

Popular Choral Handbook

*New Techniques
for
Pop, Jazz, and Show Choir Directors*

by

Dr. Scott Fredrickson

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This project began many years ago with a conversation with Doug Anderson. I discussed writing a companion book for his *Jazz and Show Choir Handbook* that choral educators would read as a follow-up text to his book. We came upon the working title of *Pop, Jazz and Show Choir Interpretation and Style* and developed an outline. Several years later I went to the University of Northern Colorado to complete work on my doctorate in music business administration. This interdisciplinary degree in jazz pedagogy and business administration presented an interesting dilemma. How do I write a dissertation that will incorporate the unique aspects of this degree? I decided to write *Pop, Jazz and Show Choir Interpretation and Style* as a choral music education text to fulfill the jazz pedagogy component, and a business plan, to publish and market the book, for the business administration component.

Over the years, this book was re-written many times and read by many educators across the United States and Canada. The concepts, ideas, and techniques were tested in summer music camps and graduate choral conducting courses, after which, revisions incorporated the comments and ideas from the educators.

The last few tests as a text in graduate choral music education courses, were surprising. Many of the choral educators commented that most of the concepts and techniques in the book were applicable to choral music education *in general* and not just pop, jazz, and show choirs. They suggested the name be changed to *Popular Choral Handbook (New Techniques for Pop, Jazz, and Show Choir Directors)* to broaden the scope of the text.

I hope you find the book insightful and educational. If you have comments or additions, please feel free to write so that future editions may be even better.

Chapter 2

Purpose of the Text

There are thousands of schools in the United States performing contemporary pop, jazz, and show choir music. Acceptance of this form of music in schools and churches is growing rapidly, and is reflected in the increasing number of articles on pop, jazz and show choirs that are being published in national journals and magazines. Many choral directors are finding, however, that they are not adequately equipped to rehearse and perform this popular choral style. Unless they have graduated from a jazz-oriented teacher-training institution in the last few years, they have received little or no college training in rehearsing and performing this style of music.¹

The committee on “Music of Our Time,” at the Tanglewood Symposium, proposed a first step towards a rationale for the acceptance of new styles such as vocal jazz or show choir music. The committee indicated the need for opportunities for self-expression and creativity in the classroom. Most important was their recommendation that education must now concern itself with the act of living, with building personal identity, and with creativity.² In connection with this affirmation, they also pointed out that instrumental music students in schools had interests other than classical music. Specifically, the preference of these students was mainly for some type of jazz.³ The needs and interests of these students apply to choral music as well. But, the realization of these needs is severely impeded by the lack of teacher-training in vocal jazz.⁴

It is undeniable that the internalization of our cultural heritage through the study of music from the Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and modern eras aid students in expanding as musician. The real question is: Are we giving our students anything to prepare them for the real world of performing and teaching contemporary popular choral music?⁵ Colleges and universities throughout the country have ignored pop, jazz, and show choir music for various reasons, but primarily because of a feeling that popular choral music is inferior to other choral styles.

Teachers must have a systematic and logical method for learning how to rehearse and perform pop, jazz, and show choir music.

This attitude is apparent in the following comments:

Commercial-type music, is by definition, music for instant gratification; it must make its impression on the first hearing. Whereas a great piece of serious choral literature grows on a singer with time as he penetrates its depths. Little commercial-style choral music contains such depths. The literature of the show choir has its roots in thirty years of television—the ultimate achievement in lowering cultural consciousness to the lowest common denominator.⁶

The attitude that music that is enjoyable and accessible on first hearing is inferior to music that must be heard many times in order to understand and appreciate it, does not take into consideration the many simple songs by Schubert or Schumann—songs that are enjoyable on first hearing.

Many new choral directors find they must teach concert choir, women's chorus, madrigals, show choir, and vocal jazz, despite a lack of training in the latter two areas. As with instrumentalists, the leaders of the pop, jazz, and show choir movement have not found their training in colleges, but have brought in their own expertise and developed their own programs.⁷ Students are also interested in learning and performing the music of their own time, because they are "living while this music is being created."⁸

Musical revues, Broadway shows, radio, television, and live concerts have influenced much of the choral music performed today. Groups want to perform the music of new Broadway shows, sing arrangements of current radio/television hits, and perform medleys from television variety shows. Because students consider them relevant, popular and show music should be regarded as having as much validity as other styles of music. Because this type of music is almost always

The choral director who has no experience with jazz or popular music, however, can, with diligent study, develop proficiency in this area

omitted from academic music education, teachers graduating from colleges and universities have been left on their own to acquire whatever training they can get. The director who has had **no** experience performing in a pop or jazz ensemble is at a disadvantage. The choral director who has no experience with jazz or popular music, however, can with diligent study develop proficiency in this area.⁹

Once the decision to include popular styles in the curriculum is made, training in that style must be implemented. Choral directors have the obligation to allow students to experience excellence in **all** styles of choral music. To deny them Bacharach, Brubeck, or Basie, in honor of three other time-respected *Bs*, is to close the door on a large portion of the future's musical history.¹⁰

The future of popular choral training for teachers looks promising but will,

undoubtedly, take time to evolve. As future course offerings in pop, jazz, and show choir teaching methods are added to the curriculum of teacher-training colleges and universities, more teachers will be attending workshops and acquiring books to get the needed training to teach these exciting classes.

Popular, jazz, and show choir should be a viable part of a well-rounded choral music program. For this to occur, teachers must have a systematic and logical method for learning how to rehearse and perform pop, jazz, and show choir music. This book attempts to offer such a method.

¹Anderson, D. (1976). Vocal jazz for your choir, here's how. *The Choral Journal*, 17(2), 12.

²Tellstrom, T. (1971). *Music in American Education: Past and Present*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, p. 243.

³Choate, R.A. (1968). *Documentary Report of the Tanglewood Symposium*. Washington, D.C.: Music Educators National Conference, p. 100.

⁴Shaw, K. (1978a). An assessment. *Jazz Educators Journal*, 10(2), 18.

⁵Cryder, S. (1979a). Are show choirs valid? *The Choral Journal*, 19(5), 44.

⁶Paine, G. (1981). The show choir movement: Some food for thought. *The Choral Journal*, 21(9), 5.

⁷Strommen, C. (1980). *The Contemporary Chorus: a Director's Guide for the Jazz-Rock Choir*. Sherman Oaks, Calif.: Alfred, p. ix.

⁸Anderson, D. (1976). Vocal jazz for your choir, here's how. *The Choral Journal*, 17(2), 12.

⁹Garretson, R. (1993). *Choral Music: History, Style and Performance Practice*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, p. 165.

¹⁰Anderson, D. (1976). Vocal jazz for your choir, here's how. *The Choral Journal*, 17(2), 12.

¹¹Anderson, D. (1978). *Jazz and Show Choir Handbook*. Chapel Hill, N.C. Hinshaw, p. 123.

Chapter 3

A Brief Survey of the Growth of Pop, Jazz, and Show Choirs

American popular music has its joint roots in the rich musical traditions of Africa and Europe. The two cultures were united in the Gospel singing of the American South which, in turn, led to the development of jazz. Among the influences contributed by Africans are the expression of feelings through melody, syncopated beats, shifting accents, variety of rhythms, and the call-and-response format of voodoo chants.¹ European influences include form, melody, and functional harmony.² Jazz gained popularity as an instrumental form which imitated human sounds. These sounds were often drawn from the songs of early blues callers, field workers, and street vendors in the southern states. Sung outdoors, with no musical accompaniment to set the pitch and guide the intonation, these songs developed curious inflections and intonations. The voice was allowed to slide to tones that were foreign to the normal diatonic scale, and to intervals smaller than the half-step. Grunts and groans were added in the melody, becoming part of the melodic texture. Out of these inflections and intonations there developed a unique melody and harmony which later became a distinguishing feature of jazz.³

As these early singers became familiar with band instruments, they began to use them to reproduce their vocal sounds. Eventually, jazz vocalists began to reproduce the sounds played by the instrumental jazz musicians, thus coming full circle. The first singers to set patterns for vocal interpretation in jazz were thousands of southern blues callers and gospel singers. The earliest blues callers to be recorded, and thus survive in the memories of jazz critics, were Blind Lemon Jefferson and Ma Rainey. Blind Lemon Jefferson was singing for years before he ever entered a recording studio. He symbolized all of the anonymous people who may have been his contemporaries or predecessors.⁴

American popular music has its joint roots in the rich musical traditions of Africa and Europe.

Gospel singing was greatly influenced by earlier styles of black religious music. The prevalent opinion as to what constitutes gospel music is that it simply consists of the introduction of syncopated rhythms and blues singing into religious

music.⁵ The Church of God in Christ of the Holiness sect throughout the South played a major role in the emergence of the gospel tradition. One of the church patriarchs is reputed to have said, “The devil should not be allowed to keep all this good rhythm.”⁶ The innovations of the holiness church included the use of such instruments as drums, tambourines, guitars, and saxophones. Emphasis was placed on rhythmic vitality and freedom of expression, achieved through improvisation and the use of *bent note* (notes that were played deliberately out of tune, especially the third and seventh of the scale) scales which added to traditional musical forms. A related group, the Pentecostal Church, required full participation (call and response) of the congregation in all its worship. Because the use of piano, guitar, and drums was regarded by orthodox black churches as a sinful attempt to bring ragtime and blues into the church, this musical style tended to remain exclusively within the holiness groups until it was finally endorsed in 1930 by the National Baptist Convention in Chicago.

The first published black gospel songs that included both words and music were written in the 1900s by Reverend C. Albert Tindley. Most of his compositions were heavily influenced by the traditions of black spirituals.

Thomas A. Dorsey exerted the greatest influence on the gospel tradition during the 1920s. He began his career as an accompanist, songwriter, and arranger for Mahalia Jackson, Ma Rainey, Clara Ward, and others. The melodies of Dorsey’s songs were written as simply as possible, in order to give the maximum latitude to the soloist and accompanist for improvisation and individual interpretation.⁷ As early as 1928, Dorsey began to change the style of his gospel songs by emphasizing the beat and adding blues riffs. Through the promotion and publication of his music, he became a major force in influencing the acceptance of gospel music by the 1930 National Baptist Convention.

“The devil should not be allowed to keep all this good rhythm.”

The affinity between jazz and gospel music made it possible for many gifted black singers, who received their musical training in religious music, to become successful jazz and popular singers. As performers in church choirs or smaller singing groups, they entered the jazz or popular fields with ease. Among those who made the transition were the late Dinah Washington, who began as a gospel singer in Chicago; Billy Williams, formerly with the Golden Gate Quartet; the late Sam Cooke, formerly with the Soul Stirrers; Ray Charles, formerly of the Five Blind Boys; the late Sarah Vaughan, formerly a member of a Baptist choir in Newark, New Jersey; the late Nat “King” Cole, who had sung and played in his father’s church in Detroit; Della Reese, formerly a performer with Mahalia Jackson; Dionne Warwick, formerly with

the Gospelaires; and Lou Rawls, formerly with the Pilgrim Travelers of Chicago. Many black rock-and-roll quartets also began as gospel singing groups.⁸

Classic blues singers first gained national prominence during the jazz age in the 1920s. Ma Rainey, although not the first to be recorded, is often singled out as the earliest of the great singers in this idiom. Classic blues seemed to combine all the diverse and conflicting elements of black music.⁹

The most influential of all the early blues singers was undoubtedly Bessie Smith, whose career as a recording artist began in 1923. Her medium was almost exclusively blues material written for her by others, tailored to her life and background. Compared with most other blues singers of her day, she was a giant among midgets.¹⁰ Her male counterpart was Huddie “Leadbelly” Ledbetter, a guitarist as well as a singer. He performed his blues stories with a conviction expressive of the violence that marked his personal life. During the time of Bessie Smith, for example, he was in jail for murder.

The first sign of an extension of vocal jazz beyond blues forms appeared in the early work of Louis Armstrong’s Hot Five. Although Armstrong frequently sang the blues, he was also given to singing improvised passages similar to those expressed with his horn. Louis Armstrong epitomized the essential qualities of the jazz singer. His parched, guttural tone was similar to the sounds that musicians then identified as jazz timbres. Lyrics became secondary to musical values, and merely served as a vehicle for transporting the melody. Each song was sung as if he were in the process of personal creation, as if he were blowing the lyrics through his trumpet.¹¹ In later years, jazz voices by the dozens echoed the Armstrong technique.

**Louis Armstrong
epitomized the essential
qualities of the jazz singer.**

Ethel Waters was Armstrong’s female counterpart in demonstrating that jazz singing was adaptable to the popular song. In her popular rendering of the song “Dinah,” she rephrased it, making extensive use of syncopation and rubato, as well as adding a synthetic hot touch through the use of occasional growling tones. Waters paved the way for the use of Tin Pan Alley material by every jazz vocalist in later years.¹²

Jazz singing until the late 1920s was largely confined to black artists and, despite significant exceptions such as Armstrong and Waters, was mainly limited to the blues form. Mildred Bailey was one of the first white vocalists to attempt the blues idiom successfully. Some white singers, such as Al Jolson and Sophie Tucker, experimented with jazz sounds, but were only able to scratch the surface of the black style. Bailey, in contrast, was able to invest her thin, high-pitched voice with a vibrato, comparable to Bessie Smith’s overtones, and had an easy sense of jazz phrasing.¹³

Two vocalists stood out during the 1930s: Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald. Billie Holiday was the rugged and rasping Lady Day, whose tone and Armstrong-influenced phrasing made even the tenderest love song sound caustic and hopeless. And Ella Fitzgerald, the voice of light, as Holiday was that of darkness, swinging her bell-clear tones in an endless parade of trivial songs, and triumphing over her material in a gaily rhythmic manner.¹⁴ Other prominent jazz singers of the era were Betty Carter, Billy Eckstine, Joe Turner, Sarah Vaughan, and Dinah Washington.

Also during this time, group singing gained public acceptance. The most popular female singing group on the radio was the Boswell Sisters, who had begun making records in 1925. They did not, however, become popular until the 1930s, when they appeared regularly on “Music That Satisfies,” a program sponsored by Chesterfield cigarettes and broadcast over the NBC radio network. The Mills Brothers 1931 recording of “Tiger Rag” was the first album by a vocal quartet to sell a million copies. The huge success of their first recording allowed them to go on to motion pictures, nightclubs, and network radio programs. The Andrews Sisters 1937 version of the Yiddish song “Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen” was the first recording by a female group to equal the Mills Brothers’ sales. With its release, the Andrews Sisters were on their way to becoming one of the most successful vocal groups of that time.

Scat singing, or vocal improvisation, became an accepted form of embellishing a melodic line during the 1930s.

During the 1930s, scat singing, or vocal improvisation, became an accepted form of embellishing a melodic line during the 1930s. Leo Watson became one of the pioneers of this form by his frequent singing of meaningless syllables with only an occasional use of English. Eddie Jefferson, a former dancer, was an innovator in the field of jazz-vocalese (later used by such groups as Double Six of Paris and Manhattan Transfer). This technique added lyrics to existing instrumental improvisations. During the 1940s, he started using the improvisations of Charlie Parker. Among these tunes were “Billie’s Bounce” and “Parker’s Mood.”¹⁵ The sophisticated duo composed of Jackie Cain and her husband, Roy Kral, made use of many of the ideas originated by Jefferson and Watson. The couple sang bop lines combining lyrics and scat.

During the 1930s, the public interest began to increase in vocalists, and bands began to feature them prominently. The first pop singer to add stature to a great jazz band was Ivie Anderson, whose smooth phrasing and gentle vibrato graced the Ellington bandstand for more than 10 years. Eventually, singers began to dominate the bandstand, gaining greater public attention and becoming a vital part of dance band music.

Some of the greatest singers in the history of popular music began their careers with the dance bands of the 1930s. For example, Doris Day sang with Chick Webb, Bing Crosby with Paul Whiteman, Perry Como with Ted Weems, and Frank Sinatra with the Tommy Dorsey Band. They were all young, unknown, and comparatively inexperienced singers when they started, but they emerged as solo vocalists who would leave their mark on American popular music.

After World War II, the public lost interest in the big bands. The more personal intimate art of the singing stars began to become even more popular.¹⁶

The record business grew during the post-war years. In 1946, the first full year of peace, twice as many records were sold as in the previous year. More than the stage or motion pictures, records were the medium for making songs into hits and singers into stars. Many of the songs that received a top spot on the radio program, “Your Hit Parade,” between 1945 and 1949, began as best-selling records by other artists. Such performers as Nat “King” Cole, Perry Como, Bing Crosby, Doris Day, and Frank Sinatra, rose to fame through recordings. Vocal groups such as the Ames Brothers, the Andrews Sisters, the Chordettes, the Four Aces, the Ink Spots, the Kingston Trio, the Mills Brothers, and the Platters, shared top honors on the record charts with solo vocalists.

During the 1950s, many vocalists who started out as blues singers were commercially motivated to change over to pop songs. One of the most important vocalists was Ray Charles. The desire for financial success led him to perform

Some of the greatest singers in the history of popular music began their careers with the dance bands of the 1930s.

Tin Pan Alley songs backed by string sections, but much of the bittersweet beauty of his original style lingered on.¹⁷ Other vocalists in the jazz tradition also switched over to commercial music. Prominent among them was Nat “King” Cole, an authentic jazz singer,

when he recorded trio arrangements in the early 1940s. He became strictly a pop singer, with only faint traces of jazz, by the time he died, in 1965.

In 1958, Annie Ross, a British-born singer, teamed up with Jon Hendricks, an ex-drummer and singer who shared her interest in turning instrumental choruses into lyrical stories. They were joined by Dave Lambert, a vocal group arranger who had previously recorded with Charlie Parker, to form Lambert, Hendricks and Ross. Such vocal innovations as adding lyrics and unique harmonies to existing tunes, for which Hendricks was mainly responsible, established them as one of the most progressive vocal groups in modern jazz, supplanting such pop-oriented quartets as the Hi Los and the Four Freshmen.¹⁸

With the advent of rock and roll and the growth of television in the 1950s, radio made one last bid to challenge the growing supremacy of television in

the field of entertainment. During this time, a star-studded, variety program, appropriately named “The Big Show” was aired. Other new musical radio programs were “Musical Comedy Theater,” which offered selections of Broadway show music, “Coke Time,” starring Eddie Cantor, and shows featuring Bing Crosby and Rosemary Clooney.

New programs to appear on television included musical versions of “Our Town,” “Cinderella,” “Jack and the Beanstalk,” and “The Pied Piper of Hamelin,” as well as variety shows such as “Arthur Godfrey and His Friends,” the “Jackie Gleason Show,” the “George Gobel Show,” the “Dinah Shore Chevy Show,” the “Jack Benny Show,” “Your Show of Shows,” the “Red Skelton Show,” and the “Gary Moore Show.” These television productions became a major force in shaping the direction of popular music by making it more accessible to the general public.

The American musical theater is another genre that has influenced today’s popular music through the concepts of staging, choreography, lighting, and set design. The spectacular Broadway revue came into its full glory in the 1920s, although the *Ziegfeld Follies*, the glamorous yardstick by which other revues measured themselves, had lost a good deal of its original luster by then.¹⁹

In 1927, Warner Brothers released the first sound musical, *The Jazz Singer*, starring Al Jolson. It was the most successful picture up to that time. Two years later, a new era dawned in Hollywood with the release of the Oscar-winning movie, *The Broadway Melody*, the first all-talking, all-singing, all-dancing musical.

Talking pictures, including musicals, now began to flood the market. In 1929-30, more than 100 screen musicals were produced including the Warner Brothers production, *The Gold Diggers of Broadway*, in which color was used for the first time. In its rush to acquire properties that could be made into screen musicals, Hollywood raided the Broadway musical theater. Among the first to make the transition from Broadway to talking pictures was Sigmund Romberg’s *The Desert Song*, which was released in 1929. However, the saturation point for screen musicals was soon reached. Audiences were exposed to too many of these films, and many had little more to recommend them than sound itself. Only two dozen or so musicals were produced in the years 1931-32.

With the advent of rock and roll and the growth of television, radio made one last bid to challenge the growing supremacy of television in the field of entertainment during the 1950s.

Broadway musical revues continued into the 1930s, with scores and songs by such composers as Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Jerome Kern, Cole Porter, and Richard Rodgers. The *George White Scandals*, the *Greenwich Village Follies*,

Earl Carroll Vanities, *Shuffle Along*, and *The Music Box Revue* were training grounds for many young singers, including Ethel Merman, Rudy Vallee, Ethel Waters, Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, and Adelaide Hall. During World War II, movie musicals were produced such as *Hollywood Canteen*, *Here Come the Waves*, and *The Sky’s the Limit*, featuring many of these vocalists. The musical stage also remained vigorous throughout the late 1940s and 1950s, when such works as *South Pacific*, *Brigadoon*, and *Finian’s Rainbow* were produced.

Hollywood continued to adapt many successful stage presentations to the screen during the 1960s and 1970s. Some of them included *West Side Story*, *Gypsy*, *My Fair Lady*, *Paint Your Wagon*, *The Music Man*, and *A Little Night Music*. During the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s Broadway producers presented such wonderful shows as *Cats*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *Les Miserables*, *Miss Saigon*, *Annie*, *Rent*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Chicago*, and the *Lion King*. Recently, such shows as *42nd Street*, *The Producers*, *Aida*, *Hairspray*, and *Mamma Mia* continue to be perennial hits.

Fred Waring was an early force in the history of popular music in the choral form. In the late 1920s, Waring and The Pennsylvanians began recording for Victor. Their first release was “Sleep,” which later became Waring’s signature music.

Much of the evolution of popular-music choirs can be traced to college and university groups which formed in the early 1950s, such as the Indiana University’s Singing Hoosiers and the University of Iowa’s Old Gold Singers.

Mitch Miller, while working at Columbia Records in the late 1950s, was the first to realize the commercial potential of the pop vocal ensemble. His subsequent sing-a-long albums and follow-the-bouncing-ball television show led the way for numerous pop, jazz, and show choirs.

In Paris in 1963, the Swingle Singers was an octet that turned works by Bach into jazz by singing the original vocal version and adding a rhythm section. Three

The American musical theater is another genre that has influenced today’s popular music through the concepts of staging, choreography, lighting, and set design.

other influential groups were the Hi Los, The Four Freshmen, and Lambert, Hendricks and Ross. Within the last five decades, groups such as the Singers Unlimited, Anita Kerr Singers, Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians, the Ray Coniff Singers, the Johnny Mann Singers, The Norman Luboff Choir, and the King’s Singers, as well as numerous college and university choral groups, have contributed to the growth and acceptance of pop, jazz, and show choir music. Among these groups are Manhattan Transfer, Take 6, New York Voices, Rare Silk, The Real Group, Voicestra, and many others.

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- ¹⁰Feather, L. (1965). *The Book of Jazz*. New York: Horizon Press, p. 151.
- ¹¹Ibid., p. 152.
- ¹²Ibid., p. 152.
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- ¹⁵Gridley, M. (1978). *Jazz Styles*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, p. 151.
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Chapter 4

The Well-balanced Choral Program

It is now widely accepted that the term *choir* no longer exclusively implies to a group of singers whose performances are limited to *serious* music. Choruses of today may be comprised of any combination and number of voices, and are expected to perform, in the appropriate style, a greater variety of works than ever before. A well-balanced choral program must therefore allow the student-singer the opportunity to perform in both classical and popular vocal ensembles. Students are owed a *total music education*, and a well-rounded choral program should be the goal of every choral director as indicated by the following comments:

The inclusion of popular music groups in the curriculum must be based on strong educational objectives. Some benefits worth considering for both students and program are as follows:

- A knowledge of contemporary culture and its music
- Further development of singing skills and choral techniques
- Enthusiasm and motivation that carries over into the entire choral program
- Nurturing of students' self-esteem and self-confidence
- Positive public relations for the music area
- Focus for students' abundant energies
- Recruitment enhanced for the regular choral program

The last benefit in this list requires greater attention: Students who belong to pop ensembles must be enrolled in the regular choral curriculum. This is vital when working to provide a balance in musical styles in students' education. Some students are drawn to choral music because of interest in the show aspect of the pop group. If the only way they can become members of such an ensemble is to be part of a regular choir, however, they often will choose to do so, even when their intent is to make the pop ensemble. Once they become a member of a choir that sings art music, they often grow to value this type of musical experience.¹

Living in an age of materialism, which inevitably affects our general attitude toward the arts, mass communication brings commercial music into every home. But, rarely, provides genuine aesthetic experiences. This is a never-ending problem for the practical choral musician, who must educate as well as entertain.

The fact is, present-day choral concerts must do both: They must involve the audience as well as the performers.²

Experience in pop, jazz, and show choir should not only prepare future performers as musicians, but prepare them to be entertainers as well, through training in such areas as stage movement, personality projection, and ease before an audience. Popular music, because it is entertainment-oriented, appeals to the widest range of tastes, and lay audiences tend to indiscriminately applaud choral performances of this music. Professionals, on the other hand, often criticize such programs for overemphasizing commercialism, exploiting students, promoting poor singing habits, and, ignoring legitimate repertoire.³ All too often, this kind of criticism is warranted.

The most condemning criticism of pop, jazz, and show choir is the repertoire. The early years contained a plethora of weak arrangements and mediocre tunes. Much of the published music available consisted of formula arrangements of Top 40 radio hits. Many of these tunes were trite, repetitious, and poor in quality. Furthermore, the arrangements were executed quickly and perfunctorily, so that they could appear on music dealers' shelves before the popularity of the tune waned. The following comments concur:

We are heading towards a "pop-hit-stardom" mentality; a "here today, gone today" existence, one of "high calorie low nourishment," without artistically establishing the tastes and values of our people. We need to be cautious in selecting what we attribute as having value and significance. Popular is not always synonymous with good. Quantity does not signify quality. We have to decide what is acceptable as good American choral music, and how we want it to look and sound in fifty years. We have the privilege of studying hundreds of years of music, and we have seen what has survived and still works when given a chance. We must decide how best to use the resources entrusted to us.⁴

Quality should be the main concern of today's pop, jazz, and show choirs. High quality should mark the music, text, and arrangements that choirs choose to sing. Quality tone production, authentic stylistic interpretation, and sensitive use of accessory arts such as choreography, staging, lighting, and costumes should also be characteristic of the jazz and show choir. In other words, the best and most significant qualities in pop and jazz literature should be presented. If the student singers have learned how to produce a beautiful tone through correct technique, then their singing of pop and jazz style should continue with that tone. The accessory arts should enhance and reinforce but not overpower the music. Thus, the end product will be musical, aesthetic, and tasteful as well as entertaining.⁵

In each period of musical history, particular styles, techniques, and ideas have been developed and refined in response to the needs and tastes of the time. Pop, jazz, and show choir music should be no different. These styles possess as much relevance, and should have as much aesthetic significance, as any other historical styles.

As with any new style, fear of change and the unknown often motivates people to protect the status quo. It has always been much easier to reject new ideas than to attempt to understand and add them to one's knowledge base. Consider the early rejection of such musical innovators as Monteverdi, Wagner, Debussy, or Count Basie.

During each stylistic musical period, there have been hundreds of composers vying for public acclaim, financial reward, and historical acceptance. Over the course of time, composers such as Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, and Schubert were acknowledged, and their music survived through the centuries. Many composers whose works are performed today will not stand the test of time and their music will eventually fade into obscurity.

But, to compare the art form of pop, jazz, and show choir music, still in its infancy, to earlier music that has stood the test of time, is not fair. Much of Mozart's music was not appreciated during his lifetime and it took years to become popular. Unquestionably, very little of current pop, jazz, and show literature will prove to be lasting. But, composition by composition, the list of

Pop, jazz, and show choir music comprises an art form that requires special musical skills, knowledge, and an awareness of stylistic authenticity that many legitimate choral directors have not considered.

standard repertoire will grow, and it is this time-tested music that will be justly compared with that of the past.

A major concern in music education today is the development of choral programs that will allow students to discover and use their creative powers. Students often find a vocal and intellectual freedom when they are no longer restrained by the established harmonic and melodic traditions. The performance of popular styles contributes to the unfettering process while offering the opportunity to improve skills such as sight-reading and rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic interpretation.

Pop, jazz, and show choir music comprises an art form that requires special musical skills, knowledge, and an awareness of stylistic authenticity that many legitimate choral directors have not considered. Popular choral music is here to stay. The accepted status of the jazz band in the school instrumental curriculum is now enjoyed by the vocal curriculum.

The inclusion of pop, jazz, and show choir music in choral programs affords teacher and student the opportunity to explore techniques inherent in this style. When pop, jazz, and show choir techniques, in turn, are applied to conventional choral literature, they can give this music new excitement.

The older masters cannot be replaced, and the introduction of popular music into choral programs is not intended to do so. The director must calm the fears of those who are concerned that swing/show/jazz choirs will phase out traditional choirs from the curriculum. In a study, 78 percent of the choral directors questioned indicated that there was no negative effect on enrollment in concert choir when popular music was introduced. More than 50 percent of the directors said that they had had an increase in membership. This positive response seems to support the views of those who regard the pop ensemble as a means of revitalizing and expanding choral programs.⁶

Good choral singing should need no defense, whatever its musical style. Unfortunately, the public is bombarded with poor quality *pop-style* singing, and too many people have come to accept it as the only way to sing. When the worst aspects of this vocal concept are brought to the choral setting, the sound of the choir degenerates into raucous gutsy wailing, often manifested by heavy chest tone, considerable vocal tension, poor breathing technique, twangy vowels, manufactured vibrato, poor intonation, or lack of expression.⁷ This makes the goal of bringing quality singing to *all* of our groups paramount.

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A commitment toward broader variety can help breathe new life into stagnant programs. Studies have found that successful choral programs tend to stress a greater variety of styles.⁸ For example, using elements of jazz in contemporary music does not make it unacceptable, as some choral directors believe. Rather, in view of the respectability given this style by numerous serious and highly regarded contemporary composers, it seems fitting to urge choral musicians endeavor to better understand the jazz idiom.⁹

No choral singer should be encouraged to spend even a single year developing only one style. If choral students are permitted to perform only sacred music, or only madrigals, or only masterworks, their musical development is being impaired. Likewise, it is a mistake to offer the choral student only popular or jazz music. The choral director should remain open to new and exciting musical expression.¹⁰ Such expression can serve as a challenge for both group and director to develop new vocal, rehearsal, and performance techniques.

A group of nationally known choral conductors were asked the question,

“How do you envision American choral music 50 years from now?” Here are two of their responses:

I would probably have to say that it all depends upon what we decide to value in art and choral music. If we choose to emphasize shallow and trite music that appeals only to the most mundane of senses, and if we are eager to be trend-driven versus driving-the-trend, we will end up with little or no audience with an appreciation or the desire to hear good choral music. If we insist on making choral music a disposable art form by establishing or joining the flavor of the month club, then we shall end up in fifty years with few, if any, composers who write good choral music. We will also have few, if any, performers willing or capable of performing good choral music.¹¹

My hope for choral music of the future is for us to be focused on choral music as art. A successful performance is most important, one that communicates with the listener, stirs memories, excites feelings, and incites an emotional response. We need to continue to invest in the intimacy of the art and the connection, if not unity, between the listener and the sound.

Of course there is the element of entertainment, but I hope our young singers have the opportunity to grow up singing Palestrina and Brahms and the good music of American composers. I hope choral music is about the voice and that we aren't taken over by synthesizers, microphones, dance steps, and accompaniment tracks.

As we look at the history of American choral music, it is clear that this music was composed by American people, to be used by the American people. If people aren't participating in the art form, our future won't be significant.

Until we find a choral voice that is heard by the American people, we are in the danger of extinction. We are in a path of concentric circles. We have created rarefied standards and perfected our presentations. What have we done to bring people to the experience of choral singing—both as participants and as consumers—to ensure the prosperity of our future? We must continue to educate young singers and create an environment for lifelong singers. We must foster the integration of choral music and all arts education in schools. We must make our concerts a welcoming experience where people will come to be entertained, informed, and even inspired. People want to be touched, and American choral musician particular can touch them where they live.¹²

A commitment to excellence requires freedom from narrowness in the type of music to be studied and performed. Unfortunately there will be teachers who will opt for the *safe* sound. They will be ones who always do things in the same way. Their procedures, pedagogy, philosophy of music education, terminology, choice of repertoire, and lesson plans will show little change from day to day and year to year. They will have suspicion of anything that is contemporary or new, whether this be a declaration from Tanglewood or the performance of a rock group.¹³

In most schools, the pop, jazz, or show choir consists of the best voices in the school, and it often provides services to both the school and community. It

can also be an excellent recruiting device for the choral music program, because many students will be enticed to join by the professional, show-biz aspects of the popular music presented. As long as pop, jazz, and show choir are not the only styles of music taught in the curriculum, these types of groups might be good investments for a choral program in terms of audience support and enthusiasm, increased vitality in singing, increased poise and stage presence, and possible career preparation.¹⁴ By resisting this kind of music, the choral director is denying students exposure to an exciting new style that can revitalize a dying program.

One final area of concern for the pop, jazz, and show choir director is the use of choreography. For some, it is the reason to avoid the genre altogether. Music educators who applaud Emile Jaques-Dalcroze for introducing the use of movement in music instruction, and enthusiastically advocate various forms in the elementary grades, often shy away from choreography in the high school chorus, citing excuses such as, "I've never studied dance."¹⁵ If a group uses choreography, it should be as a further enrichment to a performance of high musical quality. But, for many groups, it becomes the primary concern. Such groups turn into dancers who sing, rather than singers who move. Too much effort is directed towards the visual, and the music is sacrificed.

If a group uses choreography, it should be as a further enrichment to a performance of high musical quality.

Pop, jazz, and show choirs are the latest in a series of choral styles, and they will eventually take their place with other historical styles of choral music. It is through the awareness of legitimate criticism and concerns that efforts can be made to strengthen the quality and scope of this new style of music and its performance.

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Chapter 5

Show Choir vs. Jazz Choir Literature

Show and jazz choirs are similar in a number of ways. Both use the Renaissance approach to tone production—a straight, light, focused tone with little or no vibrato. When vibrato is used, it is a melodic ornament. Rhythmically, they reflect similar influences—from rock, swing, Latin, ballad, country, and combinations of these styles. Melodically, both use arrangements based on standard or current pop tunes. Harmonically, both use the same type of chords, vocally as well as in the accompaniment. These influences will be compared and contrasted in later chapters.

Nevertheless, show choir and jazz choir also differ in many ways, both historically and technically. All too often, groups that do not sing jazz are called jazz choirs, and many show choirs are called swing choirs, erroneously implying that they specialize in the kind of jazz that was popular in the 1930s and 1940s. One significant reason for this is due to music publishers who erroneously label arrangements as vocal jazz when they are not. When a choir performs a piece of music with vocal jazz printed on the cover, it is assumed that it is jazz.

The show choir has its roots in vaudeville, the Broadway show, and the musical revue. The influence of men such as Fred Waring contributed to a change of attitude, beginning in the 1930s, that made this music acceptable for choral singing in schools.

Show choir music is generally easier to sing than jazz choir, and is oriented toward popular music. A tune that is a hit on the radio or television does not necessarily possess significant musical content. Many of the pop tunes published are trite, non-challenging, and poorly arranged. They are often taught in a few days so that the group can spend the following weeks on the choreography in an egregious misplacement of priorities. Show choir music chosen for performance should be high quality and well-arranged. The choreography should function as a subordinate aid—not as the primary focus.

Melodically, show choir music possesses a lesser range, is more diatonic, and tends to be more triadic than jazz choir music. This, in no way, makes show choir music inferior to jazz choir music. They are different, and both have their

...show choir and jazz choir also differ in many ways, both historically and technically, and it is inaccurate to use the terms interchangeably.

place in a well-rounded choral program. Show choirs make use of movement, choreography, and staging as part of their message. Jazz choir generally does not.

Vocal jazz has its roots in the big band music of the 1930s and 1940s, but is not limited to the music of the swing period or to this idiom. Jazz includes many types and styles, ranging from early Dixieland and ragtime to rock. It contains the following characteristics: a rhythmic feel, achieved largely through the use of syncopation; a tonal approach that, in its specialized phrasing, is distinguishable from the classical; tone color effects such as bendings; and, finally and most importantly, improvisation.

Improvisation is the key element that sets jazz apart from other styles. Show and jazz choirs frequently perform so-called jazz arrangements, which contain a few elements of the style, but usually lack improvisation. If a vocal jazz arrangement contains jazz rhythms, jazz harmonies, and space for improvisation, are choral directors doing the pop, jazz, and show choir movement a favor by allowing these musical elements to be optional?¹ Jazz implies these elements, and if they are lacking the jazz piece becomes a pop arrangement in swing style.

Improvisation is the key element that sets jazz apart from other styles.

Jazz choir music tends to be more complex and dissonant than show choir music. Wider ranges and thicker textures are often used. Vocal jazz is usually not choreographed since the music is generally more difficult and time cannot be taken for extra-musical effects.

Choral students should be given the opportunity to experience both jazz and show choir of music. Why can't jazz choirs move a little, and why can't show choirs stand and sing a challenging jazz selection? Many of the nations' top choirs are neither show nor jazz choirs—they are versatile musical entertainment groups, capable of performing in both styles.

¹Spradling, D. (1987). Establishing credibility in the vocal jazz movement. *Jazz Educators Journal*, 19(2), p. 83.

Chapter 6

Conceptualization and Hierarchy of Learning

The ultimate goal in singing is the interpretation and communication of ideas and emotions. Musical elements such as conceptualization, visualization, actualization, and quantification should be arranged in order of importance into a logical teaching sequence. This hierarchy of learning can provide an outline for the flow from one musical element to the next, and indicate how a musical element is to be conceived or interpreted. The structure of the ordering process may be visualized as an old Chinese box puzzle that has many decreasing-size boxes inside each other. The choral director must first have the group see the big picture, the large outer box, and then slowly define the musical concepts from the large areas into smaller and smaller sections.

If each musical concept is given its proper place in the hierarchy, learning and achievement will be greatly facilitated. For example, should correct pitches be spoken of before tone color, or intonation before phrasing, or rhythm before blend, or articulation before pronunciation? By establishing levels of musical importance, rehearsal time can be logically planned, concentrating on the most important musical elements first.

The concept of hierarchy when applied to conducting can be broken down into the following areas:

Conceptualization

A concrete mental image is provided for an abstract musical idea. For example, in attempting to get the group to sing with an especially light, transparent tone color, describe that tone as white puffy clouds or an early morning mist. Conceptualization is internal visual imagery. Once a new abstract idea can be seen on the internal movie screen inside student heads, they are on their way to acquiring that idea as their own.

Visualization

This is similar to conceptualization, except that it is physically demonstrated. In attempting to get the group to produce a particular articulation such as a *fall-off*, say, “Make it sound like this.” The director would then move his hand in an appropriate fashion to indicate the desired sustain, length, and depth of that particular fall-off. If a focused or pointed attack on a certain note was wanted, that entrance might be conducted with a pointed finger going through a hole in a wall. A smooth entrance could be conducted with an open, flowing hand moving horizontally. Visualization is a powerful device when the entire group participates in the process. Through its use, abstract concepts can be conveyed quickly and increase the student’s understanding of a wide range of musical concepts.

Actualization

An abstract concept is made real by acting it out. The group kinetically experiences what has just been conceptualized and visualized. A concept is not owned until it can be felt. It is this feeling process that crystallizes the intellectual act of conceptualization. To fully experience the proper fall-off, for example, have the group learn to conduct it as the director would. To appreciate the focused attack, have the students conduct it with the same commitment and enthusiasm. To understand the smooth attack, have the students conduct the extreme opposite of the desired attack, and then follow with the correct one.

Quantification

This is the conceptual process of determining the amount of an abstract idea that should be applied in a particular situation. A continuum of 1-10 is easily used for most musical concepts. All musical elements can be quantified and placed on a continuum. A few of the most obvious are:

- Tempo: slow to fast
- Dynamics: soft to loud
- Articulation: short to long
- Tone color: breathy to bright, dark to light
- Levels of tension: consonant to very dissonant

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

pp p mp mf f ff

For example, the continuum for dynamics could be:

Figure 1: Dynamics continuum

If, for example, an articulation is too short, tell the group to make it a little longer—but how much longer? By applying quantification the director would be able to say, “That articulation was a number 4 (on a particular continuum). Please make it a number 7.” They are given a concrete understanding of the amount of change desired. After they become accustomed to using the idea of the continuum, there will be no difficulty in reaching a consensus as to what exactly constitutes a certain degree of change within a particular concept. With this achievement, the group will have reached toward higher levels of musical accomplishment, going beyond the notes on the page.

As these concepts are attempted, the choral director will sometimes find that certain gestures do not elicit the desired response. Go back and reconceptualize, revisualize, reactualize, and requantify. If necessary, change the conducting technique.

These learning concepts will be applied in the following sections of this book. They are tools, guidelines, and suggestions to help in learning and teaching. It is inevitable and desirable that differently ordered hierarchies, giving more weight to certain musical ideas and less to others be set up. These differences are reflected in the variety of schools of choral theory and interpretation, and these differences contribute vitality to the field as a whole.

All musical elements can be quantified and placed on a continuum.

Whatever individual choices are made, every musical suggestion or direction that is given to a group will be more successful when the concepts of hierarchy and the relationship of musical concepts can be clearly explained. By making use of the principles of conceptualization and hierarchy, a choral group will also become actively involved in the creative process and eventually own each new concept presented.

Chapter 7

The Vocal Ensemble

Instrumental and vocal music are very similar in basic musical aspects, such as articulation, dynamics, phrasing, accenting, melody, harmony, and rhythm. The singer differs from the instrumentalist, however, because the singer *is* the instrument. Artur Rubinstein was once asked how he taught his concept of piano tone. He replied, “I cannot. I sing inside myself as I play, this creates my tonal concept.”¹ Singers can do things that are impossible for the instrumentalist. They can, for example, sing syllables while producing a pitch. These syllables can be actualized in random forms, as in a scat solo, or combined in a logical sequence to form lyrics. Singers can also easily change tone quality in mid-phrase, for musical contrast. For instrumentalists, tone quality changes are more difficult, often requiring a mute change, hand position in a bell, or a complete change of instrument.

These vocal advantages are among the most obvious that can contribute to making choral music exciting and rewarding to listen to and perform. They can also make it more difficult to interpret properly, as there are often more variables

The singer differs from the instrumentalist, however, in the fact that the singer is the instrument.

to deal with simultaneously. Variables in vocal music include such elements as tone quality, intonation, dynamics, articulation, pronunciation, posture, vowel placement, consonant accentuation, vibrato usage, and rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic interpretation. Choral music has all of these elements, plus such variables as overtone and harmonic differences, analogous pronunciation and vowel placement between individuals and sections, vibrato compatibility and use, blend and balance, in addition to singing the correct note with the correct rhythm.

In preparing to perform choral music, choral directors become familiar with the approaches and interpretations of their peers. This will broaden their awareness of alternate possibilities, and aid in deciding what works best for their group and planned repertoire. No choral director can outgrow the need for listening to other ensembles and for learning from such experiences.

Knowledge of fundamentals is pre-requisite to free flight.² A choral director’s goal is to develop ways to evoke efficient, healthy, beautiful, expressive singing in the choral group setting.³ No matter what type or style of music the

group sings, the basic concepts of good singing always apply. The only thing that changes is the style. Good singing is not a matter of isolated components, but of an integrated physical and mental whole.⁴ With this principle in mind, the techniques and skills required to perform pop, jazz, and show choir music that can easily be learned if the group is approached with the attitude that learning and performing is an adventure.

Developing the Appropriate Choral Tone

The human voice is perhaps the most mysterious, unpredictable, and emotionally stimulating of all instruments.⁵ Human tone quality is one of the elements that can make choral singing one of the most exciting forms of music—but it is also one of the most difficult. The first thing a choral director must decide is what fundamental tone will be most desirable from the combination of singers at hand. Although standards of beauty or quality differ, most will agree that a beautiful tone is not breathy, is sung to the center of a pitch, possesses some degree of intensity, accompanies a sound which is normal in pronunciation, and is comfortably sustained.⁶

It is essential that the same guidelines for the performance of serious choral music be observed in the pop, jazz, and show choir idiom. These guidelines include the same principles of free tone production, blend, and balance, as well as good singing posture, proper breath control, relaxed jaw, and proper focus.

Throughout history, suitable performance practices have been developed as different styles of choral music came into being. Pop, jazz, and show choir music are no different—they just make use of new combinations of existing historical techniques. The closest approximation of the basic tone production in pop, jazz, and show choir music is the Renaissance tone. Composers of that period often used instruments to support or replace vocal parts. These instruments were played without vibrato, and therefore big-voiced vibratos would not blend into their tonal texture. Purity of tone color, with little or no vibrato, was the objective sought by early singers. This essential character of chant will be attained as singers learn to hit each pitch dead center without slurring. An emphasis on vowels, and a slight de-emphasis on such aspirated consonants as *t* and *k* will also help to preserve the chant's legato nature.⁷

The closest approximation of the basic tone production in pop, jazz, and show choir music is the Renaissance tone.

The case against the vibrato as offered by Renaissance instrumental quality,

is reinforced by the knowledge that the horizontal lines of the composition must be heard because each line is important in itself, and large vibratos will obscure the vocal lines of the polyphony. The tone must be alive, free, and full. The ideal tone quality for this music is not breathy or a thin, pinched straight tone, but a rolling, free tone and not an uncontrolled vibrato without a pitch center. A bright forward tone must be cultivated. A dark, overly-mature, dramatic placement of tone must be avoided. The singer should use the same weight of tone quality as employed in the singing of a folksong.⁸

There are many similarities, vocally and stylistically, between the music of the Renaissance and pop music of the 1940s and 1950s. Vibrato is limited, the tone is warm and flowing, important words and syllables are stressed, and the rise and fall of the phrases are remarkably alike.⁹

A standard form of classical voice training is that of Bel Canto. A method that originated in 17th-century Italy, it is based on the concept of a bright, stress-free, naturally articulated tone. During the Renaissance, theorist Franchinus Gafurius wrote of the ideal tone by stating that, while performing, singers should not project their voices with an unusual and unsightly opening of their mouths, or with an absurd loud bellowing when they strive after melodies, especially in the divine mysteries. They should also spurn excessive vibrato and voices which are too loud, for they are not compatible with other voices similarly pitched.¹⁰

There are many similarities, vocally and stylistically, between the music of the Renaissance and pop music of the 1940s and 1950s.

