partial fulfilment of your higher degree and does not extend to use for any commercial enterprise or gain. Any other use of the images outside of the scope of the authority granted by this letter will be regarded as a violation and The University Singers reserves the right to take all the necessary action(s) to preserve its rights hereunder.

Yours sincerely,

**Franklin E. Halliburton (Mr.)
Musical Director**

Encls. (1)



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1. Pictures photographed by Christopher Benjamin;
2. Pictures from DVD produced by Lilieth Nelson;
3. Pictures from The University Singers' archives

1.



1



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2



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4



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January 10, 2016

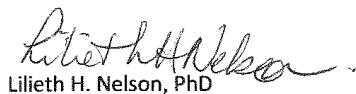
To Whom It May Concern

This serves to confirm that I requested and received permission to commission a video taping of the University Singers' Concert Season 2013, on Sunday, June 23 at 8:00 p.m. The taping was carried out with three cameras and equipment belonging to Talk TV and Stefan Nelson, and the persons involved were Mr. Jesse Golding and another technical staff member of Talk TV in addition to Mr. Nelson. The editing was done by a staff member of Talk TV.

Inter alia:

1. Approval of the edited video was sought from Mr. Noel Dexter and the rest of the University Singers' Committee.
2. The cost of producing the DVDs was borne by Talk TV and Lilieth H. Nelson. The DVDs were made available to The University Singers for sale. If required, the approved edited material could be made available to the University Singers for production of DVDs for sale.
3. The net income from sale of the DVDs was to be put towards a Scholarship Fund for awards to be named The University Singers' Bursary, to be managed by the Office of Student Financing of the UWI, Mona Campus, to be used to assist a member of the University Singers each academic year, who will be awarded the bursary based on specific criteria, which should include evidence of need.
4. Talk TV has the right to use the approved edited material on their programmes.

By means of this correspondence and with the approval of Talk TV and The University Singers, I give permission for Mr. Joey Wolfe, of The University of Southern Mississippi, to use material from the DVD entitled **The University Singers Live in Concert Season 2013**, based on his request as follows: *"For my dissertation, I would like to use still shots from your 2013 DVD. I have a program that will allow me to pause the video and then take a "snapshot" of a frame. These still shots will be used as illustrations in the text of my dissertation."*


Lilieth H. Nelson, PhD

Copies: Mrs. Florence Darby (Talk TV); Mr. Franklin Halliburton (Musical Director, The University Singers) and Mr. Noel Dexter (Consultant on Choral Music to The UWI and The University Singers)

APPENDIX C

ADDDITIONAL SOURCES

[The following sources were consulted during this research; but they were not directly related to the topic of choral theatre and, therefore, not included in the bibliography. Several of these materials provide additional insight into Jamaica and its culture.]

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APPENDIX D

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH NOEL DEXTER

Interviewee: Noel Dexter (ND), former musical director of The University Singers

Interviewer: Albert Joseph Wolfe, Jr. (JW), researcher

Date: Tuesday, January 6, 2015 at 11:00 a.m.

Location: Philip Sherlock Centre for the Creative Arts

The University of the West Indies, Mona

Kingston 7, Jamaica

Note: Every effort has been made to reproduce accurately this interview in its entirety. Jamaicans speak both standard English and Jamaican (also known as “Patwa”), a language that combines English with words from other cultures and regions and that does not follow the grammatical and syntactical rules of standard English.¹⁴⁹ In formal writing, standard English is used. However, in a semi-formal or an informal setting, many Jamaicans easily and fluently alternate between the two languages.

[Prior to starting the interview, ND mentioned speaking with Lilieth Nelson, another former director of the choir. The recording device was started mid-sentence as ND was explaining that Ms. Nelson was working on a formal history of The University Singers.]

149. “The Jamaican Language Unit,” The University of the West Indies, accessed February 19, 2016, <http://www.mona.uwi.edu/dllp/jlu/index.htm>.

ND: ... a history of The Singers. She hasn't completed it yet. But I know she has a lot of material you should see.

JW: OK. Well, do you mind if I ask you a few questions, though, just to, kind of, get your memory going? And do you mind if I record just for ...?

ND: No problem.

JW: OK. As you see here, what I hope to do is not define for The UWI Singers what it is they do. What I would like to do is help The UWI Singers ...

[Someone appears at ND's office door.]

JW: [to ND] Oh, do you need to ...?

ND: [to visitor] [unintelligible], you want to see me? I'll be here for a little while. So you can come back.

[The person leaves.]

JW: What I simply want to do is, kind of, help, in an academic way, describe, help The UWI Singers and you describe this style, this choral theatre style. In all of the research that I've done—and having seen The Singers perform

a couple times—it seems to me that what happens here is very unique. You've seen American choirs. And most American collegiate choirs stand up and sing. Maybe one piece will involve some sort of choreography or movement. But for the most part, we just stand up and sing. To me, what sets The Singers apart is that, that use of movement, that sense of, whether subtle choreography or something bigger, it infuses everything that happens. Would that be a correct statement?

ND: Yes. Alright, I'm thinking Lilieth would be better to give you something on the history, a documented thing, on the history of The Singers.

JW: OK. Right.

ND: The group started somewhere in the late fifties [1950s].

JW: Right. I think about '59 maybe.

ND: Yes. And it ... From about eight or nine singers, I can't quite remember, who met to perform for a Christmas presentation. Then, they decided to form a permanent choir. I first heard this choir when I was in school, from about 1960; and I studied here. I did economics, studying mostly ... My degree is called economics; but it consists of many different subjects, including sociology. And I specialized in sociology. That was my main

thing. The Singers, when I arrived here, was conducted by a very brilliant musician, Carol ... She was, then, Carol Gascoigne-Smith. But she was a brilliant musician—quite an accomplished pianist and violinist. She had perfect pitch; and at that time, we sang mostly standard choral pieces ... madrigals. We did a lot of madrigals and motets, most of them in English, some in Latin, some in French. And then, the concert program, at that time, consisted of that type of music with some spirituals; and at the end, we tacked on a few folk songs. It was during my time as a student that [Professor Rex] Nettleford came into the picture. I remember he choreographed one folk song, a work song. And that was all he did in that time. I took over The Singers from the person who ... There were several persons after Gascoigne-Smith. One, two, three, I think. And then, there was Lilieth Nelson. But The Singers was always just a student group—students only. They operated outside the formal structure of the University. When I came on as director of music here, I taught first-year music, something like the first-year courses you have in any university: history, theory ... that sort of thing. And there was a practical sight-reading focus, sight-reading thing attached to it. And I had come up from teaching, come to the University after teaching at the high school. And the thing is, when I arrived here to do my degree, quite a number of the singers who I taught also came on as students. And I gathered them to form the nucleus of a choir. We started out, and The University Singers

got very ... probably jealous. I don't know. They asked if I could work with them.

JW: Oh, so there were two choirs—The Singers and the choir you started.

ND: But I didn't ... Mine didn't last very long. As soon as they heard I was forming a choir, they felt that there shouldn't be two choirs. So I took over The Singers. Now, in my taking over The Singers, the thing of singing with movements had already been established in the performance pattern. However, I brought in Nettleford because he was the greatest. And he came in; and as a result of my bringing him in, after that, every year he came on as the artistic director. And I think, the term *choral theatre*, I first heard it with him. He was the first person, I think, that used that.

JW: So when ...? Let me take this step back. So before you became the director, you said, when you were a student, he would choreograph, like, a folk song, a work song, or what have you?

ND: He did only one.

JW: Only one. And that pattern pretty much continued ...

ND: It did, yes.

JW: ... just a song.

ND: When I started my ... started the early group here, I used to do it, the movements, myself. But then, I felt I was very inadequate. So I brought him in. And he was the artistic director right until his death. He just ... You know, Prof would just come in; and he asked, "What was the song?" We sang it; and while we sang, he'd close his eyes. And he said, "Come on the stage." And in two minutes, that simple song was transposed or developed into a great work of art. And he always insisted that what he did for The Singers was not choreography. He said it was movement, movement to complement the music. And he always pointed out that the movement must never supersede the energy in the singing. The singing must come first. The movements just enhance, give a visual aspect to enhance, the performance. The thing to look at is that there were always choirs in Jamaica, as you said. All these choirs performed with the choristers just standing and singing. Although, in Jamaica, there is a National Pantomime where people sing and move just like an American musical. And I think all that influenced what we do because, while I was director, I took a lot of the songs from the Pantomime and put them on stage.

JW: Oh, OK. So you would just go get pieces from the Pantomime and bring them straight in.

ND: Yes. But Prof, who sometimes choreographed for the Pantomime, still would come and choreograph for The Singers here. Sometime, he did it differently from the way they did it.

JW: Oh, so he would adapt.

ND: Yes.

JW: Now, would you ... what was taken from the Pantomime, would you arrange for choral?

ND: I would re-arrange it for choral.

JW: And then, he would change the movement ...

ND: Yes.

JW: ... to adapt. OK.

ND: And this went ... That's been going on for years. You see, the whole thing of singing madrigals and European motets, religious music, and a few art songs continued for a long time in The Singers. And even when I took over from Lilieth Nelson, they were doing movements; and I took over

from Lilieth in the seventies [1970s]. And at that time, there was a strong movement for the liberation of the people—the black people—of South Africa. And that the songs from South Africa then formed a good part of our repertoire. We sang them ...

JW: In solidarity with the people of South Africa?

ND: Yes. And in fact, when Nelson Mandela came here, we had already known that anthem which the black people sing; and when we sang it, the whole place just lit up. And I introduced quite a number of things during my period. One, the section of the program—I'm talking about our annual concert season— was always divided into two sections, a more serious side and a side, which was lighter. And in that serious side, we kept the anthems and the spirituals, Negro spirituals; and we had few Jamaican pop songs—reggae—were introduced at the time. The second half consisted of Pantomime songs and folk songs ... some for ladies, some for men, some SATB. And that filled up the whole of that second half of the program. The thing is that, after doing all the religious anthems and so on, I did a thing where I did some religious pieces to replace those from outside Jamaica. And even in the section where we did some, what they call, art songs, we added our own things; and in addition to my writing, I encouraged students to start doing things. And some of them were very, very good. In addition, too, I tried to collect as many Jamaican choral

pieces, written choral pieces, as I could find in terms of what you would call anthems and a few based on spirituals. I have written or re-arranged some spirituals for the choir; but they are Jamaican spirituals, songs from what we call Revival [an Afro-Jamaican religious sect] folk groups. I did a lot of that.

JW: Not necessarily in ... like in American spirituals ... borne out of a slave tradition?

ND: No. Ours, if you know of our Revival people, you'll find that they were influenced by formal church music; but they arranged it in their own style. They added their own Jamaican rhythms; and drum accompaniment was very, very important ... and tambourine. They were ... They sang—or they still sing—with movements. So all that was incorporated. What is significant here is that there is very little formal—or there was very little formal—music training in Jamaica. There was a school of music, which I attended, which was more like a conservatory. They didn't offer degrees, diplomas. You just went and did your classes and left, but we did British exams. For example, I did one in class music teaching, in which I had to write a paper, answer questions in music history. And there was a paper in theory. And then, the music examiner came down and examined me teaching a class. And I got through with that exam. One of the things, you must remember, is that, before '62, Independence, we were British. So the

music we learnt in school was British mainly. I grew up on things like “Loch Lomond,” “Flow Gently, Sweet Afton;” and we never were taught a Jamaican folk song in school ... never came up. After ‘62, these things were given some status and were accepted. There were just a few groups that did folk songs in a performance; and I think it was about that time, after Independence, that the Jamaican Folk Singers [a choir that specialized in presenting arrangements of folk songs while maintaining a high degree of refinement in its vocal production] came in. You ever heard ...?

JW: That’s Olive ...

ND: Olive Lewin [a Jamaican-born, British-trained musicologist who collected folk songs and tunes across the island as head of the Music Research Unit, a government entity].

JW: Right. OK.

ND: They started out, too, with choreography. A quite a few choreographers assisted, choreographed their movements. Quite a few people did that. But they were all people who had studied dance. And I think most of them met Nettleford, so the movement spreading.

JW: And around that same time, didn't he found NDTC [National Dance Theatre Company] as well?

ND: Yes. Yes.

JW: Right, all in that very ...?

ND: Everything started there. And the dancers at NDTC had within it a group of singers, which Howard [Cooper, father-in-law of JW] was a part of.

JW: That's right.

ND: And sometimes, they not only sang by themselves; but they sang as a complement to some of the dances.

JW: Exactly. I've seen some of those videos.

ND: Alright. Now, what has happened is that some students who come to the University without ... We don't have a faculty. Some of them have done music outside of the University, and they have brought their skills here. And one of the first places they come to is The University Singers. And I make sure that they develop and do more things while they are here. So that, when we started singing more off the campus and into the public, it

was a thing, which made ... It drew a lot of attention because a lot of people hadn't seen this sort of thing very much. I think there's an article in a *Jamaica Journal* in which Pamela Gorman ... You've seen the name before?

JW: I think so. Let me just reference this. O'Gorman?

ND: Yes.

JW: Yeah. I don't know what happened there.

[JW reviews a working copy of a research bibliography.]

JW: Pamela O'Gorman. Actually, I have several articles by her.

ND: Yes. Well, there is one in which she compares our performance with the Jamaican Folk Singers' performance.

JW: OK. I need to find that.

ND: There's some brilliant thoughts. There's something on folk song presentation in which she compares the two styles.

JW: I will find that article. So in some of my research, I found an article written by you, I think, in the *Caribbean* ...

ND: *Quarterly*?

JW: Yeah, and I don't know why I didn't put it in here. Maybe ... No. I don't know. I left it off this. I'll have to make sure I put it back in. But you use the term once, *choral theatre*. That really is about the only ... only thing I've been able to find with the term associated with The UWI Singers. And it was from, like, 1984. I don't know how I left that off.

ND: The term I know is the term Professor used.

JW: So it was really more his ...?

ND: Yes. I would give him the benefit of saying he was the person who coined that description.

JW: Interesting thing is that he never used that term in what I've been able to find of his. Isn't that interesting?

ND: Yes. But he always [unintelligible] choral theatre.

JW: So since we don't have him here, unfortunately ... You know he and I share the same birthday, I found out.

ND: Ah!

JW: February 3. As best as you can, tell me—somebody who's not from the West Indies, from the Caribbean—how would you describe choral theatre?

ND: I would compare it with presentations as they are called in a musical. It's the same sort of thing. It's music with movement. Only here, we begin with a choir. And we have strayed from the traditional way of presenting choral music: standing in rows and singing to our audience.

[unintelligible] by more visual, by increasing the visual content of the performance. And as you say, the movements are to enhance the musical part of the performance.

JW: And from what I've seen ... I've seen The Singers twice: this past time, where we saw each other at the Chapel, and then two years ago. I think I met you then.

ND: Yes.

JW: It was here at the Sherlock Centre. It's not, from what I see—and correct me if I'm wrong and help me keep on the right track—it's not just that it can be a hand gesture or something like that; but it can even involve staging, as you said. It's not just, you know, say, four rows of singers, straight-on, looking at the audience. I mean, it can be this group is diagonal upstage or, I mean, is that ...?

ND: Yes. It's not choreography because the movement is not the important part of our content of the presentation. Music is still ... The singing is still the important part of the presentation. Gestures, full-body movements, positioning on the stage—all these things go towards highlighting or bringing out a visual aspect. And as Prof, I know, always said that nowadays, people, they don't just present their singing on record; there's a video to go with it. So it's part of the same thing.

JW: Yeah. It's not like, when I think choreography—and I'm a layman when it comes to that—we generally would think, like, fancy footwork, you know? We're gonna take five steps this way. We're gonna, you know ...

ND: But an important aspect of that performance is movement.

JW: More like what NDTC does.

ND: Yes.

JW: And then, as you said, the singers ...

ND: Complement.

JW: ... are just kind of accompaniment. Yeah. 'Cause I've seen some of those videos of ... with Howard and what they do.

ND: Our thing ... singing is still the important thing.

JW: The most important thing.

ND: And the movements come in. We have a annual music festival, and groups from all over the country come in. And what I find is that everybody now is singing with that sort of style. You have watched some of the school competition? It's called ...

JW: *All Together Sing* [an annual choral singing competition]? Yeah. Yeah. I've seen that on TV.

ND: See how movements are important? What will happen, I find, that sometime I twist something in a folk song, add a little thing, or do it in a

particular way; and people who haven't done their research come and sing it as if it's an original thing. There's a folk song I know that Olive Lewin does, which has a modulation—a very smooth modulation; and people sing the thing nowadays as it goes—about five or six bars are a part of the song. So it is influencing the sort of thing we do with the folk songs.

JW: Well, and I had the opportunity, the privilege to conduct the KC [Kingston College, an all-boys school in Kingston, Jamaica] Chapel Choir.

ND: Oh, you did?

JW: Yeah, on their Christmas program. I met Audley [Davidson, the director of the Kingston College Chapel Choir] when we were here two Christmases ago. They did a concert at the Bank of Jamaica downtown, so Howard and I went. It's the first time I had been able to hear them. Lori Burnett [a faculty member at the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts] sang.

ND: Yes. I went to their Christmas concert, and she sang.

JW: Yeah, and so I met Audley at that time; and he said, "Well, if you're ever back down here, let me know." So when Howard knew that we, my wife and I, were coming for Christmas, he reached out to Audley; and Audley

said, “Why don't you conduct on our program?” And I said, “Sure!” So I did a Mozart *Te Deum* and Mozart “Ave Verum Corpus” with them, which was great. They did, kind of, the same thing that you’re talking about, where the first half of their program was more standard choral literature.

ND: Yes. We have set that pattern. That’s our thing.

JW: That is the direct influence of The UWI Singers?

ND: Yes.

JW: Makes sense. But in the second half, as you were saying, they had a couple of pieces that they used some movement. Like, they ... The second half, they started ... They changed out of their robes and into their blazers.

ND: That’s The University Singers’ influence.

JW: Yeah. And I remember that from seeing The University Singers here back in 2012. But when I saw the KC boys doing that, I thought, “OK. I wonder where the influence is.” And so what I’m hearing you say is that style of using movement caught on.

ND: And it adds some variety to the whole performance. And a lot of people can identify with that music.

[At this point, someone knocks on ND's door and interrupts the conversation to give a 2015 calendar to him.]

ND: [to the person] Oh, bringing me a calendar? Thank you.

[The person leaves.]

JW: But even—correct me if I'm wrong ... But even seeing The UWI Singers Christmas program here that was sponsored by Bank of Jamaica, it, the use of movement, was in everything, whether it was a carol, whether it was one of your arrangements; it was in everything.

ND: Well, that's the influence of Professor Nettleford. I remember he would just look at a formal song. You know what I mean, formal? And he would just say, "Just turn a little this way on this line"—an inspired movement. Or when the tenors had a line by themselves, he'd say, "Take two steps forward." And it added so much. 'Cause I went to a concert. There's one of my tenors who did his degree, who is doing a doctorate now. And he had to go to Queen's University in Canada. And I was in Canada at the time; it was about two years ago. And he was one of my tenors, and he

joined one of the top choirs on the campus. I said, “How did you get in?” He said he just auditioned, and they took him. And most of the other students in the thing, there were music majors; and he said he had to learn everything—not like here, where we teach from the piano or anything like that. He said he had to go online and find his part, and the whole concert they sang in about three different languages. And I remember there were only two spirituals and one song at the end, which was done in English. And I don’t know, coming from the Caribbean, I found that [unintelligible]. But what thrilled me was that they did a short Bach cantata, and he was the tenor soloist. I felt so proud.

JW: So tell me about your involvement today with The UWI Singers.
[Franklin] Halliburton is the director.

ND: I go to the rehearsals. I don’t take over. I make suggestions to him.

JW: And he solicits those suggestions? He wants ...?

ND: Yes, he wants me to. How do I think about this one, do I think about that?
And I help him to make the program.

JW: Now, how long has he been director?

ND: Franklin? Maybe about eight or so years.

JW: And he succeeded you directly?

ND: Yes. He sang as a student for me.

JW: Oh, how about that! And I understand he's an attorney by trade?

ND: Yes. Yes.

JW: In Montego Bay?

ND: No, in Kingston. He's from Montego Bay.

JW: OK. But he's here. So in a rehearsal, you all are pretty much teaching notes by rote. You're just playing parts, and printed music is part of it.

ND: Yes. Yes. The pop songs, the folk songs are just done from the piano. People learn them by rote.

JW: Text and everything?

ND: Yes. Nowadays, we have some guys who can ...

[A security guard knocks on ND's door. He wants to greet ND and wish him a Happy New Year.]

ND: [to the security guard] Hello? My car isn't locked? I'll soon come down.

[The security guard leaves.]

ND: [to JW] I go to the rehearsals. I find, nowadays, I don't have to be there at every rehearsal 'cause he ... Franklin is very competent, very, very musical. And he's the sort of student that you might find appearing from time to time, but I think he's exceptional.

JW: Did you select him to be the next director, or how did it ...?

ND: I selected him. You see, when I ... I had a system of transition. I just wanted to be out.

JW: After what, twenty-five years?

ND: I started in 1977. It's thirty-something years. And then, I had different people conduct different sections of the program. And at first, I had two: himself and another guy. And I used them as two directors, and they would decide among themselves who'd conduct. Eventually, Franklin just

tended to shine much more than the other guy. The other guy also conducts a choir off-campus. He conducts the choir of the police force. And Franklin Halliburton, his ear ... He can move.

