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Applying Universal Design for Learning and Queer Pedagogy to Choral Rehearsal Structures

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Abstract

Individuals participating in choral rehearsals bring varied relationships to voice, identity, participation, and ensemble traditions. Because choral singing is an embodied and communal art, GALA choral educators may seek pedagogical approaches that support queer, trans, nonbinary, and gender-expansive singers without singling out individuals in the name of inclusion. In this article, I put Universal Design for Learning (UDL) into conversation with queer pedagogy as complementary frameworks for reconsidering choral rehearsal design. I situate UDL within its roots in disability advocacy and accessibility while distinguishing its emphasis on proactive design from queer pedagogy's interrogation of assumptions that have become normalized within educational spaces. Together, these frameworks invite directors to ask when gender and other forms of classification meaningfully support musical and pedagogical goals and when they unnecessarily constrain participation. I draw from choral and music education literature, queer pedagogy, disability studies, and my own practice to examine applications in rehearsal structures and participation, vocal pedagogy and voice classification, and repertoire and interpretive design. Ultimately, I argue that queering rehearsal design does not require abandoning the structures of collective music-making but reconsidering when and how those structures shape who can participate within them.

Keywords

queer pedagogy, universal design for learning, LGBTQ, choral pedagogy, rehearsal design

Introduction

Those who participate in choral rehearsals engage in deeply embodied work. Singers negotiate breath, resonance, posture, language, identity, and expression, while building community within a collective musical environment (Menon, 2026a). Choirs can become profoundly affirming spaces for community and self-expression, particularly for singers who experience belonging through collaborative artistic practice (Gregoire, 2025; Parker, 2023). At the same time, some inherited choral structures may carry assumptions regarding voices, bodies, presentation, and participation that may not fully account for the multiplicity of singers who enter rehearsal spaces (Palkki, 2017). Specifically, such assumptions may create environments in which LGBTQ+ individuals feel discrimination, distress, and alienation (Winfree, 2025).

Taken-for-granted structures may reinforce practices that minoritized individuals, including those within the LGBTQ+ community, may find exclusionary (Menon, 2026a). Directors may use gendered language such as "men" and "women" (Palkki, 2017), organize structures around binary presentation (e.g., concert attire and ensemble branding) (McKiernan & McNickle, 2023), or presume relationships between vocal range and gender identity (McKiernan, 2021). Such practices might represent unexamined assumptions held by directors, but they may also persist through inherited traditions that have become commonplace within choral practice. Regardless of their origin, taken-for-granted practices shape both the musical and social experiences of singers within ensemble spaces. For instance, when choir directors assign voice parts using a binary method, they implicitly communicate assumptions regarding which bodies and identities belong within specified vocal spaces. Similarly, concert attire and timbral

ideals might constrain choristers' bodily comportment and personal expression (Hess, 2012; O'Toole, 2005). As such, common practices may exclude some individuals within a choir.

According to their mission statement, GALA Choirs seek to support queer, trans, nonbinary, and gender-expansive singers through community, artistry, and advocacy (GALA Choruses, 2026). However, inclusion efforts sometimes remain limited to individualized accommodations rather than broader structural reconsiderations of rehearsal design. An accommodation can provide an important response to a singer who encounters a barrier; however, it does not necessarily address the rehearsal structure that produced that barrier or anticipate that other singers might encounter it differently. In this article, I argue that Universal Design for Learning (UDL), when placed in conversation with queer-informed pedagogy, offers a productive framework for designing choral rehearsals that might better anticipate singer variability and expand pathways for participation. Specifically, I consider how these frameworks can help directors identify barriers within their own contexts and design multiple pathways toward shared musical goals.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Queer Pedagogy

UDL emerged from disability studies-informed educational frameworks that sought to move beyond retroactive accommodation models and toward proactive educational design (Meyer et al., 2014). Rather than treating learner difference as deviation from a normative student model, educators can use UDL to anticipate variability from the outset by designing multiple pathways for engagement, representation, and action or expression (CAST, 2024). These three principles provide a practical structure for considering where barriers to participation may occur. Multiple means of engagement address how learners enter, sustain, and find purpose within learning; multiple means of representation concern how learners encounter and make sense of information; and multiple means of action and expression consider how learners interact with and demonstrate their learning (CAST, 2024). Educators might implement UDL to anticipate that variability will exist and to examine whether the design of a learning environment unnecessarily privileges or constrains learners.

