

## 2015 SOAR Project Proposal

**Project Title:** The Choral Village

**Faculty Member:** Joy Hirokawa, DMA, Assistant Professor of Music, Music Department

**Student:** Kurtis Reif

**Timeline:** 10 weeks total from April to August, 2015. Please see timeline.

### Description of the Project:

National events in the last year bring into focus the significant need for young people to learn tolerance, leadership, and understanding of those different than themselves. Research supports the fact that choral singing contributes to developing good citizens and a sense of community. In 2009, Chorus America, the national service organization for choirs of all types, produced the *Chorus Impact Study*, designed to gather new data relative to the role of choral music in childhood education and to update an earlier study about the impact of choral music. Among other items, the study found that:

- Chorus members exhibit greater civic leadership than their fellow Americans;
- Children who sing in choruses get significantly better grades;
- Parents...report that their children are better team players and have more advanced social skills;
- ...Educators believe choirs...help get students more involved in their communities and add to the overall sense of community in schools. (Chorus America, 2009).

With this research as the backdrop, the purpose of this project is to provide an opportunity for young people of diverse backgrounds to come together to learn leadership, community, and teamwork through a program that would include teambuilding activities, collegiate experiences, musical experiences (Middle Eastern drumming), storytelling, and artistically expressive choral performance. The name, Choral Village, is derived from the African proverb, "It takes a whole village to raise our children. It takes a whole village to raise one child." We come to understand others through understanding their stories. Stories heard, performed, experienced, and shared through song are among the most powerful.

Using best practices in building community through music and other performing arts, we will examine the impact these activities might have on participants' attitudes and views towards others. This program will be in collaboration with The Bel Canto Children's Chorus (BCCC), a nationally recognized, not-for-profit, community based youth chorus founded in 1993 ([www.belcantochildren.com](http://www.belcantochildren.com)), which will be responsible for obtaining additional funding and support for the program.

The program will be open to youth just completing grades 5 – 8 who are nominated by a teacher or other adult who knows the individual well. Candidates will be considered on the basis of their potential for leadership within their home community, desire to learn, self-discipline, openness to new ways of thinking, motivation, and love of music. Singing ability will be an important, but will not be the deciding factor, as personal skills are more important for this program, and vocal technique will be included in rehearsal. However, a child must have a good ear, be able to match pitch, and *love* to sing! Applications will request, on a voluntary basis, information on race, gender, ethnicity, and faith in an effort to ensure

diversity within the ensemble, essential to the goals of this project. This age group is being targeted specifically because they are still in a more formative stage in the development of their attitudes towards others.

The program will run Monday – Friday from 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM, extending on Friday to include a 7:00 PM concluding performance. Guest artists will provide specialized instruction in Middle Eastern drumming and Story-Telling/Theater Games, areas that also contribute to learning about others and working together as a team. I will lead choral activities.

With the 2015-16 In Focus theme of Poverty and Inequality, this project provides an excellent opportunity to tie into the broader collegiate community.

**Enumerate the roles and responsibilities of the student(s) and faculty mentor, and include a timetable of expected milestones.**

April 1 – 30 (Week 1)

Kurtis will complete the first 40 hours of work over four weeks in April. All work will be supervised and mentored by Joy Hirokawa.

- Work with the Leadership Center and BCCC to publicize the program.
- Assist in the development of publicity materials and news releases.
- Become familiar with techniques used in ethnographic research.

May 1 – 15 (Week 2)

- Research existing scholarship on the effect of community building through choral music.
- Research and identify programs, curricula, and team building activities for potential inclusion in the program and to provide a reference point.
- Assist in identifying potential student participants
- Assist in identifying appropriate music for the program
- Assist in overall program planning

May 18 – 31 (Weeks 3 - 4)

- Prepare materials and plan for team building activities based on completed research
- Assist in overall program planning

June 1 – 21 (Week 5 – 6 – 7)

- Learn how to use video recording equipment and video editing software.
- Assist in developing final schedule, curricular materials, and organization of the program

June 22 – 26 (Week 8)

- The Choral Village Program

June 29 – July 10 (Week 9)

- Compile all research and organize for final reports, presentations, and video
- Write final report for SOAR

July 11 – 17 (Week 10)

- Complete 5 – 10 minute documentary video of the project
- Prepare presentation for Moravian Scholar's Day and LVAIC Social Research Social Justice Conference

**Describe how the student will be engaged in discipline-appropriate scholarly research.**

Kurtis will be building on research he completed in our FYS class on Music and Social Change. In that class, we studied historical and contemporary situations in which music played a significant role in instigating, reflecting, documenting, and/or promoting social justice issues. The Choral Village provides a first hand opportunity for him to observe and participate in music as an agent for social change, as we endeavor to change attitudes of young people towards those not like themselves.