JW: I noticed that.

ND: And in addition, his voice is superb. He had everything for it.

JW: And he plays?

ND: He plays quite well. And I think giving the opportunity to create music, you know, I've seen some ...

JW: Now, so with what he does today, in terms of movement ...?

ND: We invite choreographers.

JW: You have more than one, or ...?

ND: Right now, we have just one [Kevin Moore] from the NDTC. But sometimes we have had others come in.

JW: But the one from the NDTC is kind of the regular ...

ND: The regular one.

JW: ... who comes in. And when he, when that person comes in ...?

ND: We have already learnt the music.

JW: Does he have a similar approach to ...

ND: Nettleford?

JW: ... Professor Nettleford in that he wants to hear it once and then ...?

ND: Yes. He has to hear it.

[ND's assistant, Shawn Wright (SW) enters the office.]

JW: [to SW] Hello.

ND: This is my assistant Shawn.

JW: [to ND] Oh, OK.

JW: [to SW] Joey Wolfe.

ND: [to SW] Mr. Wolfe.

JW: [to SW] Nice to meet you.

ND: [to SW] He's doing some research on The Singers. Do you have some things written, some written things on The Singers somewhere? Like programs or something?

SW: Probably programs.

[SW begins searching for programs.]

JW: [to ND] Now, tell me. So UWI still does not have a music faculty.

ND: No. But we offer subjects in music.

JW: As a minor or ...

ND: No.

JW: ... just as part of ...?

[SW, pausing from his search for programs, explains that there is now a minor in music at the UWI.]

JW: [to ND] Is there interest or movement toward a degree?

ND: When Professor Nettleford was alive, he always said that the focus for music education is the Jamaica School of Music [a unit of the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts, the only tertiary institution in the country that grants a degree in music].

[SW shows JW some printed programs from different years. ND also looks at the programs.]

JW: [to ND] That's not Edna Manley [College of the Visual and Performing Arts], though?

ND: It's Edna Manley.

JW: Oh, it's Edna Manley. So they actually offer ...

ND: The School of Music is just one school in the Edna Manley.

JW: But they offer a degree in music.

[ND hands a program to JW.]

ND: Yeah. You can look through this. There's an article in there by Nettleford.

JW: So his belief was that UWI didn't need to offer it because somebody else already was.

ND: Yes.

[ND and SW peruse the programs that SW has retrieved from the files.]

ND: [to SW] This is alright, Shawn.

JW: [to ND] So how would you say choral theatre has evolved? Is it pretty much being practiced and employed today, as it was when Professor was alive?

ND: More people are adopting the presentation.

JW: More people in terms of other choirs?

ND: Yes.

JW: But in terms of inside the University and UWI Singers, has it evolved?

ND: Evolved in the sense that it has got better? That's what you are saying?

JW: Well, in the sense that ... and I think you may have already answered the question. But from early on, it was just, like, one piece, you said, one folk song. To now, what I saw a couple weeks ago, which was pretty much everything.

ND: Yes. It's a pity Prof isn't here to answer this.

JW: I know. I came along too late. Or, he died too soon.

ND: When are you leaving? Tomorrow?

JW: Thursday.

ND: I think you should talk to Lilieth Nelson.

JW: OK. Be glad to. And I mean this. If I need to, I can come ... I've prepared to do this research if I need to make another trip back if I'm not able to get her.

[ND dials Lilieth Nelson (LN)'s phone number. He then arranges for LN and JW to meet at her home.]

ND: [to LN] Hello. Is Ms. Nelson in? How are you? Yes, after last night, it was ... Now, look here. I have here with me Mr. Wolfe, Dr. Wolfe from a university in the States. He's Howard Cooper's son-in-law. With the choir, yes, he came also. He's doing research on choral theatre and The University Singers. So I think he should talk to you before he leaves on Thursday. When could you see him? It's today it starts? No sir. You're sure it's today and not next week? That's Tuesday evening. OK. Hold on.

ND: [to JW] I'm sure you didn't hear. She has two drawers of things on The University Singers.

JW: Wow.

ND: [to LN] Brochures. Two filing cabinets full. [unintelligible] No, no, no. It's a collection of things. But it's something that was published recently. Yes. He's talking about the term *choral theatre*. Everything. You say from what time? Four-thirty, you said? Four [o'clock]? At four? Alright. OK. Let me ask him.

ND: [to JW] Would you be available to see Ms. Nelson at four [o'clock] this afternoon?

JW: I have an appointment at three [o'clock] at Edna Manley with Lori Burnett. Would it be possible for Ms. Nelson to ...? Would five [o'clock] be OK? I don't know how long that appointment will be. It's about ...

ND: [to LN] Would five [o'clock] be alright? [unintelligible] at six [o'clock].
Alright.

ND: [to JW] It wouldn't be as long as an hour? She said she has something at six [o'clock].

JW: Oh, I see.

ND: [to JW] Tomorrow morning at nine [o'clock] would be alright?

JW: Tomorrow morning at nine [o'clock]? I'll tell you what. Let me see if I can get Lori on the phone and see if we can move my time with her back maybe to two [o'clock], and then ... Hold on. Let me see if I can call her right quick.

JW: Let me ask you something else about ... OK. Again ...

ND: [to JW] So what time you say now?

JW: I think four o'clock will be fine.

ND: [to LN] Yes, he says four o'clock will be fine.

JW: And where should I meet her?

ND: [to LN] I'll call you before the time.

[ND ends the telephone conversation with LN.]

ND: She lives at 50 Donhead Close.

JW: [Fifty] 50 Donhill?

ND: Donhead. D-O-N-H-E-A-D. Close.

JW: Close.

ND: And it's off Hope Road.

JW: Oh, OK. OK. I'm sure I can find that.

ND: Donhead Close is off Donhead Avenue. Where will you be coming from?

JW: Well, I'll probably be coming from Edna Manley.

ND: Oh, from Edna Manley. Alright. Let's see. The easiest way ... If you'll come up Old Hope Road to Liguanea. Turn left at the traffic light. And then, Donhead is at the first traffic light ... Wait now. The second traffic light. Turn left, and you're on Donhead Road or Avenue. I don't remember. And then, Donhead Close is on your right about, about two chains after you turn. You don't talk chains anymore.

JW: That's alright. This phone, I have, like, maps on it; and it's been pretty reliable. Do you have a phone number for her, just in case I get lost?

ND: Yeah, I'll give you two numbers. The landline is 927-4221. And her cell is 368-3802.

JW: OK. Very good. So let's go back to ... 'cause I want to make sure I have this correct. You mentioned you did not start The Singers, which I did know that. In fact, what I read—maybe it was even Chris Benjamin who told me—that the founder is the current Governor-General of Belize. Is that correct?

ND: Yes. Yes. Yes.

JW: What is his name again?

ND: Uh ...

JW: See? Nobody knows.

ND: Yes, I know. Sir ... Sir ... I don't know. Lilieth will have it.

JW: Yeah, I can look it up.

ND: Lilieth will have it.

JW: I've looked it up before.

ND: And I just read it in something here. The Governor-General of Belize.

JW: Yeah, I've seen his ...

ND: It's interesting. You see all these people who came here, spent so much time with The Singers. And they are such varied professions.

JW: Right. So what keeps people singing? And this is a little bit off the subject of choral theatre, but I think it's important. What is it that keeps people still singing in The UWI Singers even long after they've graduated?

ND: I'm glad you should point that out. I am ... I was the person who started keeping them on ...

JW: Oh!

ND: ... after graduation because, when I was a student, as you finished your thing, you go.

JW: You were done. Right.

ND: And then, I found that there was such a demand for us to perform that it was difficult to keep the repertoire or to expand the repertoire as people were coming to learn each year. It just didn't make sense. Now, I have people who have been in for even ten years. They go on, and they still sing.

JW: And you have a standard set, a standard rep that you keep from year to year, certain pieces that are ...

ND: There are certain things. I would say the repertoire would span about five or so years and another five years, but there's no sort of systematic general way of dropping pieces.

JW: There's no piece, though, that, say, whether it was from when you were in The Singers in the sixties [1960s] to today, that that same piece is ...

ND: Take, for example, the arrangements we have of Bob Marley's music. They have been in there for over twelve, fifteen years. We still keep those, the same original ... They were done by a guy who now lives in ... He was from Antigua. He was a medical doctor.

JW: OK. Wow. And tell me about touring.

ND: Now, we used to tour much more than we do now. When I was a student, we did two tours; and they were just short weekend things to Nassau, Bahamas. And then, I think, in my final year, we did one in the United States, which was a flop ...

JW: Uh oh!

ND: ... that, you know, in those years, everything was left to the students alone. And it wasn't properly arranged. We got stranded.

JW: Really?

ND: Yes. The guy who did it just didn't understand. So when we arrived in New York late one night, they said they weren't expecting us that time. So they shifted us off to Washington. [unintelligible] Washington wasn't ready for us, either.

JW: Oh no!

ND: We were supposed to go Washington, New York, Washington, Detroit, Chicago. But I had another choir, which I used to conduct before I came here; and we did all that. Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Anderson, Indiana. [unintelligible] with that other choir. So when I came here, I realized all that was involved in a tour. So I made sure we had the right properties to look after us. But this thing was left to this guy alone, and he was the business manager. I won't tell you some of the things that happened to us.

JW: Ha! So when you tour, are you looking for an invitation from somebody; or do you just say, "We're gonna go to New York?"

ND: We haven't planned any tours like that where we say we'll just go. We go to Brooklyn. We used to go to Brooklyn College every other year. [unintelligible] the theatre was being repaired, so I don't know if they're

gonna call us again this year. And when we go, there's a large Caribbean audience. But this present group ... The other thing which prohibits tours is we cannot afford to do a tour on our own ... think about creating a tour. It's too expensive to travel now.

JW: Didn't The Singers go ...? It seems like, since I've known Howard, which has been the past four or five years ... The Singers went to Mexico?

ND: Yes, we did, in Mexico. And that was an invitation. Sir ... The guy from Belize. He was the person who got us to Belize; and then, they went across the border.

JW: Ah ha. So when somebody invites you, then the expectation is they are helping make arrangements, helping pay for things, all of that.

ND: When Brooklyn College invites us, they pay airfares, accommodation, and give us an honorarium.

JW: OK. Have you toured, I mean, The Singers, over the years, toured, like, in England, Canada?

ND: Yes. Been there. I think ... No. Come to think of it. I think the English tours were done—the last one we did—was at our initiative. And even that

wasn't properly done. The guy who said ... who was supposed to make arrangements when we paid the fares and so on just didn't do his part of the job and came off a bad tour. And I think the University contributed a considerable sum towards our going.

JW: So normally though, The Singers, I'm assuming then, has no budget, no operating budget to speak of?

ND: No, nothing to do anything like that. We used to make ... [unintelligible] tours to the eastern Caribbean, go island hopping. Come to think of it, some of those ... I think, we initiated those.

JW: OK. Does the government of Jamaica, has the government ever sponsored ...?

ND: No. Never. Never. The University has helped us. And the University outposts in the various islands, they will take care of ... They are glad to have us.

JW: So do you think it's ...? 'Cause I don't want to mischaracterize what happens here. Do you think it's a stretch or an exaggeration to say that, on some level, though, The UWI Singers serve as an ambassador, of sorts, for Jamaica? Is that a stretch?

ND: They have used us as such.

JW: The government?

ND: They just give us their blessing, probably a tribute in the program. The University has jumped in and helped us from time to time.

JW: So where do you see ...? Where do you see The Singers in five years, ten years? Are there things that The Singers haven't done that you aspire for them to do?

ND: Yes. [unintelligible] I'd love for everybody to do more intensive work in music because everybody can't read. Right now, we have quite a few readers in the various parts. And it's quite ... [unintelligible] extra time.

JW: Oh, trust me. I know. I sure know.

ND: It's frustrating sometimes. But one thing I can say, they learn very quickly compared to other groups. When Kathy Brown [a physician who serves as one of the accompanists for the choir] goes to the piano and plays and African song with strange words, strange lyrics, strange tune, strange harmonies, they learn it very quickly.

JW: That's good. Now, as far as ...

ND: I don't know of any other group that could do that.

JW: Right. Now, as far as your training as a conductor and now, like, Franklin's training, you know, do you have formal—even just if it was a course—do you have, like, formal training in conducting?

ND: No. No. Our conducting is very unorthodox 'cause I did conducting courses in the States.

JW: OK. At Westminster?

ND: Westminster. And it's a whole different thing. We were at a thing [unintelligible] I'd been hearing about when I went up last, last year at Westminster, and saw ... What's his name? Conductor. The famous conductor. He was teaching; and it's, to me, strange.

JW: Talking about someone at Westminster? Was it James Jordan?

ND: James Jordan!

JW: James Jordan.

ND: What he's doing now, I ... It's not like what I learned.

JW: No. No. He does some different things. Yeah. Yeah, he has a whole ...

ND: [unintelligible] Now, Franklin was always a bit too energetic. He conducts very wide at times. And I've had a lot of criticisms about him. We have talked about it. But he's effective. I had one person gave me a message to him. She had to remind him the conductor's not a performer; she put it. He's a facilitator. But that doesn't bother me.

JW: I studied under professors who think the conductor should never draw attention to himself.

ND: And everything must be in front of you here. [ND uses his hands to indicate the space in front of a conductor's torso.]

JW: That's right. But then, Dr. Fuller, whom you've seen conduct, he's not doing it on purpose; but he just ... What he does embodies what he thinks the music should be and what he's trying to transmit to the singers in the way of energy and finesse and all that kind of stuff.

ND: We were very close with [unintelligible] I find that American choral groups, nowadays, [unintelligible] Everything is so dissonant. It's like

everybody is trying to show off on the other. It ... the music itself is here, and the audience is here. [ND gestures to show his belief that the choral music he hears in the US is above the level of understanding of most audience members.] It doesn't [unintelligible].

JW: So you would say, then, that what The UWI Singers does ... Would you say that it's very audience-friendly, then, in terms of not just the music, the whole experience?

ND: Yes. Yes, it is. We try to make it that way. It's a different makeup in the Caribbean. It has to be different. 'Cause, sometimes ... Like the concert I went to at Queen's University, to me, it was beautiful; but it was boring.

JW: I understand.

ND: You hear the same thing.

JW: Yeah. So if a ... Let's say that an American ... Because you know ... You know Desmond Moulton [a Jamaican studying choral conducting at The University of Southern Mississippi], and he's writing a dissertation on some of your choral pieces. So we sang those for him as part of his lecture recital. If an American choir director was to pick up a piece of yours and say, "I want to program this piece. I want to put it on my concert," what

are some things that would need to be done to make that authentic? Not just the Patwa—which I know Desmond’s kind of dealing with that in terms of a pronunciation guide of sorts—but in terms of the movement, the theatre?

ND: The thing is ... I make no apologies for it. Is a rhythm [unintelligible], which I find not many North Americans feel. It’s a feeling. In fact ... [ND begins counting from one to four, accenting beats two and four.] More on the off-beat. You know? And it’s a different feeling. For example, I see people trying to dance reggae. We’re on the off[-beat].

JW: That’s right. On the up[-beat].

ND: Yes. And they’re many [unintelligible] dance styles years ago. And just that alone! [ND begins singing a tune, accenting the off-beats.] You’re on the off[-beat]. So when I write [ND begins humming a melody that is accented on the off-beats] ...

JW: Always, like, emphasizing two and four. They’re not weak beats for this.

ND: That is it. You feel that, even when you don’t use it. It’s a feeling.

JW: You’re saying is instinctive to Caribbean ...?

ND: Yes! [ND hums another melody and accents the off-beats.] That's how I ... I didn't grow up in Kingston with a lot of this urban stuff. I grew up in the parish [Portland Parish, one of the fourteen administrative regions on the island] with the [unintelligible] bands, Revival groups. I hear that, comes natural to me.

[SW interrupts to explain that he is leaving.]

JW: [to SW] Nice to meet you. Thank you! And that ...? Would you say that is, 'cause in reading some of Rex Nettleford's stuff, particularly there's a chapter in his book *Mirror, Mirror*, right, where he talks about, he uses this analogy of the melody of Europe, the rhythm of Africa ... So what I'm hearing you say—and again, clarify, correct me if I'm wrong—is that that, kind of, instinctual emphasis on two and four is that rhythm of Africa more so than the European convention that one and three are the strong?

ND: Could be.

JW: Could be?

ND: You know, we sometimes used to think it was a joke to look at how some people outside of Jamaica tried to dance a Jamaican [unintelligible].

JW: Right. We just can't do it.

ND: There's a girl in choir where she does it, show you how they dance.
Everybody just goes in stitches.

JW: Really?

ND: It's as if they don't ... They're not hearing it. They don't hear what we hear. And this is why, I think, something like calypso has become more of a world music because what you hear in calypso, what you feel—that movement of the hip—I don't know if they hear it. It's something you ... You look at little Jamaican children dance. They just have it perfect.

JW: It's true. It's true.

ND: Now, the thing that Rex often said is that it doesn't mean that we are wrong, you know, which is how some people outside the region interpret it. You know, you're dancing; and you have to follow their pattern.

JW: Right. Right. Because, I mean, what you're describing is, kind of, what I've read about his thoughts and that is, especially after 1962 and Independence, that he wanted ... that the goal was to elevate Caribbean

culture to say this is not inferior to anything from colonial Europe, from the colonial power.

ND: As I told you, in my school days, the teachers never taught anything to me about [unintelligible] because it was inferior.

JW: That's what they believed. That's what they taught, that it wasn't ...

ND: As a result, I remember when I did an exam, a sight-reading exam by a British examiner. It's after '62. He gave me some songs to sight-read, thinking I would never have heard them before. And I knew every one.

JW: Oh, like British songs?

ND: Yes. I knew them all. Some of them, I knew by heart. I had a distinct British education. I had [William] Shakespeare and all the English poets. That's what I did in school, from [Robert] Burns of Scotland to [Samuel Taylor] Coleridge and the [John] Keats and the [Percy] Shelley and the [Lord] Byron. I just ... I honestly love it. I love it! In fact, I wanted to a degree here, when I came here. They didn't have music, but I wanted to do a degree in English. But at that time, to enter, you had to have a foreign language; and I didn't have one of those. And that's how I ended up in the social sciences.

JW: Yeah. My actual undergrad is in economics, as well. I did a music minor.

ND: It's a ... it's an economics, geography [unintelligible]. And what it mattered to me ... I was a teacher of economics, you know. It's what I used to teach. And I left school. And I taught as an untrained teacher, a pre-trained teacher. And then, I'd been teaching for a number of years when I came here. It was hard, in that I was doing what I really ... It wasn't my first love. It wasn't. When I went to study at the School of Music, when it was a conservatory, I studied there. I tell you, too, that my wife was quite a singer, you know. Died four years ago. Quite a singer. I remember 1988. She entered the Kiwanis Music Festival in Toronto [Kiwanis Music Festival of Greater Toronto]. She won the oratorio [competition]. She won the opera [competition]. She won the church solo [competition]. I think it was five first places she got. She ended up in the Rose Bowl, the trophy for the competition. She won the Canadian song [competition]. It was the first competition she did.

JW: Wow. So you went to Jamaica School of Music after getting your degree here?

ND: Yes. And she was a star there. They offered her a scholarship to go to Germany to do lieder; a professor [unintelligible] was his name. It was down to her, but she didn't want to leave Jamaica. I remember, after he

had taught students for about three weeks, he had a presentation with all of them. And she was the last to sing. I remember his wife at the back of the hall; she was just crying with tears. And she came to her; and she said, “You have a jewel in your throat.” And I’ve had a quite a few ... We’ve had quite a few teachers from the States who’ve heard her. I remember this guy who taught ... What’s the name of the school? Somewhere in Washington. When she did the class, he came to me and said “That is international material.” But we had very good teachers at the Jamaica School of Music. There was Virginia Cross from Washington. And there’s Marian Nowakowski, a Polish teacher. Nowakowski’s about six foot six [inches] tall. And he taught so many good students. Now, I know, too, I should point out ... I know that the singers are not trained, as such. We really just teach groups together. Some people have got their breathing right. Some haven’t. You know? And [unintelligible]. I am still convinced that, once a singer learns to breath properly and support the breath, that’s eighty percent of the work done. And it’s one of the hardest things ... I don’t think it’s that they don’t grasp it but that they don’t practice it. You need to practice that, and lots of them don’t practice. So they sing unsupported; and a lot of the work happens up there. [ND motions to his throat.]

JW: Oh, sure. Oh, yeah. I deal with it all the time. When you say that you had a straight up and down British education, when you were growing up out in Port Antonio, did you ... were you, like a boy soprano? Did you sing ...?

ND: Oh, I was the best!

JW: Ah. OK.

ND: I remember the first time I sang. It was a church harvest supper. And they had a competition for those who attended. And I won first prize singing a song "There's a tree in the meadow" ["A Tree in the Meadow"]. I don't know if you know it. The prize was an ice cream cone!

JW: Ha! Hey, hey. Nice.

ND: And then, our parish [Portland Parish] had a well-developed music festival, well-developed music festival. That's where I learned a lot of the arias from opera and oratorios, English songs, English school songs. That's where I learned them.

JW: But never Jamaican? Never folk?

