

ABSTRACT

Seeing the World Through Song: The Pedagogical Applications of World Folk Traditions in the Secondary Choral Classroom

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In a choral program, the curriculum is comprised of the music selected for the ensemble. Directors must consider the needs of their students as musicians and learners when programming, which can often be a challenge. The purpose of this study is to provide a specific pedagogical lens of world folk traditions for implementation in choral music classrooms. In this study, three different musical traditions were analyzed through the lens of representative arrangements of traditional folk music. Methods drawn from the works of Kodály, Piaget, and Sheehan-Campbell were used to synthesize teaching sequences for these pieces that can transfer to other pieces of music, within and outside those cultures. Venezuelan, North Indian, and South African music were used as case studies in this collection of folk music, each for a specific pedagogical purpose that is applicable to a secondary choral classroom. The study of Venezuelan folk music, exemplified by the arrangement of *Duerme Negrito* by Emilio Sole, explores the applications of asymmetrical divisions of regular meters as well as the triple versus duple subdivision. North Indian characteristics are illustrated by *TāReKiTa* by Reena Esmail, by examining a variety of tonal colors, as well as harmonic and melodic systems that differ from the standard western scales and modes. Finally, through *Thixo Onothando* by Michael Barrett, South African music provides a new perspective on diction in the choral classroom through the use of language as the mechanism for teaching diction concepts.

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SEEING THE WORLD THROUGH SONG:
THE PEDAGOGICAL APPLICATIONS OF WORLD FOLK TRADITIONS IN THE
SECONDARY CHORAL CLASSROOM

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CHAPTER ONE

A Brief History

One of the most incredible phenomena that humans create and experience is music. The ability to harness vibrations for an aesthetically rich experience is simultaneously intimate and universal. The voice is the most natural and flexible instrument available for music-making. In the words of the master pedagogue Zoltán Kodály, “The best approach to musical genius is through the instrument most accessible to everyone: the human voice. This way is not only open to the privileged but to the great masses.”¹ Therefore, singing has been the most common way humans have participated from the beginning of time. Each culture has created its unique way of utilizing the mechanism available to them, and from that, folk music was created.

People have found ways to express and communicate feelings and experiences deeper than words, from ancient Greek hymnody to the microtonal Turkish tradition to Bulgarian throat singing. In defining folk music, one finds widely varying descriptions of the practice. However, for definition’s sake, folk music and melodies are those that have been passed down in a culture orally, recognizable to members of that culture, and created in real-time. The focus of this research is on music that is folk in nature, vocally driven, from cultures with origins outside of the United States of America, and has application in the high school choral classroom.

¹Szőnyi, Erzébet. *Kodály’s Principles in Practice; an Approach to Music Education through the Kodály Method*. London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1973. p. 13

Music in schools has not always included folk music as a central turrent, nor has it always existed in its current form. Music education originated with the Greeks, although music was surely sung and played long before then. Plato and Aristotle were some of the first recorded advocates for music education, stressing the importance of music for the soul. Plato addresses this in his famous thought experiment, *Republic*. He describes music education as a “true education of the inner being” that leads one to “become noble and good... justly blame and hate the bad, now in the days of his youth, even before he is able to know the reason why.”² In his treatise, *Politics*, Aristotle also describes music’s profound effect on people. He firmly believed that music influences the will and behavior of a person. He also believed the right kind of music creates the right kind of person. “From these considerations therefore it is plain that music has the power of producing a certain effect on the moral character of the soul, and if it has the power to do this, it is clear that the young must be directed to music and must be educated in it.”³ These thoughts were central to Greek music studies and fortified the foundation of music education as we know it today.

In the first few centuries of the common era (400-800 CE), the Roman Catholic church decided that the clergy and choristers needed to be able to perform music at a high level for services. These early forms of church music were known as plainchant or Gregorian chant as the first evidence of these particular forms of liturgical monody is from when Saint Gregory the Great was pope.⁴ The church created music schools called

²Plato. *The Republic of Plato*. New York: Books, Inc., 1943.p. 105

³Aristotle. *Politics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905. Book VIII 1340b

⁴Grout, Donald Jay, and Claude V. Palisca. *A History of Western Music*. 6th ed. New York: Norton, 2001. p. 27

Scholae Cantorum throughout Europe, focusing on the performance of music more than the theoretical and academic components of music as was the focus of Greek philosophers (although there was still widespread study of the Pythagorean principles and ratios within music). These schools primarily existed to train and transfer liturgical chants, as the chants were not yet notated. Oral transfer, the same way folk music is shared and passed down, was how choristers would learn the chants they were to sing during various services. This system of transfer and education resulted in natural variances in chant, primarily due to the more extensive distance geographically and temporally from the origin of the melody. Due to the growing variance within the oral tradition, Pope Leo IV, in the 9th century, introduced a way to communicate the music they were singing. This written system was deemed necessary during Pope Gregory I's failed attempts to bring the Roman chants to the distant Frankish people. To the average modern musician, chant notation is a foreign and unreadable system without specialized training. However, it was the earliest surviving music in written form, except for a singular piece of a Greek hymn on papyrus from the late third century. This was the beginning of the preservation of melodies in ways distinct from the historical method of oral transfer used by many folk traditions. The symbols used, known as neumes, were originally only used to show the general contour of the melody over the syllables sung. As with all significant innovations, it required some refining and went through many phases as musicians found and solved problems they encountered. Eventually, the chant notation showed exact pitches, rhythms, and text setting, which are the core elements of modern music notation.

As new musical traditions continued to emerge, the choristers required a higher level of training to meet the expectations of the music they were expected to perform. The popular response to this was an earlier start to musical training in the form of conservatories, which were orphanages (ospedali) that taught children music at a very high level. Italy quickly gained status as having the world's most prestigious conservatories, with Naples being the center for the musical training of boys and Venice, for girls. These conservatories became the standard for high levels of choral music performance in Europe and resulted in music being written for the adolescent voice and beyond by some of the most acclaimed composers of the time, including one of the most influential composers of all time at the Ospedale della Pietà, Antonio Vivaldi.

As the United States of America was developing as a country, so was music. The first original music of this new nation is still widely known and recognized as the Spiritual.⁵ Folk music in its own right, the rhythms, melodies, and harmonic structures from the home countries of the enslaved peoples were combined with Western forms to create a new way of music-making in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. This included complex codes passed between groups of people to communicate plans for an escape to freedom and messages of hope. At the same time, early colonial churches were teaching music similarly to the way that folk music is taught. The technique known as 'lining out' was a 'call-and-response' system where the song leader would sing a line of the melody or a short phrase to remind the congregation of what was coming next, teach new songs, and reinforce old ones.