Conduct will be more effective if the premise that there will be a strong relationship between the tone used by our singers and the kind of music which we like best to hear them sing is accepted.¹¹ Therefore, if a beautiful and full tone is desired, select music that will allow the group the opportunity to achieve these results by bringing out these qualities. Play recordings for the group to hear the type of tone desired, and then teach how to produce that type of tone.

It is essential that the singer have a complete understanding of the vocal mechanism. This understanding itself is an awareness of the need for proper support, breath control, voice placement, resonance, diction, sensitivity, and interpretation.¹² Understand how voices will respond to various suggestions, techniques, and exercises before attempting to select the tone with which the group will sing. By developing that sound first by listening, then by analysis, and then by teaching particular vocal and choral skills, the odds for success increase. When groups sing choral settings of pop-commercial styles as part of their choir's repertoire they will already have the sound of the idiom clearly in mind. It is only when the choir's concept of the various kinds of choral tone appropriate for

various styles of music is mixed or vaguely understood that conflicts occur.¹³

Singing with one tonal quality when another is called for is a major conceptual problem in choral music. Well-trained singers can produce a variety of acceptable, healthy tone qualities. Those singers who can produce one basic tone quality may be limited in their interpretive capacity, or to one style of music.¹⁴ To be a competent vocalist and musician is to be able to control one's instrument while performing in a variety of styles and idioms and to possess a wide range of musical expression at one's disposal, while maintaining sufficient self-monitoring to insure against vocal abuse.¹⁵

One of the greatest deficiencies in the singing of the average choral group is a lack of versatility in tone production.¹⁶ Work towards overcoming this old, but still justified, criticism. If singers are taught to perform with the clarity and precision of straight-tone singing, and can produce the richness of a properly controlled vibrato, the group will be equally at ease in the music of Palestrina or Brahms—and will be prepared for pop, jazz, and show choir as well.

A great deal of singing instruction is exclusively oriented toward vocal production that maximizes volume for projection and operatic intensity. If this technique is used when the desired vocal sound is a relaxed straight-tone in a lower dynamic level, overexertion, muscular antagonism, and accompanying laryngeal tension will result.¹⁷ Pop, jazz, and show choir themselves do not necessarily lead to vocal damage. Such damage comes from too great a tension in the area of the larynx. Indications of this problem may be manifested in raised shoulders or a tightening or jutting of the lower jaw.¹⁸

Singing with one tonal quality when another is called for is a major conceptual problem in choral music.

Choral directors, with little or no experience in pop or jazz singing, will often take rock and jazz stars as the basis for their own choral interpretation. This is totally incorrect. The majority of pop, jazz, and rock stars are vocally untrained, and are very poor role models for young choral singers. Their vocal production should not be emulated—only the style, energy, and emotion that they bring to this music is worthy of emulation. Such singers present us with examples of vocal techniques in country blues, classic blues, rhythm and blues, modern blues, big-band vocals, be-bop, gospel, soul, Top 40, and fusion. Some of them (examples: Billie Holiday, Babs Gonzales, Ray Charles, and Janis Joplin) must be judged only by their stylistic contributions and not by their vocal qualities.¹⁹

Some argue that the demands placed on the voice in a jazz choir to get the straight-tone and projection may be injurious to the voice. If normal care is taken of the voice and proper support is given, injury will not occur.²⁰ The potential

for vocal abuse can be minimized through intelligent application of the following simple guidelines:

- Create an environment in which everyone is working together towards the common goal of fine choral tone. Help the group understand the goal and how it will be achieved.²¹
- Sing with the basic Renaissance tone quality and avoid the overly emotional *yell singing* that is often associated with rock and pop music.
- Use a good P.A. system and learn how to operate it to reinforce a correctly produced vocal sound.
- Make sure the choreography does not become more important than the singing. Plan the choreography so that it does not physically tax the singers and waste energy that should be devoted to the music.
- Never allow bad choral production habits at any rehearsal, even if the rehearsal is just for choreography. The performance goal is not great dancing at the sacrifice of good musicianship.
- Guard the health of the pop, jazz, and show choir singers, possibly even more than that of the madrigal, concert choir, or glee club. In reality, most pop, jazz, and show choirs perform more often than the other groups. Moreover, their performances are usually at night during the school week and can tax the energies of young performers. The first sign of a group starting to get tired is a lessening of vocal production and quality. Be on guard!
- Approach this style as an aesthetic challenge. The pop, jazz, and show choir will then be a significant and enjoyable addition to a well-rounded choral program.

Much of post-Renaissance choral music, including the classical type currently performed, is diatonic tertian. This period style, as well as performance practice, requires such qualities as vibrato, large dark tones, and darker vowel placement. Twentieth-century music, including pop, jazz, and show choir, requires a different understanding of musical interpretation. The one choral tone concept does not apply here, and singers are required to produce new sounds for various musical reasons. Although most pop, jazz, and show choir music is also primarily diatonic tertian, jazz generally has much more dissonance than the other styles. Vibrato tends to destroy dissonance, and is thus reserved as a melodic ornament. Dark heavy tones do not allow the dissonance to resonate, and are avoided. Vowel placement is primarily forward, producing a clear, light, focused, straight-tone that has clarity and allows the performer to *SING IT LIKE YOU SAY IT*.

The fundamental tone is the basis for moving in many directions and allows for flexibility in molding individual and group sounds. A proper concept of this fundamental tone should be established in order to cope with the inherent differences between voices and instruments. Here are two useful approaches:

- Singers take an instrumental approach, playing their voices in a manner similar to that of an instrumentalist.
- Singers use a vocal approach when singing such styles as ballads and lyrical solo lines.²²

By using other alterations of the fundamental tone a group can achieve great tonal contrast. They can move along the tone quality continuum toward an airier or brighter tone, depending upon the effect desired. The Renaissance style fundamental tone functions as the middle ground, a number 5 on the continuum. The other tonal qualities are used as building devices and ornaments in specific musical situations to create higher levels of musical excitement.

Here are some suggestions to facilitate understanding these concepts:

- Listen to recordings of such groups as the King's Singers and Swingle Singers to hear the differences and similarities between classical and pop/jazz tone production such as the use of vibrato and vowel placement as sung by the same group.
- Listen to recordings of the Hi Lols to understand how dissonance produced without vibrato can be utilized effectively.
- Listen to early Ella Fitzgerald and Mel Tormé recordings to understand a light, straight-tone with vibrato used as a melodic ornament.

No one has all the answers to correct tone production. Nevertheless, all will be aided if it is remembered that the basic concepts of good singing continue to apply in pop, jazz, and show choir. Many of their unique qualities and requirements are derived from historical sources. The appropriate choral tone is not difficult to develop and, if approached correctly, is not harmful. It only requires a proper understanding of what is stylistically correct and applying suitable techniques that will not damage the voice.

Overtones and Harmonics

Harmonics are the basis for building all sounds, and must be properly understood and utilized to mold and direct choral tone. Interest in promoting overtone reinforcement grows out of the knowledge that it is the relative strength of various partials (particularly the upper ones) that cause the richness and brilliance of a vocal sound.²³

All musical instruments, including the voice, produce composite sounds consisting of a main sound, or fundamental, plus a number of additional pure sounds—the so-called overtones—which, however, are not heard distinctly because their intensity is much less than that of the main sound. The most obvious example of a set of overtones is the set of intervals produced by any brass instrument. By using harmonics, or overtones, singers can change tone quality, pronunciation, and intensity, and effectively produce various amounts of musical tension through the use of dissonance.

Many choral directors have probably wondered why some vocal groups sound great singing in particular keys in certain rooms, or why singing in the shower is wonderful, or what causes feedback in the sound system. These effects occur as a result of a natural phenomenon called room resonance. Each room has a unique acoustical pattern. As with fingerprints, no two are exactly the same. They vary acoustically because of size, types of floor covering, windows, drapes, or curtains,

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types of seats, number of people in the room, type and amount of sound being created within the room, the point from which the sounds emanate, humidity, temperature, and other variables. Each factor adds a dimension to the overall harmonic pattern of

the room and affects the response of particular frequencies. Some types of objects reflect particular sound frequencies and others absorb them. The combination of variables at a given moment, reflecting and absorbing sounds, causes certain frequencies or overtones to be accentuated. Sounding good in particular keys in certain rooms, singing in the shower, and sound system feedback are all due to room resonance.

Many singers have had the experience, while singing in a group, of simultaneously hearing very high pitches. These uncanny pitches were higher than the human voice can sing. They resulted from the combination of voices, volume of sound, voicing of the harmonies, and acoustical properties of the room. All these factors came together at just that moment to create a surreal experience. After it occurred, no matter how hard one tried, the results could not

be duplicated. It is one of the interesting properties of music that such phenomena occur when all factors are just right. There are vocal groups that perform music using these effects such as the New York Harmonic Choir.

Each family of instruments produces its own distinctive set of overtones such as the bowed string (violin), struck string (piano), single reed (clarinet), double reed (oboe), vibrating membrane (brass), split column of air (flute), and struck metal bar (vibraphone). The human body resembles the bugle in its sound producing mechanism. The bugle is basically a column of air oscillated by a vibrating membrane (the player's lips), passing through cylindrical tubing, and out through a bell. The vocal mechanism, in very simplistic terms, is the same.

This set of overtones can be heard clearly in the following simple demonstration: Say very slowly the word *wow*, note that as the shape of the mouth and lips changes, the basic vowel shapes are pronounced backwards and then forwards (*u o i e a e i o u*). This change in shape acts as a natural powerful variable (as did the choral room and shower stall) to amplify certain partials, or segments, of the harmonic set. The fundamental pitch selected, the size of mouth, and the size of the opening of the lips contribute to the accentuation of these sounds. Listen very carefully to the following musical example on the audio portion of this book. The word *wow* will be sung many times, eventually becoming slower. As it slows, listen to the various harmonics produced by the fundamental jump from partial to partial as the resonating chamber is altered.

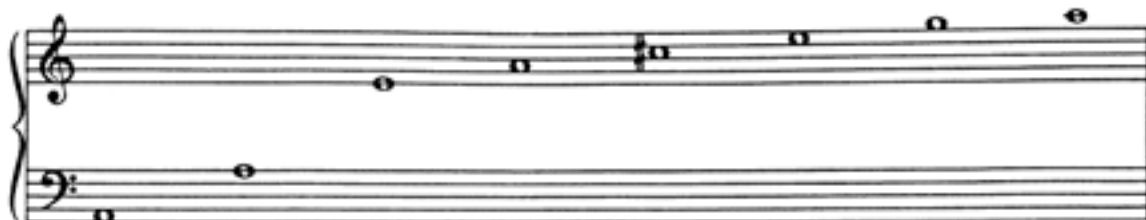


Figure 2: *Harmonic partials*

This demonstration shows that harmonics can be manipulated, and therefore effectively used in a musical context. A choral tone that may be described as having edge, brightness, or focus, is a tone that possesses a great amount of higher harmonics. Darker, covered tones accentuate the lower partials—through vowel placement, pronunciation, and support—by eliminating the full richness of natural sounds. In pop, jazz, and show choir, the use of these higher harmonics must be understood for such things as contrast between consonance and dissonance, accentuation of inner parts, and chord tuning to be effective.

The use of harmonics can aid performances in several ways:

- There are several chambers in the front of the facial mask that accentuate the resonance of the higher harmonics. These chambers open when the singer smiles. Smiling, therefore, not only adds to the attractive appearance of the group but it also contributes to the brilliance and excitement of their sounds because of the additional accentuated higher harmonics (See *Tonal Window* - p. 54).
- The concepts of harmonics can be used when tuning chords, especially in *a cappella* singing.
- Harmonics can be used for special effects, as in the following example:

The image shows a musical score for a choral piece. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system (measures 80-82) shows a vocal line with lyrics "where do we" and a piano accompaniment. The second system (measures 83-85) shows the vocal line with lyrics "where do we - o - we - o" and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features long, sustained chords. Annotations include "no tempo electronic effect" and "BRING SOUND TO FRONT OF MOUTH TO EMPHASIZE CHANGING CONFINATIONS OF OVER-TONES OF 'we - o' (fade)".

Figure 3: *Harmonic special effects* - (CD 1 - Track 1)

The understanding of harmonics is an important aspect of choral singing. Harmonics are what make Renaissance music and related styles sound superb in many cathedrals—and pop, jazz, and show choirs sound impressive over a P.A. system. Understanding how to use harmonics can aid intonation, pronunciation, blend, tuning, and intensity. Experimenting with harmonics can also be fun. Try the previous *wow* example (p. 49) in the shower stall, and note how the harmonics will be emphasized.

Vocal Weight and Blend Within the Ensemble

Most pop, jazz, and show choirs have the luxury of choosing membership by audition. For larger choirs, it is often necessary to accept anyone who wishes to participate. Voice selection and musicianship are not factors in the selection of members for these larger groups. It is the smaller, more select groups that will be addressed here. By auditioning these smaller groups, selection can be made on the basis of musicianship, reading ability, voice type, potential group blend (weight), and group voice color.

The fundamental tone quality of the group must first be decided. Then, singers should be chosen to match it. If not, educate the singers to approach it. No two choral groups will have the same sound because of the difference in dynamics, vibrato rate, matter of attack and release, balance, color and pronunciation, definition of placement of register, and a host of other pertinent factors. This disagreement in the ranks is one reason why one chorus sounds different from another group.²⁴

Within the group, achieve homogeneity by a judicious mix, instead of choosing voices that resemble each other too closely. It is not ideal to have a chorus composed of identical voices. In fact, just the opposite is the ideal. It is this which gives character to the chorus, if the voices are uniformly of high quality.²⁵

To repeat this point, the best fundamental tone quality, on which to base the pop, jazz, and show choir sound, is the Renaissance choral tone. It is clear, focused, light, and straight, with no vibrato. If the group can sing Palestrina, they have a good foundation for singing pop and jazz music.

When working toward this Renaissance fundamental tone quality as a starting place, decide on what tonal weight the group sound will be based. If the group consists of more women, the tonal weight will be lighter and brighter; with more men, the overall tone will be heavier, or darker, in quality. Most Renaissance church music was originally performed by male choirs which included male sopranos and altos. Their tone quality is quite different from female sopranos and altos. This is not to imply that women have no place in pop or jazz choral music but rather it is a question of emphasis and balance. In most professional pop and jazz choral music, as in most television and radio jingles, a non-shrill sound is preferred. Some groups, such as Singers Unlimited, have one woman and three men, and the King's Singers, Hi Los, Take 6, and Four Freshmen are all male. On the other hand, groups such as Manhattan Transfer

If the group can sing Palestrina, they have a good foundation for the singing of pop and jazz.

have an equal number of men and women, yet maintain the darker sound. The high female soprano is not characteristic of the idiom. By controlling the vocal weight of the group, the blend of pop, jazz, and show choirs should sound different from a madrigal group or other mixed groups.

Another aspect of this style is that it is written high for men. Except in *a cappella* arrangements, basses seldom go lower than an octave below middle *C*. The reason is that most composers and arrangers generally are interested in separating the harmonics/overtones of the rhythm section from the singers. By keeping the singers above the general range of the rhythm section, greater clarity can be achieved in the vocal mixture when it is eventually amplified.

The proper vocal weight for this style of choral music is achieved through a mixture of darker sopranos (neither heavy nor airy), and a high, light male sound approaching the clarity of the tenor falsetto type of tone.

Another way to achieve correct tonal weight would be to have no distinction between male or female voices, and to strive for a smooth tonal quality among registers. Blend is born when each singer succeeds in subordinating his own unique vocal quality to the emerging sound of the group.²⁶ To establish a vocal weight that fits both the requirements and a group, have some men (without injuring their voices) sing in the alto section, avoid using men with a true bass voice, or avoid using sopranos who are solo singers rather than blenders.

By controlling the vocal weight of the group, the blend of pop, jazz, and show choirs should sound different from a madrigal group or other mixed groups.

The desire to sound too much like a favorite professional group can have its drawbacks. Sometimes inexperienced choral directors are overzealous in their attempts to achieve the mature quality found only in adult choirs and, in their eagerness, develop a tenseness and rigidity in the youthful voices.²⁷

Vocal blend is a uniformity of sound within and between sections. It cannot be forced, but can be achieved through constant drill, and by arranging the choir so that they all can hear properly (See *Seating Arrangement* - p. 99). They should be able to hear themselves as a whole, and their section as an integral part of the total sound. It is not true that a good voice will automatically blend into a choir, especially if the standards for such a voice are based on qualities most appropriate to a soloist. If singers can hear themselves sing individually, they have become soloists and not chamber choir singers. Modern composers use proper theoretical practices and compositional techniques to build these inner voices properly. But, many chamber choir directors permit their singers to become soloists, destroying harmonic structure and chamber choir character.

Others permit vibrato, uncontrolled head tones, and loud singing, which are undesirable in any dignified ensemble.²⁸

Consider the following suggestions when working to achieve better blend:

- Insist on a smooth composite sound within sections.
- Make sure each singer can hear the characteristics of the prevailing overall blend.
- Avoid edgy or pinched tone quality.
- Work with sections down to quartets to achieve a uniformity of sound.
- Modify individual response if it destroys ensemble blend.
- Train all voices to learn when to amplify or diminish their own sound and sense when they can be carried along or when they must sing out to help maintain the proper balance.
- Aim for uniform vowel pronunciation to hone vocal blend.

Many of the basic elements of vocal blend are affected by the choice of fundamental tone. The direction of the vocal color must be decided on before members are selected. It is important to consider the various blends, weights, and tonal colors possible, depending on the combination of members selected. Tone color, blend, and weight concepts can eventually be taught to an experienced group, but it is best to start as close as possible to the goal. The best way to decide upon the fundamental tone concept for pop, jazz, and show choirs is by listening to as much of this style of music as possible—and then, intelligently making a unique interpretation of it.

An extremely undesirable type of vocal color is produced if a group's singing is too light or airy. All the music performed by such groups will tend to sound the same.

An extremely undesirable type of vocal color is produced if a group's singing is too light or airy. All the music performed by such groups will tend to sound the same. Melodic lines will have no direction, chords will have no vibrancy, rhythmic events will have no edge or shape, and contrast will be limited. Another vocal color extreme is the very bright, brassy sound, which quickly becomes annoying. The achievement of blend requires conscious and continuous effort. Achieving group blend is only possible when all have agreed that blend is desirable and all are committed to developing the requisite skills.²⁹

Tonal Window

All sounds possess four physical characteristics: pitch, loudness, time, and quality. They represent, respectively, the frequency, amplitude, duration, and form of the sound wave.³⁰ When singers produce sounds, certain acoustical phenomena occur that, when understood, can be used to increase intonation consistency and tonal contrast. Many choral directors have probably used the expression, “Get up on top of the pitch,” when a group’s musical intensity was fading, or tonality was slipping. But many have had little success in getting the group to understand the meaning. What really was wanted was an awareness of pitch center and tonal placement within each singer. The *tonal window* concept will help singers visualize the placement of pitch and intonation. If regularly rehearsed, the *tonal window* concept is a valuable aid in achieving intensity, excitement, and control of intonation.

This concept, when applied to tonality and pitch center, provides an abstract tool with which to visualize various combinations of voices, to understand what the choral sound is, to tune individual pitches within a chord, and to bring out quantities of higher-order harmonics.

The tonal window is an area in which a given pitch is *legally* in tune. Above, it is sharp and below, it is flat.

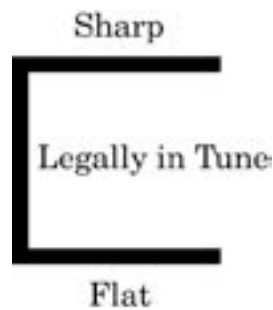


Figure 4: *Tonal window*

If one person sings a particular pitch, it looks like this:

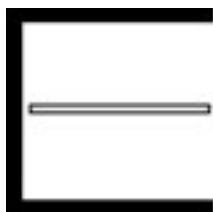


Figure 5: *Tonal window: one voice*

If two people sing the same pitch, it looks like this:



Figure 6: *Tonal window: two voices*

If three people sing the same pitch, it looks like this:

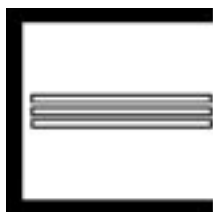


Figure 7: *Tonal window: three voices*

If four people sing the same pitch, it looks like this:

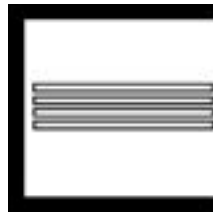


Figure 8: *Tonal window: four voices*

Note that the pitch center gets thicker as voices are added. This is caused by differing tone qualities, natural vibratos, amplitude changes, resonating chamber differences, or any of the other aspects that make one person's voice sound different from another's. It is for these reasons that a solo sounds different from a duet, a duet from a trio, and a trio from a quartet. If there are more than four voices, it begins to become difficult to distinguish individual qualities, and what emerges is the choral sound.

The choral sound looks like this:

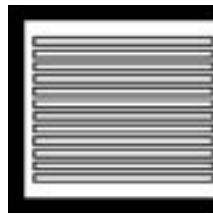


Figure 9: *Tonal window: many voices*

Note that in the above example the choral sound is very thick. If each singer sings one of the pitch center variations within the darkened area, his or her voice will not stick out, and will be *legally* in tune. This thick effect is accentuated by dark heavy tones with wide vibratos, and may be described as rich and full, in reference to tonal texture. Lighter, more focused choral sounds would generate a narrower legal pitch, and are associated with such styles as Renaissance and popular music.

For good pop, jazz, and show interpretation, a singer must visualize pitch placement at the top of the tonal window. Because the piano is tuned in an equally

tempered manner—every note on the piano is equally out of tune with every other note—and most music in this idiom uses the piano as accompaniment, vocal pitch generally must be pushed up to give a bright edge of excitement, and to contrast with the consistent tonal foundation of the piano. The concept of being on top of the pitch, or on the bright side, is analogous to a good bass player in a trio pushing the beat (being out in front of the beat, but not rushing) to create that added rhythmic drive and excitement heard in professional rhythm sections.

An effective technique for visualizing the tonal window is to use the hand sign *C* to represent it.

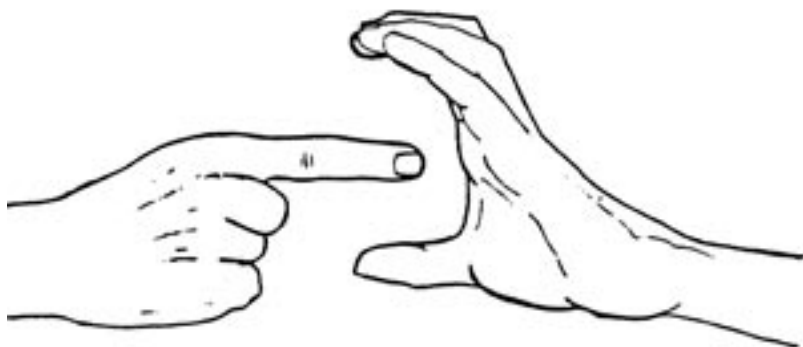


Figure 10: *Hand sign C pitch indicator*

A pitch frequency such as A-440 would be in the center of the *C*. To indicate a brighter pitch (such as A-441) push up towards the top of the *C*.

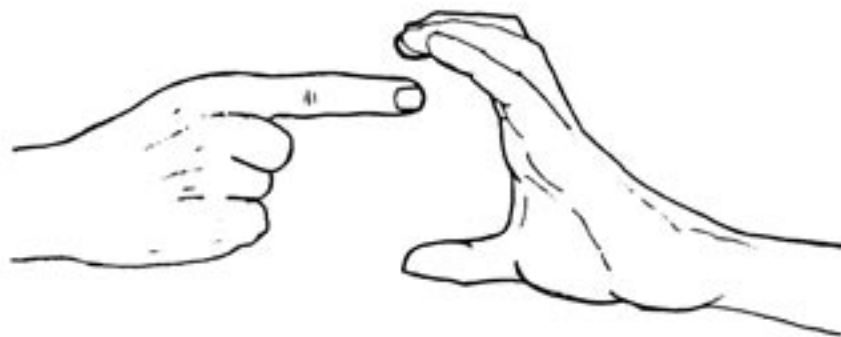


Figure 11: *Hand sign C pitch indicator (brighter pitch)*

It is very easy during a performance to give the *C* sign to the entire chorus or any part of it. Doing so alerts them to the fact that their pitch center is sagging or lacking excitement, and must be modified. They will then be aware of the following, and respond accordingly:

- Often, pitch and intonation problems are caused by poor posture and lack of proper support. The tonal window sign transmits the message to singers: “Are they in proper posture? If not, do something about it.”
- Other pitch and intonation problems occur when one sings without smiling. Smiling not only makes the singers look good. It opens small resonating chambers in the front of the facial mask, allowing the higher harmonics of a given pitch to resonate, thus creating edge and brightness. But, at times, smiling is inappropriate for the mood or the literature being performed. When it is, have the group *smile with their eyes* or *energize their eyes*. This will accomplish the same effect when showing teeth is not warranted, yet still retain the emotional quality of the music or text.
- An interest in promoting overtone reinforcement grows out of the knowledge that it is the relative strength of various partials — particularly the upper ones — that causes the richness and brilliance of a vocal sound.³¹



Figure 12: *Smiling vs. non-smiling*

- Each note has its own tonal window. Certain melodic notes have certain tendencies, depending upon their key relationships and chordal function. For example, the leading tone in a major key should be sung a little brighter because of its natural tendency to move to the tonic. This pitch should be visualized and placed higher in the tonal window than surrounding pitches (For the same reason, the enharmonic pitches *G#* and *Ab* are in different places on the violin, depending upon whether the key center is *A* or *Bb*. This is because notes within a key center have different tendencies when related to the tonic).
- When tuning chords, certain notes should be raised or lowered to make the chord speak. It is easy to visualize the placement of individual notes by having the group's various voice parts adjust their pitches by moving their hands as pitch indicators within the *C* hand sign. This technique is an aid in tuning chords, and producing the correct sound.

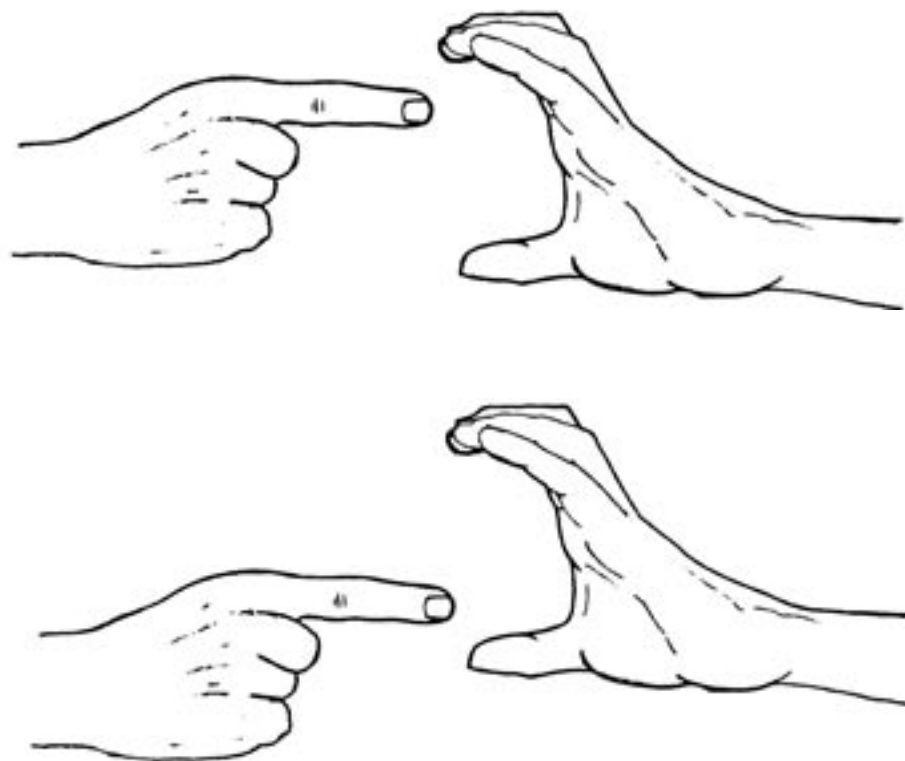


Figure 13: *Hand sign C pitch alterations*

- From the physical point of view, tone quality is a matter of number, distribution, and intensity of partials, or overtones.³² With this understanding, the tonal window concept can be employed to accentuate tone color contrast and give the music an exciting edge.
- To train their ears, have singers listen to various pitches and decide where they fit into the tonal window. This fine-tuning of the ears will help the group improve in overall quality.

By employing the simple concept of the tonal window, listening in tune and singing in tune can become a process that is understood visually as well as kinetically.

Diction

Many choral directors have all had the unfortunate experience of hearing choirs perform in English without being able to make a single word understandable. Proper diction in choral music functions simultaneously at two levels. First, it makes the intellectual message—the text—intelligible. Second, it provides the actual medium upon which the musical content is communicated. Within this musical medium are three elements: the words must be pronounced correctly; the vowels, which carry the melodic and harmonic elements of the music, must be enunciated correctly; and the consonants, which help to uphold the rhythmic elements, must be articulated correctly. Proper attention to these elements can make the difference between a good and a mediocre chorus.

The following are a few ideas that relate to better diction:

- Vowels are the chief vehicle for sustaining the vocal tone and are the key to fine singing.
- Different voice sections within the group may need to sing with a different vowel placement on the same word. The lower the pitch, the brighter the vowel may have to be made, because singing lower naturally gets darker. Conversely, the higher the pitch, the darker the vowel may have to be made, because singing higher naturally sounds brighter.
- To improve tonal blend and uniform vowel production, try singing a choral selection on the vowels only.

- Vowels often sound dull or flat, even when technically they are not. The pitch should be altered through repositioning within the tonal window, opening the frontal mask resonating chamber by smiling, altering the tongue position, and through better posture and support.
- Properly enunciated consonants help to focus vowels.
- Consonants are used to shape words. They are rarely sustained in singing; they serve to begin and end sounds made by the vowels.
- Consonants should be sung slightly ahead of the beat so that the melodic or harmonic vowel arrives exactly on it. Text is then more intelligible and the musical elements sound more powerful.
- Consonants should be short, properly formed, and sung on the same pitch as the vowel that follows.

Pronunciation for pop, jazz, and show choirs is relatively simple. Remember, the basic rule: *SING IT LIKE YOU SAY IT*. This rule does not always apply to other styles of choral music. Pop, jazz, and show music is treated as popular music, which is performed for the general public. Much of its repertoire is derived from popular songs, written within the last 60 years and popularized by artists who performed the tunes using the normal, accepted speech of the era. In studio singing, the most careful attention is placed upon the pronunciation and enunciation of the lyric. Instant understandability of the lyric, the correct street style, is a prime requisite to a successful production.³³ The same approach is required for proper interpretation of pop, jazz, and show choir music.

Pronunciation typical of the various regions of the United States should be avoided, except in regional folksongs, popular songs, and songs that demand performance in a dialect. Whenever dialect is required, the song would be much more effective with, for example, the Scottish burr, or without the *r* in African American dialects. In fact, a good dialect is part of an effective and authentic interpretation of the music.

**Remember, the basic rule:
*SING IT LIKE YOU SAY IT.***

In all songs, strive to obtain a pronunciation that is used universally by choral singers. This is diction that transcends colloquialism and is used by professional artists. A good concept to follow is this: Sing a pure vowel sound, unless the word sounds affected with the change, in which case the singer would pronounce the word as he would in correct speech.³⁴

The goal is to sing normally and produce pure vowel and consonant sounds, unless they do not sound correct. At that point, *SING IT LIKE YOU SAY IT* becomes operative. Singers must develop a universal English, as devoid of dialect as possible, reflecting without snobbishness—an ideal that is established as goal

and norm for all educated speech.³⁵

The following are some examples of the differences between traditional choral diction and that of pop, jazz, and show choir music:

Words ending in *t*

Traditional choirs usually close off the *t* at the end of words and invariably put a space between it and the next word, thus adding an extra syllable. In pop, jazz, and show choir, *that* is pronounced as one syllable, and not the usual two syllable *tha-tah*. In the following recorded example, *great feelin'* is pronounced *grey-tfeelin'*, not *grey-tah feelin'*.

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled "JAZZ" with a tempo of 184. The score is arranged for four vocal parts: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The lyrics are: "I get this great feelin' a-comin' a-round fill-in' up in-side me. great feelin' a show-er-in' down from a-bove." The score includes numbered measures (1-12) and musical notation for each part, including notes, rests, and dynamics. The lyrics are written below the vocal lines, with some words like "great" and "feelin'" appearing on multiple lines to indicate their duration across measures.

Figure 14: *Words ending in t* - (CD 1 - Track 2)

Vowel formation and placement

Some traditional choirs produce their vowels further back, and have a more covered approach to sustaining them. Pop, jazz, and show vowels should be brought forward for easy understanding and a generally brighter tone quality.

Figure 15 is a musical score for a vocal ensemble. It consists of two systems of music. The first system shows measures 6 and 7. The vocal line has lyrics: "You are — the spir-it on my shoul-der — watch - in' ev'-ry move that I make...". The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand. The second system shows measures 8 and 10. The vocal line has lyrics: "guide-in' ev'-ry step that I take — as I go on my". The piano accompaniment continues with similar rhythmic patterns.

Figure 15: *Vowel formation and placement* - (CD 1 - Track 3)

Consonant placement

Bring consonants as forward as possible to facilitate better intelligibility on the P.A. system, and to produce a brighter tone quality.

Figure 16 is a musical score for a vocal ensemble. It consists of two systems of music. The first system shows measures 5, 6, and 7. The vocal line has lyrics: "It real-ly — don't — mean — a thing if the". The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand. The second system shows measures 8, 9, and 10. The vocal line has lyrics: "rhy- thm and the mel-o - dy ain't — got that swing: ya try, — ya try...". The piano accompaniment continues with similar rhythmic patterns.

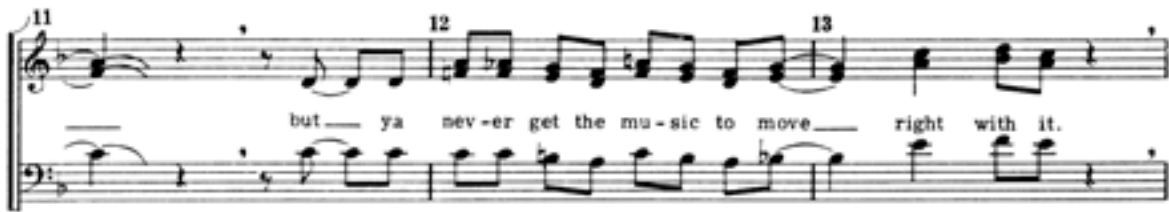


Figure 16: *Consonant placement* - (CD 1 - Track 4)

Remember, when there is a question as to proper pronunciation in this style, or when something just doesn't fit or sound right, go back to *SING IT LIKE YOU SAY IT*.

Diphthongs

The choir director must know which vowel sounds should be elongated, and which consonants or vowels should be released quickly. Indistinct diction is a fault so common as to be almost expected in amateur ensembles and soloists. This weakness makes the performance less pleasurable to the listeners because they are unable to understand what is sung.³⁶

One of the biggest problems facing pop, jazz, and show choir directors is the influence of untrained professional pop and jazz stars on young singers. Many of the new rock and pop albums released each year are recorded by poorly trained singers. An obvious example of poor vocal training is the incorrect use of diphthongs. For example, pop and rock vocalists often sing through the important sustained vowels and hang on the ending *ee* sound. This *ee* is a very obnoxious sound when heard over a P.A. system, and should be avoided.

Young singers listen to these groups and then want the choral arrangements of these tunes purchased. The group then wants to sing it in the same way as on the record, and it is difficult to convince younger groups that there is a better way to rehearse, produce, and perform this particular piece of music.

One of the biggest problems facing pop, jazz, and show choir directors is the influence of untrained professional pop and jazz stars on young singers.

Remember, a vowel must sound at the beginning of the beat and be sustained for as long as the note is supposed to last. Consonants and vanishing vowels are sounded with great speed. Do not allow the influence of untrained and unknowledgeable pop or rock stars to cause singers to develop bad habits.

Emulate their feeling, intensity, and style—not their improper pronunciation.

Vibrato Compatibility and Control

The use of vibrato in choral singing has been a controversial issue for some time. With the growth of pop, jazz, and show choir, this controversy continues. A vibrato is basically a trembling, or pulsating, effect caused by a rapid, but minute, variation in pitch during the production of a tone. The variation starts from a given pitch and glissandos to another pitch a distance away. This distance can be changed from a narrow vibrato to a wider, heavier sound, depending upon the effect desired or the style of music being performed.

Upper vibrato can be produced from a given pitch up to another note. Lower vibrato can be produced from a given pitch down to a lower note. Centered vibrato can be produced with both higher and lower fluctuations.

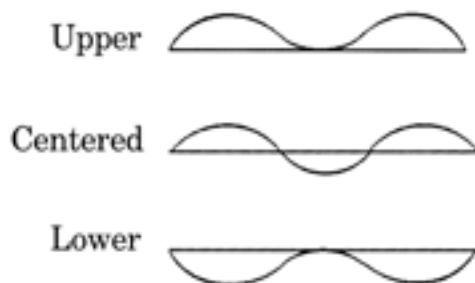


Figure 17: *Three types of vibrato*

Vibrato is considered a natural process expelled from muscle tonus.³⁷ But research has revealed that five out of six individuals do not have a vibrato.³⁸ Non-vibrato styles continue in Western musical traditions based upon such forms as Renaissance part-music, 14th-century French music, some 15th-century styles, Baroque monody, and 20th-century music. Even some contemporary styles, such as pop and barbershop, are stylistically more satisfying if done with a minimum of vibrato.³⁹ A light, pure, and straight-tone improves blend within each section, and within the group, purifies the intonation, and projects the clarity of each line's strand of melody.⁴⁰ For example, Renaissance-style clarity is best achieved with a tone that has little vibrato because excessive vibrato will destroy the transparency and forward motion of the musical line. Younger voices rarely have a problem attaining the desired quality because they are naturally light.⁴¹

Vibrato, as an ornament in Baroque music, should be prominent enough to draw attention to itself, occurring only on certain notes selected for expression.⁴²

Research has shown that singer Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau sang lieder with little or no vibrato approximately 40 percent of the time.⁴³ It is also true that Frances Alda, Caruso, Galli-Curci, Gigli, Jeritza, Scotti, and many others showed wide vibrato ranges upon measurement, but it is true that probably no director could develop an artistic chorus from among them and their colleagues. It would be interesting to listen to a chorus of high-powered vibratoists tangling themselves into the net of an eight-part motet of Palestrina, or even a simple *a cappella* fugue by Bach.⁴⁴

A certain amount of vibrato is undoubtedly desirable in a solo voice to give it individual color, but the owner of such a voice is of little value in an ensemble unless he or she are willing to subordinate him or herself.⁴⁵

Straight-tone choral singing was advocated more than 50 years ago by F. Melius Christiansen, and this trend was continued by his son, Olaf C. Christiansen, at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. Their approach was

It is this concept of limiting the natural vibrato in the voice to give the illusion of a straight-tone that is the basis for ensemble blend and balance in pop, jazz, and show choir music.

to subdue vibrato—not to banish it totally. It is true, however, that their sopranos sang with little or no vibrato, creating the auditory illusion that no vibrato was being used.⁴⁶ What sounded like a straight-tone was the result of listening to each other, thus getting in tune, and making a pure unison. All individual voices should have a natural vibrato but, by limiting the extent of deviation above and

below the central pitch, it is possible to make a whole section sound like a single voice.⁴⁷

It is this concept of limiting the natural vibrato in the voice to give the illusion of a straight-tone that is the basis for ensemble blend and balance in pop, jazz, and show choir music.

A straight-tone produces a set of overtones unique to the singer and to that particular pitch. Because vibrato is an alternated glissando from a given pitch to a higher pitch (including all pitches in between), other sets of overtones, or harmonics, are produced in the process. These give vibrato the desired warming effect when added to a pitch.

Because vibrato is not a normal element of tone production in pop, jazz, and show choir music, it must be used judiciously for maximum effect. Vibrato is generally added at the end of longer held-notes when the effect of intensity change has diminished (See *Linear Intensity Through Melodic Interpretation*

- p. 192). The warmth added to the ends of held notes acts as a building device so that longer notes do not get boring, but continue their forward drive, even when rhythmic activity is not present.

Figure 18: *Use of vibrato on longer notes* - (CD 1 - Track 5)

Pop, show choir, and, especially vocal jazz frequently contain large quantities of dissonant harmonies. For this reason, as well as for clarity of text, vibrato is used only as an ornament. A curious phenomenon of sonority in dissonant music, or at least in music in which there are difficult intervals in the vocal lines, is that the vocal production may change. Some singers seem to turn off or to narrow somewhat their omnipresent vibrato and attempt to sing with a much straighter tone, with the aim of hitting the note squarely in the middle. This thinner sound probably does help in pitch definition and in fact, may make a cleaner execution of a chromatic polyphonic texture.⁴⁸

Dissonance is much less effective when sung with a tone that contains vibrato. Clarity of pitch is needed for dissonance. Vibrato—with its additional pitches and harmonics—obscures this clarity. The added overtones, or harmonics, tend to hide the tonal conflict generated by two or more dissonant pitches. In performance periods when highly complex contrapuntal music was in favor, heavy, persistent vibrato would have robbed notes of pitch focus and thus confused harmonies.⁴⁹ When the multiple sets of overtones, or harmonics, produced by individuals in a choir are combined, it is easy to understand why the warmth of vibrato is used consistently in certain musical styles, and how it can be employed in other styles as an ornament or building device.

Use of vibrato is also a medical question. It has not been scientifically

established whether singing without vibrato will harm the voice.⁵⁰ The use of vibrato is a matter of choice, except where stylistically inappropriate as in a Renaissance piece where no vibrato is used, or in a madrigal where it is used in a very controlled manner. Vibrato may be deleted, without detriment to the voice, as long as the volume remains soft. The ideal conditions for healthy straight-tone singing include the relaxation of the throat and laryngeal area and maintaining low dynamic levels by using microphones.⁵¹ These practices also make good musical sense, because singing classical or jazz music loudly is not stylistically correct.

As a reminder, the fundamental Renaissance tone required for singing pop, jazz, and show choir music is straight and pure, with little or no noticeable vibrato. At no time should the tone be breathy.

Occasionally one encounters the misconception that straight-tone singing requires a breathy tone. Obviously, creating an excessively breathy tone is the result of inadequately adducted vocal folds or pushing air through the vocal cords. This is harmful and not recommended, particularly over long periods of time.

What is perceived by some as a breathy studio sound heard on recordings by groups such as Bonnie Herman and the Singers Unlimited is actually supported straight-tone singing characterized by a wide harmonic spectrum. This wide spectrum of partials enhances fullness and blend in the recording studio but is best achieved through relaxed, unforced vocal production.

To sing properly without vibrato, the singer must push considerably more air through the voice.

A distinction must be made between relaxed but supported straight-tone singing as opposed to the breathy sound advocated by some pop singers and choral directors.⁵²

To sing properly without vibrato, the singer must push considerably more air through the voice.⁵³ The excessive amount of air diminishes the chance of the vibrato interrupting the musical line. Vibrato can intentionally be removed from the voice. When it is done, some of the resonance (layers of overtones, or harmonics) is removed. Barbra Streisand often removes the vibrato as she starts tones, saving full resonance and vibrato for the emotional impact of the note.⁵⁴

For the warmth of vibrato to be effective, three elements must be considered:

Speed

- How quickly does the entire group, or certain sections, change pitch?

- What speed of vibrato is in context with the music at that time?
- What speed of vibrato movement is comfortable to sing?

Pitch distance

- What will the distance be between the given pitch and the alteration?
- Intervallic distances are not effective in determining normal vibrato distance.
- Use the terms narrow, medium, and wide to describe the various pitch distances usually associated with the ornament called a shake (See *Jazz Nuances, Inflections, and Ornaments* - p. 209).

Depth

- This characteristic is dependent upon the quality of the tone at a given point in the music.
- If the tone is dark and heavy, the vibrato will have more depth.
- If the tone is light and airy, the vibrato will have less depth.

These three elements should be understood and rehearsed separately. Each vibrato, or warmth situation, requires analysis as to what combination of elements will be most effective.

If the highest voice part of a particular chord contains vibrato, it gives the illusion that the entire group is using vibrato. This effect is most commonly heard in instrumental big band performance. It is usually the lead (melody) players in the trumpet, saxophone, and trombone sections who produce the vibrato, adding warmth to the section (except in some swing era bands such as Guy Lombardo's, where players in certain sections used vibrato continuously).

Equal vibrato in all parts tends to produce a dark but muddy sound, especially if the altos and basses are singing low within their ranges.

The image shows a musical score for two parts: S.A. (Soprano/Alto) and T.B. (Tenor/Bass). The S.A. part is written in a treble clef with a 3/2 time signature and a key signature of one flat. The T.B. part is written in a bass clef with the same time signature and key signature. Both parts feature a melodic line with a vibrato effect indicated by a wavy line above the notes. The S.A. part starts with a double bar line and a repeat sign, followed by a series of notes. The T.B. part also starts with a double bar line and a repeat sign, followed by a series of notes. The notes in both parts are aligned vertically, showing the harmonic relationship between the two parts.

Figure 19: *Equal vibrato in all parts* - (CD 1 - Track 6)

The following combinations and ideas may be found useful and effective in achieving vibrato control.

- Start with sopranos singing 100-percent vibrato, altos 60 percent, tenors 30 percent, and basses 15 percent. If, however, the basses are singing below a *D* on the staff, they should not sing with vibrato, but only think about it. This combination is a good starting point for developing a group's particular sound. By varying the percentages between sections, various vibrato qualities can be achieved and easily altered.



Figure 20: *Vibrato hierarchy* - (CD 1 - Track 7)

- Unique effects can be achieved if, for example, the altos and tenors use vibrato at a given point. If the sopranos do not use vibrato, there is the illusion that the entire group is not using it. What is heard is a warmth coming from the inner parts. This very interesting sound can easily be added to the group's repertoire of musical ornaments.