ND: Never. There wasn't any such thing in the competition. A lot of the teachers then were teachers from England. My headmaster was an English man, and his wife taught me English. Everything was geared that way. In fact, the sort of openness that we have now in sports ... We weren't even allowed to cheer [unintelligible]. There were more American. And they had American-type uniforms. They had a good music department. Instruments. Now, when they came down to my school at Titchfield [High School in Port Antonio, Jamaica] and the festival, they just ran off with all the first prizes in instrumental things.

JW: Oh, yeah?

ND: Awww ... The competition in our town was very, very, very high standard. The [unintelligible] was set by [unintelligible] who was a man from Scotland, and he set all those English things. Some of the arias were done in the original language. [ND hums a few aria melodies.] And all of those I learned. Anthems.

JW: Now, you are a few years older than Howard?

ND: Yes, I'm four years older.

JW: But you taught him?

ND: I did piano lessons. Have you been to Port Antonio?

JW: Yes. And he's driven me by your old house.

ND: Well, I will say that, well, that's not how my house looked when I was there. [unintelligible] wooden house with picket, veranda. On Titchfield Hill, there's a big house, which is now a guesthouse, DeMontevin's Lodge [Hotel in Port Antonio, Jamaica]. That's where I had my music lessons with the Todds [Mr. and Mrs. Lester Todd]. They migrated and went to England. When I was at Titchfield, there was a great pianist; and he had a beautiful tenor voice. And I remember one year he did a tenor solo, "Amarilli." Caccini? I remember him practicing, and he never won! Things were at a very high standard. That's how I grew up. A lot of the music I hear today, I don't relate to it.

JW: Well, like, when you see *All Together Sing*, when you watch that program and you see those choirs, do those schools have music programs? I mean, are those directors ...?

ND: The Ministry of Education doesn't have a good music program, any sort of developed music program for the [unintelligible] schools.

JW: So the people who are directing them ... 'Cause, I mean I've, like ...
Sometimes, they'll flash the camera from the choir over to the director.
And what you see the director doing ...

ND: Some of them have learned music in teachers colleges, but the standard
isn't very good. But it's taken off very well, I think. The whole thing is
that those things in Jamaica weren't recognized as of much value.

JW: Right.

ND: Folk songs were looked down on. They were in Patwa. [unintelligible] So
when I think of a ... Have you read of Louise Bennett's [Louise Bennett-
Coverley, a formally-trained actress who wrote poetry in Patwa and
promoted Jamaican folk culture] poems?

JW: I think I have ... a few.

ND: I wish I had time to read some to you, and I would explain them. She was
fantastic. And she captured a lot of Jamaica history, a lot of Jamaican
culture in those poems.

JW: That's Miss Lou [the stage name for Louise Bennett-Coverley]?

ND: Miss Lou.

JW: I can see it my head.

ND: And it shows how much things have changed and how much some things have not changed. And there's a sort of chronology in that thing [unintelligible]. And there's a poem she wrote from way down in the early fifties [1950s], which speaks of people selling on the streets and running from policemen. And I say still happens.

JW: True. True. That's true.

ND: [unintelligible] And the humor she has in the poems ...

JW: I think I've seen some videos, maybe on YouTube [a popular media player found the World Wide Web at <http://www.youtube.com>] or somewhere, of her reading some of those, or ...

ND: But she reads so fast you wouldn't understand half of them. As I say, I would have to go through and explain what she's saying. It's really, really beautiful, beautiful poetry.

JW: Have you ever set any of her poems?

ND: Yes! I used to recite that one about [unintelligible]. And I used to do elocution, too, you know.

JW: OK.

ND: That was a part of my festival in Port Antonio. And when I came to Kingston, I entered the competition here; and I was the all-island runner up.

JW: Alright.

ND: It was the adult class.

JW: Now, did you finish at Titchfield?

ND: Finished at Titchfield—that was for high school.

JW: OK. 'Cause Howard went there but then ...

ND: Went to KC [Kingston College].

JW: Came to KC.

ND: Howard's father and mother worked at the hospital [unintelligible], so they transferred all over the place. But they lived not too far from me.

JW: Yeah. So let me go back to one thing. When we were talking about if an American choir, choral director picked up something that's in the standard UWI Singers repertoire, do you think that it could, that American choir, could perform that authentically? Or is that just something that ...?

ND: They could pull it off.

JW: What sorts of things would they have to do?

ND: I remember when I was invited to Howard University one year when they were doing my "Psalm 150." "O Praise Ye the Lord."

JW: Oh, yeah!

ND: They did it for ... I think it was a Jamaican Independence celebration. And they were going to be the choir, so I went up to hear them. They did very well.

JW: Did they use any ...?

ND: No percussion.

JW: ... choral theatre? I mean, did they ...? No elements of that?

ND: No. They just stand.

JW: They just stood up and sang it.

ND: And if you listen to the recording done by the company that published my
“Psalm 23” ...

JW: Oh, oh, oh. It's not GIA [GIA Publications, Inc.]?

ND: [unintelligible] I can't remember. They have a real demonstration
[unintelligible]. And I think they did a very good job with it.

JW: You feel like they captured ...

ND: Yes, the vocal part.

JW: OK.

ND: I liked it.

JW: So beyond the vocal part, do you think that, I mean, an American choir ...

ND: They had everything in it. They had everything in it. And mainly because ... You see. I'll tell you the truth. I took a lot of pains in writing out that music to make sure that everything was readable and would make sense. A lot of the things, which people are singing, I never published them. They are just manuscript copies. Some [unintelligible] have a lot of mistakes and everything. I'm not really happy that they're singing them. Actually, there's a demand; there's a need for more of this stuff.

JW: Oh, I think so. And I think ...

ND: I did a Christmas thing last year. I had somebody call me and say, "Come, and listen to this." And it was a choir way in Canada. How they got the music, I don't know. But they did attribute it to me.

JW: Ha! Oh my gosh. You know, there's a company in the US, earthsongs [a music publishing company that specializes in choral arrangements of folk songs from around the world].

ND: And I've got a lot of things by them.

JW: Yeah, they ... they really pride themselves on ... Yeah.

[ND retrieves an octavo from his desk, thinking it is published by earthsongs.]

ND: Is it this?

JW: It's earthsongs? That's Morten Music. earthsongs, their pieces are ...
Usually, they have, kind of like, a creme color ... Usually not much ...

ND: I know I've come across it already.

JW: You probably have. I'm sure you have. But they are ...

ND: More interested in that type music?

JW: ... very much interested in, in kind of the world music and trying to ...

ND: I have a couple ... I have seen ...

JW: I'm sure you have. Anton Armstrong, at St. Olaf, is one of their big editors.

ND: Oh ... Well, I just love his things! Oh ... There's a recording—I have it on cassette—of him conducting a choir in a beautiful arrangement of “Ding! Dong! Merrily on High.”

JW: Oh yeah?

ND: I'd love to get a copy of that piece, but somebody just gave that to me on ...

JW: On cassette? "Ding! Dong! Merrily ...?" I'm going to see if I can find it.

ND: But his choir singing ... I used to ... I worked for a short while in the British Virgin Islands, just for a few months. Professor Nettleford said I should go, so I went down [unintelligible]. But he was the person who was to be there every year [unintelligible], and I saw a lot of things that he had done.

JW: So do you think ... thinking about him and his drive to elevate Jamaican culture, Caribbean culture, do you think that was a motivation in him bringing some of this movement into ...?

ND: If you know Professor Nettleford's background, he came from deep rural Jamaica [Falmouth, Jamaica, seat of Trelawny Parish]. I remember him telling, some years ago ... I went with my church to do a weekend retreat at this great house on this plantation in Trelawny [Parish]. And when I told him I went to this place, he says he knows it. For, as a boy, he used to carry lettuce on his head to sell at that place. [unintelligible] special gift

from God. A special gift. And when he tells you about his early days growing up ... Somehow, my surname Dexter is not a very popular name in Jamaica.

JW: Oh, really?

ND: Yes. If you look in the directory about ten years ago, everybody you saw in the directory then was related to me. I see some now and don't know where they came from. But Nettleford said he came from a line of Dexters in Trelawny. So we have never been able to make the connection. He said his uncle was a Dexter, and he was the organist at the church. But we have never been able to make the connection. And he grew up very, very, very poor. Somehow, he got to go to Cornwall College [in Montego Bay, Jamaica], one of the most respectable high schools—a boys school, like Kingston College. Some things he has told me about his dancing and how he learned, how he started out with choreography ... He said there was a Christmas concert in Montego Bay on Christmas morning. And when he told me that, I remembered that, in Port Antonio, we had a Christmas concert at six o' clock, too. But everybody talks about the Christmas morning concert of Kingston and failed to recognize that it was held in other parishes. And he said that all the people who were the dancers were the prostitutes from town. And he said, as a teenager, he got them together

and produced this concert. And then, I remember, in Port Antonio, it was the prostitutes who put on that concert.

JW: Wow.

ND: I remember it was held—now I come to think about it, how?—in the Anglican church hall. But you know ... But he was ... He was just gifted. He studied hard. He studied hard. He studied hard. And he said there were people who snubbed him in school. But later on, he had nothing on ... no revenge in his heart. He was a brilliant, brilliant, brilliant man.

JW: Do you think The UWI Singers today would be what they are had he not come along?

ND: No. When I was a student here, he had already finished his degree at Oxford and come back. And every lecture he gave, he got a standing ovation. A standing ovation. Every lecture he gave. We do an arrangement of “Jah Is My Keeper.”

JW: The Peter Tosh [a founding member of The Wailers with Bob Marley and Bunny Wailer]?

ND: Yes. Yes. And I remember we were doing it for a funeral. Now, I was the person who first did a choral arrangement of that. And I remember him saying, “When I finish ...” He suggested to me how I should end it. And he was quite a musician unto himself, but he said he used to play the organ at his church. And it’s the end I’ve used ever since. “Jah Is My Keeper” So we were doing it for a funeral; and [unintelligible] the choir comes down the aisle before the pastor comes out. And they stand in line, and they have to be singing this “Jah Is My Keeper.” [ND begins reciting the lyrics.] And they just do a turn slowly on that note; and it added so much, the one thing.

JW: I think I heard the KC Choir sing that when I was here last time. I think they did that. I loved the piece. I did. So you know that the Southern Miss Chorale is coming back in March?

ND: Yes. I’m in touch with Chris Benjamin.

JW: Yeah. He’s assisting us with ...

ND: Chris is one of the best organizers, but he does that as a profession.

JW: Does he work for the University, or ...?

ND: Now. He does but not in that line ... That line is separate. He works for the Alumni Association.

JW: Ah ... I see. Well, he's been very helpful. We have requested ... Dr. Fuller, last time that they were here, they did a concert with UWI Singers, the joint thing. And he would like to do that again.

ND: When is he ... when are they coming?

JW: We come in on ... Let me write it ... I'll write it down so that you can have it. Thursday, March 5th, we're flying into Montego Bay; and we're staying in Ocho Rios Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. And then, Sunday, March the 8th, is when we come over to Kingston. And we'll be there Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. And I think on that Sunday night, Sunday evening ...

\ND: The concert?

JW: ... is when we'll do the concert maybe with UWI Singers, we hope, if y'all are agreeable to that 'cause Sunday ... Tuesday night we're doing a concert at Saint Andrew Parish Church [in Kingston, Jamaica].

ND: With the KC Choir?

JW: I talked with Audley yesterday about that.

ND: That would be nice.

JW: What I asked him ... We're also gonna do a concert Tuesday at Holy Trinity Cathedral [in Kingston, Jamaica] for school children.

ND: You did that the last time.

JW: Yes, we did. It was wonderful.

ND: Yes, the acoustics in that ...

JW: So we want to do that again. And so I offered to Audley that the KC Choir could come and sing with us at that concert or Saint Andrew, whichever he prefers.

ND: You know the best place to sing from in that place is the choir loft in the back.

JW: In Holy Trinity? Really. I'll make sure we do that.

ND: [unintelligible] And they want to see you, but the sound is best from there.

JW: And then, on Wednesday ...

ND: [unintelligible]

JW: ... that's when we're heading over to Negril. And Negril will just, kind of, be down time.

ND: Yes, they'll need to relax, man.

JW: They'll have earned it by then. And then, Saturday, March 14th, home. So that's ... that's kind of our loose itinerary.

ND: You hear about one of our boys got a [unintelligible] audition ...

JW: Really?

ND: ... in his first semester at Alcorn?

JW: Oh, really? Is that ...? Wait! Is that where Byron teaches?

ND: Yes.

JW: Is he at Alcorn?

ND: Yes.

JW: Yeah. I know where that is. That's in the same state as Southern Miss, in Mississippi.

ND: He sang the bass, first, in *The Seven Last Words* [unintelligible] last year.

JW: Nice. Very good. Well, you know, Byron has come through Southern Miss and Desmond; and there have been a couple others. And we're happy, at Southern Miss, we're happy to have that tie to this nation.

ND: You see, there's so much talent here, which, I think, if we got the exposure ...

JW: Yeah. Well, at the KC concert, the young man who played first violin, his father's a string player; and the name escapes me. I spoke with him, and he's considering auditioning at schools in the US

ND: OK. Williams?

JW: I think so. That sounds right.

ND: Well, his father is a BRILLIANT musician!

JW: And I told the young man, I said, “You know, you really should look at Southern Mississippi ‘cause we have a very active, very good student orchestra.” I mean, a lot of our players come from Cuba, Central and South America. They’re scholarshipped.

ND: His father’s brilliant on piano.

JW: And I talked to his father, too.

ND: His father’s a brilliant Jazz player.

JW: Oh, really?

ND: Years ago, he won the Royal School of Music prize in Jamaica and went to the Royal School of Music. He studied at the Royal School of Music in London, the father, and won prizes there, too.

JW: Well, I met him; and I told him ... I said, “You really ...” I gave him my name, my number, my e-mail address. I said, “Call me. Contact me. Let me know because your son is the kind of student that we want in our orchestra.” He played so well at that KC thing. He really did.

ND: We have excellent string players. [unintelligible]

JW: Well, it was a pleasure to hear him play. He was very well prepared and ready to go. So I told him ... I said, "You need to look at Southern Miss because there's scholarship money. There's, you know ... It's very active. I mean, they're doing things like Mahler's *Second* [*Symphony*] and Beethoven and Tchaikovsky. I mean, they're doing, like, the BIG monuments in orchestral literature."

ND: Yes! Well, we had a very good set of players here in Jamaica, a whole symphony. And it's called the Surrey Philharmonic Orchestra, and it's attached to the YMCA. They, sort of, sponsored the whole thing. And the YMCA used to be [unintelligible] requests to just sing here in Jamaica. They had a big hostel and a very active ... But not anymore. And they used to accompany all the big oratorios.

JW: Well, I love being down here; and I love getting to learn more about the culture and the arts here and ...

ND: This is ... Let me tell you something. I am proud to be a Jamaican. And this is one of the, to me, one of the greatest countries in the world. One of the greatest in the world. I have a friend who complains so much about our being a part of, what they call, the West Indies cricket team ["The Windies?"] and this trying to form this West Indies Court of Justice [Caribbean Court of Justice]. And he says we can go it on our own. He

says we see people from the European Union and all sorts of things; but it isn't necessary, for, as he points out, the people who have made Jamaica are not the people who we think are the people who know how many people at the top. It's the Bob Marleys, the Usain Bolts—people from the grass roots. It's ... Look how many times [unintelligible] a prestigious thing like the world beauty contest that we have won that. You know? They're ordinary, and most people seem to forget that Jamaican music was a world music in the fifties [1950s] with Harry Belafonte.

JW: Yeah. It's true.

ND: Belafonte went to Wolmer's [Trust High School for Boys in Kingston, Jamaica]. I know ... I know people who are relatives of his here.

JW: Oh, really?

ND: Yes!

JW: Well, that's what ... that's what motivates me to write this story because I have fallen in love with the people here—obviously my wife and my family here. But I think it's a story that needs to be told. I think it's ... In the world of choral music, what happens with The UWI Singers is very unique. I don't ... I mean, I've seen choirs in Europe perform, British

choirs, the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, which is excellent. And nowhere in the world can I think of where you find choral theatre. In fact, as I told you, if you were to go do a search ...

ND: I've already been ...

JW: It's not there. I mean ... And when ... The few times it's ever used, it's not used ... It's ... It's ... I mean, probably less than ten times in scholarly literature when it's even used, it's talking about something totally different that has nothing to do with choir usually or singing. And so it really is your term. I mean, it really is your ... From what I can see, choral theatre really belongs to The UWI Singers. And that's a special thing. And so my goal is to, kind of, help tell that story in, you know, from a scholarly standpoint to let everybody else know, "OK. Here's what choral theatre is, according to the people who do it—not my definition but according to the people who do it and who invented it and who practice it. This is what this is." That's my goal.

ND: The thing is it's so much a part of us. [unintelligible]

JW: Well, and that's why I would never try. Because I am not Jamaican, it would be presumptuous and probably foolish on my part to come in from an ... with an American vocabulary, which is, obviously, heavily

influenced by Western Europe and try to say, “This is what it is.” That’s ... I don’t feel like that’s my role in this writing. It’s to take what you all know.

ND: You know, sometimes, when I listen to some groups who say it’s beautiful music; and music they sing is beautiful—for example, the type of music that KC boys do. It takes blend or observing the English cathedrals. I went to Canterbury [Cathedral] some years ago. It’s Heaven. It’s a whole different style of singing.

JW: Very much.

ND: And I contrast that with a simple song we sang some years ago in the Chapel [at The University of the West Indies, Mona] at a concert. And when I ... when I turned around, there were two ladies in the front who were just crying. It goes at another dimension.

JW: It does. It’s very moving. I mean, when I ... when I saw the Christmas concert the other day, it was the last song that they sang before the break. And I was recording it just so I could, kind of, have it. And I told my wife at the break, I was like ... I said, “That’s it.” That, whatever that piece was, and I’d have to go back and look at the program. “That is what they do so well. How do you capture that? How do you ...?” Because it was so

moving, and it was so effective and impactful. It's like how do you capture that in a bottle and put a cork on it and say, "This is what it is?" You know? You have to experience it, I believe.

ND: Some things are like that.

JW: Yeah. I agree.

ND: It's like me explaining to somebody North American winter! You have to experience it.

JW: Yeah. It's true.

ND: You know. Words can't convey it.

JW: Well, and that means, for me, the burden is a lot higher to make sure that what I write really represents, as best as I can, you know, what The Singers do 'cause I really do think it's special. I really do think it's unique. Otherwise, I wouldn't have made the case for this as my dissertation topic. So ...

ND: Your wife and my daughter went to school together.

JW: That's what she said! Your daughter's name is Carol?

ND: Uh huh. She just left. She sings with one of Bob Marley's sons. She just left for Brazil three days ago.

JW: Really? Which son?

ND: I don't even know. It's the one who resides in England. [unintelligible]

JW: Well, I thank you, so much, for your time today. You have given me a wealth of information. I thank you, too, for making the arrangement for later this afternoon. That will be very helpful. If I have any follow-up questions ...

ND: You are welcome to call me.

JW: Calling is best?

ND: You can call me.

APPENDIX E

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH LILIETH NELSON

Interviewee: Lilieth Nelson (LN), former musical director of The University Singers

Interviewer: Albert Joseph Wolfe, Jr. (JW), researcher

Date: Tuesday, January 6, 2015 at 4:00 p.m.

Location: 50 Donhead Close [private residence of Lilieth Nelson]
Kingston 6, Jamaica

Note: Every effort has been made to reproduce accurately this interview in its entirety. Jamaicans speak both standard English and Jamaican (also known as “Patwa”), a language that combines English with words from other cultures and regions and that does not follow the grammatical and syntactical rules of standard English.¹⁵⁰ In formal writing, standard English is used. However, in a semi-formal or an informal setting, many Jamaicans easily and fluently alternate between the two languages.

[This interview was facilitated by Noel Dexter who, earlier this same day, sat for an interview about The University Singers.]

JW: As Mr. Dexter told you ...

150. “The Jamaican Language Unit,” The University of the West Indies, accessed February 19, 2016, <http://www.mona.uwi.edu/dllp/jlu/index.htm>.

LN: You want to bring it [the recording device] a little closer so it doesn't get under the fan?

JW: Oh, sure. As Mr. Dexter told you, I am writing my dissertation on the performance style of The UWI Singers. If you've ever seen American choirs, college choirs especially, we just stand up and sing. Right? There's no ... anything else. What strikes me about The UWI Singers is their use of movement. I know that choreography is not the term that is used.

LN: Movement.

JW: Movement is the term. And so in doing some research, what I've found is that there's really ... Nobody has investigated, from a scholarly standpoint, that performance style. There are a handful of documents where the term is used, *choral theatre*, but never by Caribbeans, never by West Indians.

LN: Except in my book, which is to be published. [LN is writing a book on the history of The University Singers. In this book, she is including a chapter on choral theatre.]

JW: Right. Yours would be the first 'cause even in what I've been able to read about Rex Nettleford ...

LN: Yes, he has said quite a bit about it because he is the one who, I think, came up with the phrase actually.

JW: That's what Mr. Dexter said. Is it in any of his, any of Rex Nettleford's writings, though?

LN: In things that he has written about the choir, over the years, when he was Vice Chancellor [head of The University of the West Indies] and even before when he was the person who did the movement, the one responsible for the movement, he has written ... I have all his little, the comments that he has made about the choir over several performances, several years. And he has, more than once, used the term *choral theatre*.