Importantly, UDL's roots remain connected to disability advocacy and accessibility work. Meyer et al. (2014) located barriers within individual learners and the interaction between learners, curricula, and their environments. They advocated shifting the responsibility of access from the individual requesting an accommodation toward the educator designing the learning environment. For example, rather than waiting until a singer cannot access a rehearsal activity and then devising an exception, a director might consider in advance which elements of the activity are necessary to its musical goal and which can be made flexible. For example, if the musical goal of a sectional is independent part learning, singers need not necessarily move repeatedly between rehearsal spaces to accomplish it. A director might instead organize sectionals at the beginning of rehearsal or bring sectional leaders to singers to reduce physical barriers. In using UDL within this article, I aim to avoid detaching the framework from its origins in disability studies. Nor do I suggest that disability, queerness, or gender diversity constitute equivalent forms of difference. Instead, I draw upon UDL's design orientation while maintaining the distinct histories and experiences from which these frameworks emerge. I consider how UDL's emphasis on expanding participation within choral spaces might inform more inclusive practice.

Within music education, researchers have increasingly explored how UDL may support broader forms of musical participation and accessibility (Evans, 2024; Hammel & Hourigan, 2017; Hess, 2023). Hammel and Hourigan (2017), for example, encouraged music educators to begin with students' individual strengths and needs rather than allowing diagnostic labels to determine expectations for musical learning. They advocated for a label-free approach that asked teachers to adapt musical environments, materials, and instructional practices in ways that increase access while maintaining meaningful musical goals. More specifically within choral education,

Evans (2024) translated UDL principles into ensemble practice, demonstrating how directors can provide varied means of accessing instruction and participating in choral learning without presuming that all singers will engage with rehearsal information in the same way. For example, if a conductor wants to implement solfege and hand signs into their rehearsal, they might model them by rote while also displaying a visual graphic of the signs. They may also describe each sign using a mnemonic device to create multiple ways of engaging with the learning goal. Such practices have the capability to increase participation and access.

At the same time, scholars have given critical attention to what educators mean when they claim to anticipate variability with UDL. Hess (2023) cautioned that efforts to predict learner difference can reproduce limited conceptions of disability when educators imagine in advance which forms of variability matter and how disabled students will participate. Her critique is particularly important for my application of UDL to queer choral pedagogy. In this article, I suggest practices that directors can utilize to create more flexibility, such that singers need not conform to a singular presumed relationship among body, identity, voice, and participation.

Scholars have similarly used Queer pedagogy to examine assumptions that become normalized within educational spaces, but by shifting attention away from individual difference and toward the systems that define certain identities, bodies, and ways of participating as normative in the first place (Britzman, 1995; Bryson & de Castell, 1993; Kumashiro, 2002; Shlasko, 2005). Rather than focusing exclusively on the inclusion of marginalized identities within existing structures, one might use queer pedagogy to ask how those structures come to be understood as natural, inevitable, or neutral. Bryson and de Castell (1993), for example, resisted approaches that insert queer identities into otherwise unchanged educational structures, while Shlasko (2005) positioned queering as an active practice of questioning how normalcy itself becomes constructed and sustained. In this sense, choir directors can use queer pedagogy to examine who is included, and how participation is organized and valued within educational spaces (Gould, 2013; Nemi Neto, 2018).