⁵Curtis, Marvin V. "African-American Spirituals and the Gospel Music: Historical Similarities and Differences." *The Choral Journal* 41, no. 8 (2001): 9–21. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23553686>.

Also, in colonial America, starting in 1717, singing schools became the primary form of music education. The focus of these schools was technique, not theory, as most people at the time only needed to know how to sing well for church services and personal worship instead of the academic pursuit of music like the Greeks or modern-day musicians. Much of the repertoire of the singing schools consisted of hymns or partsongs,⁶ using a system called ‘shape-note singing’ — a system of notation in which each syllable of the scale was represented by a differently shaped note head on the page and, therefore, did not require the same level of music literacy as traditionally notated music.

As a continuation of the emerging choral tradition in America, singing societies were established in the late 18th century. These societies were essentially professional choirs that raised the standards of choral performance in America, performing major choral works from both American and European composers.⁷ The singing societies relied on the training of the singing schools to perform at such a high level, which is not very far from the modern-day music classroom, where general music teachers lay the ground for music literacy—reading music primarily—and better levels of performance.

An education revolution was happening at the turn of the 19th century, much of it catalyzed by a Swiss pedagogue named Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi. The Pestalozzian system emphasized instruction via participation. This development forever changed the way teachers thought about education. One of the disciplines that greatly benefitted from the Pestalozzian view of education was music, specifically vocal music. Pestalozzi

⁶Abeles, Harold F., Charles R. Hoffer, and Robert H. Klotman. *Foundations of Music Education*. Schirmer Books, 1984. p. 9

⁷Abeles p. 9

himself used vocal music education in schools over the course of his career. With such a radical approach to education, Pestalozzi had many staff and students that shared what they had learned and the benefits of this new way of thinking. One of whom was Hans Georg Nägeli. Nägeli was one of the earliest, most prominent educators to combine the Pestalozzian approach with basic music education in a curriculum that was easily accessible for teachers and changed the music learning experience for students, including many techniques historically used in the folk song tradition to teach or pass down ancient melodies. The Pestalozzian approach to music education focused on students discovering truths of music for themselves, rote teaching of melodies, and emphasis on scaffolding — the mastery of one concept or skill at a time before moving on to a new concept or skill.

The first music teacher in a public school in the United States was Lowell Mason. Mason himself was a student of Pestalozzi. Mason's philosophy was adopted by the Boston school system, stressing the necessity of a musical heritage for all children. Therefore, in 1838, the first public school music program was created in Boston. Mason's philosophy toward music was a hybrid of Pestalozzian theory and Greek ideals, which set the scene for early American music education. He brought Aristotle's ideas that music was necessary for the development of the soul into the classroom, along with the scaffolded approach to learning introduced by Pestalozzi.

Music education made its way through large cities in the US, but the Civil War tightened budgets, so music teachers and communities had to convince local school boards that educating children in music was valuable. Fortunately, the concert and regiment bands had become extremely popular in the wartime era. More and more people were exposed to the public performance of music, and musicians needed to find ways to

be employed when they were not performing. Many teachers at the time were private instructors from the singing schools. They emphasized the importance of choirs as American composers rose to prominence and choral activity increased. Despite being somewhat widespread, music still was not considered a basic course of study until 1846, when N. Coe Stewart, a schoolteacher from Cleveland, taught classroom teachers the fundamentals of teaching music.

World War I shook the world at the beginning of the 20th century. In response to the upheaval from the war, educators created ways to restore and improve their society. One of the most prominent voices in education reform, John Dewey, was also a major proponent of the arts. Dewey's philosophy to educate the whole child, meaning every part of their lives, deeply emphasized the necessity of arts education for every student. As the arts continued to receive support, more programs were being built, and school districts had to hire more fine arts teachers. Many of these teachers were professional musicians in need of a stable income. This resulted in today's prevailing method of teaching secondary band, choir, and orchestra programs. Due to the teachers' performance backgrounds, courses became like a smaller version of professional ensembles with a conductor, public performances, and a repertoire-based curriculum drawn from the canon of the Romantic, Classical, and Baroque eras of European music as well as the contemporary American works of the time. This is still largely the standard for music education in the United States.⁸

One of the catalysts for change toward music education was the pedagogical battle that took place at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the

⁸TAC §117.311.C (b)(2)

twentieth century. The ‘battle’ was an argument amongst teachers concerning the benefits of teaching in a rote style or teaching students using a pure reading approach, where students are expected to be able to read music fluently and perform primarily from written scores. The proponents of rote teaching emphasized the importance of the music-making process, while the purely reading-based instruction placed the most emphasis on the ever-growing desire to perform “great choral works” directly from the score and create musicians ready for the professional world.

While there are still century-old remnants of that debate, “the battle was beneficial to the profession because it made teachers think about methodology.”⁹ The metacognition which took place revolutionized the credibility of the field. Teachers were publishing about music education; societies were formed to talk about the big issues in music education; higher education was becoming more and more available for music educators. Most importantly, teachers were confronted with the looming question of why they should teach music at all. As teachers sought out their own reasons for why music education should be taught, different schools of thought emerged, laying the foundation for more well-rounded teachers to come after. Another benefit was the prevailing mindset in the new child-centered method of education that students should be led to love music and that understanding it in an academic sense is merely one way of helping students get to that point.