Figure 21: *Vibrato special effects* - (CD 1 - Track 8)

Remember, vibrato is an ornament. Like Christmas candy, a little goes a long way, especially when used as a technique such as warming up ends of phrases or on long held notes. For the best effect, gain control over vibrato, use it sparingly, and keep in mind that some choirs, known for singing Renaissance

styles with great purity by using the straight quality often flounder when they move to Romantic repertoire. This underscores the value of attaining control over the group's vibrato so that they may sing more than one style of music with validity.⁵⁵

Singing With Commitment Rather Than Volume

Commitment is necessary for the effective performance of any style of choral music. Once a musical direction is chosen, everyone must be totally committed. Through concentration and energy, greater musical heights will be achieved. Groups often mistakenly use volume to express involvement in a musical experience. Volume is an important element in building momentum and excitement. It is not, however, the source of musical energy.

Energy is achieved by taking musical elements to the limit—by pushing ourselves and the music to new levels of enjoyment. For this goal to be realized, the group must understand that each of its members can draw upon their own inner motivation.

All too often pop, jazz, and show choirs perform in a manner often called *yell singing*. This is a false expression of musical energy and commitment. Musical energy is not achieved through volume, but through focus, drive, momentum, and the desire for excellence. Music can sound exciting when the volume is low, if commitment, energy, and focus are high.

Singing with commitment rather than volume is one of the simplest ideas to understand, but one of the most difficult to implement. Be constantly vigilant to keep laziness and inattention from occurring during rehearsals. If these bad habits are present in rehearsal, the resulting performance will manifest a low energy level. But if skills are mastered, and higher levels of musical excellence are experienced, the group will strive to achieve even more. It is hard work to commit to nothing less than excellence.

All too often pop, jazz, and show choirs perform in a manner often called yell singing.

The following suggestions are offered to help groups to sing with commitment rather than volume:

- Never ask a choir to sing loud. This will only drive their voices harder. Tell them to sing bigger or fuller.⁵⁶

- There are obvious stylistic differences between classical choral music and pop, jazz, and show choir. Singers should still sing with the same intensity and precision in the pop styles as they do in any other form of musical expression.
- The singers must be able to both crescendo and decrescendo without loss of intensity and pitch.⁵⁷
- Insist on energized consonants and rounded vowels to prevent dead tones.
- Stress the necessity for increased support when singing softly.
- Ask for a hushed rather than a soft response.⁵⁸

Posture

Poor posture is a major reason for lack of breath support, causing a lack of intensity, excitement, intonation, and tone quality in choral music. Good posture is the beginning of good singing. Unless the body is properly aligned, correct breathing and free position of the larynx are impossible.⁵⁹

Posture problems can be solved easily and effectively through the regular use of a few simple techniques and exercises:

- Stand with feet at shoulder width, with the ball of one foot in line with the heel of the other. When the feet are spaced in a comfortable position, allowing for subtle movement during long periods of standing, knee and hip lock—the most common choir posture problem—is avoided.
- Have each choir member *hug a tree* at chest height. The arms should be rounded, not straight. This simple exercise raises the chest to allow for proper support and also gives a good physical appearance. Remember, hold the tree at chest height.



Figure 22: *Proper posture*

- As the group *hugs the tree*, have them say loudly, “I feel great,” as they lower their arms. Do not change the new posture—only lower the arms. Note the change of attitude reflected on their faces. The group will often react with laughter. Repeat several times. Have the group members look at each other and note the pleasant change. This positive public affirmation changes a group’s attitude, favorably altering their self-image. It can also improve tone quality and production. The laughter and spontaneous motion derived from this type of exercise relieves the body of tension and places it in a good position for singing.⁶⁰
- Posture can affect the entire group’s overall presentation, including intonation, tone quality, and intensity. It is very simple to correct. Show the group how good posture can affect both their sound and their enjoyment.

The following are a few suggestions for improving posture:

- When the group sits, make sure they position themselves either as far back on the chair seats as possible, or on the front edges of the seats. Sitting in any other position will lead to slumping.⁶¹
- Make the group aware of the importance of good posture in relation to good singing. Good posture, in general, is one of the best ways to keep the throat relaxed.⁶²

- Encourage erect and energetic posture, but do not have the group stand like soldiers—military posture is overly tense and constricting.⁶³
- Moving the group physically, at the beginning of the rehearsal or during moments when it is lagging, can be productive. The actual movements probably have little effect on vocal efficiency, but moving the body relieves accumulated tension.⁶⁴
- Stress freedom and relaxation in rehearsals while simultaneously insisting that the group hold their spinal columns erect to secure the best posture.⁶⁵

Movement

Music must move and human beings must move. The more physical movement, facial expression, and gentle movements of the head are encouraged, the more vital the sound and the music become.⁶⁶ Moving with the music demonstrates a commitment to either the style or the text. When there is no movement in the body, there tends to be less conviction on the part of the singer and less expressive quality in the music. Phrases tend to be mechanical and less musical than they might be. When there is no animation, there is a greater tendency to sing in a stylistically inappropriate fashion with less syllabic stress and thus lowered rhythmic intensity. There

How many performances have been witnessed from groups dressed in choir robes attempting to sing high-energy music, yet standing there like statues, never letting the music reach their souls and thus never communicating with the audience?

is also less interaction with the audience.⁶⁷ This does not mean choreography! This means letting go and flowing with the music. The music should emanate from the whole body, not from just the mouth.⁶⁸ How many performances have been witnessed from groups dressed in choir robes attempting to sing high-energy music, yet standing there like statues, never letting the music reach their souls and thus never communicating with the audience? How many other performances have been witnessed from a similarly robed group, even singing less-challenging music, who were able to move and excite an audience? The variable was the ability to feel the music, let go of inhibitions and communicate with the audience with their entire bodies. The instrument in singing is the entire body and not just the singing mechanism. No professional entertainer stands completely still during his or her performance. Because pop, jazz, and show choir music is entertainment, it is very important that movement

be an important part of the performance.

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Chapter 8

Intonation and Tuning

Intonation is one of the most elusive elements of choral singing. When it is correct, melodies seem to have direction and momentum, chords seem to speak, and the contrast between dissonance and consonance is clarified. When intonation is incorrect, it can cause many other musical problems such as blend and balance.

Soon after the acceptance of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* as the model for tonal equality, music entered the realm of even-tempered tuning. In even-tempered tuning, all the notes on the piano are equally out of tune with each other so that modulations between keys can exist with some semblance of equality within and between key centers. All octaves are even multiples of each other (220 - 440 - 880) and thus are beatless. Other intervals (such as perfect fifths or fourths) are not true intervals, as they contain a small number of uneven frequency beats.

Before the advent of this model, other tuning schemes, such as Pythagorean and Just Intonation, were used. These three models, that of the Even-Tempered, Pythagorean, and Just Intonation tuning, differ in several important ways. Some of the characteristics of Pythagorean tuning are:

- Highest leading tone of the three models
- Octaves and fifths are beatless
- Highest major third of the three scales
- Flats lower than enharmonic sharps, allowing for greater contrast between dark and bright tone colors¹

Just Intonation tuning differs by having beatless thirds mixed with beatless fifths. Even-tempered tuning is the basis for Western diatonic music. It is followed in almost all choral music, and especially in the literature containing piano or organ accompaniment. Singers have become accustomed to hearing chords in this *out-of-tune* system. If the same material were to be sung under a different tuning system (as sometimes occurs in a *cappella* music in early period styles), it might sound strange or out of tune. The following is an example of just how out of tune the equal-tempered tuning system really is. First, perfect piano fifths will be played, then perfect beatless fifths will be sung, followed by the original interval

on the piano. Note how flat the piano perfect fifth is when compared to the sung natural perfect fifth.



Figure 23: *Sung vs. played perfect fifths* - (CD 1 - Track 9)

Manipulation of intonation within the Western diatonic scale can add excitement and energy to the performance of most choral literature. Tension and excitement can be added by singing tendency tones, leading tones of the key, raised altered extensions of chords (ninths, elevenths, or thirteenth), and raised dissonant color notes a bit higher; and by singing lower alterations of notes than equal tempered tuning would allow.

Other tuning alterations, based on the Pythagorean scale, are often utilized in a *cappella* singing. Perfect natural fourths and fifths become possible, giving a very strong natural base for complex chords and structures. This kind of manipulation is more difficult to achieve when groups work with a rhythm section or piano, because these equal-tempered instruments lock the group into that tuning system.

By understanding where the even-tempered tuning system came from and how it works, basic intonation problems can be solved.

Listening in Tune

Many of the problems associated with intonation stem from the fact that most performers have never been taught how to listen to music. The ear is just as important to the singer as the voice.² Listening skills can be learned easily, especially if the student is involved in making music during the learning process. Unless the students are physically tone deaf, which is very rare, they can be taught to hear with increasing accuracy.³ A poor ear can be sensitive to pitch differences as large or larger than a semitone. On the other hand, the average person can hear pitch deviations as small as 1/17 of a tone, and those of superior acuteness may be able to detect one 1/100 of a tone, or less. With the exception of very few people, everyone has the native capacity to sing fairly well on pitch.⁴

Listening with accuracy includes the ability to shut out extraneous sounds in order to devote one's attention to those sounds. The mind cannot immediately

absorb everything which reaches the ear at one time. Consequently, listening to music is often accomplished by placing certain sounds in the forefront and others in the background. The way to refine the musical ear is to strengthen those skills involved in isolating certain sounds, relegating others to the periphery, and shifting attention among them as necessary.⁵

An easy method by which the singer can start to gain the listening and musical skills necessary for choral music is a simple four-part cyclic process:

- Singing: producing a vocal sound
- Listening: learning what to listen for
- Analyzing: comparing against previous experience or outside musical sources
- Modifying: making accurate adjustments of the vocal sound⁶

This learning process can easily be applied to learning basic musical elements, such as may be found in the vocal improvisation text, *Scat Singing Method*. This text offers a rote learning method which breaks down vocal music into its primary elements—syllables, rhythm, and melody. Awareness of each of these elements in isolation is stressed by means of theme and variation. Through the alteration of a given set of syllables, rhythms, or notes, skill can be gained to dissect these elements when listening to a piece of music. The ear becomes attuned to the sounds that the mind has selected as important.

The next step in ear training is the development of pitch retention and the understanding of what melodies and chords and how they function. Pitch

Pitch retention is one of the most critical and necessary skills in dealing with pitch relationships, particularly for establishing the sense of a key tone.

retention is one of the most critical and necessary skills in dealing with pitch relationships, particularly for establishing the sense of a key tone. Only through conscious and purposeful listening, and real effort in experiencing pitch relationships to any tone of reference, can the aesthetic qualities of pitch in melodic and harmonic contexts be made evident.⁷

Once students have grasped these concepts, they are ready to begin listening in tune. By teaching them a minimal amount of theory—e.g., what chords are and how they function—students can begin to find the correct notes with which to tune. At any time during rehearsal, the choral director should be able to stop the music and ask singers to identify their part of the chord and explain its function. By knowing if it is the root, third, fifth, or seventh, of the chord, and whether it is the melody, counter-melody, chordal pad, inner moving part, pedal point, or

rhythmic accent, they will start connecting what they hear with what they know. This connection is the basis for listening in tune.

To attain listening skills, groups must be taught some music theory and then be given freedom to explore and learn through trial and error. By allowing a structured freedom to exist in the rehearsal environment, higher levels of musicianship can be achieved. This is the first step toward singing in tune.

In striving for this goal, there is another factor that should be considered. Poorly planned seating arrangements can also be a cause of bad intonation. If the singers are improperly placed, they may listen to the wrong voice part and attempt to tune with it (See *Seating Arrangement* - p. 99).

Singing in Tune

Singing in tune grows from a foundation of knowing how to listen in tune. If singers do not know what to listen for, there is less possibility that they will sing their parts correctly. Learning to sing in tune requires the flexibility to accept a trial-and-error style of learning. Once the basic listening skills of intonation have been internalized, fewer intonation errors will occur, and chorus members will begin to regulate their individual pitch placement within the group sound.

Good intonation is imperative if one is to grasp the resulting vertical chordal structure and sonorities.⁸ Singers must gain awareness of where their single note fits into the overall musical fabric. Melodically, do their notes have diatonic key tendencies, thus requiring alterations up or down? When tuning chords, should their notes be sung directly on the pitch, or a little higher or lower than the normal placement, in order to make the chord speak? Do their notes harmonize with another part by a third or sixth interval, or do they support other harmony, laying the foundation by being a fifth or fourth from root notes? These are some of the questions chorus members must be able to answer when singing to be able to tune their own parts accordingly.

One of the most common causes of intonation problems is not a bad ear, but underdeveloped vocal technique.

One of the most common causes of intonation problems is not a bad ear, but underdeveloped vocal technique. Perfect ensemble intonation is unattainable without a perfect unison in each section.

The enemies of a good unison are:

- Inadequate breath support
- Bad posture
- Poorly produced tone
- Ununified vowels
- Inaccurate intervals
- Excessive vibrato⁹

Accurate intonation is dependent upon correctly produced tones properly supported by the breath. Incorrect tone quality and production may block the hearing of singers so they will sing sharp or flat without being aware of it. If the tonal production is out of balance, the resulting tone may suffer in pitch and quality.¹⁰ Incorrect vowel formation and placement can also lead to intonation problems. Once the vowel sound is agreed upon and consistently produced by all the singers, accurate intonation usually follows with little difficulty.¹¹

Another common problem associated with singing in tune arises when individual group members cannot hear themselves sing.¹² This situation can be a result of several factors:

- They are not singing fully enough.
- They lack confidence in their singing abilities.
- They do not know their part.
- They are surrounded by stronger singers.

Much of this can be solved by:

- Motivating them to learn their individual parts
- Helping them to become more confident, through private instruction
- Seating them near, but not surrounded by, stronger singers

Often, the problem is not weak singers, but the fact that everyone is singing too loudly. Teach them the basic rule: *If they cannot hear their neighbor singing, they are singing too loudly.*

As a remedy for the occasional problem of not being able to hear oneself, use the hand ear-phone method. Form a half-cupped hand, with fingers resting on the upper ear and the palm pulled toward the face—much like the handset on a telephone. The sound bounces off the palm of the hand directly into the ear. This technique is used by professionals in group singing sessions, especially in the

recording studio. It is extremely useful in very soft musical passages, or when a P.A. system with an ineffective monitor is being used.



Figure 24: *Hand ear-phone*

The biggest problem associated with intonation is inattention and laziness on the part of group members. Do not allow poor singing or poor musicianship to exist at any time during rehearsals. It is difficult to maintain the pressure constantly, but singers will eventually start regulating themselves and correcting their own intonation problems. Self-regulation is the key to good group intonation. It cannot come from constantly berating the group for singing flat or out of tune. It must come from within the group, as its members gain skill and rise to higher levels of musicianship. These skills do not come quickly, but can be attained through persistent work.

The following is a checklist for some of the causes of flattening and sharpening:

Atmospheric

- Too much humidity = flat
- Poor ventilation = flat
- Extreme heat = flat

Acoustic

- Too much echo in the room = sharp
- Too much absorption in the room = sharp

Emotional

- Lack of confidence with high notes = flat
- Lack of mental alertness = flat
- Lack of musicianship, causing fear = flat
- Lack of confidence = flat

Physical

- Too much muscular tension in diaphragm = sharp
- Lack of control in the soprano voice part = sharp
- Lack of vitality when singing softly = flat
- Poor posture = flat
- Improper breathing = flat
- Failure to open jaw widely on high notes = flat
- Physical fatigue = flat

Technical

- Wrong classification of voices = flat or sharp
- Inaccurate attacks = flat or sharp
- Tessitura lying consistently at the break = flat or sharp
- Incorrect tone quality = flat or sharp

Rehearsal

- Failure to hear correct pitch before singing = flat or sharp
- Continuous use of the piano to play individual parts = flat or sharp
- Incorrect key for the music = flat or sharp
- Failure to use warm-ups = flat or sharp
- Incorrect warm-ups = flat or sharp

To avoid these errors, consider the following:

- Every pitch must be heard mentally before it can be sung.
- A good listening choir does not sing with the even-tempered tuning of a mechanical keyboard instrument.¹³
- Stress correct vowel formation. Many intonation problems are actually discrepancies in vowel production.¹⁴

- Be sure the outer vocal parts of a chord are in tune before tuning the inner parts.
- When flattening or sharpening occurs, diagnose its cause. Don't tell singers that they are flat or sharp.
- Sharpening (less common in choruses) is often a function of too much breath pressure or of vowels that are spread, as in the word *bad*.¹⁵
- Take big steps when going up the scale. Take small, light steps when coming down.
- Choral improvisation is extremely beneficial to aural training because it compels the singer to invent, with the aid of his or her ear, a suitable counter-melody against a given melody.¹⁶
- Take small steps on all half-steps.
- Very soft dynamics require tremendous breath control and often invite flat pitch.¹⁷
- Have the choir engage in silent practice as an exercise. Have them stop singing at a given signal, then sing on the pitch that follows what they have been singing silently.¹⁸
- Support and think of the note high on all downward intervals.
- Singers in all voice ranges will tend to under-support when singing softly toward the top of their range.¹⁹
- Continuous use of the piano will hide intonation problems. Singers will listen more attentively, develop more self-reliance, and sing with more accuracy and assurance when they are not trying to follow their parts as played on the piano.
- By keeping the tenors on the correct vowel but replacing the bass vowel with a brighter version, the intonation will be better.²⁰
- Sing all out-of-key accidentals higher for sharps or lower for flats.
- Raising or lowering the pitch of a selection by a half-step will usually snap the choir out of a worn musical groove and will result in better intonation.²¹
- To avoid scooping, support all repeated note sequences.
- Use warm-ups at the beginning of each rehearsal to ready the voice and tune the ear.

In dealing with the special problems of singing in tune, it should be reemphasized that no single aspect of choral technique can ever be neatly isolated. Tone, diction, vowel formation, rhythmic consistency, style, and intonation are all interdependent. As a result, artistic choral singing can be achieved only when all elements of technique are successfully synthesized.²²

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Chapter 9

Rehearsal Techniques

The goal of the rehearsal is to learn to serve the music. Creating an appropriate rehearsal atmosphere depends on a proper approach toward the music. For without the attitude of respect and the spirit of servanthood, one won't get very far artistically. It is at this beginning stage of artistic development when the student learns to give him or herself to the understanding of music technically, intellectually, and spiritually. As the level of commitment leads to personal involvement and a deeper appreciation for the gift of music, one can then get out of one's ego for a time and be free to internalize a sort of beauty consciousness. This experience is unique and liberating. During this psychological transformation, the individual becomes self-motivated, self-rewarded, and self-judging. Ideally, then, the quality of their work becomes central to them as opposed to focusing on some extrinsic reward. Through this artistic process one develops integrity, not only in terms of the sound that is produced, but even more importantly, in terms of the personality of the musician.¹

Effective use of rehearsal time is a major factor in the improvement of any group's musical quality. Some groups may rehearse three to four hours per day and others only three hours per week, yet both achieve the same musical level. Many hours of rehearsal are not the answer to higher musical quality. Optimal results may be achieved in fewer hours if the time is used efficiently. The amount and quality of learning depends upon the director. A well-programmed rehearsal will include several changes of music, and with these changes will come variety in style, dynamics, tempo, length, difficulty, and familiarity.² To help groups reach their fullest potential, take charge, establish a proper environment, make sure the group possesses the requisite skills and training to fulfill their roles, provide goals, organization and structure, and control individual and group behavior.³ The following sections include basic ideas and techniques to help in rehearsing a vocal ensemble. If the ideas and techniques are used with the proper preparation and control, rehearsal time will be more efficient and musically fulfilling.

Attitude

- Singers will be more productive if confidence in them is demonstrated. Treat groups with respect and concern.

- Singers must never feel anonymous within the context of the larger group, nor should they be used as the means to a musical end. They must sense that they play an important part and share responsibility as co-creators in the musical process.⁴
- Be enthusiastic and honest. Open up to the group.
- Create a sense of physical and mental readiness for singing. This can be accomplished if the rehearsal is well-organized, fast-moving, exciting, and enjoyable. Choir members should be made to feel at ease with their choral experience, that their participation is valued, and that their hard work will be rewarded with the satisfaction of making good music.
- Each group has its own personality. This personality is determined by:
 - The organization's customs, beliefs, and values.
 - The attitudes and motives of its members.
 - The social structure of the group.
 - The cohesiveness and morale of the group.⁵
- Non-verbal actions project the director's expectations of student behavior and can motivate or discourage each student.⁶ For example, come to rehearsal prepared, start on time, and end on time.
- Singers must be committed to expending the time to achieve a high degree of excellence. Some directors find written contracts, detailing how much time a singer will give to the group, to be effective. Contracts should be signed by both student and parent. Other directors have a handbook or set of group rules to which members must adhere.
- Wise directors know when they must be stern and insist on absolute concentration. They must also know when to relax the singers and permit more freedom.⁷
- Directors must include themselves by using the plural pronoun when addressing the group. For example, say, "Can we do this?"
- Know what happens when the choir catches fire. They never forget it. The spark of inspiration comes from the director.⁸

Technique

- Before the rehearsal begins, directors must ask themselves if they have done all they could have done to prepare for the rehearsal.⁹
- At the beginning, spend a few minutes on relaxation, good posture, and a few breathing exercises.

- Never allow bad singing, obvious mistakes, or poor musicianship to go unaddressed in order to save time. These problems will continue and most likely get worse if not completely corrected.
- Basic skills must be taught simply and effectively before going on to refinements. If the fundamentals are learned thoroughly, the choir will be 90 percent of the way toward its goal of excellence.¹⁰
- If a director teaches principles, rather than individual cases, breaks in the continuity of the rehearsal will be minimized.¹¹
- Demand the choir's full attention. Choral singing is a team effort. Remember, it is not the director against the singers. The director is a member of this group, not its ruler. The director just happens to be the one with the knowledge to guide the others to musical excellence (See *Power and Leadership* - p. 94).
- Rehearsals are for working on phrasing, balance, blend, intonation, and musicianship, not to learn notes.
- Be sure the key and rhythm of the song are established in the singer's mind before singing.
- Choirs and their directors deceive themselves if they assume that the use of the piano saves rehearsal time. The opposite is generally true. The choir director should avoid using the instrument as a crutch. The more independent a choir becomes of its accompaniment, the better the finished product.
- Some directors habitually rehearse the music in its entirety. Such rehearsing tends to lack focus. Isolating portions of the music will enable the singers to improve their performance.
- If section work is necessary, move quickly from voice part to voice part. Avoid allowing time for the other sections to become inactive, bored, or distracted. Require non-singing sections to rehearse their parts mentally, then quickly test them to keep them alert.
- Avoid repeated use of the same terminology. Do not follow predictable rehearsal formats. Introducing new styles, vocabulary, and approaches as one grapples with old problems can add much variety to worn-out rehearsal strategies.¹²
- From the outset, require the group to sing as much as possible from memory. The printed music can become an unnecessary barrier between the director and the choir, and among the singers themselves.
- To keep the group's attention during a long rehearsal, constantly change voice pitch, volume level, and speed as directions are made. Also try rearranging their physical position.

- All ears, including the director's, tend to become somewhat insensitive to certain distortions or mistakes over a period of time. This problem can be partially eliminated by moving the rehearsal to another room or, sometimes, even to another part of the same room. Each room has its own particular acoustical characteristics, which reinforce certain timbres and distort or deaden others.¹³
- When searching for a particular measure bar, loss of rehearsal time can be minimized by use of the following two methods:
 - Have everyone in the group number the measures before rehearsal.
 - Use a page-system-measure number scheme. For example, *4-2-1* would mean page number four, system number two, measure number one.
- Humor is one of the best ways to relieve tension during a rehearsal. Most directors have been trained to follow a businesslike rehearsal protocol, but inexperienced singers work better when there is occasional relief from physical and mental concentration.
- Tape record the rehearsals to check on how guidance and techniques are effectively being accepted and used.
- End each rehearsal by singing through one of the group's favorite selections. This leaves the choir cheerful, wanting more, and looking forward to the next rehearsal.
- After each rehearsal, make a few notes about what went well and what did not. Each day, a director must try to learn something about him or herself, the group, and the music. Creative persons must learn continuously; otherwise, they stop creating.
- Do not adopt other directors' rehearsal techniques just because they work for them. Seek to understand the purpose behind other procedures and adapt them to their own way of working.¹⁴

Environment

- Have each rehearsal start and end on time.
- Have new music ready for the group to pick up.
- Have the day's selections listed in order on the board.
- Have each choir member develop the habit of carrying a pencil to mark alterations and interpretational changes.

Peak Experience

- The climactic point of a session should coincide with the rehearsal of the piece of music requiring the greatest degree of concentration.
- Every learning session should aim toward a focal point, or peak experience. In such experiences, the individual is momentarily fulfilled, has a sense of accomplishment, and feels content. In situations that involve music-making, peak experiences are relatively easy to attain. Appropriate challenge, persistent struggle, sufficient reinforcement, and eventual achievement bring about such experiences in rehearsal. It is largely through continual peaking that people are motivated to grow.¹⁵
- After each rehearsal, directors must ask themselves whether their singers went away with something that made them more sensitive to the art of sound.¹⁶

Levels of Success

- Teach concepts that can be directly applied to an immediate problem.
- New concepts must be modeled by the director using a positive *how-to* approach. Emphasize mastery of one concept at a time.¹⁷
- Start a rehearsal with a familiar piece that the group performs reasonably well. Rehearse less familiar music later.
- Give feedback as soon as possible.
- Enthusiasm will be maintained if singers are presented with tasks that become increasingly difficult in a logical progression. Singers will be more willing to try to stretch their abilities if they have previously succeeded in meeting every challenge. With each success, they will be ready to take more risks. Their growing confidence and enthusiasm, in turn, will fuel their desire to complete the rehearsal successfully.¹⁸

Closure

- Closure is an essential ingredient in the learning experience. At the end of the rehearsal, provide immediate reinforcement or correction by letting singers know the extent of their attainment. A director's statements may be positive or negative, depending upon the circumstances but, above all, they must be honest. During closure, most of what is learned is cemented into long-term memory.¹⁹

- Good directors can plan and control their full closures. For example, if a positive closure is desired, establish a goal that can be accomplished successfully. If, on the other hand, the group has grown overconfident or cocky, a more negative closure may be structured.²⁰
- A well-programmed rehearsal will always leave the members wanting more and anticipating the next rehearsal.²¹

Mental Alertness and Attention Span

- Attention span is a crucial factor in planning effective sequencing. The group may not be able to absorb any more ideas concerning a piece already rehearsed for more than a half an hour.²²
- Fire a question at the group the moment they stop singing—before anyone can begin to speak.
- Choose a small ensemble to stand and sing alone. Their individual faults will become more apparent, and they will gain a better understanding of the relative importance of their part.
- When working with one or two individual voice parts, have the rest of the group sing their own parts silently. Then, to see if they have been following along, suddenly ask them to sing their part at a given measure. This technique helps eliminate boredom.

Introducing a New Piece of Music

- Music should be studied before the singers even attempt the first note.
- When introducing a new style, lay some groundwork by discussing the period, composer, song classification, mood, and text.
- Play a recording of the piece.
- Read the text of the piece.
- Discuss the direction of the piece, as a road map for the singers.
- Sing through the piece without stopping. The singers will then have an overview, and their sight-reading abilities will be enhanced.
- Do not sing the actual words during this first reading. For example, substitute the syllable *du* for the lyrics. By eliminating this one variable, success can be achieved more quickly.

- When possible, find a section in the new piece that can be brought to some stage of fruition in the first rehearsal, even if it is only a few bars.
- An analysis of the musical form may help the chorus understand a new piece. By explaining such musical elements as sequential melodies, counter-melodies, overlapping fugue themes, and form structure, a director can help a choir solve problems more quickly.

Goals

- Set realistic goals that are small enough to achieve.
- Arrange goals in the most effective sequence.
- Make rehearsal goals clear to the group.
- Make a new set of achievable goals for every rehearsal of every piece of music.

Feedback

- Feedback must be immediate. A group needs to know how well they are doing at all times.
- When a director stops the choir, they must find something positive to say about the group's negative performance, then challenge the group to sing it better in a designated way. *Compliment before criticizing.*
- If a director cannot honestly praise singers during the rehearsal, the director may be attempting to accomplish too much at one time.²³

Directions

- Keep directions simple. Do not offer a lot of directions at one time.
- A director must always explain the reason for requests. Do not merely tell the group to do something in particular.

Correcting Mistakes and Problems

According to psychologists, the more times an error is repeated, the stronger the memory connection will be. The error must be abandoned and replaced by a

more desirable response.²⁴

Here is a list of procedures for problem-solving:

- Diagnose the problem.
- Stop the music.
- Identify the problem and prescribe corrective measures.
- Give instructions and resume singing.
- Synthesize the problem area back into the music context.
- Use partial closure to analyze success.²⁵

The following are some suggestions for implementing these procedures:

- Work on the big mistakes first, not on the details.
- Repetition with meaning will foster real learning. When it is necessary to repeat a passage, call attention to the reason for the repetition—don't just sing it again.
- Directors should reward initiative, correct mistakes, ask for input, share feelings, and be open-minded in their relationships with singers.²⁶

Remember, the way a choir sings during rehearsal is the way they will sing in performance. If they sing out of tune during warm-ups and rehearsals, they will sing out of tune in performance. If they sing with energy and vitality every day in rehearsal, that is the kind of performance a director can expect.²⁷

Power and Leadership

Many directors believe they must “motivate their students.” Yet this very statement contains a lie. An individual chooses a particular direction because they seek pleasure or wish to avoid pain. People can be coerced, manipulated, bribed, coaxed, or threatened, but in every situation the individual is ultimately responsible for the choice to move in a given direction. The only true form of motivation is self-motivation.²⁸

Power is the ability to cause an event to happen or not to happen, to influence or control events and people, and to influence how events are interpreted.²⁹ A leader influences followers through the power of authority. This power may be assumed or granted by the group. If choral directors use their power positively, they can create and maintain rapport with their singers and “motivate” them in appropriate directions. If they use power negatively, the singers will become

alienated and the relationship will be destroyed.

Power can be divided into three types:

Punitive power

This implies the threat of punishment. This is also known as the *galley slave effect*. Employers of punitive power force their will on the group, regardless of needs and desires. An example would be singers in a group who would prefer to start talking every time the director stops the rehearsal, yet know they will be reprimanded if they do.

Compensatory power

This form of power is *dangling the carrot or Pavlov's dog*. People are offered a reward sufficiently advantageous to forego their original preference. An example would be the director who offers to buy ice cream for the entire group if they perform well on the concert.

Conditioned power

This type arises from the voluntary subordination of one's will to that of another in order to achieve a mutually desired goal. It is thought of as the product of the individual's own moral and social sense, his or her own feelings as to what is right or good. Punishment is not involved.³⁰ An example would be a group of singers deciding not to go to the game so they can rehearse their vocal parts for the concert.

There are three basic types of leadership authority:

Traditional leadership

This refers to official position. A group assigns command, symbolized by position and title, to an individual. Being appointed does not make one an effective leader or director. It does provide a base from which power may be exercised. An example would be electing choir officers.

Functional leadership

This refers to the leader's expertise. Functional power arises from the group's respect and admiration for the leader's knowledge and skill. An example would be the senior section leader rehearsing a group of freshmen.

Personal leadership

This refers to influence through strength of personality. How truly powerful

a leader is can be judged by how well he can persuade his followers to accept his solutions to their problems, his path to their goals.³¹ An example would be the charismatic politician.

To judge which forms of power are most effective, look at them from the negative point of view. Of the three types of power and three types of leadership authority discussed, conditioned power and personal leadership authority are the least destructive, because all the others can have negative side effects such as resentment, distrust, and disrespect.

Every organization has two simultaneously functioning power systems:

Formal power system

This system is based upon titular hierarchy, job descriptions, layers of management, and office routine.

Informal power system

This is a system where face-to-face information-gathering, trading, and negotiation are more effective than reliance upon formal position or written directive.

Directors are involved in both systems. It is important to keep in mind that the formal system is really just a framework for the comfortable functioning of the informal system. Under the informal system, things get done across organizational lines rather than within them.³²

Motivation comes from a combination of sources arising from both within and without the individual's mind. The director must encourage and take advantage of singers' motivation in ways conducive to their acquisition of necessary skills, knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs. Skill in interpreting situations to others and altering their desires and perceptions is one of the principal skills of a politician. Calling these behaviors *skills* emphasizes the extent to which this is a matter of choice and practice. If a person is liked, these skills are called *charisma*. If a person is not liked, talk centers on the cunning ways in which that person has unscrupulously played upon the hopes, fears, and expectations of people so as to secure personal power.³³

For positive reinforcement to be effective, praise must be deserved, and desired by those receiving it.

Human beings normally behave in ways they hope will lead to success and achievement. Sociologists have shown that groups, to do so, need controls and expect their leaders to provide them. There is no single way to motivate singers, but the following methods have proven to be helpful to many choral directors:

Fear

The use of fear, or punitive power, is one of the most effective of motivators, but should be used sparingly. Fear comes from the fight-or-flight response associated with basic self-preservation. When people are attacked or something important is threatened, fear motivates people to defend themselves and protect the things they value. Fear is best used, for example, to pull things together a few days before a concert. Some directors control their groups through fear because their own personal insecurities have not allowed them to transcend to a more positive level of motivation. Side effects associated with the long-term use of fear as a motivator are guilt, a lowered self-esteem, hatred, and distrust of authority by group members towards the director. Remember, fear is a very powerful tool, with serious repercussions when abused.

Respect

Stimulating respect for traditional and functional authority is a very effective motivator. Although not as effective as fear in a crisis situation, respect leads to long-term benefits. Respect is earned, not taken. It must be cultivated and nurtured to be effective. Respect is earned when one's inner-strength, knowledge, self-esteem, and ability to inspire confidence are acknowledged by the group. Despite its positive long-term effectiveness, respect has one drawback. It depends upon an image projected onto the leader by others, and is therefore fragile.

Positive peer pressure

This is one of the most effective of long-term motivators. The source of this form of motivation is the individual's desire to be first, best, or accepted by the group. The director can manipulate these desires for the good of the group. Peer pressure, positively directed, has very few deleterious side effects, and can be used on a regular basis. Good examples of using positive peer pressure are instituting first chair competition, holding tryouts for solos, and voting for section leader. The individual's desire to be better than others leads to feelings of accomplishment and greater self-esteem.

Positive reinforcement

Positive reinforcement is a very valuable tool. It can be as effective as fear in motivating for the short term, but can also be a powerful long-term strategy for the group's overall self-esteem. For positive reinforcement to be effective, praise must be deserved, and desired by those receiving it. Self-esteem can be strengthened through deserved praise. Positive reinforcement will produce greater results than all the other motivational methods combined.

The previous types of motivation are most effective when used in conjunction with each other. Build the organization on a basis of earned respect, the fostering of self-esteem through positive reinforcement, and only the occasional use of fear.

The following are suggestions for motivating singers:

- Be organized.
- Start and end rehearsals on time. A singer's time is as valuable as the director's.
- Demand the best. Never sacrifice poor musicianship, intonation, or attitude for the sake of rehearsal speed. Train the group to care about every sound they make.
- Remind the group when they have done well, and when they have not. In either case, do so in a way that will inspire the group to achieve greater musical heights.
- Before every negative criticism, mention something the group just did well no matter how small or insignificant. The group will try harder when praised. This type of reward reinforces what has just been learned and motivates further learning.
- Hold frequent competitions to decide which section best memorized or learned its music, who is the most creative scat singer, and which quartet sounds best. Have the group vote. These events are not just fun—they serve a larger musical purpose of motivating and inspiring singers to become the best among their peers.
- There will often be singers who work very hard, study their music, and try out for everything, but never make the group. Not everyone is born with musical talent. It is a director's job to find something these students can do well. Consider them for such jobs as P.A. system assistant, music librarian, equipment manager, or publicity chair. Every choir has these lesser musicians, and they can become valuable members of the group.
- Success itself can be used for further motivation. Encourage the group to compete with their best previous performance.
- Be an acute observer of group dynamics. In the midst of a rehearsal, a director must always be extending emotional antennae to sense fatigue, confusion, or conflicts.³⁴
- Use humor to increase interest, involvement, motivation, satisfaction, creativity, and retention, and decrease stress and apathy.³⁵

- Gear the pace of the rehearsal to the abilities of the upper half of the group, not to the slower learners or weaker singers.

Motivation does not happen automatically; it must be created and nurtured. To do so requires earning the respect and devotion of the group. Be positive, yet firm. Always observe the basic principles of leadership:

- Be consistent.
- Be fair and impartial.
- Be reliable.
- Be loyal.
- Be decisive and be sure everyone is informed.³⁶

Seating Arrangement

By properly arranging the seating, a director can help singers learn their parts, allow them to hear all the other voice parts, create a homogeneous sound within a section, and blend sections into a well-balanced choral sound. Seating arrangements are an important factor in the efficient use of rehearsal time and should be chosen for their suitability to the type of music being performed.

Sectional seating

This is the most common, but not always the most effective, seating arrangement used by choral groups. In much of contemporary pop and jazz literature, chromatic and dissonant textures are frequently employed. For rehearsing this kind of music, the following arrangement has proven useful:

Sopranos	Basses
Tenors	Altos

Several things are accomplished with the above seating arrangement:

- Sopranos are in the back so that the other voice parts can tune their parts to the melody, and match phrasing.
- Basses are in the back so that the other voice parts can hear the lowest note, or root, and tune to it.

- Tenors and altos are as far apart as possible. These voice parts often create the dissonance frequently found in pop and jazz. This arrangement allows each voice part to gain confidence away from conflicting parts, thus shortening rehearsal time.

Sectional seating is best used in large group settings, and when individual voice part control is required, as in polyphonic music. There are, however, some drawbacks to this kind of arrangement:

- Individuals become less important when surrounded by others singing exactly the same part.
- Weaker singers tend not to grow musically because they learn to depend on stronger ones to carry their part.

Small groups

Quartets and other small group arrangements are useful when individual competence and confidence in one's part is required. Such seating arrangements may be used to accomplish several things:

- Confidence is built in individual singers by giving them the responsibility to become confident in their own voice part, so that the quartet sounds complete.
- If an individual sings flat, for example, the likelihood of loss of pitch for the entire choir is reduced.³⁷
- Although at first the music will be learned more slowly, it will eventually be learned faster because quartet singing fosters independence, self-reliance, and increased concentration.
- Choir members listen to the other voice parts within their small group and learn to blend.

Scrambled seating

This arrangement allows for singers to sit anywhere they wish. This arrangement is useful when a high level of musical competence is required and may accomplish several things:

- Increases awareness and interest in the other voice parts and improves pitch consciousness
- Improves sight-reading and self-reliance

- Improves overall blend because the various voice parts are evenly blended throughout the group

Circular seating

The importance of circular seating arrangements is clearly reflected in the German *Singkreise*, a term for a singing society, which literally means *singing circles*.³⁸ This is the best arrangement for small group rehearsal.

- All singers can hear the music as the director hears it.
- Individual musicianship is enhanced because singers can gauge the placement of their part into the overall blend of the piece. Guided by the director, they can then make adjustments.
- With greater eye contact, team spirit is enhanced. The piece is rendered with a greater sense of unity and purpose.

The following are some suggestions to consider when planning seating arrangements:

- Seat the best ears in the middle of each section, weaker ears in the outer area, and strong ears at the very ends. This surrounds the weaker ears with better intonation, thus helping them improve.
- Many choral directors fall into the habit of using the same standard seating arrangement for all rehearsals and concerts, regardless of circumstances. When rehearsal and performance arrangements are varied, ear development is enhanced and greater musical control is achieved.
- A three-step method, utilizing several formations, may be helpful:
 - Employ sectional seating to secure pitches and build initial confidence.
 - Switch to mixed quartet arrangements to develop musical interplay. Circular arrangement is also excellent for this purpose.
 - Return to the original plan to refine sectional contributions.³⁹
- If the above methods prove inadequate, place weaker sections closer to the front of the choir, and closer to the piano.
- Voices whose quality will stand out from the rest of the choir should not be placed in the front row.
- Place stronger voices toward the center of each section.
- Place music readers close to stronger singers.

Warm-ups

Choral rehearsals can begin effectively and efficiently with a few physical stretching exercises and a series of short training exercises and warm-ups. These exercises and warm-ups are effective for quickly improving the sound of the ensemble. Warm-ups lengthen muscle/tendons and fill muscles with blood, thus increasing their temperature and nutrient supply. They are then more relaxed and pliable. These conditions affect tone quality, pitch-interval, and pitch-speed agility in the voice.⁴⁰

A director can develop drills to make the ears more aware of intervals; promote good intonation and blend. Have singers learn to sing together without accompaniment, and practice correct breathing, vowel production, legato and staccato, tone color, phrasing, attacks, and releases to ready them vocally for the rigors of the rest of the rehearsal:

Warm-ups can serve two major purposes:

- Warm-ups waken the singers, getting the vocal production equipment ready for singing. Any standard vocal warm-up, of the type generally used for any choir, can be effective for pop, jazz, or show choir.
- Warm-ups get the ear and brain quickly attuned to making music. Here is an example of a warm-up that challenges both the ear and the brain while gently awakening the voice. This warm-up can start in any key and proceed chromatically on any syllable or vowel.



Figure 25: *Vocal warm-up* - (CD 1 - Track 10)

Scat singing is excellent as a warm-up exercise. It allows for creativity, the exploring of new sounds, syllables, and effects, and leads to increased musicianship. A short period of vocal improvisation at the beginning of each rehearsal also breaks down inhibitions, fosters group cohesiveness, and loosens up the group so that learning and making music become more pleasurable. The following is a musical example that can be utilized as the basis for a regular daily scat singing warm-up. This example is taken from the author's *Scat Singing Method*, and includes unison melody with SAB background figures over which a vocal improvisation would be added.

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with three staves: a vocal line (treble clef) and two piano accompaniment staves (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The score is numbered 4 through 14.

System 1 (Measures 4-6):
Vocal line: Measure 4: "Du" (quarter note), "dut" (quarter note), "du du" (quarter note, quarter note). Measure 5: repeat sign. Measure 6: "du" (quarter note), "dut" (quarter note), "du du" (quarter note, quarter note).
Piano accompaniment: Measure 4: whole rest. Measure 5: repeat sign. Measure 6: "Dut" (quarter note), "du" (quarter note), "du du" (quarter note, quarter note), "dut" (quarter note).

System 2 (Measures 7-10):
Vocal line: Measure 7: whole rest. Measure 8: "du" (quarter note), "dut" (quarter note), "dut" (quarter note), "du" (quarter note). Measure 9: "du" (quarter note), "du" (quarter note), "du" (quarter note), "du" (quarter note). Measure 10: "du" (quarter note), "du" (quarter note), "du" (quarter note), "du" (quarter note).
Piano accompaniment: Measure 7: "dut" (quarter note), "du" (quarter note), "du du" (quarter note, quarter note), "dut" (quarter note). Measure 8: "Dut" (quarter note), "du" (quarter note), "du du" (quarter note, quarter note), "du" (quarter note), "dut" (quarter note). Measure 9: "Dut" (quarter note), "du" (quarter note), "du du" (quarter note, quarter note), "du" (quarter note), "dut" (quarter note). Measure 10: "Dut" (quarter note), "du" (quarter note), "du du" (quarter note, quarter note), "du" (quarter note), "dut" (quarter note).

System 3 (Measures 11-14):
Vocal line: Measure 11: whole rest. Measure 12: "du" (quarter note), "dut" (quarter note), "dut" (quarter note), "du" (quarter note). Measure 13: "du" (quarter note), "du" (quarter note), "du" (quarter note), "du" (quarter note). Measure 14: "du" (quarter note), "du" (quarter note), "du" (quarter note), "dut" (quarter note).
Piano accompaniment: Measure 11: "du" (quarter note), "dee du" (quarter note, quarter note), "dee du" (quarter note, quarter note). Measure 12: "dut" (quarter note), "du" (quarter note), "du du" (quarter note, quarter note), "dut" (quarter note). Measure 13: "dut" (quarter note), "du" (quarter note), "du du" (quarter note, quarter note), "dut" (quarter note). Measure 14: "dut" (quarter note), "du" (quarter note), "du du" (quarter note, quarter note), "dut" (quarter note).

The image shows a musical score for a scat singing warm-up exercise, consisting of two systems of three staves each (Soprano, Alto, and Bass). The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor), and the time signature is 4/4. The first system covers measures 15, 16, and 17. Measure 15 has the lyrics 'du'. Measure 16 has 'du', 'dut', 'dut', 'du', and 'du'. Measure 17 has 'du'. The second system covers measures 18, 19, 20, and 21. Measure 18 has 'du', 'du', and 'du'. Measure 19 has 'du', 'du', 'du', and 'dut'. Measure 20 is marked 'all endings' and has 'Du', 'dut', and 'du dut'. Measure 21 is marked 'last time' and has 'dut'. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Figure 26: *Scat singing warm-up* - (CD 1 - Track 11)

Consider the following when doing daily warm-ups:

- Warm-ups should not be routine. Boredom and careless execution must be avoided.
- Alter the common warm-up patterns and examples to fit the articulation, dynamics, tonality, or rhythm of the pieces being rehearsed.⁴¹
- After the warm-ups, go directly to an *a cappella* selection to bring together the vocal concepts just rehearsed.
- Exercises must adhere to the fundamentals of proper singing.
- Good exercises should accomplish more than one objective.
- Sight-reading should be a major consideration in the selection of warm-up materials.

If warm-ups are done regularly and with forethought, musicianship will increase, creativity will expand, and rehearsal time will be used more efficiently.

Pace

To make rehearsals as efficient as possible, a no-nonsense, well-organized approach to pacing the rehearsal must be taken. Here are some guidelines:

- Warm-ups must be effective and fun, while loosening up the vocal mechanism, tuning the ears, and focusing the mind.
- Start with a familiar *a cappella* selection to continue the energy, enthusiasm, group focus, intonation, and blend just experienced and rehearsed in the warm-ups.
- Next, get to the main objective of the rehearsal. Move quickly from rehearsal point to rehearsal point, never allowing time for distractions or for the energy level to drop.
- If the rehearsal is not going as well as expected, switch to a favorite musical selection of the group.
- Plan the rehearsal so that there are contrasts in mood, style, and key center. The level of difficulty should increase throughout the rehearsal. To keep singers interested and reduce the level of fatigue, change activity, focus, or physical position every six to seven minutes.
- If a piece of music was featured near the midpoint at one rehearsal, place it near the beginning or at the end of the next rehearsal.⁴²
- Avoid pounding at the same problem over and over. Go on to something else, and then come back.
- End the rehearsal with an upbeat selection liked by the group. Sing it all of the way through, especially if the main rehearsal time was spent on small sections or particular measures.
- A rehearsal is like a concert. First, get the complete attention of the singers, hold it, and leave them feeling good and wanting more.
- The goal is to build each rehearsal to a climax; however, this may not always be possible due to the nature of the music being rehearsed.