To queer a pedagogical practice is to examine assumptions that have become naturalized, question the norms that govern participation, and consider alternative possibilities (Shlasko, 2005). In choral settings, queer pedagogy can help choir leaders question how they organize systems of participation including voice part assignment, timbral expectations, repertoire, concert themes, physical placement, attire, and expressive conventions. Although normative structures might serve practical and musical purposes related to efficiency, they may also communicate assumptions regarding whose voices, bodies, and identities are expected within ensemble spaces (O'Toole, 2005). For example, a director may use queer pedagogy to question why a tenor/bass sectional is described as a "men's sectional," whether gender is relevant to the musical task, and what assumptions the terminology communicates about the singers expected to occupy those parts. Indeed, queering part assignments requires directors to question whether vocal range and timbre should function as evidence of gender and to consider the implications of organizing singers as though they necessarily do.

Importantly, queer pedagogy encourages educators to distinguish between structures that meaningfully support artistic and pedagogical goals and those that persist primarily through convention or habit (Nemi Neto, 2018). For example, specific gender categories may meaningfully shape repertoire interpretation, vocal identity, community formation, and artistic expression (McKiernan & McNickle, 2023). Rather than erasing gender as a meaningful aspect of musical experience or elevating a single model of participation as ideal, queer pedagogy invites educators to create space for multiple ways of being, singing, and participating within ensemble communities.

Although UDL and queer pedagogy share an interest in expanding participation, I do not understand them as interchangeable frameworks. They offer different points of entry into rehearsal design. Queer pedagogy provides a critical lens through which directors can identify and interrogate norms. Directors can use queer pedagogy to

ask questions like: Why has this rehearsal structure come to seem natural? Does the rehearsal presume certain identities or invisibilize some? When does gender meaningfully contribute to the musical task, and when does it merely organize participation? Directors can use UDL as a complementary design process. Once directors identify a potential barrier, they can ask what the musical or pedagogical goal requires, what forms of variability they can anticipate, and whether multiple pathways toward that goal can be designed from the outset. In this sense, queer pedagogy helps directors recognize what might need to be reconsidered, while UDL provides principles through which reconsideration can become proactive rehearsal design.

The relationship also works reciprocally. Hess's (2023) critique reminds educators that even well-intentioned attempts to anticipate variability can establish new assumptions about which differences matter. Queer pedagogy therefore continues to trouble the categories through which directors imagine singers, while UDL provides a means of translating that critical inquiry into flexible structures for participation. Bringing UDL and queer pedagogy into conversation may offer more than their shared commitment to inclusion and encourage directors to consider accommodation as intentional rehearsal design. Throughout the remainder of this article, I place these frameworks together to invite choral educators to consider how they design rehearsal environments and how those designs shape musical participation. In practice, I use this synthesis to ask four related questions: What is the musical or pedagogical goal? What variability might singers bring to the task? Which elements of the existing structure are necessary to that goal, and which reflect convention? Where might another pathway expand participation without compromising the musical purpose? In the examples that follow, I aim to illustrate how these questions can inform rehearsal design.

Moving from Theory to Practice

The intersection of UDL and queer pedagogy raises practical questions for choral directors. One such question is: When does gender meaningfully shape musical experience, and when does it function primarily as a mechanism for organizing participation? I have pondered this question in relation to my own rehearsal design because it moves my thinking beyond debates about whether gender should matter and instead asks how gender operates within musical contexts.

I began my queer-informed UDL approach from the premise that gender may be highly salient in some musical moments and irrelevant in others. For example, whe I programmed repertoire centered on women's empowerment, queer intimacy, masculinity and emotional expression, or gendered historical experiences, the choir engaged diverse gendered perspectives in significant ways. Similarly, I found that trans, nonbinary, and genderqueer singers in my choirs were navigating vocal transition or identity affirmation, and some experienced voice classification and rehearsal participation as deeply personal matters connected to safety, dysphoria, or affirmation (Constansis, 2008; Garrett & Palkki, 2021). In these contexts, attending to gender may be central to musical engagement.