JW: Does he ever really define it, though? [unintelligible]

LN: I think I made an attempt to define it my, in the book, which has been coming for how long. But anyway, I hope I can finish it this year. But I ... Oh, that is me.

[LN looks at a copy of a program and recognizes herself.]

JW: That's you.

LN: I made an attempt to define it as something which is theatrical, which has all the elements of theatre. So it has the visual elements, the audio. It involves lighting. It involves movement, the whole thing.

JW: In this ... This was the fiftieth year [program book]. He just uses the term.

LN: What did he say here?

JW: He just says, "... performance art dubbed 'choral theatre.'"

LN: Yes.

JW: And that's generally what you find in scholarly literature, is just ...

LN: So perhaps an attempt to define choral theatre was the ... I think probably the first time ... When I was ... In my book, which has not come yet, I attempted to define it. I attempted to define it by using, if I could find that section, then you could quote it as unpublished to date. But I remember I put in it that it had elements of theatre and not just a choir standing and you listening to the choir and seeing a group of people standing, but the drama, the movement, lighting, the whole ... All the things that go together to make theatre, you know? All of this not belittling the role of choral, the choral sound because that is the primary ... I mean, Professor

Nettleford used to say, “You are not dancers.” You know? That’s why, in fact, we tend not to use the word *choreography* because that denotes, you know, focus on the body movements; but the body movements that are used are used to accentuate the sounds, accentuate the words, accentuate the meaning of the sounds. So it’s more, rather than for you to interpret the body movement yourself ... In part of the book, I don’t remember which part, I attempted to define choral theatre. So I could probably search for a definition and e-mail it to you. The definition I use, you might not agree with it; but you might want to say, “Well, Lilieth Nelson defined it as so, so, so;” but however, you think something else or whatever.

JW: Here’s the position that I come from, and I shared this with Mr. Dexter: my father-in-law, Howard Cooper, used to sing in that group.

LN: Many years ago.

JW: Right. Many years ago. That’s my entrée ... that’s my introduction to the group. I would never presume, as an American, to try to define that for anybody. What I would like to do with what I’m ... in my writing, I want to help add to the conversation of you defining it yourself because I think it’s such a unique performance medium and performance style that ... I mean, I’ve seen choirs all over the world. I’ve seen choirs in Korea, Estonia, Britain, you name it, America, many. Nobody uses movement in

that way. I think it's a very unique ... I think it's something that The UWI Singers owns. It's yours.

LN: Yes. Markedly, there are other choirs in Jamaica and, I would venture to say, throughout the Caribbean, usually as an offshoot of The University Singers, who have used the choral theatre style. Right? I'm not to be confused with, say, musicals.

JW: Exactly. Like Pantomime [the annual theatrical production of the Little Theatre Movement in Kingston, Jamaica that incorporates singing, dancing, and acting]?

LN: Because the musical has its own genre. I have, in fact, been involved in quite a few musicals, which are dramatic, theatre, but with songs. Musicals for children. *Cindy* [by Johnny Brandon]. Musicals for [unintelligible] where music is woven into the drama. But it's a different thing, and that is why I attempted in that book to define what University Singers was doing. You know, it was not just theatre with music; but it was music with the elements of theatre.

JW: I'm glad you mentioned that because, when I was speaking with Mr. Dexter, we didn't talk about lighting. We mentioned staging, how

sometimes you'll watch. The tenors will move this way. But you're even saying that lighting is ...

LN: Lighting is important, yes. Sound. You know, when the soloist is against the choir, against a small group. [unintelligible] I'm just trying to remember. I did a Philip Sherlock Lecture recent ... last year; and I think I alluded to something in it about, something again about the choral theatre. I can't remember what I said then, but I could look. This is something in the archives at the University that will be there. They keep all the lectures, the Philip Sherlock Lecture. And I think ... I know I referred to The University Singers in it and talked a little bit about the theatrical elements. I can't remember what I said now. But I don't know. What is your main focus? What is the underlying thread in your thesis?

JW: Well, the underlying thesis is that this performance style is unique throughout the world, that this choral theatre performance style is really not found anywhere else; and it is distinct. It's unique. And then, within the context of The UWI Singers, you have this choir that's attached to a university; but the university doesn't offer a music degree. So you have these folks who are singing simply for the love ...

LN: Extra-curricular.

JW: Right. There's no pay. There's no financial motive, which is different from the US because, in the US, most choirs—collegiate choirs—are gonna be attached to, like, a music program, a degree-granting program. Most singers who are gonna be in that choir are going to expect some... They're either gonna be majors or minors, but they're also going to be expecting some form of financial compensation generally through the form of scholarships. So for example, at my university, our school of music is about 500 majors, alright? Probably 200 sing in choirs. We have seven different choral ensembles. Almost every one of those singers receives some bit of money to be a part.

LN: Grant to help them. OK.

JW: The idea that folks just sing for the love of singing or for the love of the art, you find that more in community choirs in the US but not in a collegiate-level ensemble. So I think that what UWI Singers does ... And not only just the movement and folk songs, but I went to the concert in December. That use of movement really infuses everything. You know, in America, we might do a spiritual; and we might have some moment where we clap. Right? But for the most part, we're gonna just stand and face the audience head-on and just sing. What I noticed with The UWI Singers, the couple times I've seen them perform, is that, even if it's a slight movement, it's found somewhere in everything, in every piece, even if it's

a carol at Christmas or whatever. And so I think that's just a unique element; and it's really something that you all own.

LN: Well, OK. I would advise that you make sure that you look at other groups in the Caribbean, you know, so that you don't make a statement that The University Singers is, you know, the only one.

JW: No, not the only one. Surely not.

LN: Yes. Because ... And even other groups in Jamaica that, say, no they may not do such a wide range. But what I think is distinct about University Singers is the versatility. You see? Because we're going for Mozart and Beethoven and whoever to Marley and [unintelligible] or whoever the modern people are. So it is the range of music that is different. There are other choirs that sing and dance. I mean, the Jamaican Folk Singers, for years, have been singing and moving with movement appropriate to the songs. There's another group called Cari-Folk Singers who have mastered the art of singing and moving, too. There are a few other groups, you see. And what they do is like choral theatre, too. What is different is that The University Singers has a much wider repertoire, a much more diverse set of songs. They used to be called the "Universitile Singers," actually, because that is what ... Versatility in the numbers presented, that is where you'd get the difference. You can quote me because I have looked at that

carefully, and there's no other group that has the versatility that University Singers has. There's a group in Trinidad, the Lydian Singers. There are also some other splinter groups, other groups, which I call splinter groups, started by University Singers as they went back home that have done various forms of, versions of the thing. The Lydian Singers and some others in Trinidad have done some very interesting things. They have woven the singing with the steel pan and have done some very interesting work. So a lot of experimentation; but University Singers is unique, not in the fact that they present choral theatre only but that they have had choral theatre with such a versatile range of music. And I think that's where the difference is.

JW: And so like, for example, Jamaican Folk Singers, which was Olive Lewin, right?

LN: Yes.

JW: They, pretty much, just did folk music.

LN: Folk songs, yes.

JW: Right. And that was, if I understood Mr. Dexter correctly, pre-Independence, the idea, he said, in music schools was that you learned British music ...

LN: Oh, of course.

JW: ... and that folk music was ...

LN: ... and was a bit tacked on at the end. When we were singers, when Howie Cooper and Noel Dexter and myself and some others were members of University Singers in the sixties [1960s], I could show you a picture. We stood with long, elbow-length white gloves, the ladies, and long, narrow skirts; the men, bow tie and what have you. And we sang, you know, the *canzonetta* and things like that and madrigals; and then, the folk songs were tacked on. We, like ... we might do about six or so folk songs at the second half of the concert towards the end. So yes, we have come a far way. It didn't change only in the nineties; and so it started to change from probably in the seventies [1970s], eighties [1980s], when we started to do a lot of, like, Revival things and things from Trinidad. I remember songs from the French Caribbean countries, and we started to put in a wider range. And so later on, with what was going on in the world, we started to do a lot of African songs and, you know, the songs when [Nelson] Mandela was in prison. In one chapter in my book, I actually traced the

changes in repertoire with changes in the Caribbean and changes extra-Caribbean, outside the Caribbean. But all of that was still interwoven, and I think the choral theatre concept grew. You see? More and more, movement became an integral part of the choral presentations.

JW: Tell me about ... Mr. Dexter mentioned that Professor Nettleford, when you all were singing, that, basically, his early involvement with The Singers was to come in and add movement to, say, one folk song at the end of a concert and that that was kind of the pattern for quite a while. And then later, Professor Nettleford began to be more involved in not just staging one song but the whole thing.

LN: I would say he staged more than one song; but he tended to stage the folk songs at first and then, eventually, staged the whole concert. Even when they were doing ... when what's his name died ... Michael Jackson and they did a suite of Michael Jackson songs, I still think that's one of the most beautifully staged suites that they've done. You know? And they actually came out, the guys, in black ... with white socks and black shoes.

JW: Oh, really?

LN: Yes, and it was just fabulous! So you know, and he staged ... Even when were doing something like [LN begins singing a folk tune.] ... Now,

Professor Nettleford has staged this for his National Dance Theatre Company; but a different thing that he did with The University Singers with some subtle movements, which will bring tears to anybody's eyes, apart from the fact that the music itself will do that. So yes, his involvement grew from staging a few songs, a few folk songs, to staging the concert.

JW: The whole thing.

LN: Yes. That is true.

JW: In his book, *Mirror, Mirror*, he has the chapter where he talks about using the arts as nation building. Was that, do you think, knowing him, having worked with him, having studied, do you think that was the impetus behind adding movement to, say, folk songs first and other stuff later, to begin to elevate the folk song in the minds of Jamaicans that this is not subservient music to British music or Western European? Can you probe into his mind, what he was thinking?

LN: I don't know if this was a conscious decision on his part. I would more give a bit of that credit to Mr. Dexter who moved from the European music and then the spirituals and then the art songs and then the folk songs and probably some [unintelligible] pop songs and moved to, at one point,

presenting a full concert of all Caribbean music so that the Caribbean music was not something *also*; but it was *the*. Caribbean music in all sorts of forms, in what is called the “formal form” or whatever word one wants to put to it—structured a certain way [unintelligible] Caribbean music, as depicted in the folk songs. So I think that transformation from Caribbean—and I say “Caribbean” advisedly, rather than just “Jamaican,” because it’s not just Jamaican music; and you know we are The University of the West Indies, which is already a uniquely regional institution. It is uniquely ... It’s owned by, what, fourteen, fifteen governments and countries. [Eighteen different countries and territories contribute to the University: Anguilla, Antigua, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Turks and Caicos.]

JW: Is it all CARICOM? [CARICOM is the moniker for the Caribbean Community, the cooperative organization of Caribbean nations that focuses on economic development in the region.]

LN: It’s owned by the fourteen, yes, [unintelligible] members of the CARICOM. It’s owned by all these countries, so you can imagine how complex ... But The University Singers, itself, started in Mona Campus; but it did not see itself as just belonging to Mona Campus. It saw itself, for

many years, as representing THE University of the West Indies, which is regional.

JW: Oh, that's good to know. OK.

LN: Probably more and more, since there was some ... not ... I don't want to say "fragmentation," but I can't find the word right now ... of the University, where each campus became a little more autonomous, then, you know, you get The University Singers identifying much more with Mona Campus than with the whole University. But when we go out there, outside of the Caribbean, we represent The University of the West Indies, which is a regional entity. So I segueway to that. But I don't know if the conscious decision was to elevate or substantiate the value of folk songs for the Jamaican or for the Caribbean person or for people in general; or it was just to, as people experimented with the folk songs and the popular songs, as the musicians like Noel Dexter and some of the upcoming ones like Franklin Halliburton, Denae Greaves, Ewan Simpson, Kathy Brown, as they experimented with the Caribbean folk songs and the Caribbean popular music and re-worked them using various forms, then I think that helped to move these songs into a different realm, if so to speak. You know?

JW: That makes sense.

LN: Yes, so I don't know, you understand, if it was just that, probably, that the Professor wanted to—there's a word that is escaping me—wanted to ... What's the word when you want to ...? Validate? Validate the folk music so much as it grew because people were experimenting with arranging the music and presenting the music. Well, that's my opinion. I think it was more that. And of course, it touched a very tender chord in Professor Nettleford because he had been trying, for many years, to validate the dance, you know, our kind of way of dancing and using the lower part of the body, you know. And it probably fitted very well with what he envisaged.

JW: Now, tell me what your thoughts are about how choral theatre has evolved in terms of what the earliest uses of it with Nettleford just staging those folk songs to the present iteration of it. What do you see as the main points in its evolution?

LN: I would like to suggest that it started before Professor Nettleford, right? That he accelerated it, certainly catalyzed the process; but I would like to think that it started, the whole idea of using the songs in a theatrical ... using all the theatrical elements in presentation on stage, that that started long ago. You know, it started—oh, probably I would say—in the seventies [1970s], eighties [1980s], you know; and then it accelerated as

Professor Nettleford became ... Because there were one or two other people who helped them with staging before Professor Nettleford.

JW: Oh, OK. So let's trace back. The Singers started in '58.

LN: 1957. It was the '57-'58 academic year. So that started in October. The year starts October '57; and The Singers, actually, their first performance was December '57.

JW: OK. And that gentleman who founded the group ...

LN: Robert Henry.

JW: ... he's the current Governor-General of Belize.

LN: No. So Colville Young, who is the Governor-General of Belize, was one of the early conductors, directors of the choir.

JW: But not the founder?

LN: No. The founder was Robert Henry. Robert Henry, who was a Jamaican, who actually has been living in Trinidad for a long time, got married to a Trinidadian and has been in Trinidad for many, many years, worked at the

St. Augustine Campus [of The University of the West Indies in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad] before he retired in Trinidad. He started it with seven singers, seven students who really just got together for the love of singing. And their first performance was called *Words and Music* in Christmas 1957, and that's when they really started.

JW: OK. And he was the first director?

LN: He was the first director. I can actually give you the list of directors if you're interested. So Colville Young was one of the directors.

JW: But not the founder?

LN: Not the founder, no. Robert Henry was the founder.

JW: Well, that's something that I look forward to your book—and what I do—kind of correcting that record because what is out there that you can find in academic circles, which is not much ... And I knew this; I knew this was not the case, but just to show you how far things get misreported: people have reported that Noel Dexter started the group, which I knew that wasn't ...

LN: And they say I am a founding member, which I'm not.

JW: Right. And I knew that wasn't the case. But others ... Somebody said that the man in Belize ... So I think that's an important thing is to make sure the record ...

LN: Yes. I have, in my book, all the directors and the years in which ... And in fact, we have it in some of the programs. You have the Fiftieth ...? Which anniversary program you have?

[LN begins reviewing programs that were loaned by Noel Dexter.]

JW: He [Noel Dexter] just let me borrow a couple of these.

LN: Oh, nice, because ...

JW: I think that's the Fiftieth.

LN: You may have the directors listed here, the previous directors. Oh, it's going to be like that. Excuse me. That must be Mr. Dexter.

[The telephone rings. LN answers and addresses Noel Dexter (ND), who was calling to inquire about the status of the interview.]

LN: [to ND] Yes, sir. It's you? He's here. He's here. Yes, we're talking.

[LN hangs up the telephone.]

LN: [to JW] In a book like this, you would find ... Well, I probably said it in the ...

[LN reads from the Fiftieth Anniversary program book.]

LN: Let me see if I said ... “The University is fifty and fabulous.” Did I give the list of names? No. Alright.

[LN continues viewing the Fiftieth Anniversary concert program.]

LN: But that’s Kathy Brown I spoke of. That’s Franklin Halliburton. That’s Denae Greaves. And here me talking about some of this who have been doing a lot of work. Interestingly, the list of previous directors is not in it. But in another, in several of the programs, we have it in the back. And I can give you that easily ‘cause I have all of them. They have 1958 to 2008. Well, it’s the ‘57-‘58 academic year.

JW: Yeah, that makes sense.

LN: I guess the first real performance was ‘58.

JW: And see, he, Nettleford ... born in '58.

LN: '58, yes. See? The last ... See?

[LN reads from the program.]

LN: "Our mission ..."

[LN scans the paragraph and skips forward in it.]

LN: "... has remained the same since our beginning in the last quarter of '57."
You see? It was the '57-'58 academic year, so I guess it's settled on the
'58. So as a group ...

JW: It's easy enough to ... '57 to '58.

LN: But I can fix that.

JW: Yeah, that's easy to deal with.

LN: OK. You didn't get any which had the past singers, the past arrangers?

JW: No, he just, kind of ... He just pulled ... His assistant grabbed a couple that were there.

[LN continues to look at the programs.]

LN: This might have it, but I can give you that very easily.

JW: So tell me about The Singers. You directed The Singers for how long?

LN: For seven years. I sang with it for fifty years. Wow! I must have retired as an old woman! And I directed it for seven of those years, and I was the person who handed it over to Mr. Dexter.

JW: Oh, OK.

LN: So I was ... I preceded him.

JW: Now, did you have a formal, tertiary education in music, or ...?

LN: Not in music, no. I am a science, a chemistry teacher. Chemistry was my main subject in university [The University of the West Indies]—chemistry, botany, zoology. And then, later on, I did education, science education. And later on, business administration. And then, a doctorate.

But no, music was just a love. But I have been exposed to music since I was probably four years old. I remember being Little Red Riding Hood in some musical a hundred million years ago. And I sang with a lot of church choirs, with my East Quincy Baptist Church, the main church I went to when I was growing up. So sang with that and, then, when I entered university, I sang with the University Chorale first, for a short while; and then, I guess they hand-picked a few of us and went over to University Singers. So I've had some formal training in music but not ...

JW: Sure. Sure. Sure.

LN: ... you know ...

JW: To earn a degree.

LN: Yes. At the Jamaica School of Music, I've done Jamaican folk styles, looking at the various folk music styles. I've done composition. I've done ... What else I did in music? Oh my gosh! I don't remember. I've sang with voice tutors over the years. Joyce Briton was one of my favorite tutors and, of course, with Noel Dexter. So I have, you know, sung with, done a lot of voice, a lot of voice training.

JW: So under your direction, I'm assuming there was use of movement in the early choral theatre ...

LN: We did a little, yes. We did some, especially when we used to do some songs ... not just Revival but a sort of religious, folk religious things that was somewhere introduced to us by a fellow from Trinidad. And we used to do quite a bit of that. And we did some African ones, you know. And I remember the Haitian, a Haitian lullaby. [LN begins singing a few notes from a Haitian folk song about a baby.] So we used to act out the baby... So from those days, we used to do a bit of choral theatre.

JW: And that was before Professor's involvement?

LN: Yes, before Professor's involvement.

JW: So he came along ...

LN: When Mr. Dexter was the director, he ...

JW: ... in the seventies [1970s]?

LN: I handed it over to Mr. Dexter in '78, 1978. And I think Prof probably started about '79, '80. So I'm corrected there. I couldn't find the actual

time; but it's around, you know, a year or two after Mr. Dexter. Certainly in the eighties [1980s] 'cause I was singing in the group when Professor Nettleford was directing. 'Cause even though I was director, I started off as an alto, then as a soprano. Then, I was director. Then, I was business manager. But all along, I sang ... Did I say fifty years? Thirty years. I sang for thirty years I think. Was it thirty or fifty? From 1963 to 19 ... 60, 70, 80, 90. Yes, thirty years. I sang with them for thirty years.

JW: Wow. Now, in your time as either director or singing with them, did you all go on many tours?

LN: We did some tours, yes. And that is, of course, a part of the importance of The University Singers as ambassadors for the University, cultural ambassadors. 'Cause, when I was director, we did ... Alright, let's go back even further. When Noel and myself were singing in the choir, I remember we went on a tour. We went to the Bahamas, and we went to somewhere in the USA. Well, we don't want to remember that. We used to call it "Watson's Tours and Troubles." He told you about that one?

JW: He said that, yeah, the New York and the ...

LN: New York and Washington. We call that "Watson's Tours and Troubles" because the business manager was a fellow called, surnamed Watson. And

whew, that was a memory. I tell you, boy! So we did do a few tours. And when I joined the group, they had just come back from the eastern Caribbean on a tour under the directorship of Geoffrey Fairweather, who was one of the directors. He died a few years ago. Their first tour was about 1959 or so, just after they were formed. They had gone down the eastern Caribbean as well. You know? So the group has always been touring. I know about that one in 196 ... I told you I joined in '63? So that tour was, I guess, in '62. And then, when I was director, we went to the eastern Caribbean. We went to the Bahamas again. We went ... I'm trying to remember where else we went. Can't remember now. Then, later on, the group started to do some more. I think most of the tours have been the eastern Caribbean. But they have been to USA several times and to Canada. Oh, there's a time when I was involved, too, that we went to Canada ...

JW: OK. And ever over to the UK?

LN: ... to Montreal to perform in the ... We performed in the Place des Arts in Montreal, yes. And in Toronto, performed quite a bit. In Ottawa. They've been to England, to London. They've been over to—what's it—Germany. The time they went two years ago.

JW: I think Mexico once.

LN: They have been to Mexico. Belize. So you know the choir has really a lot ... Florida, of course. A lot of eastern Caribbean tours.

JW: Is it a stretch to say not only are they cultural ambassadors for the UWI but even for Jamaica at large. Is that a stretch?