The following graph illustrates the manner in which a rehearsal should be structured:



Figure 27: *Rehearsal structure*

Vocal Instruction Throughout the Rehearsal

The majority of choirs in this country are composed of amateurs with limited training in proper vocal technique. Most of these singers have never studied voice privately and have devoted little time to the technical exploration of their vocal mechanism. This problem is compounded by the fact that many choral directors avoid teaching vocal techniques in their rehearsals. Many have little or no background in singing and are uncomfortable with being responsible for the vocal health of their singers. For these directors, vocalizing their choirs is indeed a burden, for it focuses the attention of the singers on what the director does least well.⁴³

Voice instruction also becomes a low priority when the dominant concern is an emphasis on getting more songs learned for the show, or making sure the choreography is correct. Directors must teach specific elements of vocal technique, building them into rehearsals in order to achieve a successful, satisfying performance.

Much can be accomplished, not by teaching complicated theories of phonation, registration, or vowel formation, but by providing a good model for the group, because most lay singers acquire their singing habits through direct imitation.

Vocal instruction throughout the rehearsal is not heavily time-consuming. It is an affirmation from directors to their group that bad or incorrect singing is unacceptable at anytime, and that techniques and skills will be learned for training the voice to its full potential. Remember, this may be the only vocal training most singers will ever receive. Directors have a tremendous responsibility. Do not treat it lightly. No matter how skilled a director may be in other areas, without a clear understanding of vocal production they will be unable to teach their choruses to realize the desired sound in a methodical fashion.⁴⁴

Voice instruction also becomes a low priority when the dominant concern is an emphasis on getting more songs learned for the show, or making sure the choreography is correct.

Sight-reading

One of the most effective ways to increase the efficiency of a choral rehearsal is through a regular program of sight-reading training. Too much rehearsal time is wasted when the piano is used as a crutch in teaching the individual parts to

the singers. Rather, they should be taught how to learn the parts themselves. Sight-reading training can easily be worked into a daily warm-up routine. A director's background may be in solfege, intervals, or some other system—they all work if applied on a regular basis.

The following are guidelines and suggestions for teaching sight-reading:

- Sight-reading materials should be used regularly.
- Exercises should be comprehensive so that all intervallic and rhythmic combinations are eventually learned.⁴⁵
- As part of daily exercises, have the group sing various written intervals from a warm-up sheet. It is important that these intervals be in written form, not just called out. The eye must get used to seeing what the mind is thinking, what the voice is singing, and what the ear is hearing.
- The elimination of even one musical element (such as rhythm) will allow more intense concentration on the others.⁴⁶
- Before each rehearsal, write on the board one or two lines of music taken from a sight-reading text, or an inner part from a piece of music that the group is not studying. This makes it much easier to point at various musical elements, as the entire group watches and sings along.
- Frequently distribute music for sight-reading only. Do not rehearse it. Have the group sight-sing it immediately, then pass it in.
- Use positive peer pressure to increase sight-reading ability. Regular sight-reading contests between individuals and sections will help to increase overall musicality and efficiency.

Remember, sight-reading exercises need take only a few minutes per rehearsal and are most effective during the warm-up process. Sight-reading skills increase overall musicianship and confidence. Once learned, these skills may get rusty through disuse, but they are never forgotten.

Use of Sectionals

Two basic types of sectionals are most effective:

Individual voice part

This is the most common type of sectional. The different voice parts (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) meet with the others in their voice category to rehearse their

parts. Rehearsal time is best used when all voice parts strive to achieve unity in the rhythms, note changes, pitch placement, vowel formation, pronunciation, and tone quality. The goals should be:

- To achieve a blend that sounds as if one person is singing with many voices
- To teach melodic segments that will stretch the ability of the chorus
- To teach phrasing and other aspects of basic musicianship not dealt with in the full rehearsal

Small groups

Some directors like to assign all singers to a quartet or small group and suggest that they periodically meet and rehearse their parts together. Rehearsing in a one-on-a-part group, consisting of three to five voices, is an excellent way to achieve blend, phrasing, and vocal precision. In small group singing, singers are forced to learn their parts and perform them with accuracy and confidence. Each singer is made to listen, sing in tune, and blend with the other parts to form a cohesive sound. Individual achievement is fostered and the singers are encouraged to earn the recognition of their peers. Small group rehearsal is one of the best methods for increasing listening skills and improving overall musicianship in any choral ensemble.

Use of the Rhythm Section

The rhythm section is one of the most important elements of a pop, jazz, or show choir. It can make or break a performance. It provides a group with the opportunity to reach higher levels of achievement.

Few pop, jazz, and show choirs have the luxury of a rhythm section at each rehearsal. Many groups can only add the rhythm section at the last moment. It sometimes happens that groups will spend a lot of money outfitting themselves only to have their rhythm section appear in street clothes. This gives the unfortunate, but correct, impression that the band is a last-minute, tacked-on addition. All too often, it sounds that way as well.

The following are some guidelines for making rhythm sections play better and sound more integrated with the group:

- Make the rhythm section a part of the group. Invite them to group social functions and outfit them to match the vocal group.

- Make sure the singers understand the importance of the rhythm section, and that they treat its members accordingly.
- Rehearse with the rhythm section first to allow them to look good in front of the singers.
- Copy individual instrument parts for each rhythm section player. Do not have them try to play from the singer's music.
- For the rhythm section's individual parts, number the bars in the score with corresponding measure numbers.
- Do not add the rhythm section until the choir knows the notes.
- Place the band on stage as a part of the show, not in the wings or pit.

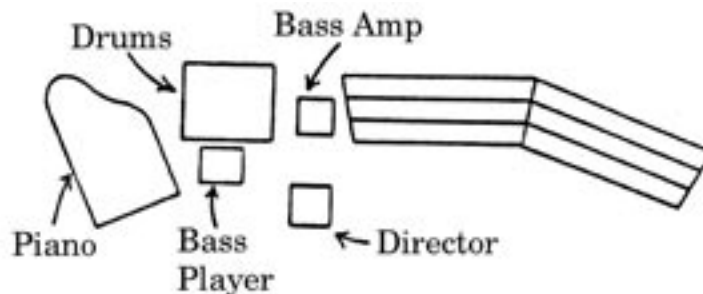


Figure 28: *Rhythm section placement*

- If risers and a choral-shell performance set-up is used, do not place choral-shell sections behind the rhythm section as this will cause sound reinforcement problems when microphones are added.⁴⁷
- If risers are used, the drummer should be placed stage right, next to the highest level of the risers. The bass player should be in front of the drummer, slightly to the right. The grand piano is then brought in close to the drummer and bassist.⁴⁸
- Have the bass player stand as close as possible to the drummer's high-hat cymbals. The bass guitar amplifier speaker should be placed behind the drummer and angled toward the band. The physical closeness of the bass and drums is very important for rhythmic unity.
- Some directors suggest placing the upright piano next to the stage-right end of the vocal jazz ensemble, with the sound board facing the choir.⁴⁷

- As with the singers, demand excellence and do not allow incorrect rhythms, intonation, or tempo to go unaddressed. Rehearsals may be a little slower in the beginning, but the learning curve will soon rise swiftly.
 - Beyond a certain point, piano accompaniment alone is insufficient for rehearsal. Do not wait until the last moment to add the rhythm section. It holds the key to the singers' dynamics, phrasing, and tempo. If the band plays incorrectly, the singers cannot perform correctly. Without a well-rehearsed rhythm section, a group will never achieve an A+ performance.
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Chapter 10

Conducting the Ensemble

The choral director's major purpose is to interpret the music for the group. He or she transmits concepts through the group, but the group must be made to feel that it is actively participating at all levels of interpretation. The goal ought to be for a choral director to teach everything he or she knows and understands about music, such as chords, sounds, time, rhythms, melody, phrasing, and vocal technique. If all of this is taught with the goal of setting the singers free, the choral director needs to get out of the way of the performance.¹ This is brought about by shaping musical sounds according to concepts of what is right, appropriate, and desired. The choral director's ideas form the basis for a personal interpretation of the composer's music. This interpretation can, however, be a double-edged sword. Berlioz had been known to remark, "The most dangerous of the interpreters is the director."² Brahms, upon hearing a final rehearsal of his *Requiem*, walked back to talk to the director. "This is not the way I intended it to be performed; it is better!"

If choral directors are to present their interpretational ideas with legitimacy and confidence, they must be based on careful study, with an understanding of the responsibility toward both the composer and the group. Aaron Copland put it succinctly: "No man has the right to stand before an orchestra unless he has a complete conception in his mind of what he is about to transmit."³

The choral director's instrument is the chorus. Good directors do not just beat time, go through rehearsed motions, and ride herd just to keep the music from self-destructing. Rather, it is the goal to prepare a group of musicians for the *experience of performance*. The good choral director plays the group as an instrument that is capable of sensitive emotional response. Choirs should never feel, however, that they are being controlled by the director. Choirs should feel that they are being freed to respond to the music so that they can recreate it with collective empathy.⁴

The choral director's major purpose is to interpret the music for the group.

A story is told by a well-known choral director about one of his groups. During the performance of a ballad, he could feel that he and the group had become one mind. At a particular point in the piece, he developed a nervous twitch in his hand, and the group sang it. This was a truly responsive group,

well-prepared to work together and willing to be guided by a director who did his job properly by playing them like an instrument.

Choral directors and their groups, all too often, merely go through mechanical motions, duly repeating the same interpretations from memory. This is not making music. Music is always changing—moody, unpredictable, emotional, and, above all, spontaneous. It is in the preparation for spontaneity and change that conducting becomes an art form. Here is a hierarchy of phases through which a director takes a group:

- Starting level: capturing attention, salesmanship
- Teaching level: technical instruction and drill
- Learned-note level: coordination, use of materials learned
- Creative or artistic level: expression, insight, inventiveness, interpretation—achievement of ultimate musical values⁵

Most of the work of a choral director is done in rehearsal. In performance, the principle function is to remind the chorus of all those details which have been worked out so carefully in rehearsal, plus cuing and making the adjustments necessary in any performance.⁶ Understanding and using the previously mentioned hierarchy will help develop a new perspective and better attitude toward conducting and to view it as an art form.

Choral directors should consider themselves creative people, on par with composers, arrangers, and performers. It is their job to prepare groups to create a unique performance and interpret and give life to musical works.

A group reflects the director's personality, musicianship, and style. A story is told by a well-known choral director concerning an experience he had in graduate school. He attended a concert in which all of the vocal ensembles were conducted by seven of his fellow peers. Comparing them, he became aware that each choir had its distinct personality, level of musicianship, and style. Some were technically precise, but had no soul. Others had poor blend and balance. Some were sloppy and out of tune but were filled with exuberance and life. Knowing the directors personally, he could see that each choir's special qualities were a reflection of the director's personality.

A group reflects the director's personality, musicianship, and style.

Choral directors need to be aware of how their personality, musicianship, and style are being reflected in the personality of their group. Here are some questions to ask:

- Are all singers treated with respect?
- Is a positive attitude that real music will be produced at each rehearsal presented?
- Is excellence the goal, never letting poor work go unaddressed?
- Is motivation used, rather than pushing?
- Is a sense of exploration and freedom with every new musical selection attempted instilled in each singer?
- Is input from the group regarding interpretation allowed?

These are the kinds of questions frequently asked of young, as well as seasoned, directors during workshops and seminars. Answers to these questions are reflected during performance.

Music is an abstract art. It exists in time. Its structure can be perceived only in relation to time.⁷ Choral directors bring life to this art by molding, shaping, and honing groups. By aiming for quality, higher levels of musicianship can be achieved. Here are a few practical suggestions for achieving this goal:

- Maintain eye contact with the group. Eye contact is the most forceful non-verbal communication possible. Confidence can be instilled with a look.
- Avoid getting into the habit of singing with the choir during rehearsal. The task of the director is to listen.⁸
- Use a videotape recorder to study one's conducting skill.
- A choral director should conduct the choir as if he or she had to sing in it.

Remember, the maxim "talk little, conduct much" is good advice but only if conducting gestures clearly convey the messages intended.⁹

Use of Traditional and New Terminology

Agreed-upon terminology is a necessity; without it, people from diverse musical backgrounds, possessing different degrees of expertise, cannot communicate effectively. When appropriate terms are used consistently, efficient dialogue can take place between choral directors and their groups. Traditional choral terminology should be taught to the group, as well as inventing or borrowing appropriate new terminology, drawn from their experience. For example, use jazz band terminology to describe particular lengths of notes with such terms as *du*,

dah, and *dot*.

When attempting to solve a problem, speak the singers' language. A choral director's words must be precise and pertinent. Because conducting involves communication, have something *to say* to the group and say it in an engaging way. It is distressing to see choral directors who are good musicians (have something to say) but are bad conductors (do not speak the language).¹⁰ A choral director must translate one symbolic system (notation) into sounds that have musical meaning by using another symbolic system (language). Here are the functions of verbal communications:

- To give directions for implementation
- To explain and clarify
- To persuade and convince
- To correct errors and offer solutions¹¹

Remember, when using traditional or newly invented or borrowed terminology, be specific, consistent, and repetitive. It is through first learning terminology that choral groups learn new subjects.

Use of Descriptive Imagery

To employ descriptive imagery as an effective communication technique, make use of vivid analogy, metaphor, and simile. Utilize terms referring to places, sounds, emotions, colors, smells, and textures that are part of the group's common experience. Just as a picture is worth a 1000 words, visual imagery, aptly applied, can prompt just the right thought necessary to initiate positive musical change.

Descriptive imagery is a device for expressing, through experience, what lies beyond experience, for expressing the abstract in terms of the concrete, for picturing forth the unfamiliar by means of the familiar.¹² By employing descriptive imagery, emotional or spiritual meaning can be more clearly articulated. Choral directors should only be limited by the degree of imagination, richness of language, and level of formal musical training.

The following are practical examples of effective descriptive imagery. Use them as a stimulus for forming imagery compatible with their own personality and experiences, and with the experiences of their group:

- Use terms such as:
 - We want to *mold* this line into a graceful whole.
 - Sopranos *cut through the vocal fabric*.
 - Tenors should *caress* that phrase.¹³

Here are a few scenarios:

- A group was having a problem with a particularly high dissonant four-note chord; it never quite *spoke*. The chord's unique sound came from two tritones pitted against each other. When it was in tune and properly voiced, it sounded like the horn on a locomotive. It was termed the *train chord*, and it required a specific bright and brassy tone quality for proper expression. When this term was later applied to other highly dissonant, similarly voiced chords, the group immediately produced the correct tone color and interpretation.
- A certain background chordal pad required a transparent, airy, vague, tone color. The term *cloud chords* was coined. In rehearsing later pieces, this term could again be used with effect.
- A light, airy, but not transparent, tone was needed. The group was asked to produce a tone that sounded like *cotton*. This tone was still too bright and light, so the term *thick cotton* was coined. It was again successfully used in rehearsing later pieces.
- Sometimes the best way to interpret a phrase of music is to assign it a color. For example, say, "Make this line sound more *red*." This may seem very abstract, but with enough practice, color terms will come to have specific meanings for the group.
- Lyrics may also require special approaches. Different languages have different qualities. Even when the lyric is in English, a director might say, "Let's make that lyric sound more *German*," to get the desired effect.
- For some compositions and arrangements, the use of instrumental imitation is required. Whether it is a vocal solo a la trumpet, background figures a la trombone section, counter melodies a la saxophone section, chordal pads a la string section, or percussive a la drum set, the use of instrumental imagery will help realize each of these imitations.
- To illustrate the constant ebb and flow of melodies and counter-melodies, the image of *open ocean waves* is effective. There is seldom a smooth surface on the open ocean. There is an upward and downward motion, creating a continuous flow. This image is useful when teaching

individual voice parts in a highly contrapuntal selection to understand where and how their moving notes fit into the fabric of the music.

The above are just a few examples of the application of descriptive imagery. A choral director's job is to find the images that will have meaning for his or her groups. They really work.

Physical Conducting Technique

Conducting consists of translating the movement and rhythm of music into visible signs.¹⁴ Two areas must be addressed through physical conducting technique:

- The metric organization (beat) of the piece must be clear.
- The interpretation and style of the music must be visualized with the hands, body, head, and face.

Metric organization is one of choral director's basic jobs. Many arrangements are ruined, due to the director's lack of control, individual voice parts within the group becoming unsynchronized, or the singers distancing themselves from the pulse set by the rhythm section. The most basic form of conducting is to simply to stand in front of the group and wave hands in one of the patterns taught in first-semester college conducting classes. This will get the job done, if one wishes to not rush or drag the beat. But conducting should be much more than just beating time. The choral director's gestures must communicate the shape of the musical phrase and line and inspire the group to produce the sounds *they see*.¹⁵ Consider the following:

Posture

Posture can directly influence the choral tone. Good conducting posture resembles the correct posture for the singer. It should also emanate a sense of leadership and impart a message of confidence.

Internal beat

Controlled by the conducting pulse, the singers should feel a metronome pulsating inside themselves sub-dividing the beat into the 1/8 or 1/16 note.

Precision

A choral director cannot obtain the utmost from a group unless the conducting is absolutely clear. To attain precision, it is essential that every beat have an exact starting point. Clarity can usually be secured with a beat that appears to rebound against a fixed invisible plane (remember the conducting box from first-semester conducting?)

Initial attack

A poor vocal attack is often the result of a preparatory beat, lacking energy and direction as to where the music is going. The preparation beat should include such elements as tempo, style, approximate dynamic singing level, and initial breath. A choral director should act out the initial breath with the group.

Beat patterns

Beat patterns should reflect weak and strong beats, the rise and fall of each phrase, and pitch changes. Style and dynamics may be indicated by height, weight, and length of beat, the distance of the beat from the body, and muscular tension.¹⁶

Ambidexterity

A choral director's hands should be independent of each other with each able to perform any function. Most directors beat the metric organization with one hand, and hand attacks, cut-offs, phrasing, and dynamics with the other. This method has both benefits and drawbacks. Groups will become accustomed to seeing certain control signals generated from a particular hand. This can be conducive to a sense of security. But, ultimately, this method proves to be inefficient. It cannot be used, for example, when conducting multiple phrases, conducting one in each hand and giving different attacks and cut-offs simultaneously; or in a split choir or sectional piece, where left and right sides of the group must each be controlled by half the body. Use the following exercises to improve ambidexterity:

- Facing a mirror, practice all the metric beat patterns with both hands, first separately and then simultaneously. Do they look equal and feel comfortable?
- Practice basic attacks, cut-offs, phrasing, and dynamics until they can be executed comfortably with either hand.
- Practice switching hands while conducting, without losing continuity or momentum. Turn the pages of the score with a different hand each time.

Conducting planes

Two planes are most often used in conducting—the vertical (up and down) and the horizontal (left and right). As dynamics increase, increase the span of the hand movements to include the forearm. As dynamics further increase, add more arm, then the other hand and arm, until both hands and both arms are moving along their full reach on both axes of their planes. At their fullest, these movements represent the greatest degrees of loudness a group should sing.



Figure 29: *Vertical and horizontal conducting planes*

Intensity plane

There is one other plane of conducting that should be discussed—the plane of depth extending in front (in and out). This plane can be used for musical elements requiring a change of intensity, rather than a change of beat, dynamics, or phrasing. Intensity change can be indicated by an in-and-out motion made with either hand.

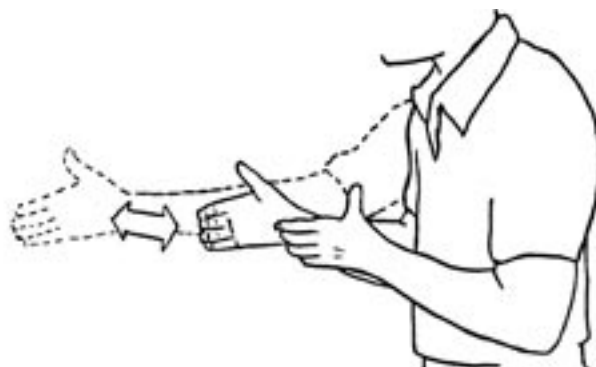


Figure 30: *Intensity conducting plane*

By adding this plane, another level of control and subtlety can be achieved. It is very effective for controlling and driving degrees of dissonance, pulling phrases, continuing the momentum of notes of longer duration, bringing out inner moving parts, and bringing out hot color notes of chords. The intensity plane can be used for other directions when the horizontal or vertical motions seem inappropriate or uncoordinated.

If this third plane is used regularly, groups will learn to respond appropriately. It is one of the finer techniques of conducting, and can serve in taking groups to a higher level of musical performance.

Visualization through body language

The director's gestures must communicate such elements as the shape and contour of the musical phrase, quality of the tone, quantity of the sound, and articulation of the rhythms. Through body language, abstract concepts can be transmitted with ease and simplicity. All parts of the body are indicators of expression—not just the head, eyes, arms, or face. Use the fingers, wrists, elbows, and shoulders, as well.¹⁷ The good director acts as a mime to convey emotions, attitudes, sounds, and ideas.

Nonverbal communication has been shown to be part of the human thought process. The gestures people use are as much a part of their thoughts as their verbalizations are. Therefore, if the conductor uses gestures that reflect a nonverbal message contrary to the concept that the conductor is trying to obtain from the ensemble, he or she will have to stop and verbalize the desired concept. Most likely, verbalization will need to occur over the course of several repetitions, until the ensemble learns to ignore the mixed message. However, the conductor can choose to employ conducting gestures that reflect standard nonverbal communication ideas similar to the musical result he or she desires from the group. This synchronization of messages from the conductor will greatly increase the efficiency of the rehearsal and will help alleviate some of the stress that some ensembles feel as they try to decipher mixed messages.¹⁸

Partly because of the puritanical heritage, the use of the body as a vehicle for expression has been relatively restricted in this country.¹⁹ Therefore, in most college conducting courses, communication through hand and facial expression is stressed. To rectify this imbalance, a class or workshop in mime is of great benefit. Many colleges and universities offer such courses through their drama or music departments during the summer months or between semesters. One university in Southern California offered a workshop entitled "Pantomime for Musicians" several years ago as an adjunct course for graduate conducting students. Subtle facial expressions required for exhibiting emotions, the gentle

hand motions used to motivate and control, and the body language of confidence, assertion, and communication were taught.

An experienced director once told about his final exam in graduate orchestral conducting. He had to conduct an entire symphonic movement without saying a word, with his hands tied behind his back. To be able to perform such an exercise is the culmination of conducting technique.

Use the following examples of visualization as a basis for making up their own:

- A transparent or breathy sound: fingers open



Figure 31: *Conducting a transparent or breathy sound*

- A dissonant sound: two fingers



Figure 32: *Conducting dissonance*

- A consonant sound: smooth hands



Figure 33: *Conducting consonance*

- A restrained sound: palms out, pulled back



Figure 34: *Conducting a restrained sound*

- A full choral tone: arms out, full and wide



Figure 35: *Conducting a full choral sound*

- A delicate sound: arms pulled inward, only hands used



Figure 36: *Conducting a delicate sound*

- A high-intensity sound: intense face



Figure 37: *Conducting with high intensity*

- A focused sound: single finger



Figure 38: *Conducting a focused sound*

- Ornaments: conduct the shape of each effect such as fall-offs, doit, ascending smear, shake (See *Linear Intensity Through Melodic Interpretation* p. 192).

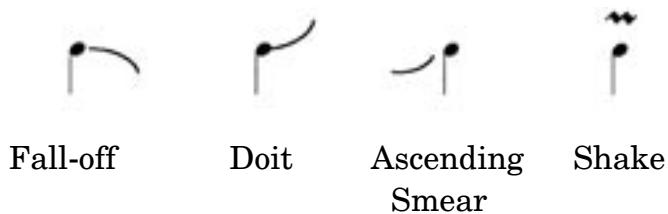


Figure 39: *Conducting ornaments*

- An accented sound: conduct the shape of each articulation such as tenuto, marcato, staccato.

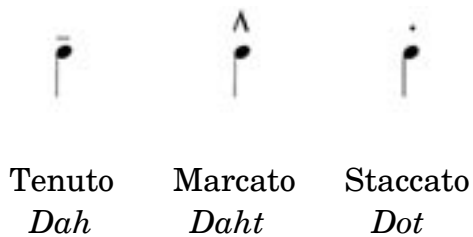


Figure 40: *Conducting accents*

- A smooth sound: paint brush motion, sideways



Figure 41: *Conducting smoothness*

- A subdivision of the beat: hand moving up and down



Figure 42: *Conducting subdivision of beats*

- Beat placement during accelerando or ritardando: tapping fingers



Figure 43: *Conducting beat placement during accelerando or ritardando*

- Vowels, ex. *oo*: hands together, at chest
- Vowels, ex. *ah*: hands apart, away from chest



Figure 44: *Conducting vowels oo and ah*

These are just a few examples of effective visual cues. It is up to choral directors to invent and develop their own set. When this has been done, a new piece of music could be presented to the group and rehearsed without saying a word—simply by using hands, face, and body.

Visualization through facial expression

It has been estimated that the face is physiologically capable of producing 20,000 different expressions.²⁰ A director's face should be the center of attention when directing and should be even more expressive than his or her hands. Facial expressions should reflect the mood or character of the music, and show the choral director's desire to communicate with the singers. Endeavor to *look like the music*.²¹

Physical imagery

Imagery is a means by which abstract ideas can be made vivid. It can be expressed verbally or visually (See *Use of Descriptive Imagery* - p. 116). If, through verbal imagery, the intended results have not been achieved, employ visual and physical imagery. A choral director's selection of words may have been inappropriate, or definitions, experiences, or choice of words may have conflicted with the experiences and background of the group. Visual imagery is less abstract. It is actually seen and, most important, it can be replicated by the group. One of the easiest ways to convey a new concept, visualization, or image to a group, is to have them conduct the motion along with the director. Once a

group has physically experienced the new concept, another memory is added and they will be able to relive the original moment each time they arrive at that point in the music. The brain has memory layers stimulated by sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell. The more sources of memory included in an experience, the better the chances of recapturing the interpretation.

Memory layers

The usual memory layers associated with understanding a new musical concept are produced as follows:

- The concept is discussed. The group listens and then attempts to produce the sounds.
- The group listens to the choral director producing the sounds.
- The group sees the director visualize the interpretation through hand, body, or facial motions.
- The group produces the physical motions, following the director while producing the correct sound.
- Having the group conduct attacks, entrances, cut-offs, ornaments, phrases, tone colors, dynamics, articulation, rhythms, and style interpretation will get them to experience the physical and mental images required to mold, shape, and communicate the music as a unique personal experience.

Remember, choral directors should not let inhibitions keep them from reaching their full potential. Note how a great director, such as Georg Solti, was described as he communicated through body movement:

Solti's body language is dramatically explicit. The violins are brought in with a scoop to the floor. The trumpets are cued by the riveting spear of an arm and index finger. The starburst of fingers summons a crash of the cymbals. Movements of lyrical romance come with the left hand cradled near the heart, the right hand beating coronas of love high above. Passages of staccato brilliance are paced by chopping up and down with both arms. A furious backhand indicates a sforzando attack, a hand moving slowly across his mouth implores the players to give him a soft sound. His gestures may at times seem overlarge, but they are no mere sideshow to titillate the audience....He eschews any useless movement.²²

Score Study

Choral directors must have a crystal-clear conception of the music that will be conducted, a conception which is necessary in terms of sound. The better the form is understood, the clearer the conception. Form and sound must become identical in the mind. The exact shape of every passage, the extent of every crescendo, and accentuation of every phrase must be heard distinctly and vividly with the inner ear.²³

Score study is a key element in the preparation of music for performance. Only through score study can the music be *learned*, and only through learning the music is one equipped to *interpret* it.²⁴ The score is the yardstick by which a choral director measures the actual sounds in rehearsal and performance, and score study is the means by which the mind and ear are made ready. The secret of proper choral interpretation lies in the understanding of the score.

Unless the choral director does his or her homework, he or she will waste the group's time. A group respects a choral director who is well-prepared, and who is obviously in control. Being thoroughly familiar with the music can reduce rehearsal time. The following are some suggestions for score study:

Prior study

Never attempt to learn the music concurrently with the singers. Study it carefully prior to rehearsal.²⁵ These questions should be answered prior to rehearsal:

- Is this piece of high musical quality and worth performing?
- Is the text appropriate for the group, audience, and occasion?
- Is the piece within the emotional grasp of the singers and the intended audience and within the technical abilities of the choir?

The following work should have been done before introducing the piece:

- Background information gathered on the piece
- Text and its relation to the music studied
- Interpretive decisions made
- Potential trouble spots located and ways to correct them determined
- Conducting challenges within the piece located and solved
- An overall strategy for rehearsing the piece developed²⁶

Form

Know the form—*AABA*, *ABAABA*, *AABCABA*, etc. Be able to explain how the piece is divided into sections, how each section relates to the others, and how it builds through the cycles of repetition, modulation, and span of texture (the number of different voice parts). The group will then understand the basic road map for the piece from the start, and potential problem areas will immediately be avoided.

Singers must have an absolutely clear understanding of the music to be performed. The better the form is understood, the clearer the understanding will be. Form and sound must be identical in the mind. Distinctly and vividly, the inner ear must hear the exact shape of every passage, the extent of every crescendo, and the accentuation of every phrase.²⁷

Melodic considerations

Prepare the group to answer such questions as:

- What are the basic melodic and counter-melodic themes?
- What is the range of each phrase and line?
- What is the shape of each phrase and line?
- Are the phrases long or short?
- Where is the climax of each phrase and line?
- How does the composer create tension and release within phrases and lines?
- Are there sequences within each phrase?
- What is the key?
- Is it diatonic or chromatic?
- What are the main intervals?

Harmonic considerations

Prepare the group to answer such questions as:

- How much dissonance is there?
- Is there a modulation? If so, where?
- Are the nonchord tones important?
- Are there many altered extensions?
- Is chord tuning going to be a problem?
- How fast is the harmonic rhythm?

Rhythmic considerations

Prepare the group to answer such questions as:

- Are there repeated rhythmic figures or patterns?
- What types of accents are used?
- What is the tempo (e.g., allegro, largo)?
- What is the rhythmic style?
- Are there rhythmic ornaments?
- Are there potential trouble spots?

Texture

Prepare the group to answer such questions as:

- What is the basic texture of the piece?
- Is it primarily homophonic or polyphonic?
- Does the texture remain consistent?
- Will a thick or thin sound be required?

Textual considerations

Prepare the group to answer such questions as:

- Is the text important?
- What does the text mean?
- Does it make sense as a poem?
- Are the musical rhythms influenced by the text?
- Are there any dialect or foreign words requiring special attention?
- Can word painting be used?

Individual voice part considerations

Prepare the group to answer such questions as:

- Are there difficult intervals?
- Are range and tessitura problems?
- Is there cross-voicing?
- How do individual parts relate?
- Are there special phrasing problems?

Tone quality considerations

Prepare the group to answer such questions as:

- What basic tone quality is required?
- Is the tone quality contrast level high?
- What dictates tone quality changes (e.g., dissonance, dynamics, phrases)?

Dynamic considerations

Prepare the group to answer such questions as:

- What is the beginning dynamic level?
- Are dynamics important in this piece?
- How wide is the level of contrast?

It would be helpful to:

- Number all the measures, and have the group do the same. It is much simpler to say “Measure 43, beat four,” than to say “Page six, second system, third measure, beat four,” or to say, “Six bars after rehearsal letter *D*, beat four.”
- Before the first rehearsal, mark the score with colored pencils so that most of the breath marks and cut-offs are indicated. There will always be further markings to add after rehearsal begins, but this is a good start. Require each group member to always bring a pencil with an eraser to rehearsal. Go over all the basic interpretational data before singing the piece. Then, even on the first reading, the group will attempt to sing the correct phrasing. Beginning instructions might sound like this: “Measure 10, breath mark after the word *first*; measure 23, dash four, cut-off”; or “measure 33, breath mark on beat two” (See *Releases* - p. 178).
- Discuss the types and styles of ornament or nuance that will encounter in the piece. Discuss dynamic flow, span, and range.
- Consider the proper placement of the rhythm section for the piece. Do the instrumentalists play a major or secondary role? If they are featured (as, for example, during a dance break), do they know when to resume their supporting role when the choir starts singing again? Can the arrangement be performed virtually without the rhythm section? If so, the tune is probably a melody-based piece, relying on chords and rhythms implicit in the vocal parts; if not, it is probably a groove

tune, relying on the rhythm section to carry the feel and style of the arrangement.

- Play a recording of the selection for the group. This is one of the easiest ways to identify trouble spots.

The above are just a few suggestions for score study. Other sections of this book will also be useful in forming ideas for rehearsal preparation. A greater amount of high quality musical performance can be realized when time management concepts are incorporated into rehearsals. The most basic form of time management is proper score study.

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²Mason, V. (1985). On Being a Choral Conductor. *The Choral Journal*, 25(6), 7.

³Copland, A. (1963). *Copland on Music*. New York: W. W. Norton, 137.

⁴Pfautsch, L. (1969). *Mental Warm-ups for the Choral Conductor*. New York: Lawson-Gould, 12.

⁵Stanton, R. (1971). *The Dynamic Choral Conductor*. Delaware Water Gap, Pa.: Shawnee, 12.

⁶Grier, G. (1977b). An Interview with Norman Luboff. *The Choral Journal*, 17(9), 25.

⁷Cornelius, J.M. (1982). The use of metaphor in the choral rehearsal. *The Choral Journal*, 23(1), 13.

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⁹Unger, M. (1994). A self-diagnostic checkup for conductors. *The Choral Journal*, 35(3), 29.

¹⁰Pfautsch, L. (1969). *Mental Warm-ups for the Choral Conductor*. New York: Lawson-Gould, 5.

¹¹Gordan, L. (1977) *Choral Director's Complete Handbook*. West Nyack, N.Y.: Parker, 16.

¹²Brown, S. (1965). *The World of Imagery*. New York: Haskell House, 33.

¹³Cornelius, J.M. (1982). The use of metaphor in the choral rehearsal. *The Choral Journal*, 23(1), 13.

¹⁴Ehmann, W. (1968). *Choral Directing*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 109.

¹⁵Moe, D. (1972). *Basic Choral Concepts*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, p. 6.

¹⁶Roe, P. (1970). *Choral Music Education*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 235.

¹⁷Lyne, G. (1979). Effective bodily communication: A key to expressive conducting. *The Choral Journal*, 20(1), 22.

¹⁸Ford, J. (2001). Implications for non-verbal communication and conducting gesture. *The Choral Journal*, 42(1), 17-23.

¹⁹Lamb, G. (1974). *Choral Techniques*. Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 31.

²⁰Lyne, G. (1979). Effective bodily communication: A key to expressive conducting. *The Choral Journal*, 20(1), 24.

²¹Garretson, R. (1981). *Conducting Choral Music*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 26.

²²Bender, W. (1973, May 7). Solti and Chicago: a musical romance. *Time*, pp. 56.

²³Stein, E. (1962). *Form and Performance*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, p. 19.

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Chapter 11

Stylistic Considerations Affecting Interpretation

Style is the perception of what is right and what is wrong in interpreting music. Style is learned both with the heart and with the head. With the *heart* we admire the composer and the music. With the *mind*, we understand what is taking place in the score.¹ Interpretation of various styles of music is one of the main elements of a choral director's education. Stylistic accuracy begins with the director's own concept of style. Learning the differences between and within the various periods and styles of choral music is a lifelong pursuit. It is not the approach to vocal technique that requires changes, it is the approach to specific styles.²

Pop, jazz, and show choirs encompass a wide range of popular styles, including Broadway show music, country, jazz, rock, Latin, fusion, and *a cappella* ballads. Moreover, new configurations will continue to be added to this repertoire. It is impossible to delineate every stylistic characteristic of pop, jazz, and show choir because these genres draw from and combine such diverse influences. Listening is the key to successful interpretation of popular styles as indicated by the following comments:

Don't plan on doing any Broadway pieces unless you've heard Liza Minnelli (rent the video *Cabaret*); any black gospel music until you know Aretha Franklin's renditions; any jazz without admiring Carmen McRae and Sarah Vaughan; any scat singing without listening to Jon Hendricks and Ella Fitzgerald; or any blues without hearing B.B. King. A lot of music educators will tell you to listen, listen, listen. Take it one step further and don't stop until you can reasonably approximate a whole host of sounds that the great artists make on a regular basis. The better you can imitate, the better your teaching abilities will be.³

The following, however, may serve as an introduction to some of the important elements in the styles incorporated into pop, jazz, and show choir:

Pop Style

This is a very common style found in *Top 40* music used in the school setting.

- Melody and lyrics are the most important elements.
- Pronunciation is very forward.
- It is sung with a focused, light, forward fundamental tone.
- Most pieces require the use of a rhythm section.
- Contrast is generated by changes in tone color, span of dynamics, intensity, and momentum of the melodic line.
- Harmony is often a secondary element; syncopation is important.
- Vibrato is used as an ornament and is not a necessity in tone production.
- Most pop music is rock-oriented and is interpreted with straight eighth notes, with accents on the second half of the beat, and major pulses of two and four.

Musical notation for measures 33-36. The melody is in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The lyrics are: "Just learn-ing to love _____ is the on - ly way__ to__ go__".

Musical notation for measures 37-40. The melody is in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The lyrics are: "by let-ting the love__ in your heart-go and give__ you the start__to__ let__ the__ world.know__".

Musical notation for measures 41-44. The melody is in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The lyrics are: "Just learn-ing to love _____ is the on - ly thing__ that's..real__".

45 46 47 48

it's tell-ing the one...that you love...how you feel...

Figure 45: *Pop style* - (CD 1 - Track 12)

Swing Style

Swing style is similar to pop. The technical aspects of teaching jazz and pop build on those used in the teaching of classical music.⁴

- The eighth-notes are performed with a 12/8 feel (See *Rhythmic Intensity* - p. 148).
- More attention is given to the feel of the tune. Terms such as *in the groove* and *in the pocket* are often used to describe the way in which individual parts fit together to make the tune swing.
- The abstract concept of *swing* can only be learned by listening to jazz recordings, reading about jazz musicians, and watching live jazz. Contrary to popular belief, it is not necessarily something with which one is born.
- In jazz, the printed page is the point of departure, not the point of arrival.⁵
- Jazz incorporates improvisation.

93 94 95 96

Du du du du du du wah du we oh

97 98 99 100

Du du du du du du du du bwee ah

The image displays a musical score for a swing-style Christmas song, consisting of three systems of music. Each system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The lyrics are: "Du bee du bah bwee do bop bah du bah du bee. We're going to Ring the bells at Christ - - mas to let the peo-ple know that 'tis the sea-son of the year which sets each heart a-glow." Measure numbers 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, and 112 are indicated above the notes.

Figure 46: *Swing style* - (CD 1 - Track 13)

Latin Style

Latin style is not common in the school setting, but it should be. It is a viable style that is appreciated by a great number of people in this country. It is similar to pop in production and concept, but with several differences:

- There is much more repetition, mainly in the rhythmic framework, in such sub-styles as Bossa Nova, Rumba, Cha Cha, and other dance forms.
- Auxiliary percussion instruments are characteristically employed.
- Much more attention is focused on the rhythmic groove of the piece than on the melody, harmony, or lyrics. Latin tunes can sometimes continue indefinitely, if a good groove is found.

15) 16) 17)

1. Winds
2. Love

blow on-- to
please be sin--

18) 19) 20)

me,
-cere,

let me know that you're
make the breez-es that

read---y to give my
blow ev-ry day bring

21) 22) 23) 24)

one chance to live com-plete-ly.
some-one my way to be near.

1. Winds of
2. Through all my

25) 26) 27)

3. wan... d'ring day
4. find the one

with no--one there to guide
I can give all my love to

28) 29) 30)

I tra-vel'd the road of my heart hap-ing some-one would start my new
then I'll thank the breez---es that blow for the ones who did show me the



Figure 47: *Latin style* - (CD 1 - Track 14)

Rock Style

Rock style is the most common style found in pop and show choir settings. Much of pop choir literature is *Top 40* oriented, and most of the published pop choral music available consists of shallow arrangements of mediocre tunes. Basically, this style is similar to the overall pop style, except for a few differences:

- More emphasis is placed on a harder driving beat, with stronger accents on two and four.
- Tone quality is usually more frontal, somewhat harder, and rougher.
- There is more emphasis on the inner subdivided eighth, with a focus on the second half of the beat (back beat).
- Eighth notes are usually shorter, quarter notes longer.
- Much of the feel is generated by the rhythm section, with stylizations coming from the vocalists.
- There is a hard attitude and cockiness that is less refined than in pop music.



The image displays a musical score for a song in a rock style. It consists of four systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "in an-oth - er if we can - not go and find who we are Liv - in' in - side each and ev' - ry-one there is a dream - er who'll be our guide through the maze of life un - til it seems we fol - low the one who". The score is written in a key with one flat (B-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. The piano accompaniment features a steady, rhythmic bass line and chords in the right hand.

Figure 48: *Rock style* - (CD 1 - Track 15)

Broadway Show Style

Broadway show style is the original source of show choir style, and remains most prevalent in it. Interpretation is, again, similar to pop, with certain changes:

- Pronunciation is very forward and projected. This manner derives from the techniques required for being heard without a P.A. system. These techniques, when improperly applied, can degenerate into *yell singing*.

- Arrangements are generally very simple and repetitive, allowing more emphasis on movement. Movement should not become the primary emphasis of the show choir and should be considered as supporting the music.
- This style tends to sing with a large projecting vibrato. This may be acceptable for a solo singer, but is not acceptable for a choral group.

(Swing Feel)

When my ba - by walks down the street with me I watch them
 stop and stare— but I don't ev - en— care— 'cause when my
 ba - by walks down the street with me I ne - ver have a care
 ev - en if they stare she's here with me.

Figure 49: Broadway style - (CD 1 - Track 16)

Country Style

This country style is not to be confused with current *Top 40 Country* which is now more mainstream rock and roll. This style is similar to pop, but with some changes:

- The major accented beats are one and three, rather than two and four.
- Pronunciation is usually stereotyped, with a *hick* twang.
- The harmony is primarily homophonic with diatonic triads, very similar to hymn singing. Most published *country music* is either derived from the Broadway hoe-down type, as in such shows as *Oklahoma* and *Lil' Abner*, or is oriented more towards pop than real country. True country music, unfortunately, is seldom performed by larger vocal groups.

The image shows a musical score for a country-style song. It consists of three systems of music. The first system is a vocal line in bass clef, 4/4 time, with lyrics: "I ne - ver had a way of life I know I ne - ver will so". The second system is another vocal line in bass clef, 4/4 time, with lyrics: "I just do the best I can by crank - in' up the still we". The third system is a piano accompaniment in grand staff (treble and bass clefs), 4/4 time, with lyrics: "know he'll do the best he can by crank - in' up the still." The piano part features a simple, homophonic accompaniment with diatonic triads.

Figure 50: *Country style* - (CD 1 - Track 17)

Ballad Style

Ballad style with rhythm section or *a cappella*, is also very similar to pop, with certain differences:

- More attention is paid to melody, harmony, and, especially, the text.
- Interpretation is more flowing. Integrity of the phrase and linear intensity are major factors. The line must make sense and appear to go somewhere. These concerns exist when interpreting other styles as well, but are especially important here, where these elements are more exposed.
- Tone quality can have a wider span—from soft, light, and airy to full, bright, and brassy. Tone color is very important because it is used to accentuate the text, the dissonances, and the peaks of phrases.
- Dynamics and tone color can also have a wider span.
- Silence can be the most poignant moment within a ballad.
- Accents should be more prominent, so that they add to the coloration of the texture.
- The text can be interpreted as a piece of poetry, to the point of singing it as one would recite it. Semi-out of rhythm and almost sing-talking are acceptable interpretational devices.

The image shows a musical score for a ballad style, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clef) and lyrics. The lyrics are: "feel. And now when morn- ing". The score includes measures 12, 13, and 14. Measure 13 features a glissando and a piano (pp) dynamic marking. The score is written in a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is written in the bass clef. The lyrics are placed below the notes, with "feel." under measure 12, "And" under measure 13, and "now when morn- ing" under measure 14. The score includes a glissando (gliss) and a piano (pp) dynamic marking in measure 13.

The image shows a musical score for a ballad style, consisting of four staves. The top two staves are the vocal lines, and the bottom two are the piano accompaniment. The music is in 4/4 time and features lyrics: "breaks the day, we'll be a-part. The mean- ing's clear: I'll end it now. I'll have to say good-bye to you." The score includes dynamic markings such as *ff* and *pp*. The lyrics are written below the vocal staves, and the piano accompaniment is written below the vocal staves. The score is numbered 15 through 21.

Figure 51: *Ballad style* - (CD 1 - Track 18)

The first step in developing an understanding of any type of music is to learn to listen to it rather than just hear it.⁶ Investigate and learn the intricate facets of these various styles. Listen to recordings, attend performances, watch television specials, and try out new ideas. Pop, jazz, and show choir is a continuously changing art form. Imagine, create, and experiment to reap the benefits of a quality performing choir.

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³cited in: Robinson, R. (1994) *Getting started with jazz-show choir*. Reston, Va.: Music Educators National Conference.

⁴Wiskirchen, G. (1975). If we're going to teach jazz we must teach improvisation. *Music Educators Journal*, 61(3), 72.

⁵Spradling, D. (1987). Establishing credibility in the vocal jazz movement. *Jazz Educators Journal*, (19)2, p. 83-84.

⁶Tanner, P. (1973, September). Music appreciation: jazz listening. *The Instrumentalist*, p. 65.

Chapter 12

Rhythmic Intensity

Rhythm is the unifying, binding element and the governing principle in music. Rhythm is a stronger factor than sheer sound in unifying individual singers into a closely-knit choral unit. Therefore, there is no means which is so suitable for thoroughly fusing a group of individuals into a unified musical group as rhythmic training.¹

Rhythmic intensity is one of the most difficult musical concepts. It requires special concentration on the direction and momentum of the melodic line, in conjunction with knowledge of the inner-working accents of the particular style being performed. By understanding where a musical line is going and what it is doing, the same kinds of change and contrast to rhythm can be applied to melody or harmony.

Rhythmic intensity is based on the interpretation of the natural subdivision accents inherent within a particular style, high contrast between rhythmic note values, and the concept of contrast within repetition. Certain styles of music are characterized by the accentuation of non-standard beats. Most classical music has, as its basis, the accentuation of beats one and three. Much of the music associated with pop, jazz, and show choir, however, has jazz as its heritage, as its basis, the accentuation of beats two and four.