At the same time, choral structures that shape choral participation may rely upon assumptions about gender that are not necessarily required by the musical task at hand. Specifically, leadership opportunities, musicianship expectations, expressive capacity, and rehearsal contributions do not depend upon gender identity. Likewise, assumptions about masculinity or femininity may reflect cultural expectations of gender as performance (Butler, 2013) rather than fixed musical truths. A queer pedagogical lens encourages directors to distinguish between structures that support musical and expressive goals and those that persist primarily through convention.

When directors take conventional practices for granted, they can become restrictive because they remain unexamined. As I mentioned earlier, binary voice sorting, rigid attire expectations, gender-policing humor, or assumptions that voice parts correspond to gender identity may unintentionally create friction for singers whose

identities or embodiments do not align with those expectations. Because such practices are often inherited rather than intentionally designed, they can be difficult to notice. Rehearsals function as educational spaces as well as musical ones, therefore, the structures we adopt can communicate messages about belonging and legitimacy.

In the following sections, I use the combined lens of UDL and queer pedagogy to examine several dimensions of rehearsal design in which assumptions about gender, participation, and belonging emerged from extant literature as my own experiences. I begin with rehearsal structures and participation design, arguing that participation itself can be organized through multiple legitimate pathways. I then consider voice classification and vocal pedagogy, contending with issues of identity, embodiment, and musical function. Finally, I explore repertoire and interpretive design, focusing on how directors can create multiple avenues for learning without minoritizing historically and culturally specific experiences. Across these domains, I question how choral structures are designed, whom they serve, and what possibilities for participation they make available.

Rehearsal Structures and Participation Design

If UDL encourages educators to anticipate variability and queer pedagogy encourages individuals to examine how participation becomes normalized, then rehearsal structures become an important site for inclusive design. Rehearsals establish soft policies (Jones, 2009) regarding attendance, participation, leadership, movement, communication, and membership within an ensemble. Consequently, decisions that may appear logistical often shape how singers experience belonging and agency within a choral community (Menon, 2025a).

A queer-informed UDL approach invites directors to view participation as something that can occur through multiple legitimate pathways rather than through a single model of ensemble membership. In my own work with a community-based LGBTQ+ choir, we attempted to add multiple avenues for choral participation. While performance remained an important aspect of the ensemble's mission, participation was not defined exclusively through public performance. Individuals could participate as non-singing members, attend as rehearsal members without performing in the concerts, or participate fully in concerts as performing members. Attendance expectations applied only to those who intended to perform, while others could engage with the musical and social life of the ensemble in ways that aligned with their interests and goals.

Although we implemented this participation structure in response to practical and community-oriented concerns, it also reflected core principles shared by UDL and queer pedagogy. UDL encourages educators to provide multiple pathways into participation rather than assuming a single mode of engagement (CAST, 2024; Meyer et al., 2014). Queer pedagogy similarly questions assumptions that position one form of participation as more legitimate than another (Bryson & de Castell, 1993; Gould, 2013). In this instance, we questioned whether public performance needed to determine who could legitimately participate within our community. Rather than asking singers to conform to a singular model of membership, directors can design rehearsal structures that recognize different relationships to performance, community, learning, and musical growth.

The organization of rehearsal time offers another opportunity to anticipate variability. In community ensembles, singers may arrive with different physical capacities, schedules, learning preferences, and social needs. Using UDL and queer pedagogy, directors can examine whether the rehearsal sequence itself creates avoidable barriers to contend with them. In my choir, we scheduled sectionals at the beginning of rehearsal rather than requiring singers to relocate midway through the evening. This decision emerged from conversations regarding mobility and accessibility, but it also reduced unnecessary movement between spaces and provided greater predictability for singers. We also concluded sectionals with a break before transitioning into full ensemble rehearsal, allowing singers time to regroup socially, physically, and cognitively before engaging in larger-group work.