As a result of the new ideas from this debate, some pedagogues heavily emphasized the early education of students in music, using folk music as the primary medium. One such champion of folk music in Hungary and, later, the United States was

⁹Mark, Michael. *Contemporary Music Education*. Second. New York: Schirmer Books, 1982. p 7

Zoltán Kodály. His life's work was learning about, collecting, implementing, and sharing Hungarian folk music to promote higher levels of musicianship and nationalism amongst the Hungarian people. He composed many works that were heavily influenced by Hungarian folk music, which involved rhythms and harmonic ideas atypical of much of the Russian-influenced music written at that time. Kodály's most substantial impact on music education was his educational theory. As a major advocate for music education for all, he strongly focused on how students should be taught to get the most out of their education. His overarching concept was called the "musical mother tongue" method.¹⁰ which is based on the folk music of the country from which a child comes. The manner of teaching comes from the way children learn and acquire language, which progresses from repeated exposure to the language they will be learning to the repetition of learned phrases to improvisation and communication of new and unique ideas.¹¹ Kodály felt the same should happen in the learning of music. While many of his methods are most commonly applied to the elementary music classroom, the same concepts can be used to teach at the secondary level. Most teachers will have students who are, in the words of Edwin Gordin, at different musical "ages," which can be vastly different even if they have been alive for the same number of years. Because of this, there will be high school students starting with varying levels of experience. The musical mother tongue method can also be applied to the secondary study of world folk music to increase an inherent

¹⁰ Szönyi p. 15

¹¹Mason, Emily. "Idea Bank: Using Kodály to Promote Music Literacy Skills." *Music Educators Journal* 99, no. 1 (n.d.).

proficiency in different areas of music based on the strengths of those different types of music.

It is paramount when educating students that teachers remain aware of what stage of development students are in and sequence instruction appropriately. Jean Piaget's stages of cognitive development will be at the center of this study.¹² His proposed stages of development have been studied for decades and have truly endured time and scrutiny. As they relate to music, it is important to learn the order in which students learn to distinguish different concepts. Just as students will have different musical "ages," they will be at different levels of ability in distinguishing musical concepts such as pitch, timbre, and rhythm.

In the concrete operational stage of a student's life, which is between ages 7-11, they learn to distinguish musical qualities in the following order: volume, timbre, tempo, duration, pitch, and harmony.¹³ Due to this sequencing of learning, it is important to emphasize the intentional introduction of music, acknowledging the difficulty levels of different concepts based on the placement in the sequence in which they were able to understand a given concept, with the earliest learned being the easiest and the latter concepts being much more difficult. Since secondary students are past the concrete operational stage and in the formal operational stage, this sequence is used as instruction is assessed and reinforced. Secondary students are primarily in the formal operational stage of development. This means instruction does not necessarily have to be tied to events that have previously occurred in the real world but must primarily be fact-

¹² Abeles p. 195

¹³ Abeles p. 199

based. Furthermore, instruction is better received if there is an external application, proving an extrinsic motivation to learn and master various concepts. The most important instructional element of this stage for the music educator is the need for students to have the opportunity to interact with the concept in varied ways. This allows the adolescents' minds to form connections between the new information and preexisting synaptic pathways, as there is much less formation of new synapses during this stage of development. Although the thought may seem intimidating to many teachers, differentiating instruction is really helpful for classroom management, student engagement, and retention of information. It also can help prevent teacher burnout by avoiding the monotony and repetition that comes from the exact same thing every day.

Every facet of music education coming together builds a strong system by which to teach students. Choral music brings a unique layer to education as it pertains to music, as the voice has been a central part of each new development in music-making and education. The foundations set by pedagogues and teachers over the last few centuries help one understand the relationship between how music is taught and the growth a student experiences. Therefore, teaching students choral music should be a synthesis of aural skills, cultural background, proper vocal technique, and literacy to educate “the whole child”¹⁴ most successfully. The research and proposed system of teaching to follow is a result of these influences working in tandem and are meant to bring new perspectives to the teaching of the world folk music canon in the secondary classroom.

¹⁴ Abeles p. 16

CHAPTER TWO

Duerme Negrito

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce a potential teaching progression that is focused on rhythmic concepts for the Venezuelan folk song *Duerme Negrito*, as arranged by Emilio Sole. The teaching progression will focus on various preexisting methods to synthesize the most effective parts into a singular idea. Kodály, Piaget, and Dalcroze have all inspired this particular progression and come together to create a method of instruction stronger than any one school of thought on its own.

Duerme Negrito is derived from a song initially published by Argentine folklorist Atahualpa Yupanqui (also Yupanki) from his time collecting melodies from the indigenous peoples found at the border of Colombia and Venezuela. This particular song details the experience of an enslaved woman and her son through a lullaby. Upon its release, this lullaby became a symbol of empowerment and remembrance of the horrors these people groups experienced upon the arrival of colonists to the “new world.” This piece has been the center of many studies on the role of folk music in times of oppression and the ways individuals educate their children on the harsh realities in which they are living. Many lullabies include descriptions of traumatizing or scary events. Research has shown that this trend likely exists due to the fact that children who are exposed to scary situations in a safe situation, such as a lullaby or bedtime story, tend to show less anxiety

when confronted with potential fears in the real world as well as an awareness of scary and uncomfortable situations happening around them.¹

Duerme Negrito was selected for the purpose of rhythm education through the introduction of asymmetrical division of regular meters, splitting rhythm, duple against triple, and the cross-curricular potential of the content and language, especially in populations with large concentrations of Spanish learners and Spanish-predominant English Language Learners (ELL). There is a perceived trend of lower levels of rhythmic literacy among singers that has no correlation with the potential to learn or proficiency in rhythm reading² Much of the reason behind singers' general inaccuracy with rhythm has been connected with the simultaneous need for singers to think about pitch, rhythm, and diction, with rhythm often being the least emphasized in many choral programs.

Since this piece is intended to focus on rhythmic concepts primarily, and rhythm is one of the earliest discernible elements in a particular piece of music, as evidenced by the application of the Piagetian model of development, repeated rhythmic exercises will form the foundation of all instruction related to this piece. Aligning with the Kodály sequence of education, it is important that the students are first exposed to the concept so as to internalize the concept before adding a label or applying the concept in the context of a piece of music. This is done through intentional scaffolding of rhythmic exercises.

When approaching a new division of beats, it is often helpful to relate it to an already familiar concept, as students in secondary schools are primarily in a

¹Loewy, Joanne, Kristen Stewart, Ann-Marie Dassler, Aimee Telsey, and Peter Homel. "The Effects of Music Therapy on Vital Signs, Feeding, and Sleep in Premature Infants." *Pediatrics* 131, no. 5 (May 1, 2013): 902–18. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2012-1367>.