Rhythm is the unifying, binding element and the governing principle in music.

In the performance of a jazz selection, if rhythms are played as written, the music will sound stilted and wrong. The difficulty is that the subtleties of jazz cannot be accurately notated and to attempt to do so would result in a score that would appear incredibly complex and would still remain inadequate.²

The interpretation of jazz and rock is based on the accentuation of beats two and four. Jazz incorporates a *12/8 feel*, with the stress on the last one third of the beat of two eighth-notes. Think of singing eighth-note triplets, accenting the third eighth note of each beat. In rock and many pop styles, the second of two eighth notes comprising one beat is stressed, but without the *12/8 feel*.

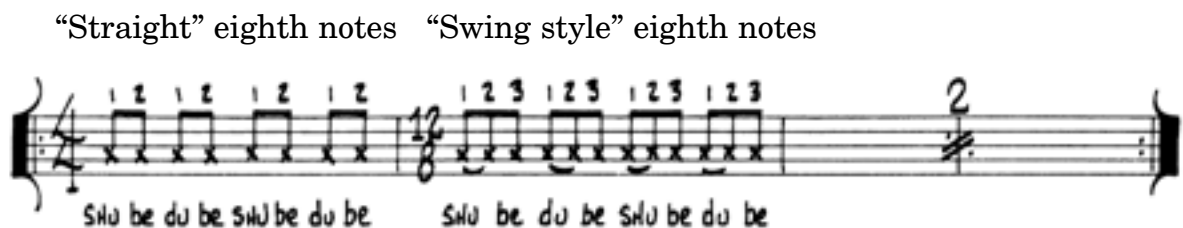


Figure 52: *Written normal vs. jazz notation* - (CD 1 - Track 19)

High contrast among note values is another important element of rhythmic intensity. Notes can be very short, very long, or anywhere in between. The following is a continuum for some rhythmic note values:



Figure 53: *Note value continuum*

In the following two versions of various note values, note how just the contrast between their lengths can make a simple rhythmic line exciting. The first version is straight eighth notes and the second is swing-style eighth notes.



Figure 54: *Rock and swing-style rhythmic line* - (CD 1 - Track 20)

There is a normal tendency to lose direction and momentum when performing slower music. All the concepts discussed previously are even more important when the tempo becomes slower. Attention to direction and momentum can be heard in the following example (the melody has been reduced to a single note in order to show only rhythmic concepts). Great attention must be given to the unwritten subdivisions of the notes. These subdivisions are the inner-working forces that drive slow music on and keep it exciting. Note the slight breath accent on all three of the *12/8 beats*, with a larger accent on the last one third of the beat. The first version is swing style eighth notes and the second version is straight eighth notes.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in 12/8 time. The first staff is labeled 'swing style eighth notes' and consists of three measures: 'Du du du du', 'du du du du', and 'du du du du du du du'. The second staff is labeled 'straight eighth notes' and also consists of three measures: 'Du du du du', 'du du du du', and 'du du du du du du du'. The notes are represented by vertical stems with flags indicating eighth notes.

Figure 55: *Slow rhythms in swing and rock style* - (CD 1 - Track 21)

The same example with a melody added:

The image shows two staves of musical notation in 12/8 time, identical in rhythm to Figure 55 but with a melody added. The first staff is labeled 'swing style eighth notes' and consists of three measures: 'Du du du du', 'du du du du', and 'du du du du du du du'. The second staff is labeled 'straight eighth notes' and also consists of three measures: 'Du du du du', 'du du du du', and 'du du du du du du du'. The notes are represented by vertical stems with flags indicating eighth notes.

Figure 56: *Slow rhythms in swing and rock style with melody* -
(CD 1 - Track 22)

A few final ideas concerning rhythmic interpretation:

- Syncopated notes are usually accented.
- Notes shorter than one beat in duration and followed by a rest are usually accented.
- Long notes should be sung through, maintaining the sense of flow.
- Choral directors should listen to jazz and rock bands and then rehearse their group to sing the rhythms as if the bands were playing these rhythms.

Rhythmic intensity is a layer of contrast that can be added to any style of music. It takes knowledge of the style, a lot of energy, and the commitment to fully absorb a particular piece of music. If the jazz style is unfamiliar, re-read this section and listen to the musical examples again. It is of primary importance to jazz rhythmic interpretation to understand the rhythmic concepts.

Rhythmic Consistency and Placement

Consistency and placement are the main factors to be considered in the interpretation of rhythms. Rhythmic consistency may be defined as a constant pulse creating a framework within which multiple rhythms can comfortably coexist. This steady pulse is the basis for the music of most periods. It is the central focus of pop, jazz, and show choir music. Except for pieces in rubato style, once a tempo is set, it usually remains constant.

Consider the following in attempting to correct rhythmic problems:

Inattention on the part of the director

This generally occurs when the choral director is concerned with other musical problems and attention is focused on individual sections, soloists, phrases, etc. At such times, the beat-keeping aspect of conducting may not be given due consideration and the group may begin to rush or drag.

Inexperienced rhythm section players

This is the major cause of uneven tempo in pop, jazz, and show choirs. The drummers are the major culprits. Usually possessing only a rudimentary rock-and-roll background, drummers are expected to play jazz, Latin, pop, fusion, and ballad styles. The easiest way to help young drummers maintain a steady

tempo is to have them wear headphones and play along with selected recordings. The best way, of course, is to have them receive private instruction. The rhythm section must be aware that the bass player is the real time keeper, not the right foot of the drummer. The drummer's basic function is to add color.

Inexperienced accompanist

An inexperienced accompanist may not follow properly, or may have difficulty playing the part. Nevertheless, many directors must use student accompanists. Have inexperienced accompanists practice their parts with a metronome until they internalize a steady-tempo concept.

Overly experienced accompanist

An even greater problem arises when the accompanists have had so much experience that they regard themselves as leaders rather than followers. If the choral director has only a few years of experience, accompanists may, for example, circumvent their direction by gradually changing the tempo of the piece to one that shows off their own playing skills. Their experience may, at times, be a valuable learning tool but they may become disruptive. Privately explain to them who is in charge.

Beat consistency

A choral director must be able to internalize constant tempo. Not being able to do so is one of the most difficult areas to correct. Work with a metronome and music scores until the internal beat of the music can be *felt*.

Subdivision of the beat

This is the foundation of constant tempo. Awareness of the subdivision in conducting patterns, and hearing the subdivision subtly in the music are paramount. In any given piece of music, the lowest common rhythmic denominator is the inner subdivided pulse, to which all greater multiples of rhythmic pulses must adhere. Everyone involved must at all times not only be aware of the larger unit of tempo (which is called the pulse), but also its divisions and subdivisions from halves and thirds to minuscule sixths and eighths.³

In swing style, for example, everything revolves around the swing eighth-note groupings. In rock style, the inner pulse is also the eighth-note, as it is in Latin music, but it is evenly spaced (straight) and not in the 12/8 swing triplet feel. This is of major importance to differentiate the two styles.

The second major factor leading to rhythmic problems is placement of the beat.

Be aware of the following:

Rushing

Rushing is a gradual shortening of the space between beats, destroying constant tempo, in which the pulses are equidistant. With rushing, a pulse occurs too soon, followed by another too soon. One can find oneself several beats ahead of the original steady beat.

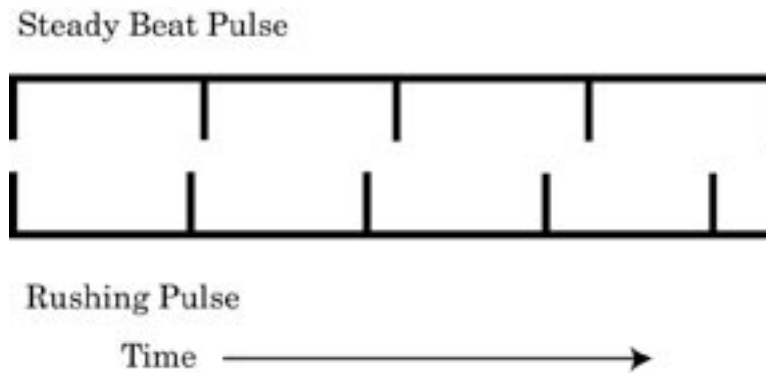


Figure 57: *Steady beat pulse vs. rushing pulse*

Dragging

Dragging is the reverse of rushing. Each steady beat gradually gets longer, until one finds oneself several beat locations behind the correct steady pulse.

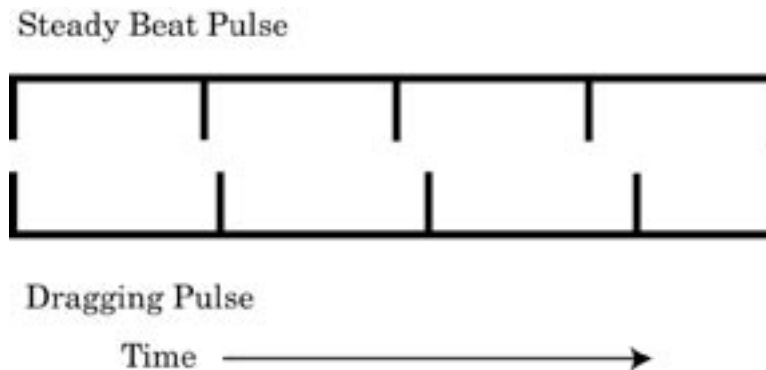


Figure 58: *Steady beat pulse vs. dragging pulse*

On the beat

This concept describes the mathematically accurate point for pulses. It is *legally* correct, but not always very exciting. This is what it looks like:

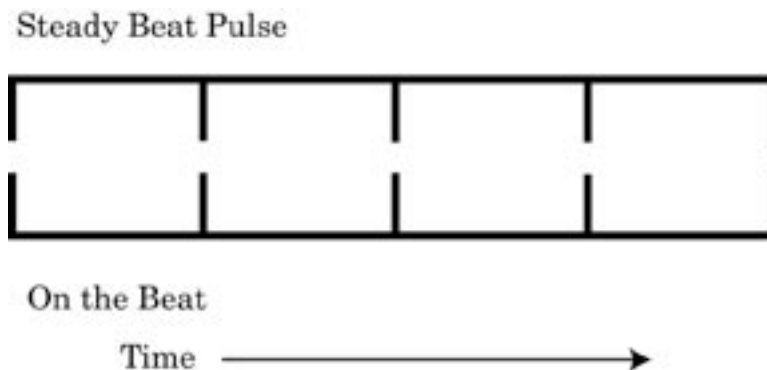


Figure 59: *Steady beat pulse vs. on the beat pulse*

Ahead of the beat

This is a conceptual location for a beat that is neither rushing nor dragging, but occurs ahead of the *legal* pulse. It can look like this:

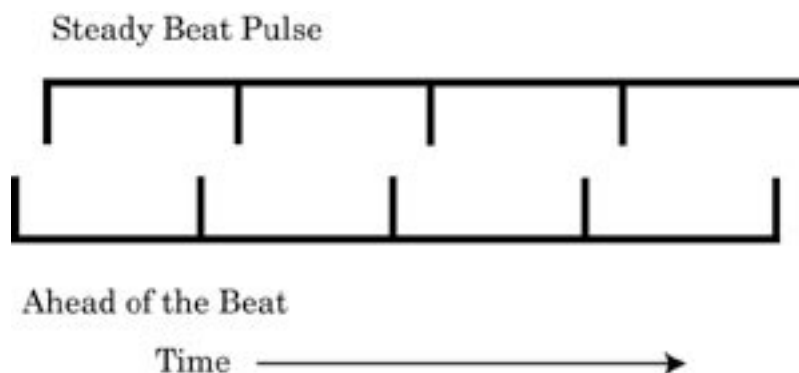


Figure 60: *Steady beat pulse vs. ahead of the beat pulse*

Note that the new pulse also maintains equidistance. This degree of out-in-frontness can be controlled and adjusted, but only by accomplished musicians. Its main purpose is identical to that of singing some notes or chords, on the higher

(not sharp) side of the pitch (See *Tonal Window* - p. 54). It adds tension and excitement. Out-in-frontness is frequently used in swing-style jazz by the bass player and not the singers, where the swing eighth notes add to the flow and feel of rhythmic drive.

Behind the beat

This concept is the reverse of ahead of the beat. The beat placement is after the *legal* pulse.

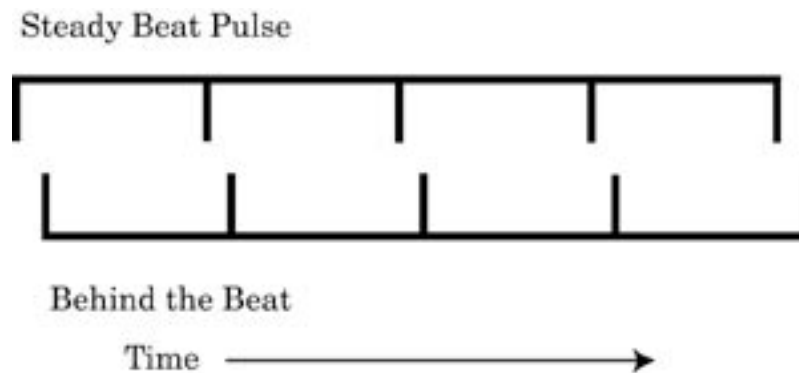


Figure 61: *Steady beat pulse vs. behind the beat pulse*

This technique is often used in slow swing style tunes requiring a heavy back-beat or *12/8 feel*, and as a semi-rubato effect in steady tempo pieces. Behind-the-beat interpretation of rhythms should be reserved for special effects. It can add to the tension by its uniqueness, but does not add excitement.

Rhythmic consistency and placement must be understood and mastered before any of the other rhythmic elements can be utilized successfully. Without this solid framework, all the subdivisions, ornaments, and accents will not be as effective as they should.

Teaching Rhythm First

The elements of choral music include melody, harmony, pronunciation, interpretation, phrasing, blend, style, tone, and rhythm. Each is of significance for the overall performance of a piece, but in learning and rehearsal they must be dealt with according to a hierarchy of importance. Of the three basic elements—melody, rhythm, and harmony—rhythm is the most basic. Rhythm can be rehearsed and performed by itself, and should always be the first musical

element dealt with. Most choirs falter first rhythmically rather than melodically when reading a new score. Rhythmic complexity will cause more problems than melodic intervals, and will plague a choral director longer in rehearsals.⁴

For a choral group, rhythmic accuracy is best attained through a regular program of rhythmic sight-reading. In addition:

- Avoid using the text during the first few readings of a new piece, unless the text is quite slow or the rhythms are very simple.
- While the group keeps time with their feet, have them read through the text, using the correct musical rhythms and notating the difficult sections.
- Go back to the difficult sections and have them mark the middle of each measure with a dotted line. This will help them find another place to tap their foot and get back on track if they get lost.
- Have the group indicate, with up and down arrows, the location of each beat and syncopated beat within difficult rhythmic passages.

The image displays two staves of musical notation, likely for a choral piece. The top staff is numbered 40 to 43, and the bottom staff is numbered 44 to 47. The music is in a 2/4 time signature. The lyrics are: "We think our lives have all been fashioned from the start... and that we never can control our destiny... Dee...dee". Above the top staff, there are three arrows: an upward arrow above measure 41, a downward arrow above measure 42, and an upward arrow above measure 43. Above the bottom staff, there are six upward arrows above measures 44, 45, 45, 46, 46, and 46, and one downward arrow above measure 47. A vertical dashed line is drawn through measure 41 in the top staff and measure 45 in the bottom staff.

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system covers measures 48 to 51. Measure 48 has the lyrics 'dee dee dee'. Measures 49-51 have the lyrics 'And if we try to change we'll break it all a-part'. The second system covers measures 52 to 55. Measure 52 has the lyrics 'but that's not the way'. Measures 53-55 have the lyrics 'not the way it has to be he-'. Above the first system, five upward-pointing arrows are positioned over measures 49, 50, and 51, and one downward-pointing arrow is over measure 51. Above the second system, one upward-pointing arrow is over measure 52, and two downward-pointing arrows are over measures 53 and 54. The notation includes a treble clef, a bass clef, and various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes.

Figure 62: *Rhythmic accuracy* - (CD 1 - Track 23)

- Rehearse each measure slowly until it is correct. Concentrate on distinguishing the down beats and the syncopated beats.
- Sing through the entire piece using only the rhythms and the text. Go back and rehearse separate measures, as needed.

If rhythms are learned first, choir members will be much more confident when tackling other musical variables such as melody, their individual part, or harmony.

Interpretation of Traditional Rhythms

There are two main differences between the interpretation of traditional rhythms and those of pop, jazz, and show choirs. Most of the pop, jazz, and show choir music sung today has its roots in the rhythms of West Africa, brought to this country during the period of slavery. These rhythms are the basis for rhythm and blues, black folk songs, and field hollers—expressions which evolved into the many forms of jazz, blues, rock and roll, and other popular styles. Much of traditional European music has its rhythmic roots in old dance forms. In some of these dance forms—such as the waltz and sarabande—the down beat in triple meter is emphasized so that the dance step can easily be felt. In other dances,

such as the gavotte and bourree beats one and three in their duple beat patterns are emphasized.

Certain styles of popular music, such as country and Broadway show music, manifest traditional European influences in accenting beats one and three. The African drumming influence, in contrast, has left the legacy of accenting beats two and four. Therefore, when a piece of music is in rock or swing style, and the quarter-note is the primary rhythmic duration, the accents are on beats two and four. This is called the back accent.



Figure 63: *Back accent quarter notes*

When the eighth-note is the primary rhythmic duration or subdivision, the same accenting logic applies to the second and fourth eighth-notes within two quarter-note values. As in the previous example, beats two and four are still being accented.



Figure 64: *Back accent eighth notes*

An increasing amount of published pop, jazz, and show choir music requires swing-style interpretation. In this style, the basic accenting pulse of two and four is still retained but, instead of even eighth-notes (as they appear in the published music), they should be interpreted as triplets with a *12/8 feel*, and performed in a legato style, unless otherwise specifically notated.

(Notated) (But performed as)

Straight eighth notes Swing style eighth notes

SHU be du be SHU be du be SHU be du be SHU be du be

Figure 65: *Duple vs. triple rhythmic interpretation* - (CD 1 - Track 24)

Jazz rhythms tend to be more linear and horizontal with rock rhythms more detached and vertical.⁵ Most country and Broadway show two-beat styles have, as their basic rhythmic structure, the accentuation of beats one and three in four note groupings.



Figure 66: *Rhythmic accents on beats one and three*

For most ballad styles, there is no common practice for rhythmic accentuation. Because of the generally slower tempo, rhythmic contrast is of lesser concern. Line, phrasing, melody, and harmony are given prominence.

With the above exceptions, most pop, jazz, and show choir style rhythms are interpreted and performed in the same manner as most other styles of choral music. If one has little or no experience with pop, jazz, and show choir, but is willing to learn, it is helpful to ask a knowledgeable director or colleague for the correct interpretation or *feel* of certain difficult idiomatic rhythms.

Tempo in Relation to Style and Musicality

Every musician must be excruciatingly sensitive to tempo, the passing of consecutive and equal units of (artificial) time; and absolutely nothing must be allowed to change that tempo except that which is conscious, proportioned, and demonstrably superior to regularity.⁶

Except for rubato-style pieces, most compositions and arrangements include a suggested tempo marking at the beginning of the score. It is only a suggestion, but generally it's a good one to start with when exploring the range of possible tempos suitable for the group. Listen to recordings in the style that will be performed and try many tempos before selecting the one that feels best for the arrangement and for its placement in the concert. The easiest way to control this experimentation, and then to achieve consistency, is to use a pocket metronome. With it, small, accurate experimental tempo changes can be made. Do not rely on internal feel to start tempos. Some directors have experienced, at a festival or concert, the horror of realizing that they have started a piece at the wrong tempo. This problem can be avoided if the pocket metronome is used consistently.

When selecting tempo, consider the following:

- How do the lyrics flow, or are they tongue twisters, if sung fast? Find the best tempo for reciting the lyrics without the music.
- How are the rhythms organized? Is there syncopation? Do the rhythms seem awkward at a fast tempo? Do they seem stilted at a slow tempo?
- What is the style of the piece? Is it a two-beat Broadway show tune, swing-style jazz, country hoe-down, ballad, *Top 40* pop tune, Latin form, etc.? Each style will automatically dictate an area of acceptable tempo.
- What role does the accompanist or rhythm section play? Is it supportive or featured? Does it set the basic feel for the tune? The competence of the rhythm section or accompanist will dictate acceptable tempos.
- At what point in the show will the piece be performed? Will a particular tempo help build momentum into the set, while still being correct for the tune? Will a certain tempo fit better in a certain programming slot?
- Large choruses are usually less able to perform at very fast tempos than smaller ones. It is simply more difficult to keep a larger chorus together at fast tempos.⁷
- Does the choreography look good at the selected tempo? If not, change the choreography, not the music. Remember, choreography serves the music, not vice versa.
- If the tune is fast, simplify the count-off. If it is slow, make the count-off more complex by using subdivisions of the beat.⁸

Often, in festival situations, when professional clinicians work with groups, their suggestions frequently revolve around the selection of tempo. When

suggested tempos are tried, the music usually feels better. This improvement results from the clinician's greater experience in the idiom or style. Experience can be gained by listening to records, going to shows and concerts, and talking to professional musicians.

Rhythmic Phrasing

Rhythmic phrasing is basically a matter of applying the concept of linear rhythmic intensity to the natural rest points in a melodic line. Just as melody and lyrics shape the musical phrase, the contribution of rhythm needs to be considered. When these elements are synchronized, a stronger melodic statement will result.

For linear rhythmic intensity, a set of rhythms must have a starting point, direction, momentum, and a predetermined stopping point. Choral directors must know where they are going and where they will stop. This will help interpret a set of rhythms effectively by focusing attention on the direction and momentum of the line.

It is obvious where a rhythmic phrase starts, but less obvious where it ends. It is even more difficult to interpret its direction and momentum. Rhythms can be short phrases, lasting only a few beats, or they can be combinations of many short phrases, strung together to form a more complex structure. Rhythmic phrases are built in the same manner as melodic phrases.

Melodic phrases contain natural breathing points. These points should synchronize with the natural flow of the rhythms.

Melodic phrases contain natural breathing points. These points should synchronize with the natural flow of the rhythms. This can usually be brought about only through knowledgeable action. If the accent of the lyric differs from that of the rhythm, the rhythm must triumph. Note how, in the following simple melody, the line contains natural breathing spaces which create contrast between tension and release.

The image shows a musical score for a simple melody. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff for the melody and a bass clef staff for the accompaniment. The melody starts at measure 5 and ends at measure 8. The lyrics are "I had a dream that thrilled my soul." The melody is marked with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The lyrics are written below the melody, with a long horizontal line under "a dream" and "soul." The accompaniment is marked with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The melody has a natural breathing point at the end of measure 6, which coincides with the end of the phrase "a dream".

9 10 11 12
I dreamed that God _____ had made us whole, _____

13 14 15 16
He loosed the chains _____ and made us free, _____

17 18 19 20
And he gave us light to make blind men see I had a dream _____

Figure 67: *Melodic line natural breathing spaces* - (CD 1 - Track 25)

In the following example of several small rhythmic phrases, note how the intensity changes within repetition and drives each phrase to change within a short amount of time. Each phrase has a starting point, direction, momentum, and ending point. By rehearsing each phrase independently, awareness of each of these elements can be achieved.

1.
Dut du du__ du__ du__ du dut

Figure 68 consists of three musical staves in 4/4 time, each showing a rhythmic phrase with intensity indicated by slanted lines below the notes.
 Staff 2: The phrase is "Du du du du du du du du du du du du dut". It features a slur over the first ten notes and a triplet over the last three notes.
 Staff 3: The phrase is "Du du" followed by a rest, then "Du du" followed by a rest. Slanted lines are placed under each "Du du" group.
 Staff 5: The phrase is "Du du du du du du du du du du du dut du dut". Slanted lines are placed under each note, and an accent mark (^) is placed over the eighth note.

Figure 68: *Rhythmic phrases with intensity indicated* - (CD 1 - Track 26)

Next, observe the same short rhythmic phrases connected to form a larger structure. Note how the larger structure keeps building. Direction and momentum give music shape and contour. These forces are part of the tension and release process inherent in all tonal music.

Figure 69 consists of two musical staves in 4/4 time, showing composite rhythmic phrases with intensity indicated by slanted lines.
 The top staff shows a continuous sequence of rhythmic patterns, with slanted lines indicating intensity changes.
 The bottom staff shows a similar sequence of rhythmic patterns, also with slanted lines indicating intensity changes.

Figure 69: *Composite rhythmic phrases with intensity indicated* -
(CD 1 - Track 27)

Figure 71 shows a musical score with two staves. The top staff is the vocal line, and the bottom staff is the piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins at measure 11 with the lyrics "but ya nev-er get the mu-sic to move right with it." The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note bass line and a more complex treble line with chords and moving lines.

Figure 71: *Composite rhythmic phrases with harmony* - (CD 1 - Track 29)

Note that each time a musical element is added, greater direction and momentum result. Each element has qualities that must be exploited for interesting interpretation. Intensity, momentum, and direction of rhythmic phrasing have been treated first because they are the basic elements of all melodic lines. Harmony cannot exist without a melody, melody cannot exist without rhythm, but rhythm can exist alone—it is the foundation of all music.

Extra attention must be given to rhythmic phrasing during passages of syncopation. Greater effort is needed to create direction and momentum that will make syncopation effective. Greater attention must be given to staying on top of the beat, avoiding rushing or dragging. The following is an example of syncopation showing rhythmic direction, momentum, and intensity. Note how the effective use of space between notes sets off the syncopation and creates more tension within the line:

Figure 72 shows a musical score with two staves. The top staff is the vocal line, and the bottom staff is the piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins at measure 5 with the lyrics "That's the way ya do..." and continues through measure 14 with the lyrics "it when you eat I-tal-ian food; That's the way ya do it when you think...". The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note bass line and a more complex treble line with chords and moving lines.

Figure 72 is a musical score for a choral piece, consisting of four systems of music. Each system includes a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "that mes-sy stuff is goo-wood. That's the way ya do it with spa--ghet-ti sauce all on your face, That's the way ya do it, spill-in' rav-i-o-li ev'-ry place. Ya scarf down a piz-za, you will take a big chance ya get pep-per-o-ni on your shirt and your pants. That's the way ya do it when you". The score is written in a key with one flat (B-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand.

Figure 72: *Rhythmic phrasing with syncopation* - (CD 1 - Track 30)

Rhythmic phrasing is another important element of music. Its concepts are relatively simple to master. Pick a melodic line from a work the group is rehearsing and dissect its internal elements. Better music will result when the relationships within a line are understood.

Accents

Articulation is a major technique with which performers may shape a musical phrase. Each note within a phrase may vary in length, from short to long, on a continuum framed by the accent terms, staccato and legato. Articulations

- Vertical: Strong accent, held less than full value



Figure 76: *Vertical accent*

- Staccato: Short, detached, unaccented



Figure 77: *Staccato accent*

Here is an example which includes all of the accent types:

Du du dut dut dut du du du — dut du du du dut du —

Du du dut dut dut du du du — dut du du du dut du —

Dut du du du dut du — du du — du du — du — du — du —

Du du dut dut dut du du du — dut du du du dut du —

Du du dut dut dut dut du du — dut du du du dut du —

Figure 78: *Four accent types* - (CD 1 - Track 31)

Breath accent

A note is re-articulated within a phrase to embellish the rhythmic pulse or add rhythmic drive. Breath accents are not ordinarily printed in published music. Used sparingly, they can be effective.

Figure 79: *Breath accent* - (CD 1 - Track 32)

H accent

An articulation starting with an *H* sound. It is effective, for example, as the initial consonant of an *ooh* background vocal part, if a gentle attack is desired. It can also be effective in a succession of articulated *ooh*, or other vowels, such as in measures 9-14 in the following example:

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The vocal line has a measure with a whole rest, followed by a measure with a whole note, and then a phrase starting with a quarter note. The piano accompaniment has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Below the vocal line are the lyrics "doo doo doo doo" and "IX only ooh". The second system also has a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with a phrase of quarter notes, followed by a phrase of eighth notes. The piano accompaniment continues with a similar rhythmic pattern. Below the vocal line are the lyrics "ooh" and "du du du du du du du".

Figure 80: *H accent* - (CD 1 - Track 33)

Heimlich accent

The Heimlich accent can be described by the physical action of gently pushing on the diaphragm while singing a sustained note. This accent does not start with an *H* sound, but the note is still re-articulated, through diaphragmatic pulsing such as in the men's *ooo* section in measures 22 - 27 in the following example.

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The vocal line has a series of eighth notes with lyrics "real - ly need _ to feel _ that it's time _ to _ sing _". The piano accompaniment has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The second system also has a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has a series of eighth notes with lyrics "making church bells _ ring _ that tis the sea-son of _our hearts we real - ly know is" and "Ooo _". The piano accompaniment has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

24 real there's stockings on the mantel and gifts be-neath the tree there's
 25 Ooo
 26 Ooo
 27 rib-bons bows and can-dles and chil-dren who be-lieve
 28
 29 and can-dles and chil-dren be-lieve while

Figure 81: *Heimlich accent* - (CD 1 - Track 34)

D or L accent

A soft *D* or *L* sound can be used to re-articulate notes within a long legato passage depending on the desired strength of the accent. This type of accent should be employed when a subtle but more definite effect than the *Heimlich* accent is desired as in measures 15-16 and 22 in the following example.

Note the three pulses in the illustrated legato line.

Figure 82: *D or L accent illustration*

15 och da da da da da da da
 16

Figure 83: *D or L accent* - (CD 1 - Track 35)

Tenuto with space accent

This technique produces a legato phrase with space between unaccented notes. A smooth continuous stream of air is cut into individual pieces for each note. It is most effective in smooth syncopated phrases where normal accents would be out of place.

The image shows two systems of musical notation for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are 'Bah bah bah bah ba dow' and 'Bah bah'. The piano accompaniment is in a single staff with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The score is numbered 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, and 78 in the upper left corner of each system.

Figure 84: *Tenuto with space accent* - (CD 1 - Track 36)

When using accents here are a few things to remember:

Rushing

When notes are accented, but the particular type of accent used does not allow for the note to be held full value, there is often a tendency to rush in order to fill in the empty space with the next note. This problem can be alleviated through group conducting (See *Physical Conducting Technique* - p. 118), and emphasis on the importance of space between notes (See *Syncopation* - p. 181).

Note separation

Whether the music is jazz or classical, accented notes following a held note are executed by releasing the held note. By providing this element of space, the following can happen:

- Bring out the accented note dynamically.
- As a group, attack the accented note together.¹⁰

Accents, used effectively, add a further level of musicality to almost any piece. Try all the various articulation types in different places, and find the accents that are best. But remember, accents are like Christmas candy—too much of a good thing is bad.

Attacks

Every musical phrase must start with an attack. A wide variety of attacks may be used to start a musical phrase, as may be seen on the continuum illustrated below. Compare the numbered continuum with the graphed examples below it. A soft attack has a gentle, sloping approach to the beginning note. A hard attack has a much more abrupt start.



Figure 85: *Attack continuum*

When particular attacks are chosen, several factors must be considered:

Tempo

If the tempo is fast, a harder, more definite attack will usually sound better. In slower music, more time is available for a smoother, gentler attack, and for the effect to be heard.

JAZZ BALLAD ♩ = 50

1) 2) 3) 4) When the

5) 6) 7) moon's on the rise 'til the night is half gone and the stars in the sky make yo

Figure 86: *Slow tune with smooth attack* - (CD 1 - Track 37)

9) 10) 11) 12) Ain't no--- bod-y gon-na love ya the way I do There

13) 14) 15) 16) ain't no--- bod-y gon-na give ya the thrill;

Figure 87: *Fast tune with hard attack* - CD 1 - (Track 38)

Style

Particular styles of pop, jazz, and show choir music lend themselves better to either soft or hard attacks. Each style has its own mood or tone. Become familiar with these stylistic differences, and apply the appropriate phrase beginning. Here are three different examples:

- Rubato *a cappella* requiring a soft attack:

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = c.76$. It consists of three systems of vocal and piano accompaniment. The first system (measures 1-4) features a vocal line starting with a *mp* dynamic and a piano accompaniment. The second system (measures 5-8) continues the vocal line with a *mf* dynamic and piano accompaniment. The third system (measures 9-12) concludes the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "O come, O come, oo O come, O come Em - man - u - el And ran - som cap - tive Is - ra - el That".

Figure 88: *Rubato a cappella style* - (CD 1 - Track 39)

- Bossa Nova requiring a medium attack:

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of two systems of piano and guitar accompaniment. The first system (measures 5-7) shows the piano part with a medium attack and the guitar part. The second system (measures 8-9) continues the piano and guitar accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Saw".

— you pass-in' by and made me want to try da love- ly _____ Stand-

Figure 89: *Bossa Nova style* - (CD 1 - Track 40)

- Medium rock style requiring a harder attack:

How are we_ to_ know_ what_ it's like_ to_ be_ in_ an-oth - er if we can - not_ go_ and find who we_ are_ Liv - in' in - side_ each_ and ev' - ry-one_ there is a dream-er who'll be our_ guide_

Figure 90: *Medium rock style* - (CD 1 - Track 41)

Consonants

Some words beginning with consonants have only one effective form of attack. Words starting with such consonants as *T*, *D*, *B*, and *P* are more difficult to perform with a gentle sloping attack and must be attacked harder. Words starting with consonants such as *W*, *M*, *N*, and *L* may be performed either softly or in a hard, more definite style.

Vowels

Usually, words beginning with a vowel may be attacked anywhere along the continuum. Placement will depend upon the style of the piece, tempo, and the word that is formed. Here are two examples:

Soft Attack



Hard Attack



The image contains two musical examples. The first, titled 'Soft Attack', shows a vocal line in treble clef and piano accompaniment in bass clef. The lyrics are 'An - y - one could tell'. The notes for 'An - y' are slurred together, and the piano accompaniment consists of simple chords. The second, titled 'Hard Attack', also shows a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are 'All I — need — is you'. The notes for 'All I' are slurred together, and the piano accompaniment features more complex rhythmic patterns and chords.

Figure 91: *Soft and hard vowel attacks* - (CD 1 - Track 42)

Lyrics

The meaning of the text is an important element in choral music. If proper pronunciation and enunciation are lacking, much of the emotional effect of a piece of vocal music will be lost. The mood and meaning of the lyric should be considered when choosing the types of attack. It should, of course, be considered in relationship to the emotional quality of the music. If a piece of music is gentle and flowing, a gentle style of attack will be most appropriate. If it is funky or rhythmic, a more defined approach is more suitable for many of the attacks.

This does not mean that all attacks should be the same in a given piece or style; rather, different attacks should be used to bring out the meaning and modify the interpretation of the lyrics. Here are two examples using the same text and music. Note how the mood changes as the attacks change:



Figure 92: *Different attacks on same lyric* - (CD 2 - Track 1)

Precision

Ensemble precision in the execution of attacks can be enhanced through:

- Eye contact
- Clarification of pronunciation at attack points
- Isolation and rehearsal of each problem attack¹¹

Attacks are potentially powerful devices—they can set the tone for a particular musical line. If selected according to a good set of criteria, prepared through adequate breath support and executed properly, attacks can be used to add another level of interest to the music. Everyone in the group should be aware of the various types of attacks possible along the continuum, and they will achieve greater precision and better blend.

Releases

The easiest way to assure accurate cut-offs or space between notes is to utilize the *dash concept*, notate it in the music, and then rehearse, using the *off concept*.

With the *dash concept*, a dash is followed by a number. The dash is a stop

sign, and the number indicates the beat on which to stop. This technique arises from the basic rhythmic understanding that each beat within a measure has its own space in time, measured from the attack of one note to the attack of the next. The following chart illustrates the spaces between beats and shows which beat has ownership of which space:

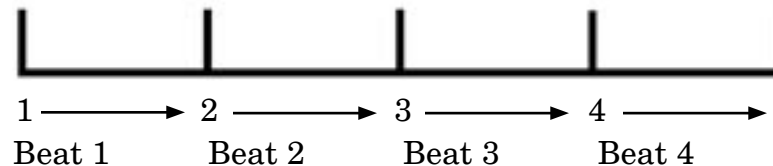


Figure 93: *Spaces between beats*

The *dash concept* indicates the beat on which to stop singing after a particular full-value note has been held. These dashes and numbers should be written in pencil into the music above the cut-off point; the group can then change these notations if it later becomes necessary. The *dash concept* can be utilized on any beat or subdivision of beats. Here are a few examples:



Figure 94: *The dash concept*

It is important to remember that if a note is held all the way to *beat one* of the next bar, *dash one* is written at the *end* of the held note bar, not at the beginning of the new bar. The cut-off at *beat one* of the next bar is often at a system change or page turn in the music. Indicating the *dash one* in the held bar alerts singers to this release; they will not become confused when they jump down to the next system or turn the page, and find a *dash one* at the beginning of the bar.

Figure 95 shows a musical score for piano accompaniment. The top system covers measures 45 to 48. Measure 45 has a vocal line with the lyrics "Doo ba doo doo". Measure 46 has a vocal line with the lyrics "doo". Measure 47 has a vocal line with the lyrics "doo.". Measure 48 has a vocal line with the lyrics "doo.". The bottom system covers measures 49 to 51. Measure 49 has a vocal line with the lyrics "And over, and over and over a - gain, pret- ty ba - by:". Measure 50 has a vocal line with the lyrics "And over, and over, and over a -". Measure 51 has a vocal line with the lyrics "And over, and over, and over a -". The piano accompaniment consists of a treble and bass clef staff with various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamics.

Figure 95: *Using the dash concept*

The *off concept* is a rehearsal technique in which the *dash concept* is used orally. To practice it, have the singer hold notes the required length of time, and say *off* on the appropriate beat indicated by the dash. When the entire group has learned to say or sing *off* together and accurately, the choral director needs to be the only one to actually say it. Once a clean cut-off is achieved, a hand movement is all that is needed to indicate it.

Figure 96 shows a musical score for piano accompaniment. The top system covers measures 32 to 35. Measure 32 has a vocal line with the lyrics "I'll tell you". Measure 33 has a vocal line with the lyrics "Off what a feel-ing". Measure 34 has a vocal line with the lyrics "ov - er me, ". Measure 35 has a vocal line with the lyrics "my heart reel-ing I've". The bottom system covers measures 36 to 39. Measure 36 has a vocal line with the lyrics "got to stop and see". Measure 37 has a vocal line with the lyrics "Off all the good things go-ing to be". Measure 38 has a vocal line with the lyrics "a-when we". Measure 39 has a vocal line with the lyrics "a-when we". The piano accompaniment consists of a treble and bass clef staff with various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamics.

Figure 96: *Using the "off concept" - (CD 2 - Track 2)*

The *dash concept* and *off concept* are important for three reasons:

- In a show choir situation, the choral director will not be in front of the group giving them cut-offs. The group must know how long to hold notes and where to cut them off.
- In conducted situations, especially in rubato music, the group waits through such musical elements as ritards and tempo changes for the particular cut-off beat.
- Rushing becomes less frequent when singers are able to visualize each note as occupying a specific space within the bar—a space that cannot be cheated of its length.

Syncopation

Syncopation may be described as the conflict created between an off-beat accent and the normal-time accent. The steady beat may either be actually heard or just suggested to the imagination.¹² Much of the pop, jazz, and show choir repertoire possesses extensive syncopation. Arrangements in swing, rock, and Latin styles are inherently based on syncopated rhythmic structures. These structures are what make each style unique.

Syncopation is basically either triple vs. duple, or off-beat accents, or combinations of the two. It can be realized through the application of a few simple ideas:

- With a dotted line, indicate the middle of each bar at the difficult places in the music.

The image shows a musical score snippet for a show choir piece. It consists of two staves: a vocal line on top and a piano accompaniment line on the bottom. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor), and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo/mood is marked 'f' (forte) and 'broadly'. The lyrics are: 'Christ - mas time makin' church bells chime... for ev'ry rea-son of our lives... we'. The score shows measures 16, 17, and 18. In measure 17, a dotted vertical line is drawn through the middle of the bar, indicating a syncopated accent on the off-beat. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line.

Figure 97 shows a musical score for two staves (treble and bass clef) covering measures 19 and 20. The lyrics are: "real - ly need _ to feel _ that it's time _ to _ sing _". A vertical dotted line is drawn through the middle of measure 20, indicating the midpoint of the measure.

Figure 97: *Dotted line indicates the middle of the measure*

- Keep time with the foot. Mark the music with up and down arrows indicating the position of the foot for each rhythm. Subdivide the beats in each bar to show 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & etc.
- Rehearse with the singers by having them tap their feet to the beat, counting 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &, and simultaneously clapping the indicated rhythms.
- Sing the rhythms while keeping time with the foot (See *Teaching Rhythm First* - p. 155).

The key to the correct placement of syncopation is space. When performing passages of syncopation, there is a tendency to rush and get ahead of the constant pulse. This problem can be eliminated by placing a window or space before each syncopated note, and by rehearsing in the following manner to gain rhythmic surety and integrity. This example is the original version:

Figure 98 shows a musical score for two staves (treble and bass clef) covering measures 21 through 28. The lyrics are: "sun will op - en - up _ our _ eyes _ and give to us _ the _ rea - son why _ we have to choose from things _ we _ can - not ev - en see _ and if we". The score illustrates syncopation in the melody line, with notes placed on off-beats.

Figure 98: *Syncopation original version*

- Halve all values of the syncopated notes and put in rests.
- Rehearse the rhythms as they are now notated, emphasizing the spaces between the notes.

sun will op - en up our eyes— and give to us the rea -

son why we have to choose from things we can - not

ev - en see— and if we

Figure 99: *Syncopation with halved note values* - (CD 2 - Track 3)

- Now, imagine a long, dotted legato line over the entire section, including the halved notes.

sun will op - en up our eyes— and give to us the rea -

The image displays two systems of musical notation for piano accompaniment. The first system consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with lyrics underneath: "son why we have to choose from things we can - not". A dashed line is drawn above the treble staff, indicating a dotted legato line that spans across the first two measures. The second system also consists of two staves with lyrics: "ev - en see and if we". A dotted line is drawn above the treble staff, indicating a dotted legato line that spans across the first two measures of this system. The piano part features a mix of chords and moving lines, with some notes marked with accents.

Figure 100: *Syncopation with dotted legato line* - (CD 2 - Track 4)

- If application of the above techniques has not cured the tendency to rush, make the note values of the phrases even shorter, and again add the dotted legato line.
- The dotted legato line—even in non-legato sections—has the effect of automatically filling in the correct amount of note value in the spaces between notes, giving the line a smooth, rhythmic feel. This feel is the key to effective syncopation. When the direction of the syncopated line is known, achieving the flow and energy required for proper stylization can be achieved.
- Anticipation is a device often used by composers and arrangers to increase rhythmic momentum and excitement. Important words can be anticipated to bring them out. Anticipated notes must be accented and sung exactly where indicated. There is a tendency to rush toward these pushed notes. If this occurs, put spaces between the notes and rehearse as previously described.

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Anticipation'. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a Soprano (S) and Alto (A) line on top and a Tenor (T) and Bass (B) line on the bottom. The second system has a Soprano (S) line on top and a Tenor (T) and Bass (B) line on the bottom. The lyrics are: 'We need more love in the world we need more love in the world we need the people to see how liv-in' could'. Arrows point to specific notes in the vocal lines, numbered 1 through 7, indicating syncopation. The music is in 4/4 time and features a syncopated bass line.

Figure 101: *Anticipation* - (CD 2 - Track 5)

Syncopation is frequently used in pop, jazz, and show choir music. If approached and interpreted knowledgeably, it can be an extremely effective device for generating excitement and energy.

Miscellaneous Rhythmic Considerations

There are two other areas of rhythmic interpretation that require attention: odd and changing meters, and half- and double-time feel.

Odd meters should not be approached with fear. They are relatively simple and easy to understand and teach if a few concepts are applied. Odd meter is generally understood to be any time signature that does not have one, two, three, four, or six as its top number. Five and seven beats per bar are the most common odd meters in pop, jazz, and show choir music.

Meter is the organization of beats by accent groups. Odd meters are best approached as combinations of accent groups, as, for example, 2 + 3 or 3 + 2 for five beats per bar; or 2 + 2 + 3, 3 + 2 + 2, or 2 + 3 + 2 for seven beats per bar. These accent groups can be found by looking at the formal groupings of the rhythms. Generally, the starting note in each note grouping gets the accent.

When odd meters are used at slow tempos, such as a 5/4 meter, each beat is conducted in a standard pattern for that meter. An example of odd meter at a slow tempo is given below. Note that there is no obvious pulsing on any of the combinations of potential inner-accent groupings. The quarter note is often used at slower tempos, negating the use of groupings. If inner pulsing is required

within a bar, a dotted line should be included within the measure to indicate the grouping pulse. This dotted line may serve for obvious accenting purposes, or to make it easier to know where one is in the music:

The figure shows three staves of musical notation in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are: "Where am I go-ing when will I know How will I see where I need to go want-ing to know how long will it be when will I be there when will I know when I find me_____". The music features changing meters: the first staff starts in 5/4, changes to 3/4, then 5/4, and ends in 3/4; the second staff starts in 3/4, changes to 5/4, then 3/4, and ends in 5/4; the third staff starts in 5/4, changes to 3/4, then 5/4, and ends in 3/4. Vertical dotted lines are placed within the measures to indicate the grouping pulse.