The director's communication similarly shapes ensemble culture (McKiernan & McNickle, 2023). Phrases such as "ladies sing here" or "the men take this section" often function casually, yet they can also reinforce assumptions about who occupies particular sonic spaces. Instead, directors can refer to voice parts, or use gender neutral language (e.g., you all, choir, friends) to maintain clarity while reducing unnecessary gender. In this case, queer pedagogy might expose an assumption that UDL alone might not. When directors use language like "tenors" or "lower voices," they communicate the necessary pedagogical information without ascribing gender to the musical task.

Transparency in planning can also support participation. For singers whose voice part varied across repertoire, I regularly distributed detailed rehearsal schedules in advance identifying which pieces we would rehearse in each sectional so that singers could attend the sectional that corresponded to their voice part.

I also maintained flexibility within the physical organization of the ensemble. Although singers generally rehearsed in designated voice-part areas, I did not assign fixed seats within those sections. Singers could sit with friends, change locations within the section, or move to another section when their repertoire assignments changed. I also varied sectional combinations across rehearsals, pairing different voice parts so that singers encountered different social and sonic relationships rather than rehearsing exclusively within the same sectional groupings. Since singers may join choir for several reasons, including social interaction (Menon, 2025a; Menon & Salvador, 2026b), these choices preserved the musical usefulness of sectional organization without requiring the section to function as a fixed social unit (Redacted, 2026). Such configurations may encourage broader musical listening while reducing the social rigidity sometimes attached to sectional identity. Importantly, flexibility should not become another normative expectation. Some singers strongly identify with stable voice-part structures or traditional sectional communities, and predictability may itself provide meaningful access or belonging. A queer-informed UDL approach therefore seeks to expand options rather than prescribe a singular model of participation.

Vocal Pedagogy and Voice Classification

Scholars have complicated conversations regarding queerness and choral singing when discussing voice classification and vocal pedagogy (Garrett & Palkki, 2021; Nichols, 2022). A queer-informed approach should not deny embodied vocal realities or oversimplify voice science (Sauerland, 2022). However, directors can distinguish between vocal function and gender identity. For many singers, voice classification can serve as a social and educational experience through which they come to understand how their voices relate to their identity and musical participation.

Voice parts are musical classifications rather than identities, yet singers often experience voice placement socially as well as musically (Garrett & Palkki, 2021; Nichols, 2022). Research involving trans and nonbinary singers suggests that voice classification can significantly shape feelings of belonging within ensembles (Palkki, 2020). Consequently, directors navigate multiple considerations simultaneously, including vocal health, ensemble needs, singer agency, and the meanings singers attach to voice parts.

A queer-informed UDL approach shifts the focus from assigning singers to predetermined categories toward designing classification processes that anticipate variability in how singers relate to their voices. Some singers may view voice parts primarily as musical designations and prefer to be placed wherever their voices function most effectively. Others might experience voice classification as closely connected to identity and gender affirmation. Rather than assuming a singular relationship between voice and identity, directors can create opportunities for singers to articulate their own goals, experiences, and preferences. Queer pedagogy can help directors question the presumed correspondence between voice part and gender, while UDL can help translate those presumptions into a placement process that does not require directors to predict how an individual singer

will understand that relationship.

In my own practice, voicing singers became opportunities for conversation as much as assessment. While range, tessitura, and vocal function remained important considerations, these meetings also created space for singers to discuss previous musical experiences, personal goals, motivations for joining the ensemble, and any concerns related to voice classification. For some singers, these conversations included discussions of pronouns or identity. For others, they focused exclusively on musical aspirations. These vocal placement activities helped to create conditions in which singers could share information relevant to their participation as they chose. Such an approach reflects UDL's emphasis on anticipating learner variability while also recognizing that singers arrive with different relationships to voice, identity, and ensemble participation.