²Henry, Michele L. "The Effect of Pitch and Rhythm Difficulty on Vocal Sight-Reading Performance." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 59, no. 1 (2011): 72–84.

developmental stage in which their brains are losing the elasticity found in younger children, so connecting information to preexisting synaptic connections aids in strength, retention, and efficiency of learning. In an exercise to introduce the asymmetrical (2+2+3) subdivision of a 4/4 bar, students should begin by tapping a consistent eighth note on their sternums, feeling the sympathetic vibrations through their bodies. The director then instructs the students to count out loud, “One, two, three, one, two, three, one, two,” with each number aligning with a tap on the sternum, repeating the pattern (fig. 1) until instructed to stop. After enough repetitions that students are clearly comfortable with the coordination of the taps and words, the instructor tells the students to step on the number “one” every time it is said, emphasizing the number “one” as they step, never stopping motion between steps. This allows the students to experience visual, auditory, and kinesthetic reinforcement of the rhythmic concept. It also gives the instructor an opportunity to assess the students’ varying levels of success at this concept and administer assistance to any students having difficulty with the exercise without stopping instruction.

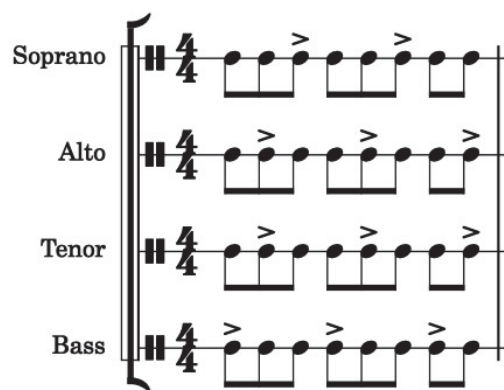


Figure 1: Rhythm accompaniment pattern 1 with eighth note fill

This pattern is the framework of *Duerme Negrito*, and this exercise can be further scaffolded to have students step on different numbers as a large ensemble and later in sections (fig. 2), all while tapping the steady eighth note pulse. As students learn the independence and interworking of the pattern, they will become comfortable with the application of the skill later because the prevailing pulse pattern will be in their bodies.

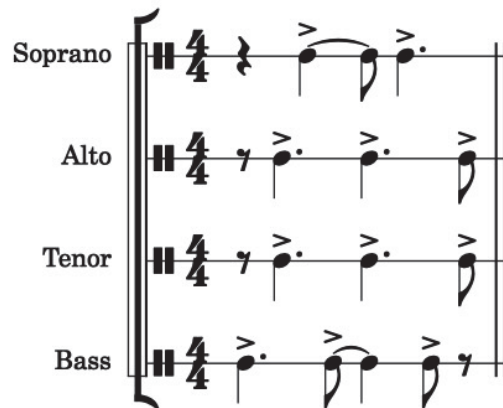


Figure 2: Scaffolded rhythm accompaniment pattern 1

Next, it is important to introduce the quarter note triplet. Although it only appears in the solo line, this piece offers a good opportunity to introduce the concept and the proper performance of the rhythmic figure. The duple against triple rhythmic figure—the simultaneous sounding of triplet- and eighth note-based rhythms—is common in much of music, especially in pieces with a higher level of difficulty that would come as the singers continue in their education. The most effective way of teaching this is by relating it to a structure with which the students are already familiar. There are a few ways to relate it to previous knowledge for the students; however, in this process, it is most consistent to relate it once again to the triplets that lie underneath. The progression of teaching (fig. 3)

will go from practicing the alternation of triplets and eighth notes to accenting every other triplet to only saying every other syllable in the triplet pattern. The key to the success of this process is consistency. Although the students might seem to have grasped the concept on the first day, it is important to present the concept consistently, in line with the Kodály progression of education, before explaining terms or showing notation to the students.³

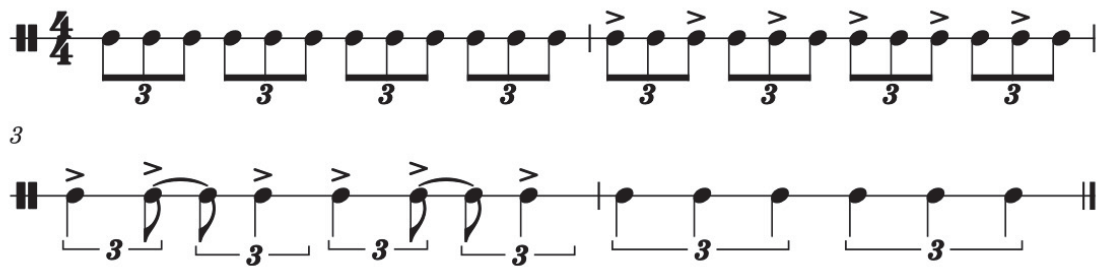


Figure 3: Triplet progression

The final rhythm layer to add is the pattern from mm. 15-21 in the choir (fig. 4). Familiarity with the interplay between these two rhythmic figures will help students be able to focus on some of the more technical issues and style considerations required for this piece. With the upper voices, one of the biggest challenges will be the initial introduction of the notation. The part is essentially the same idea with a slight variation due to the tie over the barline and dotted quarter note instead of the quarter note followed by an eighth rest. The director can best help the students learn the rhythms through rote repetition in a fun way. Using call-and-response helps students to be able to feel the

³Szönyi p. 13

rhythm and understand it more deeply than merely reading it on its own.⁴ The teacher's accuracy is important, but it is also important for the process to be fun and engaging to increase retention for the students.

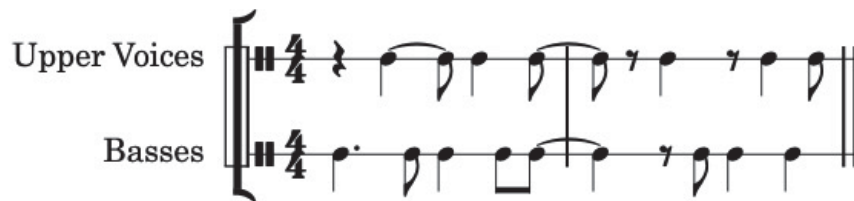


Figure 4: Rhythm accompaniment pattern 2

The aforementioned rhythmic exercises, used repeatedly in rehearsal, can be combined very easily with the harmonic progressions to add another level for the students to think about, as well as increasing the understanding of the mechanics of how the piece works. The first rhythmic activity, with all the students singing the different parts of the initial rhythmic figure, can be easily scaffolded to include the harmonic progression present in the accompaniment for the beginning of the piece. Since the progression oscillates between the I chord and the IV add 2 chord (scale degrees 4, 5, 6, and 8), the students can sing one measure on one solfege syllable and the next measure on the other, alternating between the two solfege syllables (fig. 5). This would also be a good place to allow students to learn how to improvise and feel comfortable doing so around their

⁴Hurley, Craig, and Rebecca Atkins. "Teaching Rote with Rigor: Embedding Musical Concepts and Preparing for Music Literacy." *The Choral Journal* 64, no. 1 (August 2023): 30.

peers. Since the harmonic progression is steady and predictable, the students can be comfortable in trying some improvisational ideas on top of the accompaniment.