Figure 102: *Changing meter at slow tempo* - (CD 2 - Track 6)

When odd meters appear in faster tempos, only the first note of each of the groupings is conducted (if necessary) as if it were a meter of 1/1. Each accent grouping gets one beat. As the tempo increases, trying to conduct or count the beats within each bar will get confusing and the tempo may start to drag. Odd meter at fast tempo must be felt, not counted. Fast tempo odd or changing meter music is generally more line-oriented than rhythmically pulsed. The melody transcends the potential odd meter pulse, as it flows within, between, and over the changing meter. It is through this feel of the line that most of the problems associated with odd and changing meters are solved. If the group can get past the unnatural feel of odd and changing meter and start focusing on the melodic line, odd and changing meter will not be as daunting as it can seem. The following is an example of changing meter at fast tempo. Note how the simple melodic line rises above the changing rhythmic pulse, adding a contrast:

LATIN $\text{♩} = 176$

The musical score consists of three systems of staves. The first system (measures 1-4) shows a vocal line with lyrics 'Where do we go' and a piano accompaniment. The second system (measures 5-8) continues the vocal line with 'Where do' and 'Oh what a', and the piano accompaniment. The third system (measures 9-11) shows the vocal line with lyrics 'life we lead we rush, and hur-ry a ev'-ry-where we go nev-er slow-in' and the piano accompaniment. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Figure 103: *Changing meter at fast tempo* - (CD 2 - Track 7)

Two other frequently encountered rhythmic problems are those of half- and double-time feel. These opposite concepts operate according to the same principles. A basic rhythmic pulse—the time—is created at the onset of the piece. For example, this time (pulse) may be a quarter note, equaling 120 beats per minute. Half- or double-time feel is exactly that—a non-notated feel. It just gives the impression of a change in tempo.

Half-time feel is the effect that occurs when note values are doubled, creating the illusion that the music has slowed down, although in reality the basic pulse has continued. Often, this effect can be achieved through the rhythm section. In styles in which beats two and four are normally accented, accent beat three of the first and second bars. Here is a repeated drum pattern with the quarter note equaling 120 beats per minute. Note how note values are doubled, while the pulse remains steady:



Figure 104: *Half-time feel*

Double-time feel is a shortening of the note values to give the illusion that the music is going twice as fast. This effect is achieved by accenting the second half of each of the four beats. Note that the following example is exactly the opposite of the previous one, except that the starting tempo is now quarter note equals 60 beats per minute, not 120:



Figure 105: *Double-time feel*

Here is a musical example illustrating changing time feel. Note how the pulse remains constant throughout the piece, even though the feel changes:



4 5 6

du du du du du du du du

du du du du du du du du

7 8 9

du du du du dut du du du du du du

du du dut dut du du dut du du

10 11 12

du dut dut du du du du dut du

du du du du dut dut du dut

13 14 15 16

dut du du du du du du du du du du du

du dut dut du du du du dut dut dut du

17 18 19 20
 dut du du du du du du du du du du du du du du du du
 (sing every time)

21 22 23 24
 du du du du du du du du du du du du du du du du
 Du

25 26 27 all ending- 28 last time only
 du dut du du du du du du du du du du du du du du du
 dut

Figure 106: *Changing feel* - (CD 2 - Track 8)

Neither odd and changing meters nor half- and double-time effects are as difficult as they may at first seem. They are infrequently exploited in pop, jazz, and show choir music, but can be an exciting and rewarding area for exploration. Expand the group's rhythmic horizons.

¹Ehman, W. (1968). *Choral Directing*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 93.

- ²Strommen, C. (1980). *The Contemporary Chorus: a Conductors Guide for the Jazz-Rock Choir*. Sherman Oaks, Calif.: Alfred, 19.
- ³Shaw, R. (1986). Letters to a symphony chorus. *The Choral Journal*, 26(9), 5.
- ⁴Lamb, G. (1974). *Choral Techniques*. Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown., 101.
- ⁵Anderson, D. (1984). *A conversation with Jack Kunz*. Pop, Jazz & Show Choir Magazine, No. 1, 12.
- ⁶Shaw, R. (1986). Letters to a symphony chorus. *The Choral Journal*, 26(9), 5.
- ⁷Lamb, G. (1974). *Choral Techniques*. Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 157.
- ⁸Aitken, G. (1984c). Vocal jazz technique. *Jazz Educators Journal*, 17(1), 23.
- ⁹Arnold, D. (1983) *The New Oxford Companion to Music*. New York: Oxford University, pp. 2-3.
- ¹⁰Aitken, G. (1984b). Rehearsal techniques. *Jazz Educators Journal*, 16(4), 69.
- ¹¹Gordan, L. (1977) *Choral Director's Complete Handbook*. West Nyack, N.Y.: Parker, 191.
- ¹²Blom, E. (1960). *Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Vol. VIII. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Chapter 13

Linear Intensity Through Melodic Interpretation

Stravinsky once said that pitch and interval relationships are the primary dimension. Pitch and interval relationships are the foundation of melody, and melody is one of the major elements of pop, jazz, and show choir music. Pitch and interval relationships should therefore be among the first considerations when approaching the interpretation of a piece of music. Western diatonic music is a melody-dominated musical tradition. One of the most important skills that must be developed in a group is the ability to follow a melodic thought. A melody must be found in every bar, understood by the group, and heard by the audience. To do so requires the understanding of the concept of linear intensity.

To understand linear intensity—knowing where a melody starts, where it peaks, and where it ends—is paramount. By knowing where one is going before starting, intensity and dynamic changes, tone color changes within and between melodic lines, phrasing, and added nuances or ornaments can be rationed and controlled. By utilizing these elements, the level of musical energy and excitement can be heightened.

The following sections deal with musical elements for use in conjunction with linear intensity.

Intensity Changes Within the Melodic Line

One of the simplest and most effective ways to increase interest and excitement is by introducing intensity changes that follow the contour of the melodic line. Dynamics within sections should be governed by the natural rise and fall of the melodic lines.¹ To achieve melodic intensity, sing a little fuller—with more intensity—when the melody goes up; sing a little softer—with less intensity—when the melody goes down. When intensity is varied, the energy needed for either proper support or vocal vibrancy must not be let up. These variations are additions to the basic production techniques already utilized.

Most scores include some form of dynamic guidelines including markings, such as *ff*, *mp*, *pp*, *crescendo*, and *decrescendo*. Indicate relative dynamic contrast.

Decide what *unwritten* dynamic changes are needed to shape the composition and make it communicate effectively to the listener.² One of these *unwritten* changes is when the contour of a melody changes. What is required is not a dynamic change, but an intensity change. Such changes are not written into the music, they are achieved through the understanding that a melodic line must continually change and grow.

The following example shows how intensity changes can be added to a melodic line:

The image displays a musical score for a song titled "Freely". The score is arranged in three systems, each with three staves: a vocal line (top), a piano accompaniment (middle), and a bass line (bottom). The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The score is numbered 6 through 23. The word "Freely" is written above the first staff of the first system. The lyrics are as follows:

1. You wish on a star— of some one you
 2. The dream from the start— must come from your

are heart But it seems so far a - way The dreams that are
 Cause dreams are a part of you And if they're to

true will come in - to view just look and you'll find the way
 be then you hold the key to open and make them come true

The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamics. The piano accompaniment features a prominent melodic line in the right hand, which is the focus of the intensity changes discussed in the text. The bass line provides a steady harmonic foundation. The lyrics are written below the vocal line, with some words like "oooh" and "du du du" indicating vocalizations or specific notes.

Figure 107: *Intensity changes* - (CD 2 - Track 9)

Here are some guidelines for introducing intensity changes along the melodic line:

- Applying the concept of linear intensity, find the beginning and ending points of the melody.
- Find the peak (climax) point of that melodic section.
- Graph its shape on the board.
- Have everyone sing the melodic line. The most basic and vital aspects of the choral art are to be learned from unison singing.³
- Visually and kinesthetically experience the rising and falling melodic line to fully appreciate the value of intensity changes:
 - Rehearse the line using the pitch location technique of raising the hand when the pitch goes higher, and lowering it when the pitch goes lower. Have the entire group do it.
 - Stand in a bent-knee position and move the body higher and lower along with the rise and fall of the melodic line, changing intensity along with the movement. Have the group do this in an exaggerated manner, going from almost a squat to up on the toes. In the following example note the contour of the melodic line. This shape guides the hand and body movements:

The musical score for Figure 108 is presented in two systems. The first system contains measures 9 through 12, and the second system contains measures 13 through 16. Each system features a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a bass line on a bass clef staff. The lyrics are: "Would you like to be the king of happiness and do most anything you want to do?". The melodic line in the vocal part shows a clear contour that rises to a peak in measure 11 and then falls, illustrating the concept of intensity changes discussed in the text.

Figure 108: *Intensity changes from melodic contour* - (CD 2 - Track 10)

These techniques may seem silly, but they are helpful in communicating the idea of vertical change within a horizontal melodic line. Remember, although intensity and dynamic changes often sound identical in performance,

they are achieved through different means. Dynamic contrast is based upon dynamic markings in the music and intensity contrast is achieved through the understanding of melodic lines and the application of the concept of linear intensity.

Tone Color Contrast Within the Melodic Line

Another way to add interest and excitement to a piece is by introducing tone color changes along the melodic line. To achieve this, when the melody goes up, sing a little more brightly, and when it goes down, sing a little less brightly. This technique is similar to that of changing intensity within the melodic line (See *Intensity Changes Within the Melodic Line* - p. 192). Similar rehearsal ideas and exercises should be applied here.

This technique should not be confused with tone color changes pertaining to dissonance, fast tempos, or chord tuning. It relies on a type of contrast similar to the difference between chest and head voice in women, or regular and falsetto voice in men—as the notes get higher, the tone generally gets brighter. When this technique is properly applied, listeners will not be aware of it and will sense that the melody is alive with excitement and energy.

Figure 109 shows a musical score with two systems. The first system contains measures 12, 13, and 14. The lyrics are: "day, sing I know I'm not wrong, the feel-ings get-tin' strong-er the and I'd like to see the la-zy Mis-sis-sip-pi a". The second system contains measures 15, 16, and 17. The lyrics are: "long-er I stay a-way. 2. 'Miss the hur-ry-ing in- to spring...". The score includes a first ending bracket over measures 15-16 and a second ending bracket over measure 17. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

Figure 109: *Tone color changes from melodic contour* - (CD 2 - Track 11)

Here are some guidelines for introducing tone color changes within the melodic line:

- Locate the highest and lowest note of the melody and note the range between them. These two notes mark the extremes of the subtle tone color change.
- Find the starting melodic note and gauge its tone quality against the distance from the highest and lowest notes.
- Most tone color changes can be achieved by using the resonance chamber openings in the frontal facial mask: the higher overtones (harmonics) resonate, giving the illusion of more edge to the tone.

Intensity Changes on Longer-duration Notes

Something must be done to modify any note that has a duration longer than one beat. These notes generally come at the end of phrases or sections, and can include notes with a *fermata*. The same applies to held notes. A note held for several beats (or *fermata*) without change sounds stale and boring.

In the previous sections, techniques for developing excitement, energy, direction, and momentum within a melody have been discussed. Having invested time and energy to achieve these effects, do not slacken when a held note or the last note of a phrase is reached. These are just as important as any other moving note in the line, perhaps more so. Use them to entice the audience to continue listening to the melodic direction the group has started. Changing intensity on longer-duration notes is a simple technique whereby the direction and momentum created within the melodic line is continued.

Here are some guidelines for achieving intensity changes on notes:

- Think of a held note as containing a rising melodic line, gently increasing its intensity and/or tone color within the context of the complete melodic line.
- Conduct on the intensity plane (See *Physical Conducting Technique* - p. 118) by continuing the hand motion outward and upward during the duration of the note. Held notes should be pulled in the same manner as phrases.

- Have singers make hand motions until they conduct and sing the note correctly. Unless they feel the onward and upward motion of the held note, the group will never be able to sing it correctly.
- Do not allow the group to merely hold a long note. It should be sung through, continuing the intensity, momentum, and direction.

The image displays a musical score for a vocal line and piano accompaniment, consisting of four systems of music. The lyrics are: "Oh if we ev-er knew just what our songs could do we would sing them like we real-ly mean, ev-ry-thing in -- side and some-thing more be-tween." The first system (measures 7-10) features a circled 'S' above measure 9, indicating a specific performance instruction. The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support with sustained chords and moving lines.

Figure 110: *Intensity changes on longer duration notes* - (CD 2 - Track 12)

Remember, longer-duration notes within and at the ends of phrases give space to breathe. This space should continue the drive and momentum previously created.

Intensity Changes on Repeated Notes

When a note is repeated in a melodic line, it has a tendency to become monotonous if variation is not introduced. In the “One Note Samba,” for example, most of the main melodic line consists of one repeated note. What makes it interesting is the changing relationship between the potentially boring melody and the changing chord pattern. Most pop, jazz, and show choir literature does not contain such long strings of repeated notes, but it does contain repeated notes. Avoid having the repeated notes destroy the direction and momentum already built into the melodic line.

When repeated notes are sung using the concepts discussed in the previous sections, drive, motion, and direction toward the peak of the phrase are created. If not properly addressed, repeated notes tend to halt the direction and drive.

A repeated note must be altered. The simplest form of alteration is an intensity change. With it, repeated melodic notes can be made more exciting, without necessarily getting louder. The repeated notes within the melody will become as important as the melodic intervals, and will become part of the melody’s energy, direction, and momentum. Listen to the subtle changes in measures 8-9.

The image displays a musical score for a song, likely 'One Note Samba'. It consists of two systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system covers measures 5 through 8. Measures 5, 6, and 7 show a vocal line with a single repeated note (G4) and a piano accompaniment with a steady eighth-note bass line. Measure 8 shows the vocal line moving to a higher note (A4) and the piano accompaniment changing to a more active eighth-note pattern. The second system covers measures 9 through 12. Measures 9 and 10 show the vocal line with a melodic line of eighth notes and the piano accompaniment with a steady eighth-note bass line. Measures 11 and 12 show the vocal line with a melodic line of quarter notes and the piano accompaniment with a steady eighth-note bass line. The lyrics are: 'Saw you pass-in' by and made me want to try da love-ly Stand-'. The word 'Stand-' is at the end of measure 12.

Figure 111: *Intensity changes on repeated notes* - (CD 2 - Track 13)

Remember, melodic repetition can be just as important as the melodic intervals. Don't let the repeated notes become lifeless.

Counter-melodies

When two or more melodic lines are produced at the same time, several factors must be considered:

- Each melodic line must be complete within itself. Each must have its own intensity and continuity.
- There is a hierarchy among multiple melodies. One of the melodic lines will have prominence. Remember, the other lines are counter-melodies, not fugal entrances. The hierarchy of importance can change within fugues. In fugues, and other polyphonic music, greater equality can exist among melodic lines.
- Look for and accentuate the interplay between notes (high vs. low, fast vs. slow, moving vs. held, bright vs. non-bright tone, etc.). Make the interplay as exciting as possible by utilizing the melodic interpretation techniques discussed in previous sections.
- The effect of correctly performed multiple melodic lines may be thought of as analogous to ocean waves. The surface is constantly moving and churning, never at rest. Each melody has its moment to shine, then quickly recedes as another comes forward.

In this example note that one line sustains while the other is moving, allowing for constant motion in the music.

21) Oh help us show the way to peo-ple who are yearn-ing just to
Bah du bah bah bah dah bu du dwee

24) be know-ing deep in-side all we have to say is
Bah bah dah bah vah bah du vah dah Bah bah dah bu du

27) take the time to look and you will see 28) how to be-come one 29) with the one

dwee Bah buh dah buh

Figure 112: *Counter-melody* - (CD 2 - Track 14)

If the group can visualize this constant interplay among melodic lines, they will approach their own melodic lines with the vigor and excitement needed to realize the musical effect.

Inner-moving Notes

Inner-moving, non-counter-melodic parts must be performed with confidence; otherwise they will sound like mistakes. Inner-moving parts, voice-leading connections, and non-harmonic tones can be brought out in the following ways:

Accents

The inner-moving parts are given a breath accent that is in context with the surrounding style of the music. For example, staccato notes in a legato passage would generally not be used. An effective technique is to have the entire group subtly pulse along with the inner-moving accent singers. Even if the pulsed part does not move rhythmically, an added rhythmic alteration is created within the line, giving more confidence to the singers of inner-moving notes.

Dynamics

The inner-moving, non-counter-melodic parts are accentuated by simply singing them louder than the preceding notes and then returning to the original dynamic. Caution: In an inner-moving non-counter-melodic passage, never sing louder than the melody. Sing loudly enough for the audience to sense that the inner-moving part is not a mistake.

Tone color change

Sing more brightly to bring out an inner-moving non-counter-melodic part. With a brighter tone quality, the note or passage can cut its way through an abundance of darker choral tones without appearing louder or accented.

The following example illustrates the three types of inner-moving note alterations:

The musical score consists of four systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The lyrics are: "spir-its by Thine ad-vent here O come dis-purse the gloom-y cloud of Night and death's dark sha-dows put to flight. Re-joice, Re-joice, Em-man-u-el Shall come to Thee O Is-ra-el O".

- System 1 (Measures 29-32):** The vocal line has a rest in measure 29, followed by notes in measures 30, 31, and 32. The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support.
- System 2 (Measures 33-36):** The vocal line continues with notes in measures 33, 34, 35, and 36. The piano accompaniment features a prominent inner-moving line.
- System 3 (Measures 37-40):** The vocal line has a rest in measure 37, followed by notes in measures 38, 39, and 40. Dynamic markings *f* and *mp* are present. The piano accompaniment includes a bright inner-moving line.
- System 4 (Measures 41-44):** The vocal line has a rest in measure 41, followed by notes in measures 42, 43, and 44. Tempo markings *rit.* and *a tempo* are present. The piano accompaniment continues with inner-moving parts.

Figure 113: *Inner-moving parts* - (CD 2 - Track 15)

The previously discussed techniques will only be effective if used in context with the surrounding music style, intensity, dynamic, and tone quality. If the choir is singing loudly, increasing the dynamics of a passage will be less effective than brightening or accenting it. If the choir is singing a very dissonant passage (already requiring a brighter tone quality), singing it even more brightly will be less effective than singing it accented or with greater volume. If the choir is singing a syncopated passage, heavier or shorter accents will be less effective than singing with greater volume or brightness.

To bring out inner-moving non-counter-melodic parts effectively, context and taste must be considered. Remember, these parts need to be brought out, not shoved out.

Polyphony vs. Homophony

There are basically three kinds of music:

- Monophonic: a single melodic line without accompaniment
- Polyphonic: more than one melodic line at the same time
- Homophonic: melodic interest concentrated in one part, with subordinate accompaniment

All three types are represented in pop, jazz, and show choir. At this point, however, we will not be concerned with monophony nor with that aspect of homophony dealing with instrumental support as subordinate accompaniment. Only vocal texture within a homophonic or polyphonic setting will be considered.

When multiple melodic (polyphonic) lines are used, each line must be independent, with its proper place in a hierarchy of melodic importance (See *Counter-melodies* - p. 199).

If a homophonic texture is presented, a number of interpretational aspects must be addressed. There is one melody (usually in the soprano voice part) and multiple supporting harmonic parts. An example of this form is the church hymn which has one melody and several supporting harmony parts. The melody voice part is in charge of intensity and tone color pertaining to the melodic direction, changes, due to longer duration and repeated notes, inflection, pronunciation, phrasing, and style. All other voice parts must support its lead. Once this is understood, singers can analyze their own music, find the melodic lead voice, and listen for direction. The section leaders must understand the importance of

their role and supporting harmonic parts are important as well, but not as style or direction leaders.

In the following example, the melody dictates the interpretational style and direction for the supporting harmony parts in a homophonic setting:

5
You are — the spir-it on my shoul-der — watch-in' ev'-ry move that I make, —

6
7

8
9
10
guide-in' ev'-ry step that I take — as I go on my

11
12
13
14
way, — You are — the friend who's al-ways with me —

Figure 114: *Homophony* - (CD 2 - Track 16)

On rare occasions, a primary melody will have a supporting, harmonized counter-melody. Each melody is then in charge of its own harmony, as in the following example:

50
2. If we look be-yond — our reach — for the things we real - ly — need —
(on D.S.) 3. If we look in-side — our-selves — and — see from where — we — came —

51
52
We need more — love — we need more — love —

53 54 55

in the world

bear-ing in mind stand-ing in line

that our vi-sion will be is our bro-ther who may

2. We need more love 'cause we're

3. We need more love 'cause we

Figure 115: *Melody with harmonized counter-melody* - (CD 2 - Track 17)

Lyrics

Lyrics are one of the most important aspects of choral music where the text becomes a primary and integrating factor. Lyrics, are, in fact, the basis for the existence of the work and play a fundamental role in determining the type of composition, rhythm, melody, and structure of a given composition.⁴ In addition, because the lyrics carry the story of the music, if they cannot be understood, there is no point in singing them.⁵

Lyrics should be interpreted so that they contribute to the expression of the piece. To accomplish this, approach the lyrics as an independent piece of poetry. Read and study the text to understand its ideas and imagery. Have the group read the poem aloud as a preparation for musical interpretation. Singers should try to absorb the words into their own experiences. Make every effort to connect the singer's experience with the words they are singing. It is not enough merely to understand the words; when passions and emotions are unleashed, there is identification and, consequently, communication.⁶

Three classes of words are used in texts:

Key words

These are action words, meaningful words; for example, who-is-doing-what-to-whom words.

Connector words

These words connect the key words and are needed for them to make sense.

Filler words

These words could be left out without sacrificing meaning, but are grammatically necessary and help the connector words.

If the text is first approached as a piece of poetry, the phrasing, inflection, dynamics, and intensity of the song will be better interpreted. When text is first read without the music, it must be inflected and voiced for maximum emotional effect. Here are some guidelines for better textual interpretation:

- Underline the key words and aim for them when interpreting the music. The phrasing will change as connector words are used as tension-producing elements culminating in a release on a key word. Often, key words are used at strong melodic and rhythmic points in the music.
- Conceptualize connector words as repeated melody notes. Change intensity as the repetitions continue.
- Pronounce key words especially clearly.
- Connector words are also important, and require attention.
- Filler words require less attention. Most of these words are there for grammatical purposes, not for emotional meaning.
- Tape the rehearsals to test the intelligibility of the lyrics.
- Be aware of textual punctuation and make use of the emotions of the text to decide upon levels of intensity and dynamics.

The following lyric is edited to show the three levels of words:

K: key words

C: connector words

F: filler words

The image shows a musical score for a jazz piece. The title is "JAZZ" with a tempo marking of ♩ = 184. The score is divided into four measures, numbered 1) through 4). The lyrics "I got this" are written below the notes in the fourth measure. Above the notes in the fourth measure, the letters "K C F" are placed, corresponding to the classification of the words: "I" is a key word (K), "got" is a connector word (C), and "this" is a filler word (F). The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 4/4 time signature.

Figure 116 shows two musical staves illustrating lyric types. The first staff features the lyrics "great feel - - in' a com-in' a-round fill-in' up in--side me." with chord symbols C, K, F K, F, C, K F, and K above the notes. The second staff features the lyrics "great feel - - in' a show-er-in' down from a-bove" with chord symbols C, K, F K, C, K, and K above the notes. Both staves show a vocal line with notes and a piano accompaniment line with chords.

Figure 116: *Lyric types*

Remember, vocal music is unique in that its emotional content is supported by a text. Use the text as a guide to interpretation. Understanding of the three classes of words will better prepare the group for the challenge.

Phrasing

Phrasing is perhaps the most misused word in the choral vocabulary. Most singers think of phrasing in terms of where they breathe, but this is only part of the story. Real phrasing is the shaping of the music *between* breaths.⁷ When phrasing is considered, always ask whether the musical line makes sense in conjunction with the textual line. Rehearsal time is too often spent working only toward melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic ends, without regard for the text. The text must be addressed for proper interpretation of the music. Speaking a phrase in a song is an excellent way to arrive at both correct phrasing in singing and true word meaning.⁸

The melodic line usually contains phrases consisting of antecedents (question) and consequents (answer). The phrases of the text will generally follow a similar pattern. In properly written vocal music, the most important words

and parts of words will be on the tonic or agogic accents, making the bar line unnecessary.⁹ These phrases often have similar rhythms and complementary pitch contours or tonal implications. A rising contour in the first phrase and a falling contour in the second, or a conclusion on the dominant in the first phrase and a conclusion on the tonic in the second, are examples of related phrases. The singer is safe in using the phrase design of the text of a well-written piece as a guide in determining the musical design.¹⁰ Every musician should be reminded periodically of what Rousseau said in his 1774 *Dictionnaire de Musique*:

A singer who feels his phrases and their accent is a man of good taste. But one who renders only notes, keys, scales, and intervals, without comprehending the meaning of the phrases, even if he be precise otherwise, is nothing but a note gobbler.¹¹

The following are some guidelines for better phrasing:

- Look for thought groupings in the text.
- Read the text as poetry and find words which communicate action and feeling, and have natural text accents, climaxes, and denouements which are all part of expressive phrasing.¹²
- Indicate the key words.
- Follow the punctuation markings of the text.
- Consider the series of miniature phrases, each characterized and defined by factors of relative intensification and relaxation, within the long musical sentence.¹³
- Breathe only at designated places.
- Know where the phrase is going before beginning so that the required amount of air can be inhaled.
- Do not break the phrase line, leaving the meaning of the text incomplete and musically unintelligible. The most common fault is breathing after a long note.¹⁴
- A musical phrase is rarely static. It is almost always moving toward or away from some point of stress.¹⁵
- Know the locations of the musical cadence points.
- Aim for the melodic peaks.
- To make a phrase musically expressive, individual notes within the phrase must be inflected.¹⁶
- Strive for contrast within and between phrases.

The following is an example of phrasing interpretation:

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). It consists of four systems of music, each with a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on a bass clef staff. The lyrics are: "Good-bye is such a lone-ly word in the night. We'll end it now, be-fore the ear-ly dawn turns to light. — Once we had our dream, — it seemed so real. We've put a-side — the way we".

Performance markings include *pp* (pianissimo) at the beginning of the first system, *gliss.* (glissando) in both staves of the first system, *p* (piano) at the start of the second system, *f* (forte) at the start of the third system, and *ten.* (tenuto) markings above the vocal line in the fourth system. The piano accompaniment features various chords, including a (b) chord in the first system, and uses slurs and ties to connect notes across measures.

Figure 117: *Phrasing interpretation* - (CD 2 - Track 18)

Jazz Nuances, Inflections, and Ornaments

Jazz inflections include the gamut of individual phrasing or idiosyncrasies developed by jazz artists.¹⁷ These nuances, inflections, or ornaments can be used to add interest to an already well-rehearsed piece. Properly placed and executed inflections can add rhythmic and melodic contrast and intensity to even the simplest arrangements. Ornamentation is a venerable tradition. The most important similarity between Baroque and contemporary popular music practice is the emphasis on language. Ornaments such as the trill, the appoggiatura, the portamento, the slur, and glide are all devices used by the early composers of opera to emphasize the meaning and the music of words.¹⁸

To be most effective, nuances should be approached as unique events. Use of the same ornament in two similar spots in an arrangement will produce a redundant effect. This is not to say that, for example, several fall-offs or ascending smears within the same piece of music cannot be used. Inflections are most effective when a few are appropriately placed. Here are some examples of nuances, inflections, and ornaments, with guidelines for their use:

Fall-off

A descending slide, usually accomplished by letting the pitch fall on a vowel after having established its quality. As this is done, decrease the dynamics until the sound of the vowel disappears. Remember, no matter how short the note of the fall-off, a tonal center must be established by sitting on the note for a time.¹⁹ When rehearsing this ornament try using the syllable *dow*. This will allow for experimentation of different lengths of the following variables:

- How long is the starting note held?
- How far is the fall?
- How quick is the fall?



Figure 118: *Fall-off illustration*

Experiment with these variables each time a fall-off is attempted. Try three lengths of fall-off—short, medium, long—when an indicated or appropriate place

for one is found. Have the singers vote on which they prefer. They usually choose the most appropriate one.

Ascending smear

A rapid ascending slide, starting before and below the note. This might be considered a supported scoop. Consider these variables each time an ascending smear is used:

- From which interval below the given note does the ascending smear start?
- How soon before the given note does the ascending smear begin?
- How quick is the slide into the note?



Figure 119: *Ascending smear illustration*

Each time an ascending smear is used, try different combinations of the three variables. Once the group becomes aware of what effect is desired, they always select the appropriate length, speed, and distance for that one unique in-context event.

Here is a musical example of a fall-off and an ascending smear:

Figure 120: *Fall-off and ascending smear* - (CD 2 - Track 19)

Ascending glissando

An upward glide between two pitches, with a larger interval than in the ascending smear. These variables must be considered:

- How long is the first pitch held?
- How quick is the slide to the next pitch?
- How long is the new note held before pronouncing the new lyric?



Figure 121: *Ascending glissando illustration*

The new note must have validity before the new lyric is pronounced. Try different combinations each time one is used.

Plop

A rapid descending slide, starting before and above the given note. Each of the two notes is accented. When learning this ornament, start with the syllables *bee oo* and consider these variables:

- How far before the given note is the starting point?
- How wide is the interval above the given note?
- How fast is the slide?

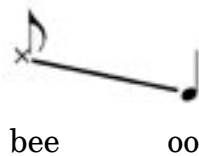


Figure 122: *Plop illustration*

Here is a musical example of an ascending glissando and a plop:

The image shows three staves of musical notation. The first staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a 4/4 time signature. It contains a vocal line with lyrics: "du du dut dut dut du du du ___ dut du du du dut du ___ Be". The second staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. It contains a vocal line with lyrics: "___ u du dut dut dut du du du ___ dut du du du dut du ___" and a "SLIDE" annotation above the final note. The third staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. It contains a vocal line with lyrics: "___ ut du du du dut du ___ du du ___ du du ___ du ___ du ___ du ___ Be".

Figure 123: *Ascending glissando and plop* - (CD 2 - Track 20)

Doit (pronounced “doyt”)

A rapid ascending smear after the note is sounded. These variables must be considered:

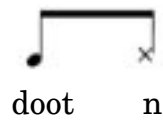
- How long is the original note held before sliding upward?
- How fast is the upward slide?
- How high is the slide?



Figure 124: *Doit illustration*

Ghost note

An indefinite pitch, more a rhythmic pulse than a note. Its effect is as if a note is being swallowed that is still being articulated as it goes down the throat. Think of it as being accented from the throat as it is swallowed. When learning this ornament start with the syllables *doot n*.

Figure 125: *Ghost note illustration*

Here is a musical example of a doit and a ghost note:

Figure 126: *Doit and ghost note - (CD 2 - Track 21)*

Shake

A variation of the tone upward, much like an exaggerated trill. The shake is not a wide vibrato, nor is it produced by shaking the head up and down. It is produced by the alteration of two pitches varying in interval from a second to a fourth. The beginning of the note on which a shake is indicated must be sung as a straight tone first in order to establish the tonality of the pitch. Shakes are not executed together in terms of metric measurement. Every person in the choir has his or her own approximate speed, which gives the shake its uniqueness.²⁰

These variables must be considered:

- How long is the first pitch held before beginning the shake?
- What is the distance of the interval between pitches?
- What is the speed of the alteration between pitches?

During slower tunes, the interval may be wider and the speed slower. In faster tunes, it may be narrower and faster. A shake can start slow and increase in speed as a building device during the execution of the ornament. When using a shake on longer-held notes, an intensity change can be an effective addition. Another technique involves having just the sopranos or tenors shake.

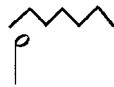


Figure 127: *Shake illustration*

Flip

Sing the note, raise the pitch, and drop into the following note. When learning this ornament start with the syllables *du le ut* and consider these variables:

- How long is the given note held?
- How high is the raised pitch?

This nuance is performed aggressively with accents on the raised pitch and the following note. The scat lyric will assist in correcting the performance of this ornament.

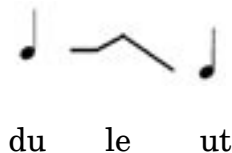


Figure 128: *Flip illustration*

Here is a musical example of a shake and a flip:

The image shows three staves of musical notation in 4/4 time, illustrating the concepts of 'shake' and 'flip'. The first staff is in G major (one sharp) and features a melodic line with a 'shake' (trill) on the final note of the first phrase. The second staff is in B-flat major (two flats) and features a 'flip' (chromatic alteration) on the final note of the first phrase. The third staff is in B-flat major and shows a continuation of the melodic line. Below each staff are vocal syllables: 'Du du du du e a du du du du du du du du du du' for the first staff, 'Du du du du e a du du du du du du du du du du' for the second staff, and 'du du du du du du du du du du du du du du du du' for the third staff. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and ornaments like trills and mordents.

Figure 129: *Shake and flip* - (CD 2 - Track 22)

Remember, nuances, inflections, and ornaments should be approached in context, as unique events. Each effect must be experimented with and adjusted for each occurrence. Use of only one type or combination will make the music predictable, boring, and not much fun to sing. And most of all, encourage the group to participate in the decisions regarding dynamics and style, options, and effects.²¹ They will begin to feel the importance of these musical elements and start to buy in to the creative and artistic aspects of music.

¹Decker, H., Herford, J. (1973). *Choral Conducting: A Symposium*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, pp. 119-120.

²cited in Web, G. (1993). *Up Front: Becoming the Complete Choral Conductor*. Boston: ECS Publishing, p. 43.

³Ehmann, W. (1968). *Choral Directing*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 152.

⁴Decker, H., Herford, J. (1973). *Choral Conducting: A Symposium*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 143.

⁵Green, E. (1969) *The Modern Conductor*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 179.

⁶Dickson, J. (1993). Musical pride and textual prejudice: the expressivity of language in choral music. *Choral Journal*, 34(2), 11.

⁷cited in Web, G. (1993). *Up Front: Becoming the Complete Choral Conductor*. Boston: ECS Publishing, p. 42.

- ⁸Roe, P. (1970). *Choral Music Education*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 261.
- ⁹Ibid. p., 270.
- ¹⁰Howerton, G. (1957). *Technique and Style in Choral Singing*. New York: Carl Fischer, 65.
- ¹¹Schwartz, D. (1979b). Standardization of vocal jazz articulation and inflections. *The Choral Journal*, 20(4), 24.
- ¹²Wurgler, P. (1994). Rehearsal breaks - an adjudicators lists ten common vocal sins. *Choral Journal*, 34(10), 33.
- ¹³Shaw, R. (1986). Letters to a symphony chorus. *The Choral Journal*, 26(9), 7.
- ¹⁴Cappadonia, A. (1971). The jazz choir. *Jazz Educators Journal*, 4(1), 19.
- ¹⁵Moe, D. (1972). *Basic Choral Concepts*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 6.
- ¹⁶Ibid.
- ¹⁷Schuller, G. (1968). *Early Jazz*. New York: Oxford University Press, 379.
- ¹⁸Pleasants, H. (1973). Bel Canto in jazz and pop singing. *Music Educators Journal*, 59(9), 54.
- ¹⁹Aitken, G. (1984b). Rehearsal techniques. *Jazz Educators Journal*, 16(4), 68.
- ²⁰Aitken, G. (1984c). Vocal jazz technique. *Jazz Educators Journal*, 17(1), 22.
- ²¹Corbin, L. (1995). Building a positive choral attitude. *Music Educators Journal*, 81(4), 26.

Chapter 14

Chordal Intensity Through Harmonic Considerations

Chordal intensity is the exact opposite of melodic intensity. Melodic intensity is concerned with linear drive, energy, and polyphonic motion. Chordal intensity is concerned with vertical musical structures. Chordal intensity is attained through the use of multiple, simultaneous melodic lines giving the illusion of vertical structure. (Homophonic music can be analyzed as made up of independent melodic lines, although technically there is only one melody supported by harmony.) Within this vertical structure, blend, balance, degrees of dissonance, voicing, range, tessitura, chord function, and individual diatonic or chromatic note function must be considered.

Chordal intensity and harmonic complexity contribute to the uniqueness of pop, jazz, and show choir music. Control of these elements can be learned. The term harmonic complexity causes some choral directors unnecessary concern. When placed in perspective and within the broad spectrum of choral literature, the difficulties, imagined or real, associated with *jazz* harmonies become far less imposing and more realistic in terms of performance.¹

Chordal intensity and harmonic complexity contribute to the uniqueness of pop, jazz, and show choir music.

A higher amount of dissonant chords is characteristic of vocal jazz literature. Attention must be paid to making these chords speak with energy and drive. Various means for increasing chordal intensity are discussed in the following sections.

Vertical Chord Structure vs. Horizontal Line

During the early Middle Ages, before the theoretical development of chords, composers were only concerned with melodic lines. By producing their simple melodies in stone cathedrals, they may have found that the natural reverberations in these halls allowed for the simultaneous sounding of several melodic lines, although only one was actually being performed. They eventually

began writing compositions utilizing this effect, thus bringing music into a new era of chord usage, color, and function. The way was now open for composers of later periods to make extensive use of chord structure, rather than just melody, as the basis of music.

In true polyphony, there is a drive for independence among and between melodic lines, the resulting harmony, produced by the simultaneous sounding of two or more melodic lines, is a secondary effect. In homophony, on the other hand, only one melodic line is prominent. It is harmonized vertically by means of supporting chords. Individual part lines are a secondary effect. Homophony does have individual lines within its vertical chordal structures, but these are of much less importance.

Most of the published pop, jazz, and show choir literature consists of single-melody tunes arranged homophonically. If multiple melodies are present, they are usually not of equal value, but function in a melody vs. counter-melody hierarchy. Interpretation is essentially a question of harmonically supporting a single melody. Much of the special stylistic quality of pop, jazz, and show music is due to reliance on chord color, in conjunction with dissonance. Vertical musical

Most of the published pop, jazz, and show choir literature consists of single-melody tunes arranged homophonically.

structures (chords) are used to enhance and support single melodic lines. The melody must be prominent at all times. Moreover, the vertical chord structures must speak with validity and energy. They must be a unique event in time, yet function with other chords to drive the underlying harmony to its conclusion. This implies, of course, that the expressive function of some chords may require a greater emphasis upon the vertical dimension. While the primary concern as choral directors will be the flow of the musical line, certain harmonic events may become important enough to justify a momentary preoccupation with the underlying chord itself.² Remember, pop, jazz, and show choir music is primarily homophonic. Each supporting chord must be blended and balanced to just the right degree so that it is made to speak.

Levels of Dissonance vs. Consonance

Consonance and dissonance are the very foundation of harmonic music. Consonance represents normalcy and repose while dissonance represents irregularity and disturbance.³ Levels of dissonance may be illustrated on a continuum. This continuum is a convenient device for comparing differences

between chords or intervals. A chord or interval with a higher number is to be understood as more dissonant than one with a lower number:

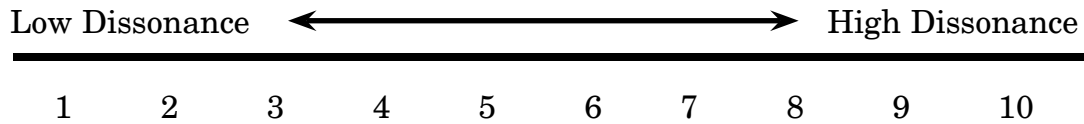


Figure 130: *Dissonance continuum*

Pop, jazz, and show choir music belongs to the Western diatonic tradition. All Western diatonic music is based on the seven-note, major-minor tonal system, with all notes in one key. Intervals are combinations of two notes chosen from the diatonic scale and sounded simultaneously. Certain intervals are naturally more dissonant because of their relationship to the tonic key area. Dissonance results when instability is created by playing two notes together in a tonal center. The instability sometimes created by an interval may need resolution to satisfy the *even-tempered-tuned Western diatonic* ear. The following is a dissonance continuum for intervals, showing degrees of instability above a given tonic:

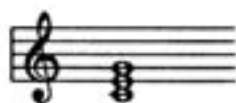


Figure 131: *Dissonance continuum with intervals* - (CD 2 - Track 23)

Note that the perfect octave, fourth, and fifth are relatively stable intervals. The major third, major sixth, major second, and major seventh gradually become less stable, with the leading tone (major seventh) of the key the most unstable. Further instability is caused by altering these intervals a half-step up or down. The following are examples of altered intervals. Note the increased dissonance in some previously stable intervals when they are altered by just one half-step.

Figure 132: *Dissonant intervals* - (CD 2 - Track 24)

Chords are built on two or more intervals from the diatonic scale. For example, the tonic triad in the key of *C* is built from two intervals as follows:

Figure 133: *C major triad*

The tonic is considered to be consonant. Various other triads can be built using only intervals from the diatonic scale. Each of these, however, is a chord of greater or lesser dissonance. The following triads are built from the *C* major scale:

Figure 134. *C major scale triads* - (CD 2 - Track 25)

Note that greater levels of dissonance are encountered the further away from the tonic. Some triads on the continuum are more dissonant than others.

Seventh chords can also be built from the diatonic scale. They are basically the addition of another third, stacked on top of an existing triad. Here are the seventh chords in the tonal center of *C*. Note again that greater instability is found further from the tonic chord, thus creating tension and the need for resolution:

Figure 135: *C major scale seventh chords* - (CD 2 - Track 26)

Further tension can be created through the use of chord extensions. Chord extensions are simply the stacking of more diatonic thirds on top of the basic triad until all the notes from the diatonic scale have been used:

Figure 136: *C major triad with extensions*

Greater dissonance and tension can be created through flattening or sharpening any of these extensions. The following is an example of a complex chord built from a simple interval. Note that each addition creates further tension, instability, and the need for resolution:

Becomes 13th when 7th is added

G (stack) Gaug G7 \flat 13 G7 \sharp 9 \flat 13 G7 \flat 5 \sharp 9 \flat 13

Figure 137: *G major triad with altered extensions* - (CD 2 - Track 27)

Teach the group the continuum for levels of dissonance. It is an extremely helpful device when wishing to make full use of tone color, inner-moving parts, color notes, contrast, tendency tones, dynamics, accents, and vibrato. For example, in rehearsal try saying, “That chord was a number five on the dissonance continuum. Please make it a number seven.” By using the continuum

approach, an abstract concept, such as the level of dissonance, can quickly become concrete.

Dissonance and consonance are what make much music exciting and interesting. Try to realize the widest-possible contrasts. The group will value the time spent perfecting control of these elements. Ways to create and use levels of dissonance are dealt with in the following sections.

Chord Tuning

Chord tuning involves the balancing of volume, pitch placement, tone color, chord span, rhythmic placement, chord alterations, and individual note tendencies. These factors must be brought together in varying degrees and combinations so that each chord is tuned and made to *speak*.

For a chord to *speak*, its individuality and texture must be revealed in a well-balanced and blended fashion. Each chord must have its moment. To achieve this, each note within that chord must contribute its individual ingredient. Give it that moment by teaching the group each chord has an individual identity that must be recognized and expressed no matter where it is in the musical line.

One of the main problems in chord tuning is the reliance on the piano. The modern piano is tuned with even-tempered tuning—each note is equally out of tune with every other note. This is done to facilitate the equality of playing within and between any key on the instrument, and was initially illustrated by Bach in his *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Only a relatively limited amount of tension can be produced on an equal-tempered tuned instrument. Pitches from the piano

One of the main problems in chord tuning is the reliance on the piano. The modern piano is tuned with even-tempered tuning—each note is equally out of tune with every other note.

cannot be played more sharply or flatly, as a piano has only one narrow band of tension or sound. This narrow band of tuning must not limit choral singing. All too often, as a result of a piano-tuning mentality, a choir will be perfectly in tune, but not exciting. It is common to hear choirs that *sing like pianos*. Not only do they hit and fade on notes, emulating the percussive quality of the keyboard instrument, but they fail to hear and sing the purer harmony of the Pythagorean scale (Pythagorean tuning relies on perfectly tuned fifths as its basis). This results in drab, dull tone color and lack of contrast between major and minor.⁴

In choral singing (as in any other variably pitched consort of instruments), individual pitches and forms of tuning can be altered. The following example

illustrates how a form of tuning not based on that of the piano can be effective in helping chords to *speak*. Pythagorean tuning is compared with the equal-tempered tuning of the piano. First, a singer adjusts a perfect-fifth interval above a note given by the piano; all the beats are then removed from the vocal interval and the same interval is played on the piano. Note how flat the piano is in relationship to a true perfect fifth.



Figure 138: *Pythagorean tuning* - (CD 2 - Track 28)

True pure intervals should be the basis for chord tuning. Sung chords will *speak* with greater clarity when allowed to resonate more closely to their natural state of purity, producing greater levels of dissonance and tension to contrast with consonance and release. Zeal for harmonic tendency and purity must be tempered with an awareness of the factors discussed below. Intervallic purity is important, but it must not be the only concern.

Here are some of the factors dealing with chord tuning:

Energy level

This is primarily a question of the overall dynamics of a piece. It should not be confused with the internal element of chord volume. Energy level is an appropriate term to use when discussing the dynamic growth of a piece of music—its gradual building through sections of tension and release, on the way to a climax and eventual resolution. Certain chord types, such as highly dissonant chords, sound better at a higher dynamic level. Others sound better when they are softer. When balancing the internal elements, decide where, in the energy level of the entire piece, certain chord types are to appear. The concept of energy level will become clearer as the internal factors affecting chord tuning are learned.

Tempo

Under most circumstances, the tempo of a piece will allow a valid duration and identity to the chords to be given. Sometimes, however, a fast tempo will not allow for individual chordal identity. This problem is difficult to overcome—the

voices must be extremely accurate at the inception of the pitch because there is no time for adjustment.⁵ Under such circumstances chord tuning control can easily be lost. If this occurs, aim for a well-balanced, harmonic shape to the line.

Texture

This is simply a question of the number of individual voice parts within a chord. It can vary from two parts to over six. Texture is important for building stability within a chord. The more than the number of voice parts available, the stronger will be the foundation and the more interesting the color possibilities. When building chords, analyze their inner intervallic structure. Most complex chords have a root, fifth, third, and various diatonic or chromatic color notes. The basic root, fifth, and third of a chord must be solidly in tune so that the color notes have something to dissonate against. This concept is similar to syncopation—requiring a stable constant beat before adding a syncopated variable against it. With a fuller texture, there is more room for experimentation with different types of chord tuning. This is why two-part music, for example, allows for few choices. In a published piece of music, the particular texture for the selected voicing arrangement is a given. Texture is an external element generally beyond the choral director's control.