Language similarly shapes how singers understand vocal development. Directors can use non-gendered pedagogical language when discussing registration, resonance, and timbre. Rather than associating chest voice or vocal weight with masculinity, directors may frame these qualities in musical and physiological terms. During a warm-up sequence, for example, a director might describe a desired sound as "grounded," "resonant," or "warm" rather than "more masculine" or "more feminine." These shifts may help separate vocal function from cultural assumptions about gendered sound. In a rehearsal of Renaissance polyphony, for example, singers might explore varying degrees of vibrato, brightness, or vocal weight while discussing these choices in relation to style and ensemble goals rather than gendered expectations. Non-gendered language can provide multiple conceptual pathways into vocal technique, aligning with UDL's emphasis on representation while reducing the likelihood that singers interpret vocal instruction as commentary on identity.

Voice classification itself may benefit from flexibility. Some singers may prefer to explore multiple ranges across different contexts or repertoire. Others may desire stable placement because it supports vocal comfort, community connection, or identity affirmation. A queer-informed UDL approach should not presume that fluidity is inherently preferable to stability. Instead, directors can remain responsive to the varied ways singers experience voice-part membership, and how voice classification relates to their goals. For singers navigating vocal transition, for example, flexibility may become particularly important. Tessitura changes, endurance variability, or shifting resonance patterns may require ongoing adjustment (Constansis, 2008). In these moments, prioritizing communication, agency, and singer comfort may help reduce unnecessary anxiety or identity friction within rehearsal spaces.

Repertoire and Interpretive Design

Directors can use repertoire to tell stories about relationships, communities, and identities. Many choral texts include gendered narratives, assumptions regarding romance or family, and culturally embedded expectations regarding expression (Hawkins, 2007; McBride & Palkki, 2020). A queer-informed UDL approach asks directors to consider whose experiences become visible through programming and how singers are invited to make meaning from the repertoire they perform. Programming works by queer and trans creators or centering minoritized experiences can expand representation, but repertoire can also queer a concert program by placing those experiences in conversation with canonical works and exposing assumptions about gender, relationships, and identity that might otherwise remain unexamined. UDL extends this inquiry by encouraging directors to create multiple pathways through which singers can encounter and interpret those stories without requiring a singular relationship to them. Repertoire and interpretive design therefore operationalize what directors program, which stories enter the rehearsal room, and how rehearsals can shape the engagement.

Importantly, directors should not endeavor to neutralize all gendered meaning within repertoire. Some repertoire rooted in women's empowerment, queer advocacy, same-sex intimacy, or gendered historical

experience may derive artistic power precisely from those identity-centered contexts. For example, Gwyneth Walker's work for treble choir, "I will be earth," has text written by May Swenson, an American lesbian poet. Acknowledging this context allows the choir to engage in a same-sex romantic text where gender is a salient feature. On the other hand, my choir performed Kate Bush's "Running Up That Hill" and discussed changing all the pronouns gender-neutral ones. Instead, we discovered that the song itself was a feminist commentary on inequity and that keeping gendered pronouns enhanced the meaning and context of the song (Pantano, 2025). I use these examples to complicate the assumption that removing gender is necessarily more inclusive. Queer pedagogy instead asks directors and singers to consider what gender is doing within a text before deciding whether it constrains or contributes to its meaning.

Interpretive flexibility becomes particularly important when choirs rehearse music with texts that presume specific relationships, identities, or experiences. In many choral settings, directors provide narrative frameworks that guide singers toward a shared understanding of a text. While this practice can support expressive cohesion, it can also unintentionally narrow the range of experiences singers bring into rehearsal. A queer-informed approach does not necessarily reject shared interpretation. Rather, it encourages directors to question when an interpretation depends upon heteronormative or binary assumptions that the text itself does not require. Queer theory is particularly useful here because it shifts the question from whether LGBTQ+ singers can identify with an existing narrative toward how that narrative became presumed to be heterosexual, cisgender, or otherwise normative in the first place.

