

Ohio Choral Directors Association Conference 2018

Multipurpose Warm-ups

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I. Self-study:

*Are your warm-ups varied and interesting, always productive and related to the music you are rehearsing? Or are they dull, repetitive, and boring, taken out of context and done on autopilot?

*Do you and your singers enjoy the warm-up process or do you dread it?

*Do you “turn on” or “turn off” when it is time to warm up the choir?

II. Purpose of warm-ups:

“To prepare the body, mind and spirit” (Helen Kemp) by relating to human development:

Physical

e.g. breathing, posture

Intellectual

e.g. aural skills

Social/emotional

e.g. group effort

III. Factors affecting the warm-ups:

1. type of singer (background, training, age)
2. time of day (early, late)
3. location/context (rehearsal room, performance space; proximity to performance, etc.)
4. allotted time
5. nature of the repertoire

IV. Warm-up sequence: BODY/BREATH/VOICE (Note that LISTENING is involved throughout: conductor and singers need to monitor constantly. Note also that warm-ups move from generic to specific as they progress.)

1. focus: mental and physical readiness; posture; stance; breathing
2. phonation: humming, glissandi; lip trills
3. vocalizes: start mid-range and work down, then up, addressing the following:
 - a. tone
 - b. breath management and endurance
 - c. range
 - d. flexibility and agility
 - e. articulation
 - f. rhythmic and melodic patterns from repertoire (use reading system of preference, such as solfege)
 - g. link to repertoire (e.g. end the warm-up in the key of the first piece rehearsed; extract themes from the music itself)

V. Ten Commandments of Warm-ups:

1. Build a base of fundamental warm-ups, some of which you use regularly.
2. Develop “new” warm-ups for specific repertoire.
3. Vary the routine within a logical sequence.
4. Use warm-ups in mid-rehearsal for transitions.
5. Provide good vocal models. Use students as appropriate.
6. Minimize use of piano!! Teach singers to move by whole and half-steps.
7. Give enough time to breathe between repetitions.