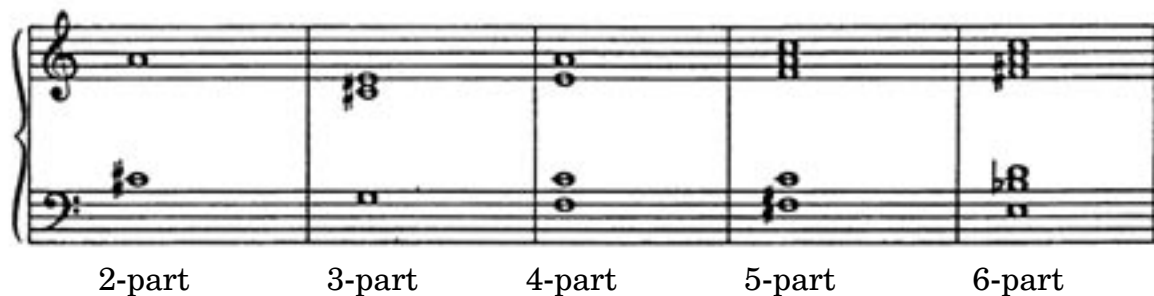


Figure 139: *Texture*

Chord span and voicing

An important aspect of any vocal arrangement is the voicing of the span between notes in the chords:

- **Open voicing:** This type of voicing involves wider intervals and is easier to tune. Individual voice parts can more easily hear which note in the chord is their tuning reference point. Open-voiced chords may, however, present problems in balance, creating disruptions in vowel unity among

the sections when one part is high in their range and another is low.⁶

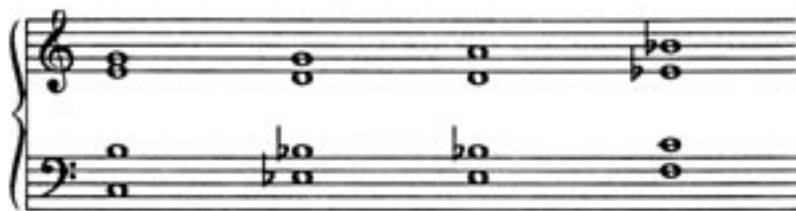


Figure 140: *Open voicing*

- **Closed voicing:** With this type of voicing it is much more difficult to place the pitch properly within the tight structure. There are fewer wide, easily identifiable intervals to tune against. Closed voicing has a different color than other voicings of the same chord symbol and note selection. The following illustration is made up of the same notes as the previous chord example, but the voicing has changed, adding a new color variable:

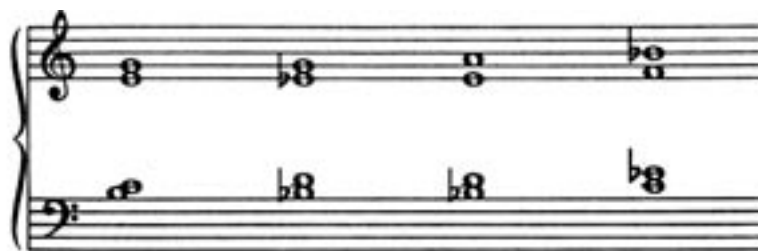


Figure 141: *Closed voicing*

Another problem requiring special treatment is that of a highly dissonant chord in which a composer or arranger has inadvertently assigned a note critical to defining the dissonance to a voice in the weak part of its range.⁷ One solution is to assign voices from other parts to help on that one particular note. For example, if the tenor note is too high, have the altos help; if the bass part is too high, have the tenors help.

Style

The style of a piece of music will often dictate the approach to such elements as amount of dissonance, voicing alterations, and shape of the melodic line. For

example, a slow rock-style ballad might not have the emotional peaks created by areas of high chordal dissonance. A swing-style selection might require greater volume, brightness, or dissonance. A cool Bossa Nova might have a shapeless, repetitive melodic line, yet build through the contrast created by the underlying harmonic structure against the melody. Understanding the characteristics of the various styles within the idiom must be attained before working intelligently with chord tuning.

Volume

It is seldom true that every note within a chord should have the same dynamic weight, or volume. Different chords and voicings constantly demand a changing approach to the inner dynamic weight of chord tones. Even if the identical chord and voicing is found in another piece of music, it may require a different approach because of context. There are no ground rules for this analysis such as *always bring the root, or the fifth, or the accidental*, etc. Applying the same dynamic weight structure to certain chord types will not work. Each chord must be examined separately, within the context of its musical existence, in order to give it individuality and validity.

Here are some examples of chord types, with corresponding dynamic weight graphs. In these examples, volume is the only changing element. The particular vocal weight required to make the chord *speak* applies only to *this* recording. Modifications would be required for stage performance, or for other recording sessions using different equipment:



Figure 142: *Vocal weight*

Pitch placement and tendency

This element is most effective for making a chord *speak*. The abstract concept of the tonal window comes into use here (See *Tonal Window* - p. 54). Chord tones have different natural tendencies, depending upon their relationship to the tonic. Within the diatonic scale, these natural tendencies include, for example, the fifth or seventh scale steps pulling toward the tonic for resolution, and the fourth

step wanting to go to three. These tendencies are often accentuated by chromatic alterations—a raised four, for example, tends toward five; a flatted seven, toward six.

Any special #, *b*, or natural sign in a song calls for even more treatment than the same signs in the key signature would. Such signs, called accidentals, throw the song temporarily out of the key and into a new key. This calls for more change of pitch than the sharps and flats represented in the key signature, so the voice must sing higher for a # sign, and lower for a *b* sign than would seem natural for the original key.⁸ Each of these tendencies should be stressed within a chord. The increased tension created by the dissonance can help to increase the harmonic motion.

Chord tones have different natural tendencies, depending upon their relationship to the tonic.

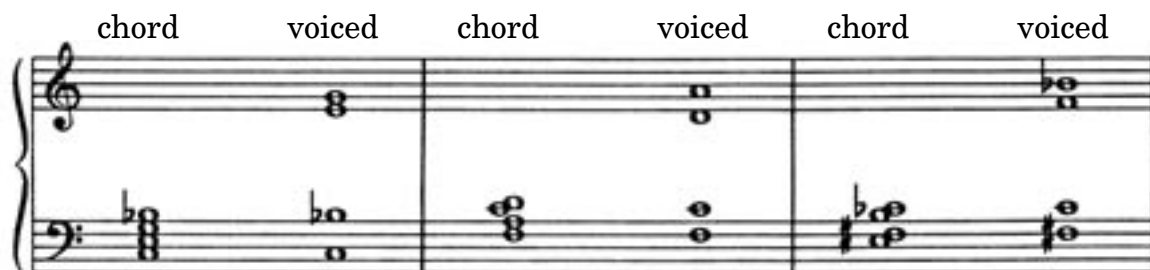
The trombone and violin are variable-pitch instruments convenient for demonstrating the concept of tonal tendency. For example, on these two instruments (depending on the key of the music), A^b and G^\sharp are not in the same position. A^b could be the minor seventh in the key of B^b or the major seventh in the key of A . These so-called enharmonic equivalents are not really equivalent.

The more complex pitches within chords often require more attention than the simple diatonic ones. These complex pitches can make a chord *hot*. They are the altered extensions of a basic chord. These extensions are any of the notes built by thirds from the basic triad.



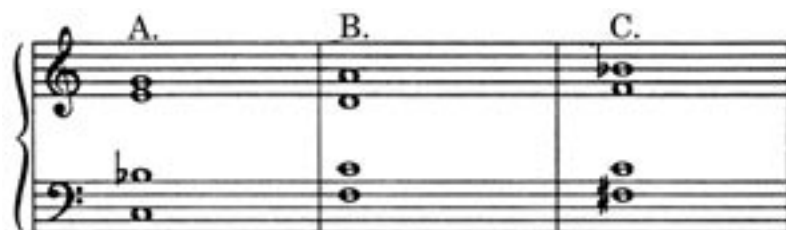
Figure 143: *Chord stack to 13th*

Such extensions are the basis for much of the dissonance in pop, jazz, and show choir music. When properly voiced, they are effective devices for building tension. The following are examples of chord extensions with various voicings. Note how better voicings enhance the flavor of the chord and make it *speak*:

Figure 144: *Chord voicings*

Note that some of the chords are more dissonant than others. This is due to the use of such chromatic extensions as altered ninths, elevenths, and thirteenth.

The next step for understanding pitch placement is to sing the chords, adjusting chord notes until the chords lock in and *speak*. Here are the same chords sung that were previously played on the piano. Listen for the alterations within each part until the chords lock in:

Figure 145: *Piano chords sung* - (CD 2 - Track 29)

Note how much more excitement there is in the vocal versions than in the piano versions. This is because certain chord tones are adjusted and sung sharper or flatter than can be played on the even-tempered, tuned piano.

Chordal brightness is the sought-after effect. Do not allow individual chord note tendencies to go out of tune. Here is an example of a chord being tuned and each chord tone adjusted so that the chord is made to *speak*:

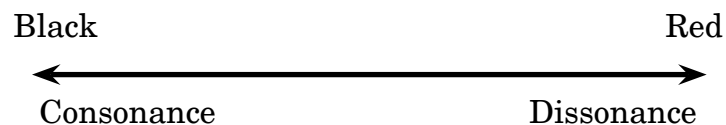
Figure 146: *Chord with tuning indications*

Have singers annotate their individual notes within the chord with a plus or minus sign, so that they will know which note within a chord is to be raised or lowered. This technique will aid them in getting the chord to *speak*.

The voice, being a variably pitched instrument, can glide between notes and bend pitches for stylization, emotion, and harmonic tendency. Wider levels of contrast through the use of greater amounts of tension, dissonance, melodic drive, and harmonic momentum can be attained, when singers understand where a melodic note fits into the harmonic fabric of a piece. This knowledge and skill can only come from studying the recordings of the best vocal groups, then experimenting. Singers will eventually adjust their individual parts without direction, attempting to get the most out of a given chord.

Tone color

This is a simple concept to apply to chord tuning. As the chord gets more dissonant, the tone must become brighter and more focused. If music were printed in colors, a continuum of amounts of dissonance could be devised utilizing a color scheme. Simple tonic triads with no amount of dissonance, for example, would be printed in black and individual hot notes or highly dissonant chords, in various intensities of red:

Figure 147: *Dissonance continuum: black to red*

Such color notation would facilitate the understanding that certain chords require a brighter tone for their dissonant qualities to be appreciated. Here is an example of several dissonant chords, each containing a hot note. Note how much better they sound when the hot altered extensions are accentuated through tone color:

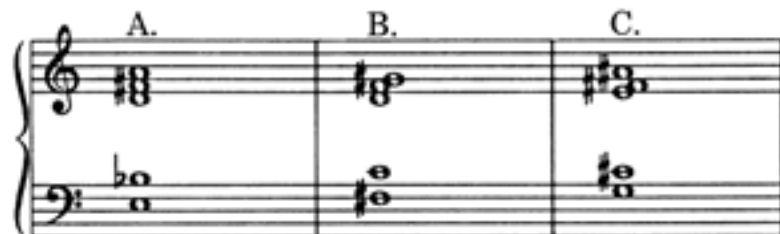
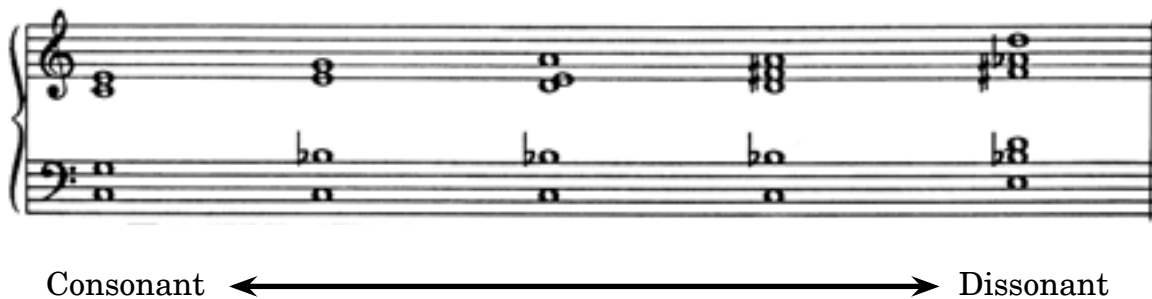


Figure 148: *Singing bright inner notes* - (CD 2 - Track 30)

The following are examples of highly dissonant chords in various places along the tone-color continuum:



Consonant ←————→ Dissonant

Figure 149: *Dissonant chords on continuum*

Rhythmic placement

This concept is simple to understand, but difficult to perform. Even if a chord has proper volume, pitch tendencies, tone color, and stylization, it will not *speak* if all the notes do not come together at the same time. Dissonance occurs when two or more notes are sounded simultaneously. The desired effect of tension will be lost if the rhythmic placement is not accurate.

Chord tuning should be one of the last elements dealt with in rehearsal and performance. It is a very subjective matter, involving listening ability,

experience, and musicianship, but it can be learned through diligent study and experimentation. Chord tuning is not the goal of good choral singing, but an ultimate refinement of the art.

Blend and Balance Through Vocal Color

Blend and balance are fundamental to all choral music. In pop, jazz, and show choir music, the blend and balance achieved through vocal color should not be thought of as static. They are the products of the constant manipulation of such elements as texture, energy level, span of chords, levels of dissonance, text, melodic shape, and tempo. The continuous changes required for blend and balance are difficult for groups to master. They find it much easier to deal with constant elements, such as vocal weight, than with an ever-changing set of variables.

Poor blend and balance may produce either intonation problems or the illusion of faulty intonation. That the lack of balance in a given chord can adversely affect intonation is common knowledge. At times, such imbalance actually produces poor intonation. In other instances lack of balance creates the illusion of being out of tune when, in fact, the notes in the chord are actually correct. Whether the intonation problem in a given chord is illusory or real, the composer's harmonic intent is still being misrepresented.⁹

Poor blend and balance may produce either intonation problems or the illusion of faulty intonation.

In the previous section on chord tuning, the ways in which various musical elements affect individual chords was discussed. For blend and balance through vocal color, such concepts must be applied to the entire piece of music.

To achieve blend and balance, consider the following:

Individual voice-part dynamics

A thorough understanding of chord tuning must be developed in singers. Voice-part units must constantly be aware of alterations to the dynamic weight of their notes so they can be fitted into the chords to make them *speak*. Vocal weight is the most basic consideration when working on blend and balance—a voice section that does not blend into the overall choral fabric is easily heard.

Pronunciation and vowel placement

The general rule for pronunciation in pop, jazz, and show choir is to *sing it like you say it*. If there is a doubt as to proper style, stop and speak the lyrics as

one would in talking to someone. (Be careful of regional pronunciation. It is just as incorrect for pop, jazz, and show choir pronunciation as it is for most other choral music.) For a unified sound to result, consonants and vowels must be formed and

The general rule for pronunciation in pop, jazz, and show choir is to sing it like you say it.

resonated with consistency. Group members must know, for example, if they are to sing an *a*, *ah*, or an *awh*. Each sound will change the color of the word, and a mismatch within a section will weaken the vocal power that can

be achieved through total vowel unification.

In pop, jazz, and show choir, pronunciation is generally very frontal. The lyrics are usually the reason for the music, and the words must be understood at all times. Everyone must pronounce the lyrics identically, and sing them accordingly.

Rhythmic accuracy

No blend can occur unless all the notes of a particular chord arrive at the same rhythmic location at the same time. Blend and balance are functions that are required in both homophonic and polyphonic environments; group precision and accuracy are absolute necessities.

Tone color

This is the most difficult element to utilize in dealing with blend and balance. Tone color is a very subjective matter, and can only be decided upon by the choral director. One mind must direct all alterations for the group. Tone color skill is not often taught at choral music education institutions, but once learned it can lead to superb performances of relatively simple music.

Traditional choirs too often have one fundamental tone, developed over many rehearsals and indiscriminately applied to all styles. The fact that the human voice is the most versatile of musical instruments should be exploited to its fullest potential. A skilled singer has the full range of density from a closed glottis (no air and no sound) to a completely open glottis (all air and no sound) and can vary the ratio of air to sound by adjusting the glottal breathing muscles.¹⁰ This allows the voice to produce and shape unique and beautiful sounds while communicating a text.

Consider the following when working on vocal color:

Levels of dissonance vs. consonance

The degree of contrast between these elements can be increased. As dissonance increases, so does the degree of tonal brightness. Dissonance requires a bright, focused tone for the notes to dissonate against each other. The *rub* created by this dissonance helps to produce a sense of harmonic excitement.

Changing blend

If the blend from within individual sections must change, each section must change as a unit. When individual voice parts (because of chord tuning requirements) must adjust more to accommodate certain dissonant or consonant musical elements, they must move smoothly without drawing attention to themselves. One voice should not be heard above the rest.

Use of vibrato

Vibrato destroys dissonance by varying the pitch and stopping two constant pitches from *rubbing* against each other and creating tension. Also, vibrato adds another layer of harmonics (by the addition of a new set of pitches) that is unwanted at a point of high dissonance. Consonance, on the other hand, often sounds better with a lighter, more breathy tone quality. This type of tone, because of its transparency and soft tonal edges, hides intonation, articulation, vowel placement, and rhythmic problems very well. For this reason many groups use this tone as their fundamental tone.

Approaching dissonant chords

This is a question of smooth transition between areas of consonance and dissonance. In pop, jazz, and show choir music, areas of high dissonance are generally approached through a series of gradually increasing levels of dissonance, as in the following example:

The musical score consists of two staves: a vocal line in treble clef and a piano accompaniment in bass clef. The vocal line begins at measure 29 with the lyrics "Lov-ing you" and continues through measure 31 with "is not as sil-ly as it seems." At measure 32, the vocal line has a long note with the syllable "Ooo" underneath it. The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support, with chords that become increasingly dissonant from measure 29 to 32. Measure 32 features a complex, highly dissonant chord structure. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat).

Rubato solo

33 34 35 36

Lov-ing you _____ is not as sil- ly as it seems. _____

Ooo, Lov- ing you, _____ it seems.

Figure 150: *Approaching dissonant chords - long transition* - (CD 2 - Track 31)

Note how each of the preceding chords contributes to building toward highly dissonant focal points. The blend and balance of the transition area must be a smooth, unified group effect. Although hot notes within the transition chords should be brought out, they must not stick out. Less frequently, dissonance will be a quick effect, giving the sensation of jumping out of an area of consonance. Here is an example of a dissonance with a very short transition.

27 28 29

part of me... and... part of you... part of you.

part of me, you part of you.

Figure 151: *Approaching dissonant chords - short transition* - (CD 2 - Track 32)

This is an abrupt, high-contrast effect. Note that there are different types of tone qualities within the phrase. No individual parts stick out and the unit changes toward the desired goal.

Quartal chords

These are chords built on perfect fourth intervals, rather than on thirds. They have a very different sound and are usually used as tonal ornaments or

as effects. They must be produced with an absolutely straight tone. Quartal harmonies have a natural equality within themselves, with a different blend and balance than other chords. Each note must have an equal dynamic weight. The term *equal* refers to equality within a chord as if it were played on the piano with equal pressure on each key. It does not mean the same number of individual voices. Depending on where the individual voice parts lay, different degrees of energy will be required to make their parts equal with the surrounding voices. Here is an example:

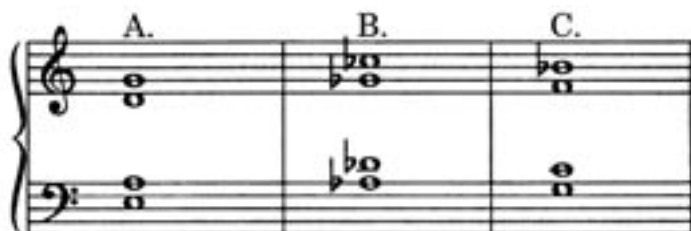


Figure 152: *Quartal chords* - (CD 2 - Track 33)

Because of the equality between intervals, the quartal chord, like the whole-tone scale, lacks harmonic tendency and does not have the drive characteristic of chords. Because of its aural effect of equality and lack of harmonic motion, quartal chords can be written in parallel fashion. If they are, they must be evenly balanced, and may be accentuated by glissandos between parallel areas:

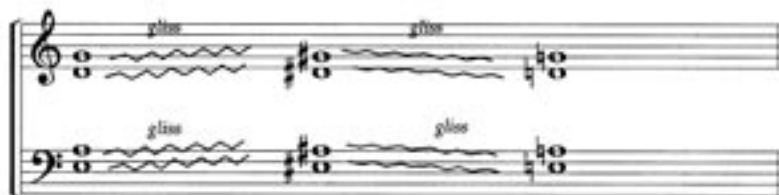


Figure 153: *Quartal chords with glissando* - (CD 2 - Track 34)

Clusters and closed-voiced chords

These chords require a somewhat different approach. There is a level of dissonance in clusters and closed-voiced chords, but generally it is not as great as that which can be generated by more open-voiced chords. The following are

examples of the same chord, first closed-voiced, then open:

A. B. C. D.

Closed Open Closed Open

Figure 154: *Closed vs. open voiced chords* - (CD 2 - Track 35)

Note that the open-voiced versions of the same chord are more dissonant because of the rub of dissonating notes some distance from each other. Closed-voiced chords do not have this distance.

Closer dissonances may require a slightly softer edge to the tone, especially when several notes are very near each other. Each tone should be heard separately, and the entire chord should *speak*. The key to blending and balancing clusters is to have an absolutely straight tone throughout the length of the chord. Any movement within the cluster destroys the effect:

A. B. C.

Figure 155: *Clusters* - (CD 2 - Track 36)

Closed-voiced structures should also have a straight tone at the critical first moments of the chord. They will then be given some identity and be allowed to *speak* before a possible pull or warmth is added:



Figure 156: *Closed-voiced chord with warmth* - (CD 2 - Track 37)

Textual considerations

Just as blend and balance can be affected through the use of changing tone color, the emotional impact and flavor of the text can also have an effect. Think of the text as word painting.

When tone changes are used to affect the mood of a piece of music, blend and balance will automatically change because different individuals and voice parts produce tone colors with varying degrees of volume and projection. To achieve good blend and balance through vocal color, the group must be conditioned to be flexible toward new ideas. By studying, listening, and experimenting, the group will achieve greater musical heights. This is not a quick process, but once these concepts are understood, greater levels of musicianship can be extracted from the simplest repertoire.

¹Strommen, C. (1980). *The Contemporary Chorus: a Conductors Guide for the Jazz-Rock Choir*. Sherman Oaks, Calif.: Alfred, 11.

²Decker, H., Herford, J. (1973). *Choral Conducting: A Symposium*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 162.

³Apel, W. (1958) *Harvard Dictionary of Music*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 180.

⁴Hanley, L. (1951) *Some Factors of Scale Usage and Interval Adjustment Affecting Ensemble Intonation Practices in Music Education*. Boulder, Colo.: University of Colorado, 87.

⁵Beachy, M. (1974b). Aspects of choral sonority: part III. *The Choral Journal*, 14(7), 22.

⁶Moe, D. (1973). *Problems in Conducting*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 109.

⁷Decker, H., Herford, J. (1973). *Choral Conducting: A Symposium*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 163.

⁸Roe, P. (1970). *Choral Music Education*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 119.

⁹Decker, H., Herford, J. (1973). *Choral Conducting: A Symposium*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 163.

¹⁰Eskelin, G. (1987). *Components of Vocal Blend*. Unpublished manuscript, 29.

Chapter 15

Overall Intensity Through Contrast

Everyone has seen soloists and choirs who, though by every technical standard were perfect, were at the same time cold. They sing with the cleanliness of stainless steel and convey a message just as sterile.¹ All too often, choral music is performed with a flare for the boring; because of laziness, or lack of knowledge, much of the music sounds the same. Groups should not get caught up only in the technical aspects of singing and interpretation, and ignore the emotional energy that makes a performance sparkling, unique, and special.

Composers and arrangers who take their work seriously spend years studying their craft, learning to eliminate the potential for boredom inherent in most musical performances. Through their efforts, at least some of the published pop, jazz, and show choir music is written and arranged in a fashion that gives a group a fighting chance to produce an interesting finished product.

The following is an outline of a successful format common in pop, jazz, and show choir music:

- Introduction (sets mood, tempo, key, style)
- Men sing in unison (verse 1)
- Women sing in unison (verse 1)
- All sing in unison (verse 1)
- Women sing melody, men provide a counter-melody (verse 2)
- Two-part men, two-part women, or mixed (verse 2)
- Multiple-part singing (chorus)
- Multiple-part singing, with counter-melodies (verse 3)
- Repeated multiple-part singing (chorus)
- Modulation into another verse or repeated chorus
- Tag, sometimes similar to introduction, performed with repetitions

In this stereotypical format, the composition or arrangement builds naturally and is often the only building element within the selection to give intensity and emotional content. In addition, four areas of contrast should be applied to the interpretation and performance of any piece: dynamics, tone color, repetition, and structure. Each is covered separately in the following sections. Inclusion of varying amounts of these elements will stimulate the listener and make the

music more fun to sing.

Building Contrast Through Dynamics

Simply stated, building contrast through dynamics means singing with greater volume as the tune progresses. This is a gross simplification, but has some practical merit.

Much of what we experience and do has an exponential curve. Mile runners tend to sprint during the last quarter-lap, Broadway shows often have a big finish with the entire cast on stage, and movies reach high emotional levels towards the end, as the action speeds up. In nature, many smaller, more delicate leaves and brightly colored flowers appear at the top of plants and music often gets faster and louder, with a thicker texture, or more instruments or voices sounding near the end. In music, attempts are made to control and explore the natural upward thrust of events as they follow each other in time.



Figure 157: *Exponential curve*

Intensity in music is created through tension and release, by deciding when the expected is or is not to be given. Dynamics are intensity generators. If variations between loud and soft are applied appropriately, a layer of tension and release is produced.

When working on dynamics, consider the following:

Span

Width of the dynamic level.

Range

Starting and ending points on the dynamic continuum.

In the following example, note how each tune has a unique dynamic span and range along the dynamic continuum. For example, Tune #1 has a very narrow dynamic span: pp - mp. Tune #3 has a wider dynamic span: p - ff.

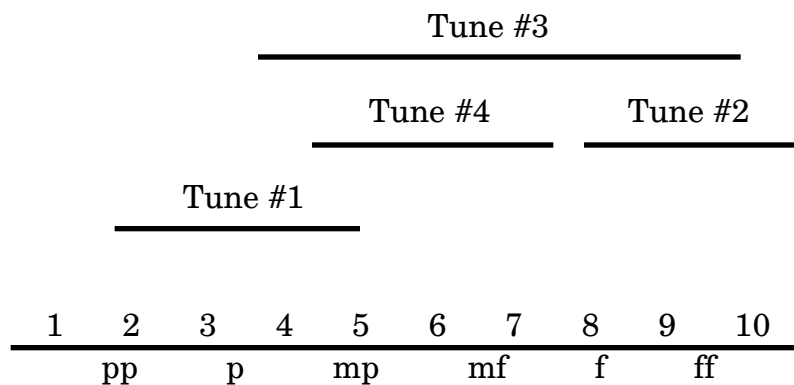


Figure 158: *Dynamic span and range*

Flow

Frequency or smoothness of the span changes. With loudness, the symbols *pp*, *p*, *mp*, *mf*, *f*, and *ff* have not caused singers to leap from one to the other as if they were absolute values. Singers generally flow through musical dynamics with flexibility and sensitivity, using the symbols as approximations and letting the ear indicate the specific loudness needed to maintain artistic uniformity.²

Dynamics are often indicated in published compositions and arrangements. These indications are only general guidelines for the interpretation of loudness flow. To analyze and interpret the overall dynamics of a piece of music correctly, several factors must also be considered:

Group size and experience

The quality and size of the group can affect the degree to which volume can be increased, and what tone quality can be produced and yet still be heard, while singing softly. Immature singers tend to yell on the loud end, and fail to produce tone on the very soft end. Experienced singers have a wider spectrum of contrast from which to choose. It is important to emphasize to the choir that control of dynamic levels profoundly effects choral tone.³

Style

Pieces in different musical styles start at different points on the dynamics scale. Each will have its own span of contrast. The following is a hypothetical dynamic continuum illustrating these differences. Note that there is a level of contrast both within and between each tune:

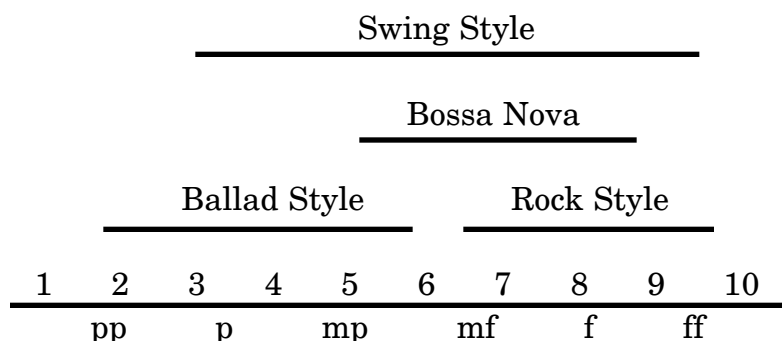


Figure 159: *Dynamics continuum for musical style*

Tempo

Do not confuse tempo with loudness. It is not true that the faster the piece, the louder it is performed. Tempo affects dynamics, but in a very different way—the slower the piece, the harder it is for groups to sing loudly and phrases tend to be held longer, and poor support becomes evident. It is easier to yell a fast, loud tune. When working on tempo in relation to the dynamic choices, always consider the experience and maturity of the singers. Fast and soft may, at times, have a greater emotional impact than slow and soft.

Lyrical content

The emotional message of the lyrics can affect the choice of dynamic span and range. Syllabic text settings are particularly challenging. Early in the learning process, the singers should read the text aloud. The expression and meaning generated from this exercise not only will indicate appropriate breathing places but also will motivate the breath motion and dynamic intensity to shape the phrases.⁴

Melodic content

Consider whether the melody has a broad or narrow span. If the melody hovers around a few notes, dynamics become a more important element than is

indicated in the published arrangement. If it has a wide span, more interest may be generated from the melody itself, rather than from dynamic extremes.

Dissonance vs. consonance

This is one of the least understood aspects of dynamic span and range, but it is simple to learn and use effectively. Consonance is the norm in most music; dissonance is the oddity, the unusual flavor, the culmination of a melodic line, the well-placed tension with appropriate release. Dissonance must be brought out even more through the use of dynamics. Composers and arrangers often overlook areas of dissonance in their basic dynamic indication, only giving the dynamics for building the melodic line. Dissonance is, however, a key element in the interpretation of pop, jazz, and show choir. It must be considered when adding other layers of dynamics.

Experiment with dynamics

One way to bring new life into the dynamic contrast of a piece and to enhance the singers' awareness and concentration is to have them sing dynamics that are exactly the opposite of what is indicated in the score. Obviously, this should not be done for too long, lest a new pattern become established. But, if a little confusion in the rehearsal is not minded, try it once or twice, and then go back to the original dynamic scheme with new awareness and energy.⁵

Dynamic contrast is a basic building device in all music. If music lacks a changing dynamic span and range, it can easily sound monotonous. Keep the above ideas in mind while reading the next sections on contrast.

Building Contrast Through Tone Color

Enhancing tone color can be an effective means for achieving subtle interest when changes in dynamics or tempo would be too extreme or obvious. The key to effective tone color is imagination. Through such techniques as word painting and descriptive imagery, the lyrics can be given added meaning by means of musical inflection. The tone colors that are created must match the intent of the music and be as varied as possible to suit the piece in terms of rhythm, melody, harmony, text, emotion, and energy. Choral tone is very much a question of imagination, and it is unfortunate that many choral groups in the main have worked almost solely in the range of dynamics and pitch and not nearly enough in the range of drama.⁶

Tone color can be made a powerful medium of communication. It does for

song what stress, pause, pitch changes, and accentuation do for speech.⁷ In word painting, modifications of tone color are the essential means by which the word is given heightened expression. Here are two examples:

The image contains two musical excerpts. The first excerpt is labeled 'dark' and shows a vocal line with the lyrics 'We march in - to the dark'. The piano accompaniment consists of simple chords. The second excerpt is labeled 'bright' and shows a vocal line with the lyrics 'Where we find the sun is bright'. The piano accompaniment features more active, flowing lines in both hands.

Figure 160: *Tone color related to lyrics* - (CD 2 - Track 38)

Tonal contrast is an important element in both Romantic and modern music. During the Romantic period, color was cultivated for itself, harmonically, rhythmically, and dynamically.⁸ Modern music may require many different tone qualities. Specific types of tone are often indicated by the composer. Directions such as *sing with a full rich tone*, *sing with a thin, white tone*, or *senza vibrato* are common. They usually occur when the composer wishes to achieve a particular sonority, often prompted by the text.⁹ The choral director who is conversant with the historical development of music understands that interpretive factors shift radically with every period of composition and for every composer and his writing. Ideally speaking, the tone of the chorus also should change with the interpretive ideas if a performance is faithful to the requirements of the music.¹⁰

The use of different shadings and degrees of vibrato are among the most expressive techniques available to the choral director.

Tone-color contrast may also be created by means of vibrato. The use of different shadings and degrees of vibrato are among the most expressive

techniques available to the choral director.¹¹ Vibrato in the pop, jazz, and show choir idiom is an important tone color technique used for building phrases (See *Vibrato Compatibility and Control* - p. 65).

Building contrast through tone color is much like building contrast through dynamics. To understand how to manipulate tone color (See *Overall Intensity Through Contrast* - p. 238) substitute the term *tone color* for *dynamics* in the section on building contrast through dynamics. The same three terms also apply here, with similar definitions:

Span

How far apart on the tone-color continuum the various colors are placed. They can vary from dark to bright, light and airy to brassy, covered to frontal, etc.

Range

Where is the starting point on the tone color continuum.

In the following example note how each tune can have a unique span and range on the tone color continuum depending on which continuum the group is working: dark - bright, light - brassy, or covered - frontal, etc.

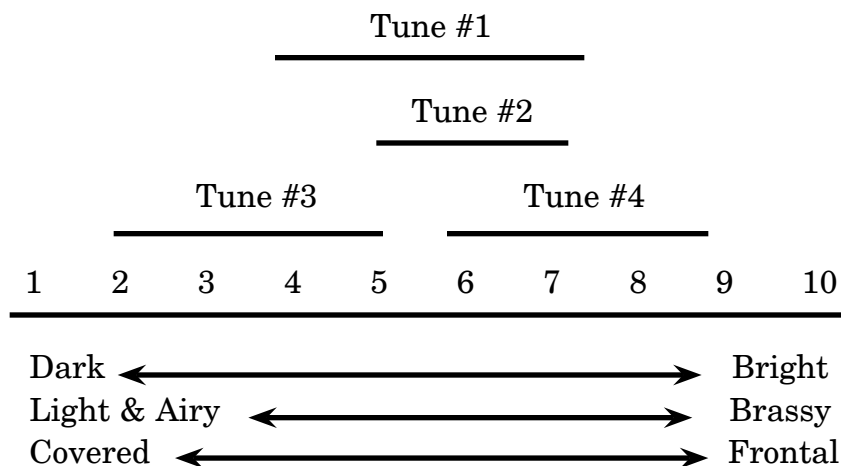


Figure 161: *Tone color span and range*

Flow

Flow is how smoothly a change from one tone color to another is made. Encourage singers to use the complete range of vocal color. They should develop sufficient vocal flexibility to make quick modifications of tonal weight and focus in response to changing musical factors. Many choirs make the mistake of trying to develop a single, fixed color of their own, as a sort of hallmark. It is better to avoid any fixed norm and to try for as great a variety of color as possible.¹²

Building Contrast Within Repetition

Monotony is the major cause of musical boredom. If a group always performs the same type of music, at the same dynamic level, with the same interpretation, and the same tone quality, its performance, needless to say, will be of the kind that only doting parents would sit through. To end monotony, build excitement, and maintain energy, employ contrast.

The easiest way to achieve contrast is by the modification of repetitions. When something repeats, it will sound boring if it is not altered. The simplest way to alter a musical element, without the loss of momentum, is to introduce a change in intensity or dynamics. Each time a musical element repeats, sing it with a little more intensity or more loudly, depending on whether it is within or between melodic phrases. For example, recurring intervals in sequence will tend to go flat through repetitions of those notes. Whenever possible, avoid potential monotony by making dynamic variations to sustain interest and, if necessary, to warn the singers that succeeding pitches must stay exactly in tune.¹³ The following are suggestions for altering phrases:

Dynamic change between phrases

This is accomplished through the use of stair-step dynamics. Each repeated phrase must be made louder to maintain the momentum.

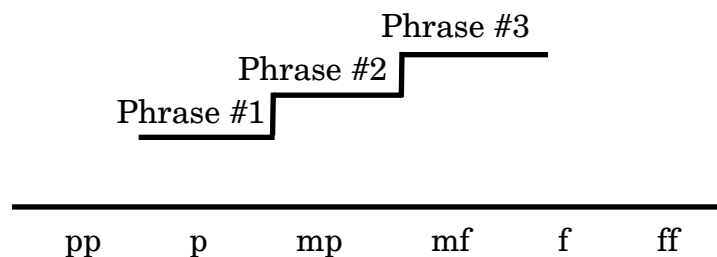


Figure 162: *Stair-stepped dynamics illustration*

Here is an example of a repeated phrase in the chorus of a song. Note how each repetition gets louder:

The musical score consists of three systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The first system (measures 29-32) contains the lyrics: "by bring-in' out_ what's in_ our heart_ so_ ev'-ry-one_ can_ see_". The second system (measures 33-36) contains the lyrics: "this great feel - - in', great feel -". The third system (measures 37-40) contains the lyrics: "- - in' this great feel - - in' in-side of_ me.". The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line. The vocal line shows a clear upward dynamic curve across the repeated phrases, with the second and third phrases being significantly louder than the first.

Figure 163: *Stair-stepped dynamics* - (CD 2 - Track 39)

Intensity change within phrases

Apply smooth intensity changes on repeated notes. It is not appropriate to employ a dynamic change on a short segment of repeated notes; use intensity alterations instead. The following is an example of a set of repeated notes within a phrase. Note that the alteration is so smooth that it is almost subliminal. The corresponding illustration is not stair-stepped, but a smooth line of upward growth.

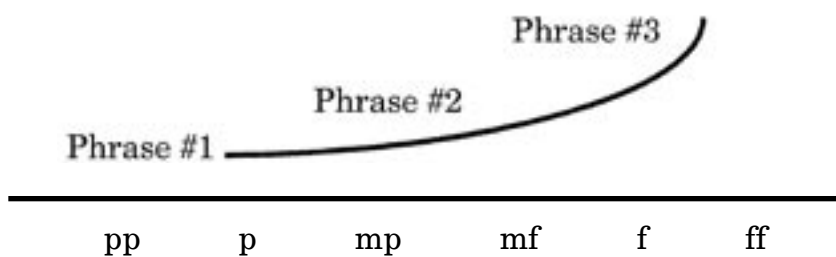


Figure 164: Intensity change illustration

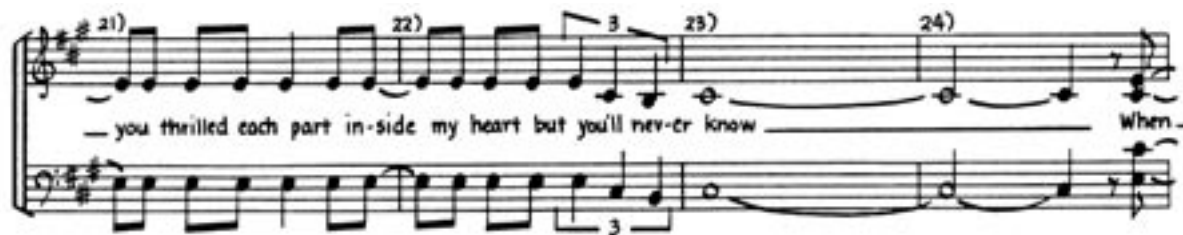
The musical score is in 4/4 time and consists of four systems of music. Each system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The lyrics are as follows:

5) 6) 7) 8) Saw

9) 10) 11) 12) — you pass-in' by and made me want to try da love- ly Stand-

13) 14) 15) 16) — in' there in style you made me look a-while da love- ly When

17) 18) 19) 20) — I saw you there I knew this was-n't fair, there was no way I ev-er could show how—

Figure 165: *Intensity change* - (CD 2 - Track 40)

Remember, each repetition must be altered to avoid boredom.

Building Contrast Within Structure

All pop, jazz, and show choir music has some structural form, such as *AABA*, *ABA*, *ABABCAB*, *AABABCBB*, etc. By applying a few simple concepts, the inherent structure of a piece can be used to build excitement and energy. Building contrast within structure is basically the same as building it within repeated phrases (See *Building Contrast Within Repetition* - p. 245). When something repeats, it will tend to sound boring if it is not altered each time.

An intensity change is the easiest alteration to make within a musical phrase. The easiest alteration to make between musical phrases is a dynamic change. This can be seen in the following graph of the *AABA* form:

Overall Structure



Phrase #1 Phrase #2 Phrase #3 Phrase #4

Figure 166: *Contrast within structure*

Note that each phrase has a clear beginning and builds to a peak. The second *A* section is identical to the first, except that it starts a little higher on the dynamic range. The *B* section is new material, and thus can start lower than the end of the second *A* but it must build quickly to accommodate for the higher starting point of the third *A* section. Note that the overall shape of all four phrases is the standard building shape for melodic lines—it starts at a given point, builds to a peak, and comes to an end.

Remember, the structure of a composition can be used effectively in the building process. In the recording studio, it is a simple matter to turn up the volume of repeated sections during the final mix. It is more difficult, but not impossible, to create this effect in a live performance. Make the music more exciting through constant change. Strive for change within phrases and, most important, between phrases.

¹Burkholder, K. (1985). The facial-expression factor: the internal and external approach. *The Choral Journal*, 25(10), 23.

²Eskelin, G. (1987). *Components of Vocal Blend*. Unpublished manuscript, 11.

³Stanton, R. (1971). *The Dynamic Choral Conductor*. Delaware Water Gap, Pa.: Shawnee, 63.

⁴Wurgler, P. (1994). Rehearsal breaks - an adjudicators lists ten common vocal sins. *Choral Journal*, 34(10), 33.

⁵Meredith, V. (1995). Reaching new peaks in choral rehearsal. *Music Educators Journal*, 81(6), 22.

⁶Waring, F. (1944). Radio: a teacher of music. *Music Educators Journal*, 30(6), 23..

⁷Decker, H., Herford, J. (1973). *Choral Conducting: A Symposium*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 51.

⁸Swan, H. (1987). *Conscience of a Profession: Howard Swan Choral Director and Teacher*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: Hinshaw, 90.

⁹Lamb, G. (1974). *Choral Techniques*. Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 189.

¹⁰Decker, H., Herford, J. (1973). *Choral Conducting: A Symposium*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 6.

¹¹Skinner, H. (1967). Words and music: part II. *The Choral Journal*, 8(1), 15.

¹²Shaw, R. (1945, October). Choral Art for America. *Etude*, 564-566.

¹³Roe, P. (1970). *Choral Music Education*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 120.

Chapter 16

Repertoire Selection

When selecting repertoire and deciding upon programming, the goal should be to achieve the maximum musical interest, excitement, emotion, pleasure, and intensity that the group is capable of creating. Although some choral directors still emphasize only one or two types of music exclusively, there is a growing tendency to present a broader range of musical styles to singers so that their musical experience may be as diverse as possible.¹ Diverse programming not only affects the group's musical growth, it will also train the audience to accept and enjoy new styles of music.

The goal as a choral director is to explore our musical heritage with respect to pop, jazz, and show choir music in order to provide an entertaining and educational experience for the audience. Here are two views of the limitation of many school programs:

- The first picture is a small-town gymnasium crowded with parents and townspeople. Members of the audience beam appreciatively as nearly every student in the high school dances and sings unison and two-part arrangements of current Top 40 hits. Year after year, the same simple arrangements are cheered by the same audience.
- The second picture is a city high school in which a chamber choir of 12 to 15 singers polishes a limited repertoire to perfection. They perform twice a year to a nearly empty auditorium. They are the only singers in a school of 1,200 to 1,500 students.

These are two familiar situations. On one hand, there is entertainment without art; on the other, art without entertainment. Both situations have mistaken the concept of contemporary choral music education. Choral directors have a responsibility to guide young singers to a balance of musicianship and showmanship.³

It takes extra effort to provide a sufficiently varied selection of the literature, and to present it in an appropriate, artistic, entertaining, educational fashion. But, in the long run, both the group and its audience will appreciate the efforts to broaden their musical horizons.

The Art of Repertoire Selection

A choral director's musicianship is reflected in his or her choice of repertoire and selection of repertoire is one of the most demanding tasks.⁴ There are many types and styles of pop, jazz, and show choir music appropriate to the performance level and musical tastes of the group. Do not be limited by one's background. Avoid being like the show choir director who appeared in Broadway shows in college and thinks that this is all that show choir is about. There is much more to pop, jazz, and show choir music than just Broadway, Top 40, or swing-style arrangements. Groups should be exposed to a diversity of styles. Selecting repertoire is to challenge one's self and the group and expose the audience to a wide range of musical styles, types, moods, and colors.

A good concert will be made up of pieces from many genres and it can include such areas as rock, Bossa Nova, swing, Latin, ballad, reggae, popular standards of the 1930s and 1940s, funk, Broadway, Gospel, speech-chorus, two-beat, country-western, contemporary Christian, folk, ethnic, country-swing, avant-garde, nostalgia, rock ballad, Top 40, classical, madrigal, featured solo with choir accompaniment, carols, novelty, or works from the standard periods in music history.

A choral director's musicianship is reflected in his or her choice of repertoire.

The art of repertoire selection lies in not accepting the status quo, and not always doing what has been performed before. By choosing with discrimination, a group's awareness of musical styles can be expanded. Unfortunately, most choral directors avoid exploring areas in which they have no training. But a confident musician will venture out and try new areas. Take a chance with the group and try something new. The group will probably help with a new style because they are often better acquainted with the latest trends in popular music. Trust them, and make the repertoire fresh and exciting.

Ask the following questions when selecting new music:

- Is the text good verse, age-appropriate, and thoughtful?
- Is the music crafted in a way that enhances the natural flow and inflection of the words?
- Are the singers' parts vocally conceived?
- Is the music well-crafted?
- Is the music appropriately challenging?⁵
- Does the music fit the limitations, needs, and interests of the group?

- Is it appealing?
- Can the accompanist play it?
- Will the group want to perform the piece?
- Can the choral director teach and interpret the music accurately?
- Is the piece useful for developing technical or vocal skills?
- Is the music artistically inspired?
- Is the piece suitable for the community?
- Is the text meaningful?
- Are the individual voices arranged in a sufficiently interesting manner?
- Does the piece contain large intervals, or intervals such as augmented fourths, which may be a problem for my group?
- Is the range and tessitura of individual parts appropriate?
- Will the rhythm patterns pose too great a problem?

Number of Voice Parts, Range, and Tessitura

The number of voice parts that should be used in the group will depend upon the number of its members and their degree of musical experience. If sufficient numbers of experienced singers are in the group, make use of more individual voice parts. The greater the number of individual voice parts, the more musical interest, content, and challenge the composition or arrangement is likely to have.