In practice, this may involve offering multiple interpretive entry points into repertoire. During rehearsal discussion, directors can acknowledge varied relational readings of texts rather than presuming heterosexual pairings or binary gender assumptions. In a rehearsal of a love song, for instance, a conductor might invite singers to consider multiple forms of longing, intimacy, companionship, grief, or care rather than assigning a fixed romantic narrative. For example, Rober Lucas Pearsall's Victorian funeral madrigal "Lay a Garland" features text which says: "Her love was false, but she was firm." During a rehearsal on this music, one singer assumed that the subject of the comment did not express true love, yet she never cheated. Another singer interpreted the word love as a noun referring to the subject's partner, where they were unfaithful while she remained true. Interpretive flexibility aligns closely with UDL's emphasis on engagement because it allows singers to connect personally with repertoire through different pathways.

Interpretive design can also occur at the level of the concert program itself. As opposed to isolated works, many choir directors organize repertoire around themes, essential questions, historical narratives, or broader artistic concepts that invite audiences and singers to make connections across pieces. These larger programmatic frameworks shape how individuals understand repertoire and can create additional opportunities for meaning-making. A queer-informed UDL approach encourages directors to consider concert themes that allow for multiple forms of engagement and representation. For example, a program centered on love might include romantic, familial, communal, spiritual, and aspirational forms of connection rather than assuming a singular model of intimacy. Similarly, themes such as resilience, belonging, transformation, or memory can create space for singers to encounter repertoire through varied personal and cultural experiences. By attending to the relationships among pieces rather than only the meanings within individual works, directors can design concert experiences that invite multiplicity while maintaining artistic coherence.

Programming decisions remain important because repertoire shapes whose stories become visible within ensemble life (Menon et al., 2026). Scholars and practitioners have increasingly encouraged choral educators to expand the range of voices represented in concert programming, including queer composers, trans composers, and repertoire that reflects diverse experiences of embodiment and identity (De Quadros, 2020; Palkki & Caldwell, 2018).

Expanding representation can recontextualize and queer canonical literature and invite directors to consider how programming choices communicate experiences that may otherwise be peripheral or absent.

Conclusion

Throughout this article, I have argued that choral participation can be shaped by how directors design the structures through which singers rehearse, use their voices, interpret repertoire, and participate in collective music-making. Practices surrounding membership, rehearsal organization, voice classification, vocal instruction, and repertoire may appear customary or merely logistical, yet each establishes conditions through which singers encounter ensemble life. While a choir director may take these structures for granted, they are the product of pedagogical choices that can be reconsidered, revised, and redesigned when their existing forms are not necessary to the musical goal they serve.

I put queer pedagogy and UDL into conversation to offer complementary means for critiquing such structures. Queer pedagogy can encourage directors to identify and question assumptions about bodies, voices, gender, identity, and participation that have become normalized within choral practice. UDL can encourage directors to anticipate variability and design multiple pathways toward shared musical and pedagogical goals. Together, these frameworks might help directors to consider what a musical task actually requires, which elements of its existing structure serve that purpose, and where greater flexibility might expand participation.

Practical constraints might also shape implementation. Ensemble traditions, repertoire demands, institutional policies, acoustical realities, and available resources may influence what directors can realistically enact within their contexts. Formal institutional policies as well as less explicit ensemble expectations may also constrain the choices available to directors and singers (Jones, 2009). For this reason, I aim to avoid universalizing the practices I described throughout this article. A flexible seating structure that supports one ensemble may undermine the acoustical needs of another; fluid voice-part placement may support one singer while another finds affirmation or security in stable placement. Instead, I offer this article as a provocation and a process for examining what a structure accomplishes, whom it presumes, where it creates barriers, and which aspects might remain open to reconsideration.

Queering rehearsal design involves remaining attentive to when gender and identity meaningfully contribute to musical experience and when inherited assumptions unnecessarily determine how singers are expected to participate. When directors anticipate variability, question assumptions that have become normalized, and remain attentive to the diverse ways singers experience ensemble life, they may create greater possibility for access and participation.

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