LN: I wouldn't say it's a stretch. I would go even so far as to say for the Caribbean. Yes, because when they ...

JW: That they represent really.

LN: Yes. When the group performs, I mean, and the songs, if you look at the repertoire, you see songs from all over the Caribbean, you know, in the repertoire. More and more, as the University became more and more decentralized—is the word I was searching for earlier—as it became more and more decentralized, then you found that the concerts comprised a lot of ... First of all, the group comprised more and more Jamaicans. And the concerts comprised more and more Jamaican songs, at least the folk songs and the pop song section. But there's still an effort to maintain the regionality of the University. So there's still an effort to keep the mix with songs from the other countries. Trinidad. Barbados. You know, the other ... Guyana and so on.

JW: That's good to know. That's good to know.

LN: Yes, there is a concerted effort to keep it regional in the Caribbean. So when we go out of the region, you know, we appeal to not just Jamaicans out there but people, you know, from ... People come to us and say, "Oh yes, my mother is from Trinidad; and she couldn't get into The University of the West Indies so she came to Canada to university. Or she came to the US. And I've always wanted to interact with people from the University." So I would venture to say we represent the region.

JW: So tell me this. If an American choral director ... Let's say I had a choir; and I decided I wanted to program a piece by, say, Noel Dexter. And I wanted to be authentic. And I came to you; and I said, "Tell me the elements that I would need to have to present this in the true choral theatre style." List those elements. We've mentioned movement.

LN: Rhythm.

JW: Rhythm.

LN: Rhythm is very important because ...

JW: Rhythm, meaning using a rhythm instrument?

LN: The actual music. No, the instrumentation. So you have the voices.

JW: The voices.

LN: And I'm assuming you're gonna use music that exists. So the tune and the lyrics. The instrumentation is important. You know? So you don't want to be singing something that should be in a calypso style; and you're singing it with a ... [unintelligible] rhythm. What's the Jamaican ...? [LN begins humming a rhythm that is accented on the fourth beat.] You don't want that rhythm when it's supposed to be ... [LN begins humming a different rhythm.] You know? So the rhythm is important. The instrumentation is important. If you're doing some which is a Rastafari style [also known as *Nyabinghi*, a music style involving three different drums and religious chants], you don't want to be using instruments that are not ... You want to be using the *funde* [or *funde*] drum [one of the *Nyabinghi* drums—small, cylindrical, with one head, held between a player's legs and struck with the fingers or the hand], or you want to be using the repeater [the smallest of the *Nyabinghi* drums, similar to the *funde*]. You know? If you are doing something which is Revival, you want to hear that big ... [LN mimics the sound of a bass drum.] You know? If it's Rasta[fari], you want to hear ... [LN taps out a rhythm on the table.] And you want to hear it with ... [LN demonstrates a different rhythm with her mouth.] So the instrumentation, the voice, the tune, the rhythm—all of that's important. I

see this group of young men in—I can't remember which part of the USA—and it's on YouTube all over the place. And they are singing this “Long Time Gal.” I don't know if you've ever seen it. And I am going, “Aghhh! Nice try, but just don't quite get it.” You know? And they did a good job, even putting in [LN mimics different gestures.] and all sorts of things. It's just not true. I say, probably, when we are singing the American folk songs, it comes like that to the Americans. When we are singing European songs, they probably feel, “They don't quite get it.” So there are those elements, which have to do with the vocals, the music. And then, of course, elements that have to do ... If they're going to do the movement, you can't be doing a *Dinkie Minie* [or *Dinky Mini*, a dance performed during a celebration commemorating someone recently deceased] move when you should be doing a Revival move or a, you know, or a ... or a *Pocomania* move [a type of dance performed during funeral rites that involves participants in a circular formation]. So the movement that goes with that particular rhythm is important. You know? Why is it that I can't remember the main one, our main folk song rhythm, the one with the accent on the fourth beat? [LN demonstrates this rhythm using her voice.] Anyway, that is a distinct thing with us; and you don't want to be with that and have a calypso beat, rhythm on top of it. So that is important. Also, of course, visually, if you want to depict ... I guess is not that ... People, I guess, put it ... How they are costumed. The costuming is also important, all the things that appeal to you visually. So the costume

... The lighting ... one pays attention to the lighting for several reasons because you don't want, if you are singing a song [LN sings a few notes of a folk song with a sorrowful lyric.], you don't want to have bright lights, you know? That's not a happy song. [LN sings a few notes of a different folk song, again with sorrowful lyrics.] That's not a happy song, you know? [LN sings the folk song again.] That's nothing. It is a sad, reflective kind of thing; and you want that kind of mood. So things that create the mood on stage, you know, one would look for that. What else you'd look for? I guess ... I guess that's essentially it. The authenticity of the music, the authenticity of the movements, the authenticity of the instrumentation, and, you know, so it's what you hear as well as what you see and the setting in which you have it.

JW: Do you think that, when you see, say any Caribbean folk song, when you see it notated in formal, using Finale or whatever, do you see that those things are captured well? Do you see that that information is transmitted well in the printed score?

LN: You know, that is more like ... That question is more like for Noel Dexter and Godfrey Taylor [a Jamaican composer], people like that, and Marjorie Whyllie [a former director of the National Dance Theatre Company Singers], who is excellent at, you know, that kind of thing, what I call the technical aspects of the music. I am more for the audio. I hear it and can

hear that it is right or is not right. But I imagine that, if it's written a certain way and someone is going to sing it just as it is written, it may be right; but it may not because there's more to the music than that. They can catch the rhythmic patterns, and they can catch where ... how many beats you hold this note for and how many ... what is a short note and what is a half note and so on. But there's something else, which you need to catch, which is the feel underneath that. So it might be written. Let's say it's written as ... Let's take a song. [LN begins singing a folk song and also demonstrates the rhythmic patterns of the song.] So if you can read music and it's written right, you could sing that. But if you go up and sing it like that, it kind of not right. You have to get ... [LN demonstrates the folk song again; but this time, she accents different beats, per the performance practice of the piece.] You can't write that, you know? So I don't know. I don't know how to answer that question.

JW: Do you think it's possible, then, really, truly, for people outside of the Caribbean to really be able to sing that music?

LN: I think they can sing it. I think they can sing it. You try ...

JW: But never with ...

LN: I interpret your question to mean how universal, a comment on the universality of the music, whether it can go beyond borders. Yes. And the answer to that, I would say, is take Mr. Dexter's hymns, say. I've heard them sung. They are in books and all over the world. And you know, it's hard not to sing it to the rhythm. [LN begins singing one of Noel Dexter's hymns.] It's hard not to get it right. But with some of the folk songs, there's just a little ... that, you know ... So they will get it, the rhythm, right. They will get the right accent, accent the right notes and so. But it just, kind of, missing something. Yes. But I think it can transcend. There's a limit. It is not totally impossible to transcend borders. I mean, we are singing Spanish folk songs; and we are singing ... I mean, I grew up singing "Flow gently, sweet Afton! among thy green braes" [by Jonathan E. Spilman]—never saw a brae in my life; I didn't know what a brae was. We were singing Welsh folk songs and Scottish folk songs, you know? The Welsh and the Scottish might laugh at us because we probably weren't singing it right, but it was according to what was written. So the answer, I guess, is it can be written so that it can transcend borders. But for performance on stage, some of it probably will need just a little bit more grounding, for want of a better word.

JW: Makes sense to me. So how do you think ...? Mr. Dexter and I talked about this. Like, I had the privilege of conducting the KC Chapel Choir

right at Christmas; and I noticed—very similar to UWI Singers—they do, kind of, a first half of the program that's, in this case ...

LN: Stand straight.

JW: ... [unintelligible], stand straight, got the robes, all that. Take an intermission. They come back in the blazers; and they are, at that point, using even more movement; and it seems to me like what I saw at the KC was a direct influence from The UWI Singers. Would that be a fair ...?

LN: And they loosened up?

JW: Much. Exactly. 'Cause I've seen The UWI Singers twice—once this time and then two Christmases ago I was here.

LN: Oh, only Christmas? You've never seen a concert season?

JW: I don't think I have.

LN: Well, I'm going to give you a DVD of last year.

JW: OK. Their concert season?

[LN begins searching for a copy of the DVD.]

LN: Concert season last year. I financed this my ... Ooo. Don't tell me I don't have one. I hope I have one. Don't tell me I gave away ... No. I'm not going to believe that. I must have one. I financed, myself and another friend who was a past University Singer, Florence Darby; we financed a DVD of the 2013 concert, which we're trying to sell to raise money to start a bursary fund to help University Singers in need in their third year. And I would have loved to give you one of those DVDs so you could see a performance, you know? As a matter of fact ... No, I could not have given away all or sold all ... I don't mind if I sold all.

JW: If you sold them all, right.

LN: Yes. If I sold all, that's fine. But not even one? Go ahead. You are taping, so I don't want to ... Afterwards, I will look.

JW: That's fine 'cause I can ... And you know, possibly Howard may have one. Maybe.

LN: Probably. I don't know if he bought one. Oh my gosh. Well, after the interview, I'll look.

JW: That's good if you sold them all.

LN: Yes, I would love to believe I sold them all. Probably one is upstairs.

JW: That you sold them all. Yeah. But he, kind of ... Mr. Dexter is of the opinion—and it seems to me that he might be right—is that the, not only just the programming but even just the use of choral theatre and the use of movement, that you see so many more choirs ... I watched, over this season, the *All Together Sing* [a national choral competition broadcast on one of the national television stations], the high school ... And you see them use movement. That that, at some level, is it fair to say, that is an influence of The UWI Singers, that more and more ...

LN: Groups.

JW: ... groups are doing it? Applied to not just folk music but ...

LN: To other music.

JW: ... to various genres.

LN: I would love to be able ... I would love to say so, but I don't know if I would be right. You know? I know The University Singers has had a

strong influence, right? But I mean ... Like I say, other groups have been singing and moving for a long time but mostly folk music, so not a range of music. And then, a lot of University Singers have gone out into the Diaspora [the community of Jamaicans or people of Jamaican heritage who live off-island]. Just take the Caribbean or just take Jamaica, gone out and helped with groups and, therefore, helped that way. A lot of them have gone to judge Festival [the annual celebration marking Jamaica's independence from Britain] competitions and, you know, encourage people to sing and move. The Festival in Jamaica is one of the strong things, the music Festival, that has encouraged groups to stage their presentations a certain way to be visually appealing as well as audio. So I mean, I would say there are several factors that have contributed to the growth of that, choral theatre kind of concept. I don't know if I would ... Well, in the book, I did not attribute all of the praise to The University Singers; so you know, you have to be very careful that you don't do that.

JW: Right. You don't want to overstate the significance. I just want to understand where it ...

LN: But there's no doubt that there's an influence. Now, whether everybody learned from The University Singers kind of thing, I don't know if I'd venture to go that far.

JW: Sure. And again, in keeping my dissertation very narrow, what I'm simply looking at is The University Singers as a representative of the UWI, you know, that this a ... the ensemble that's, in whatever way, supported by a university and that this is that performance style of that particular university ensemble.

LN: Group. Yes.

JW: As opposed to, say ...

LN: And you're comparing it with other university groups.

JW: That's right. Like, my university in the US South does not have that style. And I would say that my university, The University of Southern Mississippi, our choir is probably pretty typical of most choirs in the US, most university choirs, in that the movement—I hate to use this term—it's more of a gimmick than a style. Do you see? You know, for example, we, in our current repertoire, we had a former, well, grad take four different tunes by The 5th Dimension—Marilyn McCoo and, you know, that group back in the seventies [1970s]—and turn them into SATB, divisi, a cappella, pop arrangements. And they're very good. I mean, they're ... We'll sing them when we come down here in March. There's one point, near the end; I think it's four tunes; and at the end of the last tune, we

bring in a little bit of movement, just basically step-touch, clapping. But we're only doing it at that moment. We're not figuring out ways ... We're not bringing in a choreographer or movement specialist to say, "How can we use staging, different arrangements, different turns of the head, or whatever to enhance every song?" And so that's where I think, as a university ensemble, that is the defining feature for The UWI Singers.

LN: Yes. I think I use a phrase, in my thing, something about using body and space to accent, to underline the vocals. I can't remember the phrase I use but something like that. You want to stop that [the recording device], and then just let me find something?

JW: Sure. No problem. And I know you have ...

[LN begins searching again for the DVD. She finds a copy and inserts it into her laptop to play it. When the recording resumes, LN is in the middle of describing trouble with her laptop battery.]

LN: And you know, when you get to that stage, you might as well by a new computer.

JW: I know it.

LN: Because a new battery is probably 200 and something dollars [Jamaican dollars]; and a new computer is probably 500, 600, 700 [Jamaican dollars].

JW: So can you, while you're getting this up, at the UWI library, as a visiting student-scholar from another country, do I have to have, like, a sponsor or somebody to get me in if I wanted to go in there; or is there just a fee to pay? Do you know about that? I mean I can find out.

LN: I ran an international program for many years at UWI. That was my job, and what I used to get ... a library pass for students; but they usually were students who came in groups. Ones who came as individuals, like on Fulbright Scholarship or so, there is a small fee; but I can't remember what it is.

JW: I don't think it's much, from what I remember seeing on the ...

LN: Yes, but usually the person is associated with some section of the University. So I don't know if the Philip Sherlock Centre would want to say, yes, you are associated with ... You know? You're doing ... Then, they could probably send and ask them to take, you know, allow you to waive the fee.

[LN starts the DVD.]

LN: I'm going to show you this. Alright, I can't believe that I don't have any more; but I'll have to get some printed.

JW: That's good. You sold 'em.

LN: That is ... This is it. That was the 2013 concert.

JW: And the concert season, this was 2012, 2013?

LN: 2013, yes.

JW: See, I want to feel like I saw this ...

LN: You think you saw it?

JW: 'Cause I know I saw 'em at the Philip Sherlock Centre.

LN: But that wouldn't have been Christmas, though? You've been here in the summer?

JW: Then, it must have been summer. I have been ... Yeah, I have been here in the summer.

LN: Oh, well, you probably saw it in the summer.

JW: Then, that would have been, maybe, the 2011 season 'cause I know I saw 'em here at Sherlock.

LN: I remember when you guys came here.

[LN is having difficulty with the optical drive mechanism of her laptop.]

LN: It's kind of ... I never can manage to get it. I usually have to use a pen or something.

JW: There you go.

LN: When you all came here after a wedding, when ...

JW: That was my wedding. That was 2011, January.

LN: Oh, it was from '11? Oh, it was January?

JW: And then, we, my wife and I, came back in the summer; and maybe that's when ... 'cause I think Mr. Dexter's wife had maybe just recently died.

LN: Right. That's right.

JW: Then, that must be when I saw 'em. Wow. It's been that long. Gosh.

[LN is focused on finding a certain track on the DVD.]

JW: So let's turn it up. There it goes.

LN: You can see?

[LN plays "Ban Yuh Belly" from the DVD.]

JW: Yeah.

[LN plays "Holy Mount Zion" from the DVD.]

LN: That was the Olive Lewin "Holy Mount Zion." She had just died, so they did that in honor of her. It's one of her compositions. I wish I had connected the player to the speakers so you could hear it properly.

JW: That's OK.

LN: The song is terrible without the speakers.

JW: That's OK. That's alright. I understand.

LN: So what you're talking about now, the movement and staging? All of it is still from the beginning of the concert.

JW: It's true. It's absolutely is. And even how some [singers] are turned, facing different ways. Yeah, you just don't ... You really don't. You don't see this in other university settings.

LN: But when they move, you see another ...

[LN begins playing "Hospodi Pomilui" from the DVD.]

JW: Oh, you know what? I almost did this piece one time!

LN: "Hospodi Pomilui?"

JW: I know it. I know it. I know it. I almost programmed it on my last recital. It's not easy to do. I know. It is not easy.

LN: "Hospodi pomilui," et cetera.

[LN begins playing "Intermezzo" from *Cavalleria Rusticana* from the DVD.]

LN: You know that also?

[LN begins playing “Save My Soul” from the DVD.]

JW: It’s a good, really, very clear video, too.

LN: [unintelligible] My son was the video editor. As they take it from right to left, rocking. [LN describes a movement.]

JW: Which is about what you get in an American ...

[LN begins playing “Caan Ketch Mi Again” from the DVD.]

JW: Oh, there’s one lady, I wonder if she’s in here. I love to watch her. She’s an alto; and she has a very open, you know ... And her hands are always like this. [JW arches his arms out from his torso.] I love to watch her.

LN: You know what? I don’t think she’s on the stage. Do you see her?

JW: I don’t see her.

LN: And she’s not on the stage this year.

JW: I saw her at Christmas, and I remembered her from the last time I ...

LN: You see how they do that sort of thing?

JW: Yeah.

[LN begins playing “Praise Him in Advance” from the DVD.]

JW: Was that [Franklin] Halliburton [the current director of the choir who performs as a member in addition to conducting]? Was he, Franklin, back there singing?

LN: Yes. He was in the back singing. Yes.

JW: Is this done in high definition? It looks really clear.

LN: Oh, really?

JW: Yeah. HD. Look at that. I need to get a copy of this.

[LN begins playing “Survival” from the DVD.]

JW: See the staging? And I also noticed how they don't fall into the, kind of, predictable, everything's got to be symmetrical? You know, that they don't feel a burden or need to ...

LN: Yes, that's the choreography I like. A few others, I think, are like this.

JW: Yeah. Yeah.

LN: This fellow, he composed that. [LN points out one of the singers, who arranged "Survival."] This young fellow, he's a medical student. He put it together.

JW: OK.

LN: This one.

[LN begins playing "Africana" from the DVD.]

LN: I love this. OK. This is "African Suite." Kathy Brown choreographed ... did the music arrangement. Some beautifully arranged, staging was up for that.

JW: Do you ever just have singers who just can't dance?

LN: Yeah, man. We have to harass them until they learn—what happens to the ones who come with two left foot. [unintelligible]

JW: Yeah, this would be—I'm telling you—for a lot of American choirs, collegiate choirs, this would be a challenge.

LN: To move and sing?

JW: Yeah, that much. To memorize? You know, some American choirs would never even think of singing without a folder, let alone moving.

LN: Yes? Oh my gosh. They memorize everything. I like this part. Look at that movement. I love it.

JW: And I think a lot of American choir directors ...

LN: This is from *The Lion King*.

JW: Yeah. Yeah. I think a lot of American choir directors, too, collegiate, would be afraid of this, afraid of trying to make that happen.

LN: Oh yeah?

JW: So they just stick with the most basic, the most simple. So is it typical for, like, I see Halliburton singing? Did Noel sing? Did you sing?

LN: Not when I was conducting, no.

JW: Look at him. He's up there.

LN: Yes, he was a singer; and then, Noel pushed him into conducting, sort of allowed him too ... He's developed a lot. He's an excellent musician. And there's another one—you're going to see him in another little part—who's a good singer, too, who conducts, too, sometime. I love this.

JW: How old is Franklin? Do you know?

LN: Franklin Halliburton? I would put him in his late thirties [30s] or early ... I never know, late thirties [30s], at most forty-one [41], forty-two [42], early forties [40s].

JW: Is he a tenor, baritone?

LN: He's a baritone, excellent baritone.

[LN points to a choir member.]

LN: This one also conducts.

JW: Is he the one that also does the Policemen's ...?

LN: He is a police, right. I would watch this a million times. I love this one.
But we can't just stay there.

[LN begins playing "Ban Yuh Belly" from the DVD.]

LN: This is the folk music. See that visual?

JW: The costuming and the colors. And I love that, too. You notice the lack of fear about dressing women in stuff that doesn't ... I mean, it's the same style; but everybody's not wearing the same color top and the same color ...

[LN begins playing "Dukunoo Life" from the DVD.]

LN: This one is funny, "Dukunoo Life." [LN begins reciting the lyrics as they are being sung by the choir in the video.] It's just a bit acting, how everyone take on a persona. Yeah, I wanted you to see [unintelligible] with the drunken man persona. Lazy set of people. Watch the drunken lady now.

[LN points out a soloist who is acting as though he is intoxicated.]

LN: And watch him keep in character. Even when the chorus take on, he's still in character. That's the theatre.

JW: Yeah, he's not dropping it at all.

LN: He's still in character. Watch him. I love that. And you're literally acting it out, you know?

[LN begins playing "Lotto" from the DVD.]

LN: About the Lotto [a jackpot lottery managed by Supreme Ventures Limited (<http://www.supremeventures.com>)].

JW: The Lotto scam?

[LN begins playing "Emancipation Park" from the DVD.]

LN: That's one Mr. Dexter wrote. See that? That's a thing, one of our folk moves.

[LN begins playing "Mind Yuh Time" from the DVD.]

[LN begins playing “Bad Minded People” from the DVD.]

[LN begins playing “Da’ Coco Tea” from the DVD.]

LN: Oh, Lord, I love this.

[LN begins playing “Just Friends” from the DVD.]

LN: That’s a pop song. I love this, you see?

JW: I love that Halliburton sings with them. I really do.

LN: ‘Cause he just loves to sing.

JW: Yeah, clearly.

LN: I wanted you to see him do the one about ... “Mona Visa.”

[LN begins playing “Nine Night Suite” from the DVD.]

LN: Oh, this is a Revival. So where “Mona Visa?” It don’t come yet?

[LN begins searching for “Mona Visa” on the DVD. As there is no DVD menu, this search involves simply cueing forward and backward on the DVD.]

