

**CHORAL UNIT STANDARDS AND SUPPORT MATERIAL FOR
PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is divided into parts, the nature of which differs according to the target groups for which they were written. In Part I the author sets out to generate Choral Unit Standards and their associated Assessment Criteria for Choral Singing in the Primary School in South Africa. The requirement of unit standards by the South African Qualifications Authority, and South Africa's recent move to outcomes-based education, provided the impetus for the Music Education Unit Standards for Southern Africa (MEUSSA) team to design a General Music Appraisal Programme, as part of which this work was designed to function.

The implementation of this Choral Unit Standards framework should have the following positive results:

- Choristers can earn academic credit for their participation in choral singing, thereby gaining recognition and support for their significant and substantial involvement.
- Choral educators are given effective guidelines and assessment criteria which enable them to structure a comprehensive and creditable choral programme.
- Increased acknowledgement and enhanced perception of the choral programme as an important medium for promoting the educational process is inculcated.
- Greater accountability to stakeholders is established, thereby placing the choral fraternity in a more powerful position to compete for recognition, support, time and resources.
- A common foundation for all choirs in South Africa is promoted. The Choral Unit Standards apply across cultural groups within South Africa, as well as at every level of development, i.e. from the primary school right through to tertiary institutions.
- The children's choir is recognised as an instrument of aesthetic and artistic excellence.

Part II of the thesis comprises support/resource material required to effectively implement the Choral Unit Standards and thereby structure and direct an innovative and meaningful primary school choir. The support material has also been written for students at tertiary institutions studying choral methods and conducting. Both pre-service and in-service education and training of teachers would benefit from this thesis. In the present economic



climate, this resource material can be made available at a far more affordable price than imported books, and is also compiled for the specific South African circumstances.

KEYWORDS

Primary/elementary schools, children, choirs, support/resource materials, unit standards, MEUSSA (Music Education Unit Standards for Southern Africa), conducting, choral rehearsals, music education, South Africa.



DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my children, Elise, Helmut (Jnr.) and Ludwig, and my grandchildren, Matthew and Bianca. They are my reason for living.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following remarkable people for their various contributions:

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- Steve Williams who gave his time unstintingly to help me with the lay-out and formatting;
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- My husband, Helmut, for his boundless patience, help and vital support in this venture.

I also wish to thank the University of Pretoria for granting me the financial assistance to write this thesis.

NOTES TO THE READER

The reader will find that the language use varies in different parts of the thesis. This is as a result of the different target groups that are being addressed, namely:

- The academic institution that requires formal use of language, which is implemented mainly in the “Research Outline” (**Part I**, Chapter 1);
- The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) that specifies terminology according to their guidelines, which is evident in “Generating Choral Unit Standards” (**Part I**, Chapter 3); and
- The ordinary teacher in the primary school who requires language use that is accessible, as in “Support Material for the Choral Educator in the Primary School” (**Part II**).

Furthermore, references are largely omitted in **Part II**, *Support Material for the Choral Educator in the Primary School*. This is not because this section is not based on wide-ranging literature study, in addition to personal experience. It is rather because this support material is for the ordinary teacher and it was deemed more user-friendly to omit numerous references, which would only interrupt the flow of information for such a reader, in contrast to academics who would require these references.

The thesis is divided into three parts. These parts are indicated by bold Roman numerals, with the chapter and page number in Arabic numerals (not in bold), e.g. **Part I** 3-6, refers to part one, chapter three, page number six. Likewise, figure **II** - 3-1, refers to the figure in part two, chapter three, figure number one.

The photographs used in **Part II**, Chapter 6, “Vocal Pedagogy and Musicianship Skills”, are all of choristers from the Redhill Preparatory School choir in Sandton, where the author teaches. Two sets of photographs are supplied as an illustration of the basic/pure Italian vowel sounds. (Refer to figures **II** – 6-15a to **II** – 6-15e.) This is because mouth shapes differ and the reader is thus given a more representative example than would be the case with only one set of photographs.

Throughout the thesis, middle **C** = **c**¹ and the **c** an octave higher would be **c**². The **b** that lies a semi-tone below middle **c**, would have no superscript number after it.

The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols are given in square brackets, the equivalent letter in inverted commas, and a simplified version of phonetic spelling in ordinary curved brackets, e.g. [ɛ] “e” (eh). Although the International Phonetic Alphabet offers symbols for exact sounds in all languages, a simplified version of phonetic spelling (in curved brackets) and English equivalents are supplied because this may be deemed more user-friendly for the average choral teacher in the primary school. Throughout this thesis the long vowel sounds are used for [u], [ɔ], [ɑ] and [i]. The short vowel sound is used for [ɛ].

A general music glossary is not supplied in this thesis. Should readers require definitions and explanations of music terms that are not provided, they can consult the following books, the details of which are provided in the Sources:

- Decker, H.A. & Kirk, C. J. *Choral Conducting: Focus on Communication* (1988)
- Ehmann, W. & Haasemann, F. *Voice Building for Choirs*, Revised edition (1981)
- Hausmann, C.S. et al *World of Choral Music* (1988)
- MENC *Teaching Choral Music: a Course of Study* (1991)
- Rao, D. *We Will Sing!* (1993)

Although the author of this thesis criticises choral handbooks which lack back-of-book indexes, this thesis itself does not include such an index. The nature of theses and books differs, and this thesis does make use of substantial cross-referencing. If, as the author intends, **Part II** of this thesis is published, so as to make the material readily available for South African teachers, at that point an extensive back-of-book index will be added.

This thesis addresses Unit Standards in Choral Singing which are closely related to the General Music Appraisal Programme (GMAP). It is therefore suggested that readers familiarise themselves with the core structure of the GMAP. (Refer to the Appendix.)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACDA	American Choral Directors' Association (USA)
FET	Further Education and Training
GET	General Education and Training
GMAP	General Music Appraisal Programme
HET	Higher Education and Training
INSET	In-Service Education and Training
IPA	International Phonetic Alphabet
ISME	International Society for Music Education
MENC	Music Educators National Conference (USA)
MEUSSA	Music Education Unit Standards for Southern Africa
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSB	National Standards Body
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
PRESET	Pre-Service Education and Training
SACS	South African Choral Society
SAMRO	South African Music Rights Organisation
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SARRAL	South African Recording Rights Association
SGB	Standards Generating Body