Figure 5: Accompaniment for improvisation

Although the rest of the process is important for the development of musical skills, the students will be able to grasp the style, melody, and harmonic language of the piece best from the original source. The students can watch the original recording of *Duerme Negrito*, by Atahualpa Yupanqui, on YouTube (see Appendix A), and the exposure to this performance connects the material to the real world in a meaningful way. Developmentally, it is vitally important to have “authentic” presentations of any information with which the students are interacting. This concept means the information has connections to the world around them and has a deeper foundation than the knowledge that is introduced without contextualization.⁵ Through this recording, the students can become aware of familiar musical concepts and are able to recognize familiar rhythms in addition to describing the style and mood of the music.

⁵Abeles et al. 199

In the classroom, these elements come together to teach crucial concepts that often are overlooked or underemphasized. Students' knowledge and understanding of rhythm combined with the context of South American folk music leads to more well-rounded musicians.

CHAPTER THREE

TaReKiTa

In choral classrooms across the US, teachers introduce students to the music of different cultures and idioms, often accompanied by harmonic structures or melodic quirks that differ from much standard choral repertoire. North Indian or Hindustani music familiarizes students with a tonal language, called Raga or Raag, that is very specific to the region and expands students' notion of how scales function and interact in different parts of the world.

TaReKiTa by Reena Esmail is an original composition based on a particular raga called Raag Jog,¹ which teaches musicians about the rhythmic and melodic systems found in Hindustani music. It combines music and movement in a natural way to reflect the performance practice and heritage within the North Indian raga. Due to the spontaneous nature of the genre, *TaReKiTa* is intended to be a teaching and introductory piece to the wide range of raga performance. Email provides different resources to help singers learn more about the rich tradition of raga and bols, rhythmic syllables similar to jazz scat². The performance and study of this piece is meant to help create a bridge between the Western choral musician and Hindustani music making.

¹Esmail, Reena. "TaReKiTa," July 7, 2016. <https://www.reenaesmail.com/catalog-item/tarekita/>.

²The Kennedy Center. "Rhythm and Raga." Accessed October 23, 2023. <https://www.kennedy-center.org/education/resources-for-educators/classroom-resources/media-and-interactives/media/international/rhythm-and-raga/>.

Hindustani music is characterized by spontaneity within a given raga combined with the rhythmic elements to mimic a tabla—an instrument used to keep time in Hindustani performance³. Each raga is a different set of pitches with a specific order in which to sing those pitches. These pitches or “swaras” are assigned syllables called “sargam,” similar to the Western solfège system⁴. These syllables— “sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni”— are often employed when a singer is learning different ragas and their patterns or when creating new music. Pitches can be raised (teevra), natural (shuddha), or lowered (komal).⁵ When utilizing this system, music is often created in real-time with very little direction outside of the prescribed raga phrases. Each raga has a number of ways that the pitches can be sung and are expected to be combined in different ways in a quasi-improvisatory style to create music. “The melodic inventory and method provide the basic scaffolding for the performance of a raga”⁶ Musicians can stretch, recombine, and ornament preexisting raga patterns, but are expected to adhere to the conventions associated with the particular raga so as to avoid breaking off of the intended raga.

Ragas are traditionally associated with different times, emotions, and seasons. As much of music is rooted in ancient traditions, different harmonic languages have deep meanings that extend past the modern interpretation of scales and intervals. Although

³ “Tabla | Indian Percussion, North Indian Classical, Hand Drum | Britannica.” Accessed October 24, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/art/tabla>.

⁴ Clayton, Martin, ed. “Note on Music Notations.” In *Time in Indian Music: Rhythm, Metre, and Form in North Indian Rag Performance*, 0. Oxford University Press, 2008. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195339680.002.0009>.

⁵ Raja, Deepak S. *The Musician and His Art: Essays on Hindustani Music*. New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, n.d.

⁶ McNeil, Adrian. “Seed Ideas and Creativity in Hindustani Raga Music: Beyond the Composition—Improvisation Dialectic.” *Ethnomusicology Forum* 26, no. 1 (April 2017): 116–32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17411912.2017.1304230>.

they are not exclusively for use in those times, emotions, or seasons in the modern period of classical Indian music performance, the specific applications and original intentions of the ragas should be taken into account when performing a piece within a raga. Modern raga has departed from the traditional performance of Hindustani classical music in a few ways. Primarily, the acceptable phrases used in many ragas are no longer as strict and have expanded to include different final phrase notes. It is also now acceptable to place emphasis on different notes than perhaps have been historically emphasized.⁷ There has also been more flexibility in recent years on notes that have traditionally only been lowered in descending lines and raised in ascending lines. These changes have shifted the sound of ragas from their ancient or traditional roots into a sound that is distinctly modern Hindustani music.

Raag Jog is a very common post-sunset⁸ raga that utilizes both the natural and lowered third as well as a lowered leading tone. Jog is made up of five ascending notes and five descending notes, which are essentially the same with the exception of the mediant (fig. 6). The inclusion of both mediants is the defining characteristic of this Raga and contributes to its popularity within the past century. These distinct melodic characteristics help with the transfer to Western singers, as they can be communicated with solfège syllables with which students are already familiar. In Jog, only the major mediant is used in the ascending scale, and the descending scale uses the minor mediant but can also employ the major mediant on occasion.⁹ This variation is one of the

⁷Raja, Deepak. "Raga Jog: A Versatile Raga." *Deepak Raja's World of Hindustani Music* (blog), January 30, 2011. <http://swaratala.blogspot.com/2011/01/raga-jog-versatile-raga.html>.

⁸Raja "Raga Jog"

⁹Tanarang, Acharya. "Raag Jog." Accessed October 23, 2023. https://www.tanarang.com/english/jog_eng.htm.

modernized characteristics of Jog. The other is the ending of phrases. Historically, phrases in Raag Jog would only end on Sa (scale degree 1), Suddha Ga (natural scale degree 3), or Pa (scale degree 5).¹⁰ However, as different renditions of the raga highlighted the unique characteristics present in Jog, common practice allowed other notes to end a phrase, thus creating a dichotomy in which all swara are permissible notes with which to end a phrase.