JW: Let’s see. Are these in ...?

LN: Where’s “Mona Visa?”

JW: It was ... “Mona Visa” was right after “Dukunoo Life.”

LN: “Dukunoo ...” Oh, I wanted to see that little piece of ...

JW: It was right before “Lotto.”

LN: Before what?

JW: The Lotto, the one about the Lotto.

LN: Oh, before the Lotto? OK.

JW: Yeah, go back a little more, before that one.

[LN begins playing “Mona Visa” from the DVD.]

LN: Yeah, see it here? This one is about “Mona Visa.” You know, every Jamaican want a American visa. So him get his own visa; but it take off Mona Lisa. People pay for him to get visa.

JW: He has a very nice voice.

[LN begins playing “Nine Night Suite” from the DVD.]

LN: This one is long, but it’s Revival with the tracking [an antiphonal form of singing in which a cantor calls out a few words of a line of text and the people respond with the rest of the phrase] and all the elements of Revival. And them dressing ... You want to see the outfit, them. Just like the country people go to Nine Night [a religious observance held on the ninth night after a person dies in which the spirit of the deceased officially departs]. Watch her hat. He’s the one leading the thing [LN points out the cantor]. You would have to watch that for a little bit while because it is kind of elongated. A lot of movement. And the person who calls.

JW: So it’s a call and response?

LN: Yes, a call and response. See what I mean about the versatility?

JW: Yeah. It’s a wide range.

LN: See the staging?

JW: And this is out of the Revival tradition?

LN: Yes. Nine Night.

JW: OK.

LN: Just take you a little bit ... [LN advances the video.]

[LN begins playing “Black Consciousness” from the DVD.]

LN: People are rubbing them, bleaching them face. [Skin bleaching refers to the practice of applying a whitening creme, powder, or ointment to the skin in order to lighten it. This is practiced among some people living in the lowest socio-economic conditions in the country because they believe very dark skin is less desirable and attractive to members of the opposite sex.]

JW: I hate to see that when they do that.

LN: Oh, Lord, it's [unintelligible]. [LN recites lyrics from the song while the choir sings them.]

[LN begins playing “I Threes Medley” from the DVD.]

LN: That’s I Threes, right? [The I Three, commonly called the “I Threes,” was an all-woman singing group that backed up Bob Marley and The Wailers. The name is derived from the Rastafarian practice of referring to oneself as “I and I” as a means of acknowledging that man and God are one.] The “I Threes Medley.” Some nice movement in this one. See what I mean about the instrumentation?

JW: Do you miss performing? Do you miss it?

LN: Oh, I do, yes. When I go to ... Six performances, you know? And just drink in it. I probably would be sitting somewhere right here [LN points to a section of the audience on the video.] and just dancing to the music.

JW: So now, tell me again why the ... Professor Nettleford did not want to call this choreography as opposed to ...?

LN: I guess ... I guess the concept of choreography you think of dancers with slim, trim bodies flinging their feet all over the ...

JW: OK.

LN: And you don't want somebody to come and ... The critics are very harsh, you know? They will come and say, you know, "You know, how come that big fat girl is there?" You know what I mean? Or somebody make a little mistake or ... You understand?

JW: So when he's thinking choreography, he's thinking, like, professional, trained dancer ...?

LN: Or, even they are amateur, but ... Structuring out a dance sequence to a song. Whereas, this thing is accompaniment. These movements accompany the ... Music accompanies the choreography, right, in the dance. But in this thing, the movement is accompanying the ...

JW: I see. That's a good distinction. OK. So kind of the difference, between this and, like, NDTC [National Dance Theatre Company], where the dance is the center stage and you just have those folks ... No. Franklin's a good performer, for real.

LN: Oh yes. And this coming, you see, is a medical doctor. [LN points to one of the male performers.]

JW: Now, is this is some traditional ...? This doesn't look to me to be Caribbean ... [This is in reference to the choir's attire. They are all wearing dashikis.]

LN: That's an African, African thing. They use different African suits ...

JW: And just stay in it.

LN: And the musicians now. [LN is referring to the fact that the instrumentalists are taking their bows on the video.]

JW: And you know what else I love? Franklin looks so selfless, like he doesn't feel like he has to come to the center of the stage and take his bow. You know? That's great. He's just one of the ... Wow. Yeah, I'll find out if Howard has that [a copy of the DVD].

LN: If not, I'll go back because I had given The Singers a few. I was selling them for a thousand Jamaican [dollars] each.

JW: Which is not bad. That's nothing.

LN: Nothing. But I was just wanted them to sell off fast. I was trying to get a hundred thousand [Jamaican] dollars.

JW: You know what? I might even e-mail, see if I can find out if Chris Benjamin has any. Did you send some with him?

LN: No. Chris might not have ... There might be ... You're going to see Noel again?

JW: I don't know.

LN: Noel not even gonna know where they are. There might be ... I left about four or five with The University Singers.

JW: At the Sherlock Centre?

LN: Yes. So Shawn ... Is Shawn his name?

JW: His assistant?

LN: Yes. He might be able to put his hand on it.

JW: OK, I might try to ...

LN: I have to go get some printed because I need to sell at least 200 in order to set up the ... to pay for some of the costs of doing it. I absorbed some of

the cost. Flo absorbed some. And we had to pay for some of the cost. And then, I want to start the fund with at least a hundred thousand [Jamaican] dollars, which is nothing.

JW: Great.

LN: It's nothing; but at least, it could be a start. So that means I have to sell a hundred more.

JW: And it's a fund for third-year students, you said?

LN: I wanted final year student ... Well, it could be a third- or fourth-year students, but students who have been in the choir for at least a full year and who need. A lot of them is them singing there, and they need. You know? They don't have a whole lot of money.

JW: And I'll be glad to purchase one. I will.

LN: Oh, alright.

JW: I absolutely will. So if we can find one, you just let me know. And I will be glad to purchase one. I'm glad to know it exists. Is this the only type of recording like that?

LN: The only one recent. I think they did one of the 2014 concert, but I don't think it's out yet. This one is out; and there are VHS of previous concerts, a whole lot. But you know, the DVDs, I think this is the first DVD.

JW: OK. Well, I'll e-mail or call Mr. Dexter to see if his, if Shawn can locate one; and maybe even Chris might know, by some miracle, stroke of luck. He might know where some are, too. Well, thank you, so much.

LN: Yes. I have to go to church. My sister called.

JW: I know you have to go. Oh goodness. Church.

APPENDIX F

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH KEVIN MOORE

Interviewee: Kevin Moore (KM), movement coordinator of The University Singers

Interviewer: Albert Joseph Wolfe, Jr. (JW), researcher

Date: Monday, March 9, 2015 at 11:00 a.m.

Location: The Knutsford Court Hotel
Kingston 5, Jamaica

Note: Every effort has been made to reproduce accurately this interview in its entirety. Jamaicans speak both standard English and Jamaican (also known as “Patwa”), a language that combines English with words from other cultures and regions and that does not follow the grammatical and syntactical rules of standard English.¹⁵¹ In formal writing, standard English is used. However, in a semi-formal or an informal setting, many Jamaicans easily and fluently alternate between the two languages.

JW: So what I ... what I am doing for my final project for this doctorate is ... I’m writing about the performance style of The University Singers. A little background: my wife is from Kingston. We met in the States and married about four years ago. And that’s ... It is through her family that I first

151. “The Jamaican Language Unit,” The University of the West Indies, accessed February 19, 2016, <http://www.mona.uwi.edu/dllp/jlu/index.htm>.

heard about The University Singers. Her father was in The University Singers back in the ...

KM: Who's your wife's ...?

JW: His name is Howard Cooper.

KM: Howard Cooper?

JW: He used to sing in the NDTC [National Dance Theatre Company] Singers.

KM: Howard Cooper? Really?

JW: Yes. That's my father-in-law.

KM: I know Howard very well. Howard!

JW: So he's my father-in-law. And I met his daughter about five years ago in New Orleans. And so we met, fell in love, and married.

KM: You live in New Orleans?

JW: Not now. We live in Mississippi.

KM: That's my dream place.

JW: New Orleans? You need to come. I'll show you around. It's fantastic. You do. Howard and Karine, his wife, came; and I met them five years ago. They came in, like, the summer; and we showed them around. They loved it. So then, I came here and met my wife's sister and mother; and then, you know, we got married in early 2011. Well, the first time ... When we got married, The [Southern] Chorale came here for a tour at the same time. And they actually sang at our wedding. They came and they sang here in Kingston with The University Singers and then toured some other places. So at USM, at my university, we've had a couple of other Jamaican musicians come through. I don't know if you know Byron Johnson.

KM: Yes.

JW: Byron got his doctorate in voice at The University of Southern Mississippi, and he did his dissertation on the solo vocal music of Noel Dexter.

KM: Noel Dexter. Right. Have you spoken to Mr. Dexter?

JW: Yes, oh yes. Mr. Dexter. And I've spoken with Lilieth Nelson.

KM: Lilieth. Yes. She also has a doctorate. But is it in music?

JW: She ... I think hers in something else. So I first heard about The University Singers through my father-in-law. So they [The Southern Chorale] came; and they sang in our wedding. They did the joint concert with The University Singers, and that's where I began to hear about them for the first time. So in coming down here several times since, I've gotten to see The Singers in concert and have learned more about their kind of overall—the whole thing that they do—and choral theatre. So I started to do some research to say, "Hmmm ... Has anybody really written about this because it's so unique?" I've seen choirs from Asia. I've seen choirs from Europe, from Britain, of course tons of American choirs; and I've never seen a choir do what University Singers does. So I realized that, in the academic world, that had not been talked about. So I thought, "Ah. This is great!" So I started ... I've spoken to Mr. Dexter. I've spoken to Lilieth and soon will speak with Franklin [Halliburton, the current director of The University Singers].

KM: Halliburton? Have you spoken to Ewan Simpson? O'Neal Mundle?

JW: No.

KM: No? You should. Ewan Simpson's actually ... Well, he's not with UWI anymore, UWI Singers anymore. But he has been there for a while. He has arranged a lot of music for the choir tons and tons of times. O'Neal Mundle, I think, has a doctorate, if I am not mistaken, in music. It'd be good just to hear from them because they ... And Kathy ... Kathy Brown, Dr. Kathy Brown. She arranges for The Singers—very, very, very good.

JW: I will do that. I will write that down. So what interests me—and why wanted to speak with you—is when I look, like even last night when they sang, a big part of what The Singers does, as far as I can tell, is movement, right? And I know that Professor [Rex] Nettleford did not like to call it choreography.

KM: No, he called it staging.

JW: Staging and movement. The way that Mr. Dexter explained it to me is that, if you call it choreography, then that, somehow, elevates the movement ...

KM: Elevates the movement over the music ...

JW: ... over the singing.

KM: And you always want to ... Because primarily, they are singers. They're not dancers. You use the movement to complement whatever you sing, to basically tell the story better, to bring across to the audience the story of the music. You know? The dance or the movement is supposed to aid the process, not to overpower. Right? At times ... Being a dancer, at times, I have to hold back a bit because, you know, you might give too ... you don't want to give too much movements; or you don't want to overshadow with choreography. [unintelligible] And Professor [Rex Nettleford] has a saying that says, "Kevin ..." He always tells me, "Less is more." There is a formula. You don't have to ... for each word, you don't have to do a movement.

JW: Right. So who would say that? Nettleford or Mr. Dexter?

KM: No, Professor. He would always say less is more. You know? Don't overpower ... don't overpower the singing with movement. Just complement it. Right? That's basically what he's saying.

JW: So tell me a little bit about your history with Professor Nettleford because, unfortunately and obviously, he is gone.

KM: I know. I know. God rest his soul.

JW: I'm having to read about what he thought about the use of art and all of that; but you being in the NDTC and being a choreographer and dancer, tell me about your history with him.

KM: Professor? Whoa. I met Professor when I was seventeen, you know. I just started to dance. I was introduced to dance when I was in Cathy Levy. Cathy Levy operated Cathy Levy and Teen Players Club. It's a bunch of children from different schools who came together. We did dance and singing, drama.

JW: That's Cathy, like "K-A-T-H-Y" Kathy?

KM: No. "T-H-I." Cathy Levy. She was a former Miss Jamaica in '83, 1983. And she loved the arts. She actually is a great actress; and she saw this vision, you know: "Why not bring some children together and have a children's theatre company?" And so from that, she introduced us to ... Of course, you were exposed to all the various art forms; but you know you're gonna have your stronghold. So dance was my strongest. And so she introduced me to NDTC. She says, "I think you're ready. Go, and take classes." That's how I met Professor when I was seventeen.
[unintelligible]

JW: OK. Now, just to put it in context ... I hate to ask this, but how old are you now?

KM: How old am I? I'm thirty-eight.

JW: Thirty-eight. So over twenty years ...

KM: Twenty years, yeah. Long time. And so I met Professor when I was eighteen, going on eighteen. I was scared of this man, this very stern face, you know, just very strict and this command in his voice. When he spoke, you kind of trembled, you know; but you don't want him to know that you fear him. He has a stern look but a very, very sweet person. And you take classes. I came to NDTC and took classes, stood at the back, made a lot of mistakes, you know. You have all these elderly dancers in front of me. That was my introduction to the Professor. As time progressed, probably in my fifth year in the Company, I saw the Pantomime [an annual stage production involving singing, dancing, and acting], the LTM [Little Theatre Movement] Pantomime; and I said to him, "Sir, I want to do that. I want to choreograph." And so he gave me my first opportunity to stage. Now, I didn't know what I was doing because, remember, all I knew was dance, dance theatre. So of course, he held my hand. He told me about the system he had developed for Pantomime.

JW: And remind me again. I mean, Pantomime is similar to, like, our American musical.

KM: Broadway, right. So that would be our ... It's a musical; but our Pantomime is always shaped in some issues that's happening, today's issues. So like, for instance, you'll have ... you'll have various topics. Like, for instance, we just had, like, a breakout of chikungunya [a mosquito-borne virus that swept Jamaica in 2014]; so they have, like, stories surrounding that, you know. It's very Caribbean, very Caribbean music, Caribbean story. Anansi. Anansi is our spider, the very tricky spider. You have different issues. Annie Palmer ... Annie, the Great Witch of Rose Hall [a sugar plantation near Montego Bay]. So you have those things that comes out of Panto [Pantomime].

JW: So like folk and ...

KM: Folklore, right.

JW: ... current day.

KM: And they mixed it. They intertwined some American with ... They take stuff.

JW: And all with ...

KM: It's a melting pot.

JW: So the actors are speaking and then singing.

KM: And then they sing; and then they dance ... well, move. Move. So the first Pantomime I got to do, Professor said, "Go on stage." And he sat in the audience. He sat in the audience. And I'm like, "I'm so nervous." He's like, "Just don't do each movement with each word." He says, "Just pick, you know. Listen to the music, and listen to the rhythm. Right? And then, you are going to decide what story you want to tell with the movement. And the movement and the song should match." He's telling me a lot ... He gave me a lot of information, you know. But it was ... It actually ... it actually helped. It's a system that, actually, I held on to. I held on to. I basically ... What I ... Professor is very ... is a Caribbean man. He loves ... He always tell you, "Why you lookin' outside the Caribbean? There's enough material in the Caribbean. Use the Caribbean movement. Use the Caribbean vocabulary. Look around you. Manipulate the vocabulary." So I've actually leaned towards that direction of, you know, using Caribbean vocabulary. Of course, you know, you have to mix. Professor had his own ... I've used a lot of his movements, but I've developed my ... What I

pride myself in is special patterns, how the ... If you look at The UWI Singers, you see them always moving in and out and through space.

[KM stands and begins to demonstrate various gestures used by The University Singers.]

KM: Sometimes, it calls for stillness and just a little rock. Or other times, it calls for a little rock; and you move to the side. You move to the side, and come forward. You do a turn, or you do a little hand movement. It depends on what you're doing. And so Prof had really aided me in developing my skills to stage.

JW: So when you came to him and you started studying lessons, I mean, he's more ... he was more modern dance; and you weren't going in there to learn ballet.

KM: No. Well, the Company, the style of the NDTC is basically fusing modern with a Caribbean movement or Afrocentric movements coming out of the traditional forms. So he would use *Dinkie Minie* [a type of dance associated with a funeral ceremony]. He would use [unintelligible], which is very modern, with a *Dinkie Minie*, you know. And his ability to do rhythm like, what we call ... what we call here, a lot of syncopation and polyrhythm ... So the head would do something, and the arm is something else. And the hip is something else. And then, he's singing it.

[KM stands again and begins singing various rhythmic patterns while demonstrating head and arm gestures that coordinate with the patterns.]

KM: And that's how you know. 'Cause if you listen to his voice, he's actually telling you what the body should do. And that's, sort of, the amazing thing about it—his ability to play rhythm. He's using ... he's using this music that's going [KM begins singing a rhythmic pattern.]. And then, he adds the drums. [KM mimics a drum rhythm.]. So you have that play with the rhythm, you know. He was amazing. He was a musician in his own right, just amazing. And he always ... He believed in using the drums to accentuate, you know, whatever he's trying to bring across at the same time.

JW: So let's talk about some of those early dance forms that would have come out of, like, the West Africans, when the British brought slaves over—the *Dinkie Minie*, *Kumina*, all that.

KM: Well, the first ... the first dance that he really choreographed was "Pocomania" [based on the practices of a religious cult, *Pocomania* or *Puk-kumina*, that blends African ancestral worship and Christianity]. *Pocomania*, basically, is ... They have two sects. There are two phases: you have '60, and you have '61. *Pocomania* is a little madness. Zion

[Revival '60] is a mixture of Christian with Baptist. It's really the Baptists who came to Jamaica to convert the slaves ...

JW: ... who were still in their African religions.

KM: ... retention, who were strongly African retention. And so how did they accomplish that? They used other slaves to win over slaves. Who are you gonna trust? So in no time, you had the Baptists converting the slaves; and so you had what we call Revivalism '60. And then, we have Revivalism ['61], which is not of so much Christian background. It's more deeply rooted in the African retention so that you have *Pocomania*, and *Pocomania* is the strongest of the African retentions. Understand? So it's not leaning towards Christianity so much. So you have ... So he did "Pocomania" or "Puk-kumina," what we call it. Of course, the translation for *Puk-kumina* is "little madness." So he explored, of course, the whole Christian ... And you know, you have, in "Pocomania," singing and dancing; and you have, like, trumping. [KM begins singing to illustrate.] And you have the entering song. That's the entrance song. [KM sings an entering song.] They have candles, you know. "Pocomania," basically, you have Shepherd [the term for a male leader]; and Shepherd lead the flock, right? You have the Mother [the term for a female leader]. You have different persons who have different responsibilities. Revivalists are very secretive. Of course, you know you have the part that says, "OK. It's

Christian.” And you have the part that says, “OK. They do use their powers to do other stuff.” Yeah, we understand that part of it, you know. That was one of Professor’s early dances that I know. He also did what we call “Kumina.” *Kumina* is from the Congolese region of West Africa. Now, *Kumina* came after slavery, after the abolition of slavery. So it is the strongest in the African retention. There is no creolization. There is no mixing of the Baptists and the Christian or the Europeans or the French—none of that. They came, and they held on to their culture. So it’s very, you know ... it’s strong and powerful. You have drums. And when you’re performing “Kumina” ... So Professor ... What Professor did was, he did extensive research, went out into the field, took what he knew, and brought it on stage. Now, of course, you can never, ever present any traditional form in its purest form because it’s gonna bore you to death. So you want to ... So what he did ... He took the essential, like the basic movements. So you can really realize that it’s *Kumina* or it’s *Poco* or it’s *Dinkie* [*Minie*]; and he fused it with elements that would make it more theatrical—the costumes and the gestures and all of that. That ... So “Kumina” ... He did “Kumina.” He performed “Kumina” for years and years and years, he and a lady called Pansy Hassan. She died before he did. And then, when he ... I guess ... I don’t know if he knew he was gonna die. He handed over “Kumina” to our now associate director, Marlon Simms, and Keita, which is Keita-Marie Chamberlain. She is the wardrobe mistress. She just took over ‘cause our wardrobe mistress died a

year ago, Barbara Kaufmann. So that's the second work I know he did. Now, he also did "Gerrehbenta." *Gerreh* is a traditional form, traditional folk form mainly found in Westmoreland [Parish, on the southwestern end of the island]. And the *benta* is a musical instrument that we use, made up of bamboo. [KM mimics the sound of the *benta* with his voice.] So he fused it. In "Gerrehbenta," he started exploring *Jonkunoo*. Did you ever hear about *Jonkunoo*? Now, *Jonkunoo* is our only masquerade form that we have in Jamaica. Masqueraders wear masks. They take on different characters. So *Jonkunoo* is from the French influence. So you have the Actor Boy, which is very flamboyant, you know. He wears white face and his lavish hairstyle, and he'll dress in a long gown. He carries a whip and a mirror, and he looks in the mirror. He is, like, the narrator. And you have different characters. You have the French Set Girls. You have the Red ... You have the Blue Set. And you have the Madame. She is the leader of the French Set, you understand? The French Set, they're very stoosh [conceited]; and they're very stoic. And they carry fans. [KM mimics an affected, highbrow laugh to represent the French Set.] They have different movements, movements that they will perform, that will identify them. You have Pitchy-Patchy. Pitchy-Patchy, he wears ... he wears, like, a gown with strips of fabric. When he shakes, he shimmers. He is the most energetic, the most popular of all the characters. He does flips, turns, drums, you know. You have the Devil, which is the most feared. You have Cow Head, of course, depicting a cow. You have Horse Head, of course,

depicting a horse. So all of these characters are identified by the costumes they wear. They all wear masks. *Jonkunoo* really was originally played by men. But now, you know, our culture ... You have the Belly Woman. They might see a man in a ... Belly Woman is, basically, a big pregnant woman. She has a big butt and a big ass. When she moves, her belly shakes and all that. But that's all men that plays it. And of course, to play it, they have to cover themselves with stockings and the masks, not to show their manly features. And the only ... the only characters that don't wear masks are, I think, the French Set Girls and the Madame. They don't wear masks. You have the Witch. You have the Sailor. And you have the Whore Gal. Now, the history in Jamaica is that the sailor docks, you know. The sailors want women, so they usually goes out and buy the whores. That's a part of *Jonkunoo*. Because dance and culture evolve from generation to generation, you have new characters seeping into *Jonkunoo*. Like recently, I found out that you have one of our popular DJs, Vybz Kartel; he's incarcerated [for murder]. They added Vybz Kartel to *Jonkunoo* because it has evolved, you know. If we are going to carry on our tradition, then, and pass our traditions to the next generation, the next generation is gonna want to have a say in it. So "Gerrehbenta" started with *Jonkunoo*. And the figure of "Gerrehbenta" is the Horse Head; and the ladies are around the Horse Head, the *Jonkunoo* ladies; and that really depicts fertility. And really and truly, the *Jonkunoo* ... The Horse Head really represents the penis, fertilization. And the ladies go around, you

understand? That's how he started "Gerrehbenta." He ... he also introduced most of "Gerrehbenta." A part of it is *Jonkunoo* started, and then you have *Dinkie Minie*. You know what *Dinkie Minie* is?