Range and tessitura are of great significance when considering repertoire selection. Most of the pop, jazz, and show choir music published today is written within the following vocal ranges:

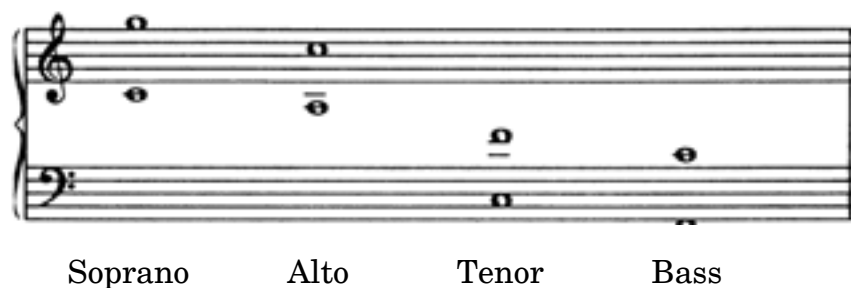


Figure 167: *Vocal ranges*

These ranges are well within the average for vocal groups throughout the country. Sopranos can sing higher than a *G*, and other voice parts can also sing out of these ranges, but these vocal qualities are not used in pop, jazz, and show choir. The voice part ranges for this kind of music automatically fit the limitations of most groups. When a piece fits closely within these limits, the overall sound of the choir is considerably better than when this is not the case.⁶

When selecting repertoire, be aware of the problem of tessitura for the individual voice parts. Top 40 tunes are often written for specific artists who may have a wide range or wish to display their vocal gymnastic abilities. When these tunes are arranged for a vocal group, good arranging concepts and tessitura constraints are often ignored. Sopranos and altos may end up singing too low, and tenors too high, for a long period of time. Moreover, the song is often in the wrong key for the group and may keep one or more parts singing around a break in their voices.⁷ This kind of vocal abuse can easily be avoided by not buying that piece of music. Select music in the idiom that will allow the teaching and maintenance of healthy choral singing techniques and habits advocated for other choral styles. Do not sacrifice good singing for the popularity of a hit tune.

Select music in the idiom that will allow the teaching and maintenance of healthy choral singing techniques and habits advocated for other choral styles.

Be sure the group has the experience required for the number of individual parts that they are required to sing. All too often, groups sing *SATB* music when they should be singing *SAB*. Do not sabotage the group's optimum performance because of the thought that *SAB* music is second-rate. A curious and damaging prejudice exists against singing in anything less than four parts, but if the chorus is deficient in one area, music in more modest groupings is often the best solution.⁸

Provide the group with literature with which they can succeed quickly, otherwise they will never attain the confidence and skill needed to graduate to more complex and challenging works. Provide the group with music that will not abuse their voices, and will not require them to sing beyond healthy ranges and tessitura for extended periods of time. Every group has its own idiosyncrasies and qualities of individual voice parts. Do not force any unique group of singers into the lowest common denominator of the published literature. If necessary, commission compositions or arrangements specifically tailored to their abilities and tastes. Doing this is the most effective solution to the group's problems.

Do not buy music based on its cover. Because it might be labeled vocal jazz doesn't make it vocal jazz, nor does it make the group a vocal jazz group by performing this piece of music.

Pop, jazz, and show choir music is a constantly changing art form. Provide the group with literature of the highest quality available. The vocal health of the group, as well as their musical education, is the responsibility of the choral director. Attention to voicing, range, and tessitura constraints is important for the achievement of these goals.

Degree of Difficulty

The degree of difficulty of the music chosen for the group does not just reflect their ability. It is also a matter of musicianship, familiarity with various styles, ability to motivate, attitude toward risk-taking, personal taste, and conducting experience. Decide the level at which the group will perform. Think of this decision as a self-fulfilling prophecy. The group will aspire to the level of expectation, and no higher. Motivate them to attain greater musical heights, stretching them beyond their own conception of their capabilities.

Only choral directors know their group's starting capabilities and limitations, but even they do not really know how far the group can develop. Young singers throughout the country have the same basic abilities, no matter where they live. The choral director is the variable. The selection of music with respect to degree of difficulty is the first affirmation of confidence in the singers. Many previously average groups have risen to the occasion when exposed to energetic direction. Note how often a group quickly improves after a clinician at a festival has worked with them. Note the quality of all-district or all-state groups.

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quickly improves after a clinician at a festival has worked with them. Note the quality of all-district or all-state groups.

Degree of musical difficulty must be decided in relationship to motivation and confidence. This is not to say there is no place for a simple, easy arrangement, but a steady diet bolsters the criticism that pop, jazz, and show choir music is inferior and aesthetically weak. Quality is too often equated with difficulty, yet there are many examples of excellent choral writing that can be rated as easy or medium-easy.⁹ Increase the singers' level of musicianship and challenge them to reach new musical heights and the choral director will be rewarded.

Quality and Musical Taste

Quality literature can be defined as music which is written with both the capacity and the intent to be timeless. This type of literature is written to serve a purpose beyond consumption and entertainment.¹⁰ Because of these types of statements, musical quality is a very subjective matter. The most serious demand is for choral directors whose knowledge and experience of music is wide enough to guarantee sound musical taste.¹¹

Pop, jazz, and show choir is a contemporary art form in the process of change. All of us are involved in the culling process to which all living forms of artistic expression are subject. Contribute to this process by deciding which works are to be the representative standards for each style in the repertoire.

In an effort to keep up with the times, many choral directors are filling concert programs with either poorly arranged pop music or more acceptable arrangements which, nevertheless, all seem to sound alike.¹² Unless the choral director writes, arranges, or commissions works, they are at the mercy of the publishing companies for the quality of repertoire that is available. Many musical decisions are not being made by musicians but by businesspeople. The search for good pop/rock materials is even more time-consuming because some publishers believe that they must quickly publish *hit* songs in order to be financially successful. A few publishers are even candid enough to admit that they will continue to publish choral arrangements of poor quality for as long as the market remains lucrative.¹³

Young singers throughout the country have the same basic abilities, no matter where they live.

Spend the time to learn the new styles, then select more challenging, higher quality literature for the group. Doing so will give the historical and stylistic perspective necessary for the cultivation of taste. Quality and taste are subjective, but they are influenced by experience and musicianship. For the choral director, taste means the ability to differentiate between inferior works, fads, and music of true value.¹⁴

¹Garretson, R. (1981). *Form and Performance*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 216.

²Brunner, D. (1994). Choral program design - structure and symmetry. *Music Educators Journal*, 80(6), 46-49.

³Spradling, D. (1983). The art of entertainment. *The Choral Journal*, 24(4), 8.

⁴Lamb, G. (1974). *Choral Techniques*. Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 93.

- ⁵Brunner, D. (1995). Choral music that matters: a composer's perspective. *Choral Journal*, 35(3), 29-31.
- ⁶Lamb, G. (1974). *Choral Techniques*. Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 99.
- ⁷Darrow, G. (1975). *Four Decades of Choral Training*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 83.
- ⁸Davison, A. (1959). *Choral conducting*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 27.
- ⁹Lamb, G. (1974). *Choral Techniques*. Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 94.
- ¹⁰Mattson, P. (1997). *Vocal Jazz: the Art and the Technique*. Creston, Iowa: Southwestern Community College, time 3:11.
- ¹¹Apel, W. (1958) *Harvard Dictionary of Music*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 472.
- ¹²Spradling, D. (1982). The swing choir: Issues with an answer. *The Choral Journal*, 22(5), 33.
- ¹³Schwartz, D. (1976). Some considerations in selecting repertoire for a beginning vocal jazz ensemble. *The Choral Journal*, 17(4), 29.
- ¹⁴Gordan, L. (1977). *Choral Director's Complete Handbook*. West Nyack, N.Y.: Parker, 95.

Chapter 17

Programming Decisions

Good programming is a learned skill. Programming is an art as challenging and satisfying as shaping a motet so that each line and page is balanced in its most perfect expression, or as planning a series of rehearsals so that the choir peaks at the time of performance, not before, not after.¹

At times, many have experienced pleasure from concerts in which neither the music nor the performance were of the highest caliber. The enjoyment, despite these shortcomings, was probably due to the skill with which the program was arranged.

When working on programming, ask the following questions:

- Does the opening selection get the audience's attention, set the mood, and create a level of expectation for the rest of the show?
- Does the last selection cap the performance and leave the audience fulfilled, yet wanting more?
- Is the concert too long?
- Are there too many pieces in the same key?
- Are there too many pieces in the same tempo?
- Do all the pieces express a similar mood?
- Is the accompaniment similar in most pieces?
- Is all the tessitura in the singers' high ranges?

To achieve quality programming, offer the audience a varied package of musical materials. Diversity is the ultimate goal in programming by aiming at the widest possible variety of styles, both of repertoire and manner of performance. Program for the broadest range of audience tastes and varied tone qualities to match the requirements of successive styles. Diversity is consciously used as a means of stimulating and holding interest by trading on the excitement of the *new and different*.²

An easy way to organize for the programming decisions is to fill out a 3 X 5 card with information on each selection, as in the following example:

Great Feelin'	by Scott Fredrickson
<i>Publisher:</i> Scott Music Publications	
<i>Voicing:</i> SATB	
<i>Length:</i> 3:25	<i>Style:</i> Swing
<i>Starting Key:</i> F	<i>Tempo:</i> 120
<i>Ending Key:</i> F	<i>Opener:</i> Yes
<i>Tessitura:</i> Medium	<i>Closer:</i> No
<i>Solos:</i> 2 Scat Solos	<i>Filler:</i> No
<i>Choreographed:</i> Yes	
<i>Accompaniment:</i> Rhythm Section	
<i>Date Last Performed:</i> _____	

Figure 168: 3 X 5 programming criteria card

Spread out the cards and, through trial and error, organize them in the best possible order to maximize the combination selected. Using this selection process allows the opportunity to vary the interrelated elements discussed in the following sections.

Types of Organization

Two different types of program organization can be used to achieve a unified concert structure. These two approaches can help build a program that is closely knit, has symmetry and purposeful design, and succeeds in moving the audience in some way.³

Chronological

Pieces are arranged historically from the earliest to the most recent. This might be done to show how one song form has its roots in one or many other forms.

Here is an example:

- Spiritual
- Blues
- 1890s songs
- Roaring '20s songs
- 1930s - '40s songs
- Early rock n roll
- 1960s -'70s music
- Current trends

Thematic

Pieces are arranged around a certain theme or for a specific season, purpose, or occasion. Here are several examples:

- Spring
- Christmas
- Patriotic music
- 1950s rock 'n' roll
- Music of World War II

Pacing

When music selections are poorly ordered, the listener is faced with a program that tends to dull the senses and causes the mind to wander off to more stimulating thoughts.⁴ To achieve good programming, make a conscious effort to build tension and release through the order in which the music is presented. Each piece possesses qualities which can be exploited to create greater or lesser tension during the concert. Consider the following qualities when choosing a piece and deciding on its placement in the program:

- Tempo: slow or fast
- Style: ballad, swing, Latin, rock, etc
- Accompaniment: *a cappella*, piano, rhythm section
- Number of singers: solo or group
- Text mood: sad, happy, uplifting, etc
- Movement: amount of choreography, if any
- Tonal center: lower or higher than previous tune

Note that in some of the above categories there is a progression from simple to complex. The greater the complexity, the greater the tension. By becoming aware of why one tune is more exciting than another, and what causes various degrees of tension between tunes, the optimum order of pieces for the performance can be decided.

The basic principle of pacing is to space out the performance of similar tunes throughout the show so that there is a rise and fall in levels of excitement. For example, if all the up-tempo, uplifting selections are performed at the beginning of the show, the audience will become bored toward its conclusion.

Building to a Climax

Every show, like every melody, contains a high point—the climax. Construct the programming as if it were a melodic line. To be effective, it must get the attention, take control, journey somewhere to an emotionally (climax), and return to the starting point.

Note that the graph starts low, builds quickly, comes back down, gradually builds to a climax, then quickly tapers off. This is the general configuration for most television, Las Vegas, and theme park variety shows. It is simple, but it works. By taking control of the audience from the beginning, their emotions can be manipulated by gradual increases in excitement, energy, intensity, tension, and volume.



Figure 169: *Building to a climax*

A commonly used recording studio mixing technique is to increase the overall volume of the entire recording very gradually. This subliminal increase in dynamics stimulates a subconscious emotional response of increased excitement. This same effect can be achieved in programming by gradually increasing the level of energy, excitement, and intensity as the climax of the show is reached.

Opener, Closer, Peak, and Filler Tunes

If a few simple steps are followed, programming can become a process of elimination of less-suitable selections at the initial planning stages. Here are some guidelines:

Select the closer tune first

The closer should be the best and strongest tune. It creates the final impression of the group and the one the audience will most remember. The most important feature of the closing number must be familiarity, whether a favorite patriotic or inspirational song or a short reprise of the opener or other memorable number from the show.⁵

Use the closer to accomplish the following:

- Complete the frame of the concert.
- Return control to the audience.
- Show appreciation for the audience's attention and applause.
- Prepare the audience for tremendous applause.
- Leave the audience wanting more.

Select the opening tune second

This should be the second-strongest tune. The concert should begin with something *up*, and it should be good. First impressions are lasting impressions, and the audience wants to be glad that it has come.⁶

Use the opener to accomplish the following:

- Get the audience's attention.
- Set the mood, style, and tone of the concert.
- Get control of the audience, making them listen.

Select the peak (climax) tune

Choose material that has lots of color and flash. Remember, this is not the strongest or second-strongest tune.

Choose works to bracket the intermission

These should have impact, but not be stronger than the opener or closer.

Fill in the gaps with filler tunes, solos, and small group numbers

Although filler tunes are of secondary status, do not underestimate their importance. They lay the foundation, set the direction, and contribute to the momentum needed for the peak and closer to be effective. The filler tunes are the grout between the tiles and are necessary for unifying the overall concept.

Variety

There is nothing more boring than a pop, jazz, or show choir concert in which all the music is in the same style. *Everything in moderation* is especially true in programming and variety is of paramount importance.

According to marketing experts, every product must, in some way, be different from the rest of its kind so that it will stand out and catch the attention of the customer. The same concept is applied to show programming, with a twist. If all the products (tunes) are the same, the audience will be unable to pick a favorite (make a purchase); of even greater significance is the fact that they were not offered the possibility to make a subjective choice, lessening the chance of creating the emotionally charged environment desired by the performance.

One method for creating tension is to subject the listeners to the unfamiliar, then quickly present them with something familiar.

One method for creating tension is to subject the listeners to the unfamiliar, then quickly present them with something familiar. Tension and release creates the desired emotional environment. Audiences consist of diverse elements, and one can never know who is familiar with what. A variety of styles, tempos, group sizes, accompaniments, and dynamics is therefore desirable for reaching a wide range of people.

Use the following checklist when considering the question of variety:

- Style: Rock, swing, Latin, ballad, funk, Renaissance, Romantic, Classical, Baroque, country, etc.
- Group size: Large or small groups, trios, duets, solos
- Accompaniment: *A cappella*, rhythm section, piano only
- Tempo: Fast, medium, slow
- Dynamics: Loud, medium, soft
- Movement: None, a little, a lot
- Mood: Sad, happy

- Type: Sacred or secular
- Length: Long works or short
- Theme: Idea-based (such as songs of the West, sailing songs, songs about the weather, occasion-based songs, repertoire-based, such as particular composers, commissions, guest artists)

Remember, variety is the spice of life so add some spice to the programming to make it come alive.

Tonal Centers and Key Areas

To insure more sales, many pop choral arrangements are published in keys containing less than four flats or sharps. When using such material, be aware of a potential hazard—an entire concert could be performed in just one or two keys, and a repetition of tonal centers and key areas will be just as boring as many tunes in the same style or tempo.

The use of key areas as a building device is apparent in arrangements incorporating modulations. These modulations almost invariably go up to a higher key. There is a basic perception that higher is better. Arrangers and composers usually start their pieces low, slow, and soft, and build to high, fast, and loud. Key area is yet another type of contrast.

The manipulation of key areas and tonal centers can be an effective technique for subliminally stimulating the audience. It is standard practice for *Beautiful Music* radio programming and *Muzak*-type background music formats, to broadcast specially arranged instrumental and vocal pieces for this purpose. Decisions regarding style, instrumentation, tempo, and key area for placement within a set during a particular time period are based on research. During the late afternoon and the period after work, stations play musical sets that are upbeat, gradually increasing the tempo, and gradually get higher in tonal center and key area. The effects are carefully planned to subliminally stimulate the listener.

The manipulation of key areas and tonal centers can be an effective technique for subliminally stimulating the audience.

Do not worry about using tonal centers and key areas to help build direction, momentum, and excitement. Just be sure to avoid repetitive key areas, because they are dull. When planning a show, write out the starting key, modulations, and ending key for each tune. Avoid using the same key for the end of one tune and the start of the next.

Understanding that tonal centers and key areas effect the overall subconscious is a relatively new concept. Learn as much as possible.

Solos and Small Groups

Solos and small groups may be used in several ways:

- As transitions between sections, styles, or moods
- As ties between filler tunes
- To allow time for costume, set, or lighting changes
- To display individual talent
- As a reward for work well done

When incorporating solos and small groups into a show, make sure that the first four listed functions are used as the rationale. The solo or small group number must meet all the criteria for a regular group number, including style, tempo, accompaniment, text quality, key area, and amount of movement.

Remember, solos and small group numbers are very powerful transitions between large group selections. They can either continue the direction, momentum, and energy already generated, or stop the show dead in its tracks.

Transitions Between Tunes

Transitions between tunes are an important feature in any well-planned program. A variety of transitions are found in the best television musical variety shows, Las Vegas style shows, and other such professional presentations.

Transitions are primarily used for four reasons:

To continue direction and momentum from tune to tune

Each of the programming decisions has been made using various criteria for style, tempo, group size, etc. Properly selected, these criteria are helpful in building direction, momentum, and energy. These qualities come into being because of the correct ordering of the material. Transitions can fill the gaps between tunes so that the energy level does not fall. They can also be an excellent device for preparing the audience for the next new key. Most transitions are *play-offs*, or *chasers*, from the previous tune. Many old vaudeville performers

used these at the end of their act—they would run off the stage to an up-tempo instrumental version of their last number. Similarly, at the Grammy Awards television special, each winner leaves the stage to an instrumental rendition of the winning song.

Consider the following when planning transitions:

- If the show has a theme song, have the pianist improvise a short chorus of this number in easy ballad style.
- If there is no theme song, use the melody of the tune just performed, in the same way as above.
- Treat these transitions as if they were elevator music, making sure attention is not drawn to the pianist. These transitions are of the same type used to tie songs together, or change styles in extended medleys.

To facilitate a change of mood or style

Different tunes or piano-playing styles can be used to let the audience know when something new is coming up.

To allow time for costume or scenery changes

The time needed for these changes can bring a show to a grinding halt. Using a musical interlude helps to draw attention away from staging activities and toward what is coming up next.

To introduce the next act

One effective form of transition is the use of an announcer. With a few well-spoken words, the announcer can easily change the mood, style, and direction of an entire show. Announcing is a critical job; therefore entrust it to only the best people.

Remember, transitions are very effective when employed properly. Use them to continue the momentum, direction, and energy that the group has worked so hard to create.

Timing and Sustaining Momentum

A polished comedian can start the audience laughing with one joke, then, before the laughter is finished, begin another. Each successive joke has the effect of being funnier than the previous one, until an audience finds themselves laughing with tears streaming down their faces. In comparison, a novice comedian

may be able to tell isolated funny jokes, but will lack the timing between jokes needed to sustain laughter and gradually build to a hilarious frenzy of tears. In other words, the novice does not know how to *get on a roll*. Sustaining momentum through the use of timing is much like the performance of a polished comedian. It is not a technique that can be learned from reading a book but rather it is a skill that must be learned through experience.

To sharpen awareness, tape and study comedy specials, live musical variety shows, and concerts on cable television. Do not use shows that appear on commercial television. They are taped, edited, and their commercials destroy momentum. Take every opportunity to see favorite performers at their best—making music, being funny, working an audience, sustaining energy, creating momentum, and reaching a peak toward the end of the show. Study the good parts over and over. Performance skills come from years of hard work and trial and error, but a few good ideas may be picked up by just by studying these shows, and taking some notes.

Watch for the following:

- Transitions should be short and smooth.
- Gradually build from tune to tune.
- Timing should be smooth so that there are no dead spots in the show.
- Sustain the energy level within and between tunes.
- Make sure all performers are having fun.
- Invite the audience to have fun with the group.
- Express appreciation for the audience during the show.
- Graciously accept the audience's praise.
- Occasionally throw the audience a curve to keep them interested.

Videotape the next concert and compare it with the videos of favorite performers. Sustaining momentum throughout a show is a skill that can be learned by studying professional entertainers.

Psychology of Performance

Singing entertainers serve as a mirror for their audiences, reflecting both the times in which they are performing and the people who are listening.⁷ Many inexperienced performers do not know how to handle an audience, and are afraid of the very group they are striving to please. Audiences are ordinarily benign at

the start of a concert. They do not, however, expect to be bored, insulted, have their time wasted, or feel unappreciated for coming to see the performance. If so, they may applaud halfheartedly, boo, or even walk out. Do not forget that, despite their potential power, they have a subconscious desire to be controlled and manipulated. They have come expecting to be entertained.

Do not just think in terms of entertaining the audience. Develop a rapport with them, and lead them through an emotional journey that will result in their entertainment and the group's praise. Self-assertion is a major factor in good showmanship, audience control, and rapport. Professional performers do not ask for an audience's attention, they demand it.

Choral directors must view themselves as *producer/director* and the singers as *performers*. Certain terms reinforce this professional partnership. First of all, don't say choir practice, say *rehearsal*. Don't wear outfits, wear *costumes*. Call the performance room a *theater* or *auditorium*, or at least refer to performing *on stage*. Begin to plan and prepare a *production* or *show* unless formality and decorum of a *concert* is what is really inferred.⁸

First of all, don't say choir practice, say rehearsal. Don't wear outfits, wear costumes.

Thinking and acting as professionals is the first step in getting the audience to accept the group as such. The following are some suggestions for dealing with the psychology of performance:

- Demand attention; be forceful and assertive. The audience will respect this.
- Never take a condescending attitude toward any style or piece of music in the show. In doing so, a segment of the audience that appreciates and enjoys this selection might not appreciate the attitude.
- Teach the group to work the audience through eye contact. Have them continuously scan the entire audience to create the illusion that they are making contact with everyone in it. Persons in the audience tend to pick out one or two favorite performers and follow them throughout the show. If these favorites occasionally make eye contact, they love the entire group and the show even more.
- At the end of a number, do not wait for the audience to applaud, but rather give them permission to applaud. Use hand gestures to indicate the piece is concluded. Make these gestures sufficiently definite for the audience to become aware that the piece has ended. Remember, the performers are in control.

- At the conclusion of the show, graciously accept the praise of the audience.

The key to audience manipulation is confidence and assertion. Without these qualities a performance will be weak and boring.

¹Washburn, J. (1984). Programming: getting your concerts into good shape. *The Choral Journal*, 24(6), 7.

²Stanton, R. (1971). *The Dynamic Choral Conductor*. Delaware Water Gap, Pa.: Shawnee, 132.

³Brunner, D. (1994). Choral program design - structure and symmetry. *Music Educators Journal*, 80(6), 46.

⁴Kinney, G. (1978). Concert programming: tips from the broadcast industry. *Music Educators Journal*, 65(4), 46.

⁵Phillips, K. (2004). *Directing the choral music program*. New York: Oxford University Press.

⁶Ibid. p. 5.

⁷Davidson, J. & Casady, C. (1979). *The Singing Entertainer*. Sherman Oaks, Calif.: Alfred, 39.

⁸Spradling, D. (1983). The art of entertainment. *The Choral Journal*. 24(4), 5.

Chapter 18

Altering a Published Piece of Music

Choral music educators justifiably complain of the lack of challenge in most pop, jazz, and show literature. The music publishing industry is profit-driven, and its goal is to sell as many copies of music as possible. The industry must therefore address itself to the lowest common denominator to be found in school music groups. This process often naturally leads to simple, trite, unchallenging, and repetitious arrangements. When the choral group, quite rightly, does not respond positively to such arrangements, it is a choral director's educational and musical responsibility to alter them, making the piece both approachable and challenging.

Music that is too difficult for the singers may also be encountered. Do not attempt to perform it unless the group needs a major challenge. Occasionally, a piece that generally fits the group's ability, but has several difficult sections, phrases, or lines, will be encountered. Even if numerous attempts to perfect these difficult parts prove fruitless, do not discard the piece. Alter the written parts just enough to accommodate the proficiency problems of the group, while maintaining the general integrity of the piece.

More and more copyright law violations, generally for illegal photocopying, are being prosecuted, with heavy fines imposed on directors, schools, and districts.

The following sections deal with altering, enhancing, and simplifying published music. The suggestions offered are by no means exhaustive so use them as a guide when making decisions based on stylistic considerations, musical training and musicianship, and the proficiency level of the group.

Legal Issues

With the advent of the 1976 Copyright Law Revision, enforcement of copyright law has even begun to be discussed in the media. More and more copyright law violations, generally for illegal photocopying, are being prosecuted, with heavy fines imposed on directors, schools, and districts. This situation has created an atmosphere of fear among directors concerning the alteration of published music. On several occasions, I have had the opportunity to talk with

directors who have performed my pieces. They often apologetically tell me that they altered some part of the piece, expecting me to admonish them for their illegal behavior. My response as a writer and publisher is always the same: *You bought it and can do anything you want with it, except make a profit from your minor alterations.*

The fair-use provisions of the copyright law deal primarily with the reproduction of copyrighted materials, and do not specifically mention the alteration of existing materials. Since the enactment of the original 1909 law, the courts have held that certain uses of copyrighted material are *fair*, within reason, and not an infringement or materially damaging to a copyright owner. Four criteria are applied in determining whether the use made of a copyrighted work is a *fair use*:

- The purpose or character of the use, including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes.
- The nature of the copyrighted work.
- The amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole.
- The effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work.

The fair-use doctrine also allows *minimal* taking of copyrighted material for the furtherance of scholarship, research, and the arts. Any *substantial* taking is likely to be looked upon by the court as an infringement.¹ Printed copies which have been purchased may be edited or simplified provided that the fundamental character of the work is not distorted.²

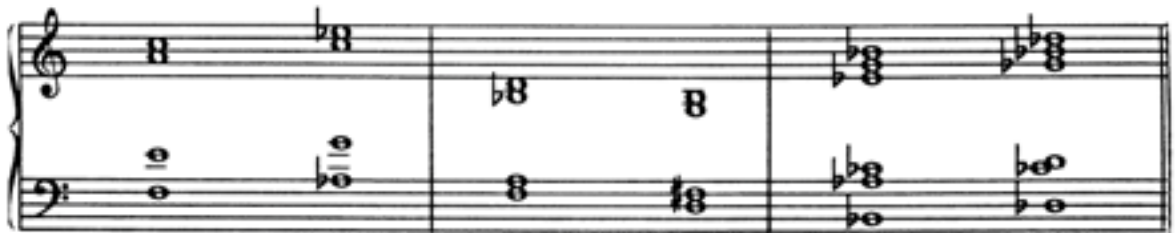
This means that only minor alterations to a published piece of music are allowable. It is not a license to rearrange the piece totally. The copyright law specifically addresses the rights of copyright owners pertaining to arrangements of their tunes by stating that the copyright owner has the exclusive right *to prepare derivative works based upon the copyrighted work.*³ Because musical arrangements are usually considered derivative works, it is clear that arrangers must obtain permission from the copyright owner before scoring their own versions of the material.

Because musical arrangements are usually considered derivative works, it is clear that arrangers must obtain permission from the copyright owner before scoring their own versions of the material.

Changing Keys

One of the simplest ways to alter a piece of music, especially if it is a *cappella*, is by changing keys. If the piece is too high for the sopranos and tenors or too low for the basses and altos, adjust the key to suit them. Beware of inadvertently raising or lowering it too much for the other voices when intentionally doing so for just one voice part.

A major factor affecting transposition is the voicing of chords within the vocal parts. They are often voiced with particular tessituras. If the range is altered too much, these chords will not be as effective as they were originally intended. For example, chords voiced with high degrees of dissonance are not always equally effective in all keys.



Original Transposed Original Transposed Original Transposed

Figure 170: *Transposed chords*

Serious problems arise when key shifts are required in a piece with accompaniment. The simplest solution, if the rhythm section is playing from the chord chart, is to transpose the chord symbols into the appropriate key. Take into consideration that many young pianists (who are just learning chord symbols) will find it difficult to play in certain multi-flat or sharp keys. It is not physically more difficult to play in these keys, but they generally include chords not commonly found in the normal published music.

Other problems occur when key adjustments are required in a piece with a written piano accompaniment. Most piano accompaniments are designed to be simple but sound full. This effect is usually achieved through basic chordal-style accompaniment, with single-note bass-line and simple, right-hand, counter-melodic fills. This form of transposition is time-consuming and generally unrewarding. The piano accompaniment tends to sound weak, and either high pitched or muddy, depending on the direction of the key shift.

Serious problems arise when key shifts are required in a piece with accompaniment.

If a note-for-note transposition is warranted, consider the new key in which the accompanist will be playing. Ask whether the new key is too difficult for the accompaniment. Also, be careful to keep the transposed bass guitar part within the range of the instrument—rewrite those few notes so that the bass player will not have to buy a new five-string bass just to play a few low notes.

Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the singers and accompanists, and consider the benefits or problems arising from key shifts. An occasional half-step modification is not a serious matter, but major changes can cause damage to a work. Most music is published in appropriate key areas. Transposition is often a quick, easy way to solve a problem, but do not become dependent on it. Instead, train the singers to adapt to changes in the music.

Arranging Sections

One of the easiest ways to alter published music is by rearranging sections. A particular piece may be found to be, for example, in the *AABACABB* form. If a dance break during the instrumental interlude is desired (*section C*), yet the original form too short, alter it to *AABACCCABB* to fit those needs. If the rhythm section cannot handle this hypothetical instrumental break, take it out and insert another *B* section between the previous two *A* sections to make the form *AABABABB*. Other simple alterations include reordering the verses, adding or deleting an introduction, ending, or reprise, and adding some new verse material. Changes such as these are in no way counter to the copyright law.

Altering Vocal Parts

Choral music is generally purchased with a specific voicing in mind. Most popular arrangements are available in several common voicings, such as SATB, SSA, SAB, or TTBB. Seldom will it be necessary to delete notes from published materials once the voicing has been selected. On rare occasions, a difficult interval, an out-of-range note, bad voicing, or too many parts may be found. When this occurs, consider the following:

Melody

- Try adding a passing note to the difficult interval.



Figure 171: *Altered melody*

Harmony

- If a note is altered or deleted, make sure that it is not a chord tone (root, third, or fifth) that will affect the structure and integrity of the chord.
- If altered or deleted note is a color note of the chord, consider whether its removal will make the chord sound dull.
- Consider whether the altered or deleted note changes the harmonic function of the chord structure.

Rhythm

Rock-style Top 40 arrangements may present problems. Most of these songs were originally intended for a solo singer with professional background instrumentation. When revised for the pop, jazz, and show choir medium, the syncopated rhythms must be accurately maintained because everyone in the group will undoubtedly know the original version. If these rhythms are drastically altered to make the arrangement easier, they will sound too different from the original. If changes in some of the rhythms are required, use the following examples as a guide:

Original

Mak-in' church bells— chime— for ev - 'ry rea - son of— our lives— we

Alteration 1

Mak-in' church bells_ chime_ for ev - 'ry rea - son of— our lives— we

Alteration 2

Mak-in' church bells_ chime— for ev - 'ry rea - son of our lives— we

Alteration 3

Mak-in' church bells— chime— for ev - 'ry rea - son of our lives we

Figure 172: *Rhythmic alterations***Additional notes**

Adding notes to existing choral materials is an entirely different situation. Arrangements containing alternate notes are occasionally available. These alternate notes are usually additional color notes that add more spice to the vertical-chord sound. The arrangement will sound adequate without their inclusion, but will sound better if they are used.

9 10 11 12 poco rit. 2

green — Here we come a - was - sail-ing so plain - ly to be

The image shows a musical score for a Christmas carol, consisting of three systems of music. Each system has a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The lyrics are: "seen. Love and Joy — come to you and to you glad Christ-mas", "too May God Bless you May God Bless and send — you a hap - py New", and "Year May God send — you a hap - py New Year." The score includes performance markings such as "a tempo", "poco rit. . .", and "to Coda". The music is in a key with two flats and a 4/4 time signature.

Figure 173: *Additional harmony* - (CD 2 - Track 41)

Consider the following if the arrangement does not include additional notes:

- Why are these notes needed? Is this to make the piece more difficult for the sake of difficulty, or is there a need for other harmonies or colors in a particular section? If the reasoning appears justified, the choral director must use their arranging experience, ear, and musicianship to select, voice, and interpret additional notes.
- *Fixed* arrangements of standard pop, jazz, and show choir literature are often heard at festivals. These alterations are frequently the work of a choral director with little arranging experience and less familiarity with the genre and idiomatic style of the original piece. Such *fixes* often sound amateurish.

- If, on the other hand, the choral director has the experience to know what changes would be appropriate and sound good, do not hesitate to sweeten a boring published arrangement. It is always a pleasure to hear a standard arrangement properly sweetened and performed.
-

¹Baskerville, D. (1995) *Music Business Handbook & Career Guide*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, p. 86.

²Faaborg, K. (1986). The music educator's guide to copyright law. *The Choral Journal*, 26(7), p. 17.

³Baskerville, D. (1995) *Music Business Handbook & Career Guide*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, p. 91.

Chapter 19

Use of Recorded Tracks

Although the use of pre-recorded vocal and rhythm tracks can be an effective teaching aid, the practice should not become a crutch for the group. Pre-recorded vocal and rhythm tracks came into being as a result of groups wanting to sing their favorite Top 40 numbers exactly as they heard them on the radio. Music publishers, finding it profitable, started producing tapes as an aid to the educational process.

The original idea was to use the tracks as a guide to what the choral arrangement should sound like, and as a rehearsal tape for the choreography. What has happened is that many groups have copied the interpretation and style of the tapes exactly, without their own input. Some have even resorted to lip-syncing the vocal tracks at their concert and festival performances, attempting to act like theme-park groups whose job it is to mime prerecorded tracks. Now that video choreography tapes are available, groups are also copying staging and movement, and not creating their own individual style. Most music professionals find it extremely depressing to see the same arrangements, interpreted in exactly the same way, with exactly the same choreography, at festivals throughout the country.

many groups have copied the interpretation and style of the tapes exactly, without their own input.

Rehearsal tapes should be only used as a guide. Most of them are recorded inexpensively and quickly, with little thought for interpretation, emotional content, or style.

Here are some guidelines for the educational use of pre-recorded tracks and videos:

- Use them as a resource tool. Pick out the concepts that are liked and disliked about a particular interpretation. Do this together with the group.
- If it is a Top 40-type selection, compare the original recorded version with the recording of the published arrangement. By doing so, new, and possibly better, ideas will be discovered.

- Listen to other similar arrangements, tunes, vocal groups, and instrumental recordings in order to develop a background of ideas as a basis for experimentation.
- Use the rhythm section portion of the tracks to rehearse the choreography. ***Do not sing with the recorded singers.*** Have the group learn their parts and sing them during the dance rehearsal. They will become more confident with their vocal parts when they are able to combine them with a dance movement. If the group sings with the recorded singers, they will become accustomed to the recorded singers carrying the tune and it will then be difficult, if not impossible, to turn on the energy at showtime.
- Use the video choreography tapes as a resource library for stylistic steps, movement, and staging. Include ideas offered by group members.
- Use the rhythm section of the tracks as a teaching tool for the rhythm section. Have them listen for style, technique, phrasing, and dynamics. They must listen first, then play. Do not allow them to play along with the tapes.
- Use the rhythm section portion of the tracks at a performance ***only as a last resort.*** Do not shirk the responsibility to learn how to develop and use a rhythm section. It is better to perform the music with only a piano than with a canned rhythm section. Pop, jazz, and show choir originated as a live medium.

Remember, do not substitute these tracks and videos for listening to recordings and watching videos of other groups, and analyzing their music and performance techniques. Recorded tracks can be a useful tool if used properly, but can harm emerging creativity if used unwisely.

Chapter 20

Use of Outside Help

Andrew Carnegie was once asked how he became so successful. He replied that he surrounded himself with people who knew more about their areas of expertise than he did. He just stood in the middle and directed traffic. Carnegie's method should be applied to the use of outside help. No single choral director possesses all the experience, knowledge, and skill required to fill every need of a performing ensemble. True self-confidence allows for the admission that one is not omnipotent. There is no greater challenge and excitement than to learn openly *with* the group.

Once the decision has been made to bring in outside people, there are three groups from which to choose:

Nationally-known clinicians

Educational and music business professionals are available, but are often expensive.

Regionally-known clinicians

Names of recommended regional clinicians can be obtained from almost every state educational choral or jazz association. Some of these experts may be in the regional area, and will work with the group for much less money than a nationally-known clinician. Some, if associated with a university or college, may come free of charge as part of their recruitment process.

Local professional talent

This is probably the most valuable resource. Every area has working professional musicians, dancers, and singers. Bring in a local dance instructor to help with the choreography, or to show the group how to stretch and limber up. Bring in local rhythm section players to assist the rhythm section. Bring in

music-store personnel to help with the P.A. system. Most local talent will work for little or no fee, just for the exposure or challenge.

Remember, outside help is easy to find.

Chapter 21

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Choral Catalog

AIN'T NOBODY

Written & Arranged by Scott Fredrickson

A good swing tune for most choirs using stop-time sections and mostly close four-part harmony.

___110 SATB (with optional rhythm section parts)

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

Written & Arranged by Scott Fredrickson

Up-tempo jazz style beginning unison and building to a syncopated SAB finish. A great uplifting text.

___112 SAB (with optional rhythm section parts)

BRIGHTER DAY

Written & Arranged by Scott Fredrickson

A bright up-tempo jazz style piece extolling the benefits of living each day with hope.

___119 SATB (with optional rhythm section parts)

CHRISTMAS CAROL COLLECTION

Here We Come A Caroling
Lo How A Rose E're Blooming
O Come O Come Emmanuel

Arranged by Phil Mattson

Three traditional Christmas carols arranged in SATB a cappella, and sparked by Phil's own intriguing style.

___136 SATB

DA LOVELY

Written & Arranged by Scott Fredrickson

A very mellow Bossa nova using unison to four-part harmony. A very good change of pace for all choirs.

___107 SATB (with optional rhythm section parts)

___123 SSA/Three-Part (with optional rhythm section parts)

GOODBY LOVE

By Ken Kraintz

A revised version of one of Ken's most widely performed choral compositions. A true pop choral standard.

___141 SATB

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GREAT FEELIN'

Written & Arranged by Scott Fredrickson

One of the best and easiest to sing of the jazz style pieces. Has been performed at many contests and by All-State Choirs.

___ 102 SATB (with optional rhythm section parts)

___ 120 SSA (with optional rhythm section parts)

___ 125 Unison/Two-part (with optional rhythm section parts)

HANUKKAH

Arranged by Gary Fry

Jewish traditions and harmonies are skillfully blended with current pop sounds to produce a wonderful addition to the standard pop Christmas repertoire.

___ 137 SATB

HOW ARE WE TO KNOW?

Written & Arranged by Scott Fredrickson

Fast rock tempo style with four-part close harmony and a repeated chorus which builds to an improvised vocal solo with four-part back-up. A good opener.

___ 111 SATB (with optional rhythm section parts)

I CAN FLY

Written & Arranged by Scott Fredrickson

A 6/8 "Jazz Waltz" with a two-beat feel building from unison melody to four-part harmony with an improvised vocal scat solo.

___ 109 SATB (with optional rhythm section parts)

I HAD A DREAM

Written by Pat Boone & Arranged by Kirby Shaw

Written by as a tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, and is based on his famous "I had a dream" speech. Arranged in Kirby's own swinging gospel style.

___ 135 SATB

I'M FEELIN' RIGHT

By Ken Kraintz

A revised version of one of Ken's all-time jazz-style hits. A real crowd pleaser, and fun to sing.

___ 144 SATB

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IT DON'T MEAN A THING

Written & Arranged by Scott Fredrickson

A sassy jazz style tune that really swings. Each of the three parts is a melody itself, and when put together, almost sounds four-part.

___ 116 SAB (with optional rhythm section parts)

___ 121 SSA/Three-Part (with optional rhythm section parts)

___ 128 Unison/Two-part (with optional rhythm section parts)

IT'S CHRISTMAS

Arranged by Carl Strommen

Carl has done it again with an exciting arrangement of a delightful piece which tells about Christmas.

___ 138 SATB

LEARNING TO LOVE

Written & Arranged by Scott Fredrickson

Slow unison rock introduction building to a double-time four-part open-voiced chorus. Could be used with two soloists.

___ 113 SATB (with optional rhythm section parts)

LOOKIN' FOR THE RIGHT WORDS

Written by Frank DeMiero & Arranged by Ken Krantz

An up-tempo jazz piece written by Frank DeMiero and arranged in an easy swinging style performed by almost any group.

___ 146 SATB

LOVING YOU

By Jack Kunz

A revised version of one of Jack's most widely performed choral compositions. Another pop choral standard.

___ 142 SATB

MAKIN' All MY DREAMS COME TRUE

By Ken Krantz

A medium tempo jazz piece arranged in Ken's own swinging style. A super contest piece.

___ 143 SATB

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NEW ORLEANS

Arranger by Dave Barduhn

A tasty new version of an old standard arranged in Dave's own unique style.

___ 140 SATB

RING THE BELLS AT CHRISTMAS

Written & Arranged by Scott Fredrickson

A lively jazz-style Christmas selection for any choir using open-voices harmony building to an improvised solo.

___ 108 SATB (with optional rhythm section parts)

___ 124 SSA/Three-Part (with optional rhythm section parts)

___ 129 Unison/Two-Part (with optional rhythm section parts)

SWINGING AROUND THE XMAS TREE

Written & Arranged by Scott Fredrickson

A catchy up-tempo Christmas tune that is guaranteed to be a lot of fun.

___ 115 SATB (with optional rhythm section parts)

___ 122 SSA/Three-Part (with optional rhythm section parts)

___ 127 Unison/Two-Part (with optional rhythm section parts)

THAT'S THE WAY YA DO IT

Written & Arranged by Scott Fredrickson

Jazz shuffle with some changing meter using close four-part harmony. A fun novelty for any group.

___ 106 SATB (with optional rhythm section parts)

___ 126 Unison/Two-Part (with optional rhythm section parts)

UNDER THE RAINBOW

Arranged by Clark Gassman

A lilting 3/4 melody arranged into a delightful choral version by one of America's top arrangers.

___ 139 SATB

WE NEED MORE LOVE IN THE WORLD

Written & Arranged by Scott Fredrickson

A four-part chorus is repeated in this rock-style piece leading to a unison contrapuntal melody and improvised solo.

___ 117 SATB (with optional rhythm section parts)

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WHEN I'M NEAR YOU

Written & Arranged by Scott Fredrickson

A good change of pace for any group, using Bossa nova time with some changing meter.

___103 SATB (with optional rhythm section parts)

WHERE DO WE GO?

Written & Arranged by Scott Fredrickson

Changing meter Latin-style building from unison melodic lines to four-part close harmony. A challenging composition for an experienced group.

___101 SATB (with optional rhythm section parts)

WILL YOU LOVE ME?

Written & Arranged by Scott Fredrickson

A very pretty ballad for female solo and four-part chorus. Could work well for a large group also.

___114 SATB (with optional rhythm section parts)

WINDS OF LOVE

Written & Arranged by Scott Fredrickson

A slow a cappella ballad introduction building to a double-time Latin tempo with unison melody in all parts.

___105 SATB (with optional rhythm section parts)

YOU ARE

Written & Arranged by Scott Fredrickson

One of the few really swing ballads. Chorus sings tight inner-voiced four-part lines, with occasional solo parts.

___118 SATB (with optional rhythm section parts)

YOU'LL BE THERE

By Jack Kunz

A moving ballad that flows melodically and harmonically through many textures to produce an exciting arrangement that is destined to be one of Jack's most widely performed compositions.

___145 SATB

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YOUR LOVE

Written & Arranged by Scott Fredrickson

A fine ballad for an experienced group using two to five-part close-voiced chromatic harmony.

___104 SATB (with optional rhythm section parts)

Books

SCAT SINGING METHOD

By Dr. Scott Fredrickson

The Method contains full written instructions and two CDs containing a step-by-step guide to successfully teach vocal improvisation. These techniques have been proven effective by thousands of college and high school instructors. Each Method also contains eight performable compositions and arrangements to practice the skills learned.

Separate vocal and rhythm section parts are also available.

___001 Scat Singing Method - Book

POPULAR CHORAL HANDBOOK

By Dr. Scott Fredrickson

This handbook contains more than 320 pages of techniques and concepts for pop, jazz and show choir style and interpretation that have been proven effective through years of use in graduate schools and choral-conducting seminars and workshops. Each handbook comes with two CDs containing numerous musical examples notated in the book. Topics include: developing the appropriate choral tone, rehearsal techniques, conducting, chord tuning, rhythmic intensity, melodic interpretation, repertoire selection, programming decisions, and much more.

___002 Popular Choral Handbook - Book

Dr. Scott Fredrickson has more than 30 years experience in higher education and experience in the music industry and holds degrees in music education from Cal-State University Fullerton; business administration from Pepperdine University; and jazz and music business administration from University of Northern Colorado. His compositions and arrangements have been heard on local and national radio and television, and area being performed regularly in the United States and many other countries. Fredrickson has worked as a composer, arranger, director, and performer at theme parks, dinner theaters and corporate shows, and numerous commercial projects. He has produced and engineered numerous albums of pop and jazz vocal music and is in demand as a clinician, guest conductor, and festival adjudicator throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe. His *Scat Singing Method* has been received enthusiastically by choral directors, and his articles on pop, jazz and show choir techniques have appeared in national educational journals and magazines. He is president of Scott Music Publications, former editor and publisher of *Pop, Jazz & Show Choir Magazine*, and has just completed a new choral music education text book entitled *Popular Choral Handbook*. He is the former president and executive director of the Music & Entertainment Industry Educators Association (MEIEA) and is a member of ASCAP. Fredrickson has also consulted with and chaired numerous university music business programs.