Figure 6: Raag Jog Aaroh (ascending) and Avroh (descending)

In *TaReKiTa*, the droning tone of the raga is also present throughout much of the piece in either one or two of the voice parts. Most ragas have a drone that is made up of the tonicized swara Sa and often a secondary pitch that is a fifth above Sa. Traditionally, the drone is played by an instrument that holds an octave or open fifth while the singer sings in the raga, and the tabla player keeps the tala¹¹—the metrical system used in Hindustani performances. The tala is cyclical in nature and can stretch anywhere from five to over one hundred beats in length, depending on the particular tala in use.¹² The

¹⁰Raja “Raga Jog”

¹¹“Rhythm and Raga”

¹²Clayton, “Time in Indian Music: Rhythm, Metre, and Form in North Indian Rag Performance.”

beats are grouped into different sets that are between two and seven beats long, but they are primarily between two and five beats in length. The applications of this concept in *TaReKiTa* are via the drum patterns associated with Hindustani music.

TaReKiTa also explores Raag Jog in the context of “bols” in a tala. The rhythmic cycles in Indian music are known as tala. These can be very complex cycles of beats that are the undercurrent of every piece of music. The voices utilize bols, the syllables that represent rhythmic and drumming elements, to mimic the drum patterns within the tala. Each syllable sung is an onomatopoetic word for a sound made by a pair of drums called a tabla. Tabla is traditionally associated with the performance of raga and is found in both Carnatic and Hindustani music but is often more closely associated with the Hindustani tradition. The two drums are most often made of different materials and are tuned to different important pitches within the raga being performed.¹³ Tabla players are trained to be able to respond to bols in order to replicate rhythmic passages. Bols are known for becoming quite complex and vary greatly based on the tala of a piece of music.

The teaching sequence for this piece is highly influenced by the application of the World Music Pedagogy system as developed by Patricia Sheehan-Campbell and adapted for choir by Sarah Bartolome.¹⁴ To increase comprehension of the tonal system created by the raga, students will benefit from the composition and improvisation steps in the system.

¹³“Tabla | Indian Percussion”

¹⁴Bartolome, Sarah J. *World Music Pedagogy, Volume V: Choral Music Education*. Routledge, 2019.

With the introduction of this piece of music, a director must also introduce the tonal language it uses. Students can sing the raga on solfège as a starting point. However, it will contribute to the fluidity of the improvisatory line on top and the stylistic choices of the rhythmic parts if the students can transition to the bols (rhythmic syllables) as quickly as possible. As with most lessons created for students in this stage of development, the real-life application of the techniques and skills is necessary for long-term learning.

A sizeable part of the introduction of this piece is comprised of the harmonic system in which it takes place. In a choral classroom that is using *TaReKiTa* as an instructional piece, vocalizations are an incredibly useful tool to bridge the gap between prior knowledge and a new concept. Since the swara utilized in this raga have solfège equivalents, students can begin learning the raga on solfège. Instead of “sa, ga, ma, pa, ni, sa,” students can sing “do, mi, fa, sol, te, do” for the ascending scale. In the descending scale, adjust the solfège from “mi” to “me” to denote the lowered mediant. Once students recognize how the scale sounds on solfège, the swara can be introduced to continue to grow familiarization with the traditional performance and practices associated with the scale. Since students are often already familiar with some sort of music reading system, such as numbers or solfège, begin with familiar systems to introduce tonality before a new system of syllables is added.

One of the steps of World Music Pedagogy is creating world music. Almost every set of standards for music education in the United States includes standards for improvisation and composition. The elements of a raga lend themselves well to fulfilling those standards in the classroom and lead to a deeper understanding of the genre and

tonal system within which singers are performing. In a classroom setting, the different short phrases that are standard in Raag Jog can be used as building blocks in a composition project. Students can arrange phrase blocks (Appendix B) to create different compositions for the class to sing as a unison line or for a section to sing over a drone sung by the other sections. Depending on the ability level of the choir, the director may choose to introduce only certain phrases based on other educational objectives, such as only utilizing phrases that end on one of the notes in the tonic triad. Directors may also lower the entry point by providing phrases that include either the natural mediant or the lowered mediant before mixing the two kinds of phrases.

Modern technology has also made the world smaller and more accessible in a classroom environment. One of the best teachers of the tonalities and timbres required to perform this music is recordings of authentic raga performances. Students will be able to hear the applications of the new tonal system, potentially hearing phrases with which they are familiar and have created within, and they can experience a different vocal technique to the popular bel canto singing tradition that is common in Western choral performance. As students listen to a recording of a performance of Jog (in Appendix A), prompt them with questions that lead to engaged listening of the piece.

Once students acquire foundational knowledge about the background and tonality that accompanies *TaReKiTa*, the learning process becomes much more straightforward. The tala can be broken down into even measures of $\frac{3}{4}$ time, and the cycles repeat at regular intervals. Students have already become familiar with the patterns and tonal system found in the piece, which allows for a deeper exploration of musicality, timbre, and style in the early stages of music learning. Directors must also keep in mind that full

authenticity will not be possible in a choir setting¹⁵—as the authentic performance is not based on written compositions but rather spontaneity—but respect must lie at the center of the performance of Hindustani classical music.

¹⁵Bartolome p. 138

CHAPTER FOUR

Thixo Onothando

One of the most common and essential elements of choral music is diction. As a discipline that marries language with music, audience members desire to understand the depth added by the text. Like many concepts addressed in the choral classroom, there are varying approaches to teaching diction. Just as with other components of choral singing, the most effective way to reinforce this concept is through regular repetition in the context of a piece of music. Singers can immediately apply techniques learned in warm-ups, exercises, and assignments, which results in a more deeply rooted retention of the material and allows for later application in other pieces of music. Diction is present in every piece of choral music. Still, there are many different levels of difficulty and function from piece to piece, making it challenging to select appropriate music for any group of singers.

In this chapter, the language used for diction growth and reinforcement is isiXhosa, a South African local dialect that is most well known for utilizing a series of clicks that add an extra rhythmic-sounding element to the spoken language, emphasized in this arrangement of a traditional isiXhosa hymn, *Thixo Onothando* by prominent South African educator and composer, Michael Barrett. Barrett is native to South Africa and is a leading expert and arranger of traditional South African music.¹ It is critical that the arrangement is by someone familiar with South African language and culture to treat the text that drives much of the piece with respect and understanding.