In preparation for the project, Kurtis will identify existing research relative to the positive impact of singing in groups to create community and developing good citizenship among young people. Additionally, he will research other programs and activities that provide similar opportunities for youth. This research will inform our planning as we develop the program, including identifying, selecting, and leading activities that promote interpersonal sensitivity. He will work closely with the guest artists and me to learn techniques and approaches for community building with young people.

During the week of The Choral Village, Kurtis will instruct activities and provide leadership for the program. Using techniques consistent with ethnographic research, Kurtis will document and ultimately report on the project. Audio/Video documentary is an appropriate choice for research based in the performing arts.

**Describe how the work of the student will contribute to the discipline and opportunities the student will have to share his or her work with other students, faculty, and the community.**

As a music education student, Kurtis will be able to directly apply what he learns in this program to his future work as a teacher. In the final weeks of the project, he will develop a 5 – 8 minute video capturing the spirit of the project that may be posted on Moravian's website or YouTube. He will apply to present at the Moravian Scholar's Day and the LVAIC Social Research Social Justice Conference held annually at Muhlenberg College in the spring.

## Student Statement of Purpose

Title of Project: The Choral Village – Leadership Through Song

Kurtis Reif

Major: Music Education and Music Composition

Graduation Date: May 2018

Faculty Member: Dr. Joy Hirokawa

On-Campus Housing: No

I consider the opportunity to work on a SOAR project over the spring, summer, and fall of 2015 a wonderful asset to my continued studies in pursuit of a Bachelor's of Music in music education. Upon being granted acceptance into this program I would be presented with field experience directly related to my major in order to better prepare me for my career upon graduation. This project provides an opportunity to receive mentorship from my professors through intensive research, planning, and execution of a predetermined pedagogy. This project will also allow me to put practical use to the research skills I learned during my First-Year Seminar as well as building upon the research I completed for Dr. Hirokawa's class. (Music: A Force for Change LINC 101J). I will be able to connect ideas about cultural diversity in the classroom that I am currently learning in my EDUC 160 course with Dr. DesJardin.

Working with my FYS professor and faculty advisor, Dr. Hirokawa, I plan to collaborate in the development of a summer music program called *The Choral Village* with the mission of breaking down ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, and religious barriers through the medium of choral singing. This program will work with children of the middle school level from various schools, faith organizations, and cultural organizations with a large array of cultural backgrounds. The intention shall be for a weeklong program to take place, which will educate children in choral singing and vocal technique, as well as equipping the students with leadership and relational skills. The goals of this project directly correspond to the ideals expressed through Moravian College's mission statement. By taking part in an inclusive and accepting environment, these students will learn valuable skills to use as they grow to become to future of our community. The vision of this program would be to have students leave the program with an increased aptitude for choral singing and vocal technique as well as a better understanding of their countercultural peers and the importance of acceptance in any community.

Using national children's choirs with similar goals (i.e. *Young People's Chorus of NYC*, *Boston Children's Chorus*, etc.) as models we will develop a structured pedagogy to best achieve the vision of cultural integration and leadership development. Coupled with the skills Dr. Hirokawa has acquired over years of experience as director of *The Bel Canto Children's Chorus* we will partake in intensive research through this spring to best design the program. During the week of June 22<sup>nd</sup> we will put our research into practice through daily rehearsals, team building activities, music clinics, etc. We will then culminate our research and observations from the week to determine the success of the program. A formal presentation will be devised and we will share our learning's with our college campus and colleagues.

I feel this project will serve me as a practical field experience that will help me reap benefits for years to come into my profession. By developing an age appropriate pedagogy that works to not only elicit acquired musical skills but also to instill cultural acceptance and heightened leadership ability in the children, as well as researching past projects and observations about the power that music has as force for social justice, I will obtain a specific set of skills and knowledge that will directly benefit my studies at Moravian College and my future as a music educator. An opportunity as such gives me distinct advantages over students from other post-secondary institutions.

### **Rationale**

I wish to be a part of this SOAR project in order to gain essential skills for my projected career in music education. By learning how to cross cultural barriers through the medium of music I will be equipped with an array of skills to use in my classroom in order to be the best possible educator to my future students. This SOAR project gives me amazing opportunities to experience and experiment with teaching a diversity of children in a choir setting.

### **Expected Outcomes**

Through this SOAR project I will learn critical pedagogy for music education that works best for teaching leadership skills and cultural diversity.