JW: *Dinkie Minie*, is the ... It's a dance ...

KM: Very complex.

JW: ... around death to encourage the mourning or something.

KM: *Dinkie Minie*, basically, is done to cheer up the bereaved, the person who has lost their loved one, you know. Of course, you have the song and dance integrated. Of course, you have the music, as well. You have the drums. And you have songs like [KM begins singing]. Of course, it's very sensual. The male and female dance, and they gyrate. You have a thing they call a corkscrew and the hip; they going from side to side, kicking of the leg and all of that. It's very sensual, but it's really done to cheer you up. So that's basically it.

JW: So those are those early folk forms.

KM: Those are those early folk forms.

JW: Are there any others?

KM: He ... Those are the main ones. He did “Pocomania,” “Kumina,”
“Gerrehbenta” ...

JW: *Jonkunoo* ...

KM: “Gerrehbenta,” it starts with *Jonkunoo* with the ladies going around. And of course, the flute in *Jonkunoo* ... [KM mimics a flute playing a melody.] Right. You have that. You have the drums with the bass drum and the stick. So those are three basic ... I can’t think of anything else that he did. He did “Kumina,” “Gerreh ...,” “Pocomania.” Those are the four that he ... Oh, early ... “Bruckins Party.” He did “Bruckins Party.” I think Joyce ... Joyce Campbell and Barry Moncrieffe [current artistic director of the National Dance Theatre Company] ... Joyce Campbell, she was very instrumental in going to the fields to get ... You could ask that lady about any traditional form; she knew because she actually was the coordinator of Jamaica ... JCDC [Jamaica Cultural Development Corporation]. It’s our cultural office that, you know ... dealing with the dance competition. You have dance. You have music. You have drama. She was in charge of the dance. She knew ... She went into the field. She brought the traditional forms to the people. And so we did “Bruckins.” Of course, “Bruckins” is ... it came out of the British influence, you know—the flamboyant

dresses, the elaborate dresses of the Queen's court. You have characters in *Bruckins*: the Queen, the King, the Granddaughter, the Swordsman. You know, you have all those characters. You have two Sets. They're called Sets, the Red and the Blue—like how you have Red French Set and Blue in *Jonkunoo*. And what they do is, they compete. The King ... And they have a sword. The King carries a sword, and they would compete just to please the Queen. And you have ... you have this whole ceremony that happens just to ... just to entertain the court, the King's court. You have ... Again, it is singing, dancing integrated. [KM begins singing.] You have a Chairman. It's like a meeting you're having, you know. And he chairs; and he says ridiculous stuff, like, "Good morning, one and all, all and one. One for all." Stuff like that. He's very witty and all that. He gets them to throw money. *Bruckins*, basically, is the breaking of the chain. So you have movements, the pulsation in the chest ... [unintelligible] But yet still, although you have this [KM demonstrates a pulsating gesture.] going on, you have the stoic posture and stately posture of the King and Queen. And they're doing this. [KM demonstrates another movement.] It is very ironic, you understand? Very ironic. That's "Bruckins." Those are the four main ... main traditional forms that he explored; but he never, ever stopped. In all of his choreography, he always ... you can always see the folk movement seeping through ... in and through his work. He was a Caribbean man. He always said, "Why don't you use Caribbean music? Why don't you use Caribbean movement? Come on. We have so much

vocabulary. Man, manipulate the vocabulary; and use it.” [unintelligible]

He also did ... Well, this is not ... this never came out of our traditional form. He also looked at Africa, African scenarios, you know, African movements, movements that came out of Africa. And of course, he would manipulate it, you know, because he wanted to be appealing to the audience. He would manipulate it and put his own twist on it and stuff.

But I think that’s ... within itself, that’s genius because you don’t want to take someone else’s stuff and present it. You want to put your twist to it. And so that’s what I have done. With Professor, I have adopted most his movements; and I will put my own twists to it. I will definitely ... And UWI Singers ... UWI Singers has evolved because most of the older folks have left, and they have handed on the baton. And the new ones have taken it on—just like how Mr. Dexter has stepped back, and Halliburton is now musical director. And so you have a fresh crop of people. And my thing is, OK, you have a fresh crop of people; and they’re all young people. I’m gonna move them around. So that’s what I started to do. And some of the Professor’s stuff that he has done, his work, I have kept it pure like that because sometimes just standing and just doing a head [movement] or an arm [movement] is very effective and powerful; and you don’t want to mess with that too much. Of course, his thing: less is more. I always remember that. And so they have evolved. They love this sort of revolution—I call it—of movement. I say, “Guys, come on. Remember we are entertaining, and we are entertainers. And so we must

entertain.” If you have a song, you should not just stand up and sing. Most of them would love to do that.

JW: Just stand and sing?

KM: It’s a challenge. I know it’s hard to actually move around sometimes and sing, you know. And they’re always ... they always are concerned about “We’re losing the sound.” It goes back to, remember, that the sound is the most important thing. Every time I go into a UWI Singers rehearsal, I have to have that in my mind. [unintelligible] Mr. Dexter always says, “Kevin, they are too far. Bring them down. Bring them down a little bit. Oh, Kev, it’s too much movement.” I say, “Mr. D, they can handle the movement.” [Mr. Dexter:] “Are you sure?” But I say, “Yes, sir, they’re young people.” You know ‘cause he worked very closely with the Professor. So he has this ideology that, “Come on, Kevin. Do a rock.” I will do a rock and a step and a turn. And that’s another thing, though. [Mr. Dexter:] “Kev, remember [unintelligible] they will lose the sound if they turn.” [unintelligible] He is very old school, very old school, but a brilliant man. I’ve learnt so much from him. Every time I’ve worked with UWI Singers, I have learnt something new.

JW: So let’s talk about that. When did you first ...? Did you start working with UWI Singers while Prof was still alive?

KM: No. Not at all. Not at all. I was floored and very honored that they asked me to take over from the Professor. I was scared and worried ‘cause you have to understand: UWI Singers, they’re excellent; but they are also not very easy to win over. Yeah, because you have this man, this stalwart of a man who have worked with them for years and years and years. And it’s someone that they have come to love so much ...

JW: And trust.

KM: ... and trust. And that’s a big thing with The UWI Singers: trust. [The University Singers:] “And there’s this young man who’s just a dancer who thinks he can come in and win us. Oh my God, no. We’re gonna give him a hard time.”

JW: OK. So they did when you first came?

KM: At first, it’s not a ... It wasn’t a hard time. They were like, “Oh, can we trust him? Can he do it? Will he perform? Will he live up to Professor’s name?” You know? I was scared, and I actually thank God for Mr. Dexter. Mr. Dexter held my hand the entire time—Mr. Dexter and Christopher Benjamin [a public relations expert who has worked with The University Singers as a marketing consultant and a logistics coordinator]. Oh, my God. I was, like, scared. These people can intimidate you. You know what

I'm saying? My first day, they all asked a lot of questions, like, "So what are you going to bring new to The UWI Singers?" They all bum-rushed me at the same time. And I said to them, "Guys, I am not coming to take over and walk in the Professor's shoes." They were like, "You could never walk in the Professor's shoes." I'm like, "OK. I concede. I understand. And yes, I will never, ever walk. What I am going to do is, I am going to try to make the Professor proud. I'm gonna try to carry on his legacy." You know? Which I did.

JW: And you've been doing that for how many years now?

KM: Six years now.

JW: 'Cause he died when? In ...? Was it '99?

KM: He died in 2009.

JW: In New York, right?

KM: He died in Washington.

JW: Oh, Washington.

KM: Yeah, it was ...

JW: And you took over almost immediately after his death?

KM: Yes, they asked me and ... Actually, it was funny because they had these well-known dancers; and they chose from, like, a pool of them.

[unintelligible]

JW: So do you know how they selected you? I mean, had you ...? You had been working with the Prof at NDTC.

KM: I'd been working with ... I think Mr. Dexter had a lot to do with the decision because Mr. Dexter knew of me through Pantomime. I have done five Pantomimes.

JW: From that first one that Prof gave you ...

KM: Right. I've done five. And so he ... I think Mr. Dexter trusted me; and him having the knowledge that the Professor kind of held my hand and was ... I did not know that the Professor was, basically, tutoring me to take over. Sometimes, you think that your purpose lies elsewhere; but then, you're forced in this direction. And you can't resist. "No, I want to go to the left." But you're forced to the right, understanding that someone can see in you

that something you can't see for yourself. You know? That's what he was doing, basically handing over the baton. I didn't even know.

JW: So are you also the principal choreographer for NDTC?

KM: No, I am not the principal choreographer; but I do choreograph. I am a principal dancer. But another thing I was honored, really humbled and honored for ... The Professor, we have a show every Easter, Easter Sunday morning. We start at six [o'clock] a.m. in the morning, one show. And he always does the hymn. He always starts the hymn. And that fell in my lap as well. [unintelligible] Another thing we have, there is the NDTC Singers; and I have been doing the movements for that as well.

JW: Yeah, 'cause that's what Howard used to sing in.

KM: Right. Exactly. And so Marjorie Whyllie, she was, then, the former musical director [of the NDTC Singers]; and she retired. So she can't manage anymore. So Ewan Simpson has taken over. But I still do the movements for the [NDTC] Singers and all that.

JW: So tell me about ... So whenever you are going to come in and do a new piece, I'm assuming that Mr. Dexter or Franklin—and then, with Mr.

Dexter's help—they've already got all the notes and all the music down. So tell me about the process. When you ... How does it happen?

KM: Ok. So they do their arrangement; and after they think that they're comfortable with the arrangement, they call me in. They say, "Kev, you need to come." I do attend rehearsals, sit through rehearsals, listen to the music. At some point, I'll ask them, if I'm not comfortable, if I want to hear, like, you know ... Hmm ... And I get an idea. Some music you hear, you get ideas right away; others ... others you don't. And of course, you have to touch base with Mr. Dexter, being the artistic director, and Franklin. "What do you want for this?" Or sometimes, they say, "Kev, I'll leave it up to you."

JW: OK. So sometimes, they have ideas that they bring to the table.

KM: Exactly.

JW: Would you say, like, that's half the time, less than half the time, a tenth of the time?

KM: Most of the time, they do. They do. You're just there to enhance their story. And they will say, "Kev, do you think this is too much?" And I'll say, "Oh, OK." And I would probably change it because, of course, I'm

not a trained singer; so I might not take into consideration that that movement might not match the sound so much and might create problems and have to change it. But they do prepare the music first. They have me come in and listen to it. And I am a person that I don't have to hear the music beforehand. I can hear it right away and say, "OK. Let's go."

JW: Really? That fast?

KM: Yes.

JW: In one ...?

KM: Yes.

JW: And you're not looking at a printed score in front of you.

KM: No. And sometimes they give me the words.

JW: The text?

KM: Right. I'm like, "Come. Give me the words. Let me read it over to see what's happening." In my head, I develop my story. And of course, like the folk songs, the stories are already there. [KM sings a folk melody to

illustrate its obvious story content.] You know that is a market woman, and you know the gestures a market woman do. You understand? [KM sings a different folk song as a second example.] It's like a work song; and so the movement, of course, has to be heavy with accents. Yeah, so those are the things, the suggestions that represent different people.

JW: OK. So you come in; you hear the song. They sing it through; you get the idea in your head. Do you begin choreographing right at that moment?

KM: Sometimes. Yes, most times. Right. "Here we go. Let's try this. If it doesn't work, then ..." Most times, it works. Sometimes, you do your work. You have to pull back and say, "Hmmm ... I'm not comfortable with that." But you have to sleep on it. Let me go home and think about it. Sometimes, you know, you have writer's block. You do have dancer's block, as well. "OK. I'm not totally comfortable with this ending or the start or the middle, but let me think about it. And I'll come back to it." And you have to tell them, "Remember this is subject to change." Once those singers ... once you do something a few times, they lock it. You have to say to them, "This is it." That's basically it. I love working with them.

JW: How long would you say a typical ...? When you get a new piece, how many rehearsals would you say it takes before they really get to where you want them to be?

KM: I would say three rehearsals. I would say three rehearsals. And sometimes, it takes less time than three rehearsals. But to really grasp it and to be confident with singing and the moving at the same time, I would say three rehearsals.

JW: So by now, would you say that, especially the singers who have been there a long time, they probably also have a vocabulary of movements that they're, that you're ...?

KM: Oh yes. Definitely. Because if they're pulling, if they've pulled stuff, they have those movements to go along with it. They have locked it. So OK. My favorite piece is this African suite that Kathy Brown did. Oh, I love it, right? Every time they perform it, they do the same movements. They know that 'cause they do a five-week season. And so you're doing five weeks for, like, four days a week because, remember, you have Friday, Saturday, Sunday, probably two shows on a Sunday or, you know, a children's show or whatever. So they lock it. They basically lock it. And they have ... They're very specific, you know. They have their system. The top of the show, the start of the show, they have their classical,

classic; and they use, basically, ramps [four-tiered steps] for that, different designs. It's not a lot of movement.

JW: Are you involved in the staging of that, like with the ramps?

KM: Well, not so much. If I'm involved, Franklin says to me, "Kevin, I need something for this or something for that. Or, you can do a forward. You can do a [unintelligible]. You can do an arc." And they move. But they're very specific with sound ... matching the sound. I don't remember what they call it, sound texturing or something like that, where it's important that the sound ... I can't hear what they hear, but there's this sound. They do that. They're very specific; they're very meticulous. And then, the second section, they do spirituals. And I think the third section is pop. And then, folk comes.

JW: Folk comes after that.

KM: That's my favorite thing to do, folk. I love the stories. They don't only explore Jamaican folk forms. They explore folk from around the world, definitely a cross-section. They're very diverse. I'd say they're a very diverse choir 'cause they pride themselves in doing, you know, classical to folk to pop.

JW: They do. They really cover the genres, which again, makes them very unique in that they're not ... they don't limit themselves to just classical. But even with all the movement that you would expect with pop and folk, they still bring that back to the classical.

KM: And you know, it's funny. You know we have our dancehall [a popular music form in Jamaica characterized by faster rhythms that are intended for dancing and not simply listening], and they take the dancehall and what they do with it ... And you're like, "Wow. OK. This is different." Because dancehall ... Everybody doesn't accept dancehall. Some people in Jamaica think dancehall is lewd and vulgar, but they take the lewd and vulgar out of it and bring to you something very unique. "How they manage to do this with this song?" You know? It's amazing and, of course, how they arrange it; and the movement enhances it.

JW: So talk about when you mentioned earlier that Prof and Mr. Dexter are more of the less-is-more school. It sounds to me like they did not use as much spacing ...

KM: Professor didn't use as much movement and as much spatial patterns as I do.

JW: And you ... So would you say that's a development has taken off under your leadership?

KM: Yes, because you have to develop your own style. You can't piggyback on someone else's legacy. You have to develop your own. And so that's what he did. And he held my hand, and he let me go. And he said, "Go, and create your own." And I think he would be warmed. I think He would be proud to see that I have taken what he has taught me, and I've added. I think we are all ... We want the same results, but we don't have to travel the same paths to get the same results.

JW: What else would you say some other developments—evolution of their movements—have taken place under your leadership; or is that the main one?

KM: Well ... well, the spatial patterns. But the movements ... I would take his movement and probably add another rhythm to his movement. I would do a lot of directional changes.

[KM stands and demonstrates a directional change.]

KM: I think, as young people, they need to be challenged. And we are entertainers, so we should entertain. I have introduced a lot of dancehall

movements, dancehall movements that's clean and tasteful and a lot of partnering and moving to space—you know, people passing through. A lot of arms. We never used to do so many arms, so much arms. Lots of arms, you know, that accentuate their movements.

JW: So I've even seen, like ... Lilieth showed me—and I've gotta buy one from her— she showed me the DVD of their 2013 concert, the one that she had done and that they're selling for fundraising. Alright. So I'm looking at that; and in my mind, I'm thinking, "OK. So it's not choreography because it's mainly about the singing." But then, when I watch that DVD—'cause I think "choreography;" and I think not just, you know, hand movement; but I think, OK, the ability to move your feet well—and when they get to the folk section, they are moving.

KM: They are moving.

JW: So how ...? Still, how do we distinguish that from that not being choreography? Where does it cross the line into—BOOM—that's choreography?

KM: Well, choreography is predominantly movement, right. And so that's why we don't call it ... Because dancers do move in and out of space without singing. They have works now that they talk, and they sing. You

understand? But it's not ... We're not singers; we're dancers. So choreography, you're moving as a group. Staging, you're moving as a group; and you're singing. And you may stop. But dance might go on and on and on. You understand? [KM demonstrates a movement.]

JW: So it's the use of the stillness.

KM: Yes, exactly. And the use of the stage ... Because, then, you might move to the right, then stop. You might move to the left. You might go upstage and downstage. It's a pattern that we use. I mean, it's not ... it's not even ... You can even differentiate it from dancing because dancing goes non-stop, and they dance to music while the singers are singing. Or, they might dance to live music. [unintelligible]

JW: Like the NDTC Singers are just there to complement on some ...

KM: Right. So NDTC Singers, our [concert] format is we have opening. Then, we have ... we might have two pieces after the opening. Then, we have The Singers in the center; they only do one piece by themselves. And then, you have ... like you have a big, larger works like the "Kumina," the "Ghere ...". They complement it. Professor's last work that he did that involved the [NDTC] Singers is ... He used ... he used, like, gospel; but it was African, African rhythm mixed in. And then, he used for the duet ...

he used dancehall but took the words out of it. And then, for another section, he used dancehall; but the [NDTC] Singers sang it. You understand? The [NDTC] Singers are always used to complement the dance, you know. It goes hand in hand because you can't do without the [NDTC] Singers. You can't do without the dancers. We just come together and make that concrete and tell the story through the dance and the song. It's like a marriage, you know; it intertwines.

JW: So how many new pieces for The UWI Singers do you do a year?

KM: Oh, it varies. It really varies because, UWI Singers, they always go back to their old works. They always pull from ... And I think that's smart. They have classics that they do, especially the folk pieces and the classical pieces, Negro spirituals. They always pull from the old repertoire.

JW: So when they do those, they're not asking you to come in ...? They already know the ...

KM: No, no, no. I do come in and work with them because ...

JW: Even on the older pieces, maybe that Prof had already done?

KM: Yes. They will do it; and I will say, “OK, guys.” Or Mr. Dexter will say, “Prof did that a hundred years ago. Can you tweak it? Can you make it more modern?” And then, if I ... Like some of his stuff that he does, I don’t want to touch it because—I’m like, you know—this is ideal. I wouldn’t ... I can’t think of it being any other way. The only difference in Prof and myself is that, well, I take a while. I’m still learning to work faster because I am so ... I am so caught up in what I’m going to do next. I always think big. I want to do something elaborate. I want The Singers to look their best. I want to explore different patterns through space. I want to do something I haven’t done. I want to cross that line. I don’t want to be stuck in this bubble.

JW: Do you ever have times where either the singers themselves or Halliburton will just say no?

KM: Oh yeah, definitely! [Members of The University Singers:] “Too much, Kev.” Sometimes, I’ll give in. Sometimes, I’ll say, “No. That’s what I want. That’s what I see.” That’s why they have to trust you. They have to trust you. If they don’t trust you, then, you know ... It’s funny. It took a while for them to trust me. Even after that first season I did after Prof died and they got rave reviews and people were like, “Kevin, you turned The Singers into performers. I’ve seen another side of The Singers I’ve not seen before,” I really had to give the credit to Professor because it’s the

way he taught me, you know, although I had my own say in it and took my own input. And Mr. Dexter, you know, behind every strong man or woman, there's always a hundred persons pushing them, who have contributed to their development as artists or whatever they do. It's been quite a nice journey with The UWI Singers. Don't get me wrong: there are bad times, and there are good times in everything that we do.