¹Bartolome p. 84

Barrett uses the sounds of the consonants in this piece to keep the rhythms driving and to align the choral parts beneath the soloists. Diction also plays a unique role in this particular style of music, as traditional South African churches utilize a call-and-response system for singing hymns, where one person will sing the first line of the piece, and others will join in with harmonies and the same melodies.² The lyrics provide the life and diversity to these pieces, which are typically quite repetitive and melodically simple. *Thixo Onothando* comes from the Xhosa people of South Africa, primarily located on the Eastern Cape but distributed across much of the country. It is the second most commonly spoken language in the country. It is so closely related to the most widely spoken language in South Africa, isiZulu, that there are debates about whether they are dialects of the same language. However, people have determined them to be culturally distinct enough to be separated. These minor distinctions make it even more critical to accurately pronounce the isiXhosa, as the differences between the two languages are a source of pride for many people and can more clearly express the meaning and intention behind the original hymn for the people from which it comes.

The language is ideal for singing for many reasons. Primarily, it provides much of the same clarity of vowels that Latin is known for and is commonly used in the choral classroom. Only having five distinct vowel sounds, isiXhosa allows for consistent purity of vowels. The most difficult of those vowels, especially for a young American choir, will be the [o] and [e] vowels, as they rarely exist without a diphthong in English and must not contain the diphthong in this context. Otherwise, the vowels are very familiar

²Cedarville University, and Jonathan Knight. "Sing on, Ntsikana: The Story of Christian Music Among the Xhosa People of South Africa." *Musical Offerings* 1, no. 1 (2010): 21–31. <https://doi.org/10.15385/jmo.2010.1.1.3>.

and straightforward to unify across an ensemble, aiding in both tuning and clarity of tone.

Regarding the consonants, singing in isiXhosa is good for younger choirs, as it only utilizes initial consonants. There is no need to align final consonants. Because of this, reading and performing the rhythms accurately is crucial to the success and clarity of the diction of this piece. Be aware that this particular piece includes one of the clicks from the isiXhosa language. There is no need to be afraid of this new sound, as students can achieve it with success after a short amount of practice, and it can sound very impressive, although it is not difficult. The particular click used in this piece, represented by the letter “X,” is the same found in the name of the language, isiXhosa. This sound, also known as a lateral click, is achieved by “placing the tip of the tongue against the hard palate (as if producing an “n” sound). Place one side of the tongue against the side of the jaw and withdraw sharply, keeping the tip of the tongue against the side of the hard palate. This sound resembles that of spurring on a horse.”³ The students will have a lot of practice integrating this sound in context, as this piece uses the lateral click often.

This piece allows focus on foundational diction skills. The most difficult diction issues come from ending consonants and their effects on both the vowel that precedes it and the beginning consonant of the word that comes after.⁴ Those situations often result in affected vowels or the loss of clarity of an ending consonant. *Thixo Onothando*, however, does not include any instances in which these problems would arise, as the language does not have ending consonants in the same way as English, and the

³Barrett, Michael. *Thixo Onothando*. Walton Publications, Inc. 2016

⁴Fisher, Robert E. “Choral Diction With a Phonological Foundation,” 1986.

consonants that generally can cause nasality or raised laryngeal positions are absent in this piece. Therefore, students can practice pure vowel sounds in an isolated situation, which will prepare them well for pieces containing more difficult diction concepts.

The last significant benefit of the language present in this song from the isiXhosa is the elongation of vowels. Students advance greatly when singing on a single vowel through a note to improve legato technique and help create consistency of tone. The single elongated vowel also allows for unification across the ensemble. Often, tuning issues in an ensemble are not due to the pitch's fundamental frequency but come from the formant of different vowels not aligning in a sonically pleasing way. A common vowel that is clear, pure, and has a consistent and definable sound aids a young choir in a skill that can be very difficult. In addition to helping tuning, the alignment of vowels can assist in the collective volume of an ensemble. The formants and overtones being the same across an ensemble create a louder sound than was possible from the original volume of each individual singer. A slower tempo aids in this alignment and lends itself to a more successful performance of the piece and a better ensemble sound.

Harmonically and melodically, this piece relies on the strength of simplicity. It provides variation with the different lyrics, the optional percussion accompaniment, and the soloists who sing over the choir like that of traditional South African churches. The prevalence of major triads and simple chords highly characterizes Xhosa music.⁵ The melody is ever present throughout the work, and the harmonic material and the soloistic countermelody reinforce it. For a secondary-level ensemble,

⁵Mnyanda, Sibusiso Lundi. "Benjamin Tyamzashe: The Man, His God, and Music." *Daily Maverick*, October 18, 2021. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-10-18-benjamin-tyamzashe-the-man-his-god-and-music/>.

this is a benefit, as the harmonic material is primarily familiar with a few diversions from the typical formula experienced in the Western musical style.

The range of each voice part is also accessible for the average high school choir. The bass range is appropriate for a new baritone, only going down to a Gb2 and up to a Bb3.⁶ Also beneficial for students in different stages of their vocal development, the lowest note is doubled at the octave with the baritones. South African music is characterized by a mid to high tessitura, which allows for the basses to remain in a comfortable range in the middle of the bass clef, as opposed to sitting in the high or low range, which can be uncomfortable for the developing singer, both vocally and mentally. The tenor range is appropriate for the singer who is a newly changed voice, as the lowest note expected of the tenor voice is an Ab3, and the highest note is an Eb4, resulting in a total range of a 5th. As the voice continues to change, some tenors may need to move into a baritone role or leave out a few notes in the newly weakening (or completely missing) *passaggio*. However, this is easily resolvable with many tenors being in a very comfortable range and the option of adding some alto voices to the tenor line, as it doesn't go too low to be unhealthy for many women at that stage in their vocal development. Both treble voices are in the low to middle section of their respective tessituras. These ranges could potentially lead to some balance issues between the treble and tenor-bass voices, especially with the tenor voice being in their modal chest voice

⁶Cooksey, John M. "The Development of a Contemporary, Eclectic Theory for the Training and Cultivation of the Junior High School Male Changing Voice: Part III: Developing an Integrated Approach to the Care and Training of the Junior High School Male Changing Voice." *Choral Journal* 18, no. 4 (December 1, 1977): 5.

and women often being in the modal head or mixed voice in tandem with the side effects of breathiness amid the female voice change.

When teaching this piece, be mindful of appropriate diction techniques for the language. Xhosa has many resources of native speakers and singers to listen to, and there are authentic recordings of the source material and arrangements to share with the students and study as the conductor. In the teaching sequence, students should be encouraged to speak the text in rhythm, paying particular attention to the different consonant and vowel combinations in this piece.

In a lesson plan, a teacher could utilize resources available through the internet and show a conversation between Xhosa speakers before showing a native speaker teach the distinctive clicks that are a part of the language, encouraging the students to imitate the speaker using the techniques they introduce (Appendix C). After the students watch and listen to the practical application and process of pronouncing the click, they should listen to a recording of *Thixo Onothando* (as seen in Appendix A) and identify style and diction traits after already being familiar with the click sound from the video they watched. On a later date, preferably the next school day, reinforce the learning from the introductory activity through a diction exercise that includes the newly learned click sound. It can be integrated into the vocalization sequence as a starting consonant option or as an internal consonant. One such activity could be a chord-building exercise that goes through the tonic, submediant, subdominant, and dominant chord progression, often performed on the syllables /mi mɛ ma mo mu/. To incorporate the diction techniques from this piece, the students would go through the consonant sounds from the music, changing the consonant sound to /t/, /n/, /nd/, /p/, /b/, /kw/, /f/, /z/, /ng/, /w/, /l/, or the

click // sound. For the conductor, it is important to insist on vowel purity and precise consonant placement to apply the best possible technique to the piece.

Just as the melodic and harmonic material is introduced one part at a time in this arrangement of *Thixo Onothando*, the material should be introduced to the students in the same manner, preferably away from the score. Once the students learn basic musical structure, adding words is a manageable leap, and the students will be comfortable with all the diction skills required to succeed.

CONCLUSION

This project was originally intended to encounter a new paradigm of music teaching, where the preexisting vast repertoire of choral music is employed as the primary medium for learning. Both students and teachers benefit from the vast world repertoire that fulfills the varied pedagogical needs of students. The repertoire available from these three countries along with many others is ripe with opportunities for learning that can be applied to many different levels of singers. For teachers who are in pursuit of more repertoire from cultures with which they are not familiar, there are publishers such as Walton Music and earthsongs that specialize in carefully curated quality repertoire from different parts of the world. In addition to those resources, many choirs from the United States and around the world are performing incredible music from varied cultures, so listening is one of the most beneficial tools available to teachers. The most crucial step to programming music from unfamiliar cultures is to ensure that the teaching and performance of the music is done with respect and intentionality. Although it may take more work, the benefits for the students are bountiful and can deeply impact the lives of the students, directors, and audiences who experience these songs.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

Additional Listening Resources

Listening resources for *Duerme Negrito*:

Recording of the choral arrangement: Duerme Negrito | arr. Emily [sic] Sole by NDSU Concert Choir (2003)

<https://youtu.be/7NRmefYXPDU?si=5irxXO5FdoaK8gLO>

Atahualpa Yupanqui, the original folklorist performing the piece (start at 2:50)

<https://youtu.be/ROJzhe-zw98?si=0v24CinsODlq-pBi>

Mercedes Sosa, popular Argentine folklorista, performing the piece

<https://youtu.be/dR9AJwjZeIg?si=atvy2ypC30E9R13W>

Listening resources for *TaReKiTa*:

Recording of the choral piece: Concinnity | "TaReKiTa" by Reena Esmail

https://youtu.be/YV80KEGMPNs?si=19V1CC_E0LUQVG2f

Raag Jog performance: Raag Jog | Sawani Shende | Bazm e Khas

<https://youtu.be/2rO9VNnuvNE?si=Pt9qTnwBPYovYCOz>

Example of bols and tabla performance:

<https://youtu.be/jJ2WseDHEPI?si=AeH2hBDvwFLAzTOH>

Listening resources for *Thixo Onothando*:

Recording of the choral arrangement: Thixo Onothando - Varsity Sing

<https://youtu.be/fr229HM-ySM?si=8l6Ybb5KWcYgVmzG>

School choir performance of the hymn in South Africa

https://youtu.be/_ngv-oIye4U?si=yTM56cD1jEXNbjd4

Appendix B: Raag Jog Phrase Options

Swara Notation	Solfège Equivalent
S G m P	Do Mi Fa Sol
n P m G	Te Sol Fa Mi
G m	Mi Fa
m P	Fa Sol
m P m	Fa Sol Fa
G m G g S	Mi Fa Mi Me Do
G m P n S'	Mi Fa Sol Te Do'
P S' n S' n S'	Sol Do' Te Do' Te Do'
n S' g S	Te Do' Me Do
g' S' n P m	Me' Do' Te Sol Fa
m P G m	Fa Sol Mi Fa
G m S g S	Mi Fa Do Me Do
S n g S	Do Te Me Do
n P n g S	Te Sol Te MeDo
n S G	Te Do Mi
S G G m	Do Mi Mi fa
G m g S	Mi Fa MeDo
m n P	Fa Te Sol
G m P n	Mi Fa Sol Te
S G m g S	Do Me Fa MeDo
P n S	Sol Te Do

APPENDIX C

Diction Resources

When learning the diction in *Thixo Onothando*, one of the most challenging components for English speakers is the lateral click sound. Below are a few videos that address the formation of the click sounds found in isiXhosa and highlight native isiXhosa speakers in conversation for use in the classroom to introduce the language.

isiXhosa Click Tutorials:

XhosaKhaya, Xhosa Lesson 2. How to say “click” sounds.

<https://youtu.be/31zzMb3U0iY?si=er6p8XOhj6uKweTV>

Learn Xhosa with Ubuntu Bridge, The Three Xhosa Clicks taught easy!

<https://youtu.be/YlocO29uud4?si=oNXnNkCe73-Onxrh>

isiXhosa Speakers:

Sithembiso Kos, Intliziyo yam (the Xhosa “Clik” poem.)

<https://youtu.be/A8rVSjKCEyI?si=hfHHX0julrpEe7y1>

Brenden Nel, SPRINGBOKS: isiXhosa section of Siya Kolisi & Mzwandile Stick’s press conference

https://youtu.be/RPDms6j_oVU?si=TuHVdpS3fO_vR6ri

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