JW: Especially in the artistic community.

KM: Yeah, definitely. People will have differences. We won't all see eye-to-eye. But you're actually ... As I tell them, "Guys, you have me here for a reason; and sometimes you just need to trust me, trust my judgment. I will never, ever do anything to make you look bad. It's always about making you looking good." And they love to hear that.

JW: Do the singers themselves ever have ideas about movement?

KM: Oh yes. Oh yes, and good ideas, too! "Oh, I've never thought about that." Because, remember, you don't know everything, you know? And you use it. "OK. Thank you for that suggestion." UWI Singers, they're very talented; and they always have ideas. Some ideas you're not going to use; but every now and then, I always say to them, "I am open to ideas I'm open to ideas and suggestions." I'm not autocratic. I'm not, you know, this

person who says, “Do it my way.” No, I’m not that sort of person. It’s a community, and we share thoughts and ideas.

JW: So when you ... when they are getting ready for their spring season or whatever—and you just tell me when you need to go ‘cause I know you’ve got to get back to school—do you also have involvement with, like, costuming and when they use lightening? Just say they’re performing in Sherlock Centre. Do you have anything to do with that?

KM: Well, I’m not the artistic director. I’m the movement director, but I will give suggestions. And they take my suggestions. Or Mr. Dexter ... Every final word lies with Mr. D, what he thinks. He has been in it for a while, and he has an idea of what he wants. And he will say, “Kev, what do you think about this?” Or Halliburton will say, “What do you think about this idea?” Or Halliburton will have his ideas as well. So it’s all about collaborating and working together as a team to get the best result possible. So I have costume ideas; but they really have a costume mistress. But I’ll say to them, “No, I don’t think that works.” And so that’s what we do. We collaborate and work together as a team, you know, to get the best possible results.

JW: That’s awesome. Well, is there anything else that, in just talking about the movement part of it, anything else that you can think of, anything that I

haven't asked that is good to know about what they do and how they do it in terms of the movement?

KM: What they do or how they do it in terms of the movement?

JW: Or anything really?

KM: Well, they ... You know you have, like, a cross-section of singers, right? Everyone won't perform to your liking. And so sometimes you have to, you know ... you have to tweak stuff so everyone can look the same 'cause they're not dancers, so you ... what you'd expect of a dancer, the eye that they have ... Some of them don't have it. And so there are better movers. Halliburton's a really good mover. He's an excellent mover. [unintelligible] The movement doesn't always transcend. You have to ... you have to put the energy in it. So when they're performing and it doesn't work or it does work ... So the energy they use to perform the movement is important and the facial expression, as well.

JW: And you deal with that, too?

KM: I deal with all of that, too.

JW: You're looking at all of the facial ...

KM: Yes. Facial and the body language. [KM demonstrates a movement.] The posture and the nuance of the movement, you understand? And the facial expressions, very important. The stance, how you stand, you know, how well you move ... Move to the right. Where's your arm? Where are your arms? Are we in sync? Are we coordinated? [KM demonstrates a movement again.] Just being meticulous about ... I'm very ... I am a perfectionist. And I get on their cases for that. Sometimes, they do get frustrated; but I always encourage them. I say, "Come on, guys. Don't get frustrated. Remember we're in this together." I feel, when you are in front of a group of persons and you are leading them, you should always try to encourage them the best possible way because, you know, people get disheartened, you know, especially if they're not getting a movement that they think it's frustrating them. And then, they'll say, "I'm a singer, man. I'm a singer, not a dancer." And I'm like, "I know, but I'll work with you after." And I do a lot of that. "I'll work with you after. Don't get frustrated. You're going to get it. Remember it's a process." You have to remind them of that. So it's really a process. Everyone doesn't get it the same time. Everyone doesn't learn it the same way; but at the end of it all, you want to make sure that they're in sync and they look their best.

JW: Now, when they ...? They've toured since you've been the choreographer. Do you go on tour with them?

KM: No, never. Never go on tour with them.

JW: I guess Prof did, though, as artistic director.

KM: Sometimes, yes. Remember I share ... I'm NDTC, as well, also a dancer. If I'm not at UWI Singers ... I'm not at UWI Singers a lot, though. When it comes to season time, I'm there; but apart from that, 'cause remember they already know ... When they have a re-show, they call me in; or they have, like, for Christmas, they call me in and stuff like that.

JW: I saw their Christmas show. We were here for Christmas. I mean it was just spectacular.

KM: Definitely. So those are the things. And for Halliburton, and you have a few others, seniors, that will learn the choreography and stick to it. And you know, people, every now and then ... You know that, if you don't practice something, then you might lose it. So then, you have those senior persons saying, "No, this is what it's supposed to be." Of course, if they don't know, then they all can go back to the tape, you know, the recording to see ... That's why I think it's important to document your work—very, very important.

JW: Do you think they're doing a better job of that, in terms of documenting?

KM: Oh, yes. Definitely because, I think, there is some stuff that they have lost. [unintelligible] They are more into documenting and actually knowing where the material is. You know people come and borrow your stuff and don't return it. So I think they are more into documenting and keeping more than one copy and all that.

JW: Good. That's good. That's important.

KM: And you know, they have these different persons that are actually leaders. You have a president, a vice president, a treasurer. You have to have a nice committee to share the work, you know. Of course, remember it's a non-profit. They don't get paid, but you'd think they get paid. One thing I like about the group, they're in rehearsals. They're all working people. Most of them are people in school. They're tired, or they get a little lousy. But when they go on stage, they deliver. They really deliver. They deliver.

JW: They are performers. They really are.

KM: Yes. They deliver. They all want to look their best. UWI Singers, it's a name that has a reputation; and they have to keep up that reputation. Of course, they are rather fortunate because they get funding from the University; and you cannot have a section of the University that is pulling down the name. No, you have to uplift and elevate the University and

represent the University at the highest level. I think that UWI is very proud of The UWI Singers. So they basically support them in whatever they endeavor.

JW: Well, this has been very helpful and very fascinating for me. It really has.

KM: Thank you.

JW: I've done some reading. Like I said, I've read a lot of stuff by Prof; and it's interesting, you know, with the formation of the NDTC and The UWI Singers right around Independence ...

KM: 1962.

JW: ... and that desire to elevate the Caribbean and not look at the Caribbean as inferior to the British or European or whatever. A lot of his writings have to do with that.

KM: Yes. Cultural identity.

JW: Cultural identity.

KM: Loving that part of you, Caribbeanness, and using what our people do and uplifting our people. Definitely

JW: But to get, kind of, the technical side of it is good because, you know, Mr. Dexter says that Prof coined the term *choral theatre*. Right?

KM: Yes, he did.

JW: So “This is what we do.” But he wrote hardly anything about it. The most you see is he’ll mention the term, like, in a program note or whatever. So trying to describe ...

KM: I couldn’t understand, though, why. It’s funny ...

JW: But it’s a great ... it’s a great term. And that’s what I ... In talking to Lilieth and Mr. Dexter and doing my research, it’s really your term. It’s really The University Singers’ term. Nowhere else do people use that term in that way. In the few other places ...

KM: What do you call it?

JW: Well, I mean I ...

KM: If you should coin a phrase, what would you call it?

JW: I don't know. I don't think there's any better phrase than that. I don't know what else you could call it. 'Cause even in the United States, I've tried to think, "OK, what's ... what is kind of like this?" And the closest thing I can think of that's kind of like choral theatre is show choir, if you know about that. Right? But even that's not the same thing because show choirs, mainly, are high school children or middle school children.

KM: Oh, you know, when I was in Cathy Levy ... younger ... I think the Harlem choir came.

JW: Harlem Boy Choir?

KM: No, it wasn't boy. It was boy and girl, some choir from Harlem. They were a show choir. It was amazing. I want to do that!

JW: Because show choir, again, they're mainly younger children. They're not, you know ... As opposed to University Singers, who are attached to a university and they're either current students or former students. You know, show choir, they mainly exist for competition, in that you have your season; but it's really a competition season. And in fact, in our part of the state in Mississippi, that competition season has been going on and is

almost over. So all around us, all these high schools who have show choirs have been getting prepared and going to this competition or this festival or this invitational or whatever. And then, once that's over, the show choir is pretty much done. They might do a show for parents or whatever, but that's pretty much it. It's more of a competitive thing.

KM: So a perfect example would be *Sister Act* [a 1992 movie starring Whoopi Goldberg, whose character hid from mobsters in a convent and used her musical abilities to teach the nuns to sing.], right? *Sister Act*.

JW: That kind of thing. In *Sister Act*, I think it was *Sister Act 2* [the 1993 sequel, again starring Whoopi Goldberg and following a similar plotline to the 1992 film], right? Yeah, that was a competition, but they were ... In that particular thing, there were, like, classical choirs and then stuff ...

KM: So in show choir, do you have sections you can enter; or it doesn't matter?

JW: Show choirs, they're all doing pop. Show choirs don't do classical. So in a comparison, University Singers, they have a pop section; but they do classical, too. So I mean it's not an apple-to-apples comparison.

KM: So they are touching everything.

JW: They are—The UWI Singers, that is. So that's about the closest thing that I can think of to The UWI Singers in America; but it's not even really that. I mean it's a really ... It's just a unique thing that you all do. So I'm happy to be exploring and to, hopefully, help tell that story.

KM: [unintelligible] I'm not sure why Professor hasn't written anything on it.

JW: He really hasn't. And trust me, I've checked; and I've searched and searched.

KM: I'm gonna to ask my colleague because he archives for the Professor. He's the NDTC archivist. I'm gonna to ask him if he has anything 'cause he has a lot of his writings actually. When we were cleaning out his office, I don't know if there was anything that could be useful to you. So I'm gonna ask him. I'm definitely gonna ask him.

JW: Yeah. If he sees anything, like, talking about choral theatre ... But by and large, even in, like, the published works of Prof, there's nothing about choral theatre. Again, the main mention you see of that comes in a ... like a University Singers program, printed program, where Prof, as artistic director, is writing a little forward; and it will say "Our choral theatre ..."
But tell me ... tell me more. And there's nothing else there. So even, like, Lilieth, she's writing a history of The Singers; so she's been working on

that. And so she's got a mention of choral theatre in her history that she's working on, kind of talking about it. So I've sat down with her; and she's got a lot of information.

KM: But UWI Singers has ... It's like—well, they say—is the sister or the brother of NDTC. [unintelligible]

JW: Well, yeah, I mean because Nettleford was between both. And even, like, Howard has said that, when Howard when in high school—now, this is pre-Independence—at Kingston College [an all-boys school in Kingston, Jamaica], that Prof was choreographing, like, their operettas and things like that. So you know, you see that from Prof's stage work, to the Pantomime, to founding NDTC, to working with University Singers, that cross-pollination. The link was him, you know. So of course, he's gonna bring movement.

KM: It's funny. It is really funny 'cause out of the Pantomime to UWI Singers, I've done Jamaican Folk Singers. I've done UWI Chorale. You know about UWI Chorale?

JW: I've heard of them. Yeah.

KM: UWI Chorale. Well, NDTC Singers. And I've done Sagicor [a Caribbean financial services firm] Singers. [unintelligible] It has opened a lot of doors.

JW: So did you work with Jamaican Folk Singers when Ms. [Olive] Lewin was alive or no?

KM: No, I have never worked with them. No, I've never worked with ... I've never ... It's Paula Shaw that actually worked with Jamaican Folk Singers. I've worked with the Cari-Folk Singers.

JW: But even that group, Jamaican Folk Singers, even though there's some similarities with UWI Singers, it's not the same thing. What they do is folk, and they stay there.

KM: And Cari-Folk does folk, Caribbean folk. And UWI Singers does folk; and they do their pop, the classical ...

JW: So I mean University Singers, I mean, really ... It's a unique kind of thing, especially to be attached to a university. Again, in the United States, like when we sang last night, we're a university choir. We might use movement on one piece just for, like, something different; but we're not using movement throughout the program. That doesn't define what we do,

the staging. We might stage one thing or sing in a round or something like that. But for it to be what we do? No. And that's where I think it's University Singers' ... it's their thing, and it's very compelling.

KM: And I think Professor set it up nicely. He set it up nicely to really ... 'Cause, I mean, he's a firm believer in movement, you know; and he loved the arts ...

JW: Yeah, very much.

KM: ... you know, and singing. As I said to you, he's a musician in his own right. You know he has this ability to pick up sounds and rhythms and this undertone. And I'm like, "How did he hear that?" And how he works ... You know he has a piece of music. He loves it; and whenever he drives off, you always hear it blasting 'cause he's listening to the music and trying to dissect the music to get the different sounds, you know? [unintelligible] It's just amazing. He ... What better person to work with The UWI Singers because of his love for music?

JW: Well, I mean ... I've seen your work now a couple of times. And it looks like you are ... you've taken up the mantle.

KM: Thank you. I'm trying. I'm really trying to carry on his legacy.

JW: Sure. Well, I thank you for your time today. I know to come out in the middle of your day is big, but this has been very insightful.

KM: It's my honor. No problem.

APPENDIX G

COMMUNICATION WITH FRANKLIN HALLIBURTON

Interviewee: Franklin Halliburton (FH), musical director of The University Singers

Interviewer: Albert Joseph Wolfe, Jr. (JW), researcher

Dates: February–November 2015

Note: Due to scheduling conflicts during research visits to Jamaica, a face-to-face interview was not possible. Instead, communication with Franklin Halliburton was conducted via WhatsApp, a popular text messaging application for smartphones (<http://www.whatsapp.com>). This text of the transcript that follows was copied directly from WhatsApp with no edits. The occasional note in brackets has been added to provide context for the reader.

February 26, 2015

JW: Franklin, this is Joey Wolfe from the U.S. I am a doctoral student in choral conducting and got your contact information from Chris Benjamin [a public relations specialist who has worked with the University Singers for a number of years]. I have been working with him regarding the upcoming tour of Jamaica by The Southern Chorale. I am also working on a dissertation about the University Singers, which is why I am touching base with you today. I would like to have a conversation with you about your work as director of the Singers. Can you look at your schedule and let me

know if you have any time available on Monday, March 9? We are looking forward to singing with you all on Sunday, March 8?

February 28, 2015

FH: Hi Joey, thank you so much for contacting me. We are all very excited that you guys are returning to Jamaica. We are even more deeply honored that our choir has formed the basis of your dissertation (or a portion thereof). Wow. That is awesome. I would be glad to meet with you when you get here. I am going to make a special effort to do so. Monday, March 9 may be slightly difficult for me (I have a scheduled Court trial all day). But I should know later down this week if the trial will proceed or not. If it does not go on, then we can have a sit down together over lunch and have a chat. One way or the other, we will definitely catch up while you are here. Looking forward to seeing you all. Cheers.

[FH was not able to meet formally to discuss The University Singers. We did interact briefly at a joint concert between his choir and The Southern Chorale of The University of Southern Mississippi, but that interaction was limited and did not include a discussion of this dissertation.]

June 9, 2015

JW: Hey, Franklin. I hope the opera performances have been going well. I have quick question. I was talking with Kevin Moore back in March, and he

mentioned some of the arrangers who help the you. He mentioned someone with the last name Simpson and someone else with the last name Mundle (?). What are their first names?

JW: Never mind. I found them: Ewan Simpson and O'Neal Mundle.

June 20, 2015

JW: Franklin, quick question. How long have you been director of the Singers? What year did you take over from Mr. Dexter?

FH: Hi Joey, I took over the Singers from Sept 2013.

JW: Thanks. I'm just confused. Mr. Dexter said you've been directing the group for 8 years. I read somewhere that he stepped down in 2002. How do I reconcile all this?

FH: Lol [social media abbreviation for "laugh out loud"] OK...let me step in and explain it properly

JW: Please!

FH: He stopped physically conducting the choir from 2002. But he remained the Musical Director of the choir all the same; is, he would have full superintendence over all the musical affairs of the choir just the same

JW: So, you assumed conducting responsibilities when?

FH: He would make all the high level decisions for the group, recruit, select the repertoire etc... I started to conduct the choir from 2002/2003

JW: Ah... Makes sense.

FH: And took full reins of the choir just about 10 years later

JW: I see. Does he have any formal role presently?

FH: He is the Musical Director Emeritus His role now is to train the individual voices

JW: OK. Thank you for that explanation. It is perfectly clear now.

FH: He also sits on our choir's music committee

JW: Excellent.

September 12, 2015

JW: Franklin, how are you? I trust all is well. Quick question: whom should I contact to ask about obtaining copies of photos of the Singers for my dissertation? I think it would be helpful to include pictures to accompany my descriptions of things like your costumes, your use of gesture and staging, etc. Even though my descriptive powers are good, a picture is worth a thousand words!

FH: Lol

JW: It's true! I think the readers need to SEE. If I could cut and paste a video into this document, I would!

FH: Hi Joey, send an email to Althea McKenzie, President of the organization

JW: Do you have an e-mail address?

FH: Her email address is universitiesingers1938@gmail.com

September 20, 2015

JW: Franklin, good evening! I just sent you a copy of an e-mail I composed to Althea. I also sent you an e-mail directly with an attached Word document.

FH: Ok, will look out for it

JW: Thank you, kind sir!

September 26, 2015

JW: Franklin, two questions for you: 1.) Does each singer purchase his/her own concert attire? 2.) Have you had a chance to review the document I sent last week? [JW sent to FH a draft copy of a chapter from this dissertation. The chapter described choral theatre and its elements.] I hope all is well.

FH: Hi Joey, the choir covers all costuming needs. We ask each person to provide formal footwear only (ie, black shoes for men and black closed toe pumps for women). Persons (both male and female) are asked to provide their own make up...the women's face/war paint is far more elaborate than the men. We simply use a matte powder to take the sheen off the faces. But that's about it in terms of the costuming. The choir takes care of everything else out of the monies we raise from concerts. In respect of the document, I did get a chance to go through it and I am amazed at how comprehensively you have captured our work. Once u have successfully defended I think that all the members past and present should have a read.

JW: Any changes/corrections/edits? I want to get it right, and you are the best judge of that. Thank you for the kind words!

FH: I would say this...our officially recognized name is The University Singers. Established in or around 1958 when there was only one University in the island. Nowadays, with the emergence of several other Universities and campuses around the island, we've been referred to as 'UWI Singers' for differentiation. What I would suggest is that you standardize the name of the choir in your dissertation, either by setting out our name in full at the start and then say something like (hereafter called 'UWI Singers') or just simply referring to us as The University Singers the whole way thru.

JW: Good point! I'll work on it. That will also streamline things.

FH: The choir was formed in the days before the university was even called The University of the West Indies...before we got our Royal Charter. It was in the days when I believe we were still a University College, an adjunct of the University of London

JW: Oh, that's right. I'll make sure that point is stated in the history overview.

FH: Oh, BTW [social media abbreviation for “by the way”], I hear Althea getting the photos all ready for u

JW: Awesome! I just sent her a message about that.

October 17, 2015

JW: Franklin, good evening. Would it be accurate to say that most of the music learned by the University Singers is by rote? Mr. Dexter mentioned that you all are always looking for ways to raise everyone’s reading abilities, but it seems that many of your pieces—particularly the folk arrangements and the pop stuff—are not transcribed. Correct me if I am wrong. What you all do is remarkable and art, regardless of the music-reading abilities of the choristers. If much of the music is learned by ear, that makes your performances all the more remarkable.

October 18, 2015

FH: I would say we learn about 40 % of our music by scores. If so much. Most persons use the scores as mere word documents. Few persons in the group are musically literate. We do try to improve their level of literacy, but yes, your assertion is indeed correct

October 26, 2015

JW: Hello, sir. I hope all is well. How were the shows this past weekend?
Question for you... What percentage of your choristers are still in university? I know many stay in the US after they finish at UWI. It would be good to have an idea of the composition of current students versus alums.

FH: 50:50 ratio That's the current ratio. We try not to over populate the choir with alumni

November 26, 2015

JW: One other thing... This is more of a legal thing. I have requested pictures directly from the University Singers. Chris Benjamin has shared pictures with me that he took. I also have a copy of the DVD that Lilieth [Nelson, former conductor of the choir] produced from the 2013 season. I know I'll need a letter of permission from the University Singers for the pictures I use from your collection. Do I need your permission to use Chris's pictures and any still shots I use from Lilieth's video? Chris said he would get a permission letter for the pictures he took. Lilieth thought I needed your permission, though, to use pictures from her video. What are your thoughts?

FH: Yes, permission is required from us to use both the photos and stills from Chris and Lilieth. We gave them permission to take pics and record for a specific purpose. Legally they are not authorized to pass this on to a third party without the choir's consent. Of course, in this case, the consent will be granted, but I just have to point out the legalities of it all to you. Surely u appreciate our position...so as to safeguard against abuse of copyright

JW: Absolutely! I am glad to have the clarification. I have no issue with that at all. What's the best way to go about securing a letter of permission?

FH: When we send the pics on, we will also send the Consent Form for u to sign and return to us.

JW: OK. I'll have to include a copy of that in my dissertation. For Chris's pictures and Lilieth's DVD, what's the process?

FH: If u make us know precisely what u have from them we will endeavor to include it in the Consent Form we used to u. That way it's covered as well.

JW: OK. I'll get that to you in an e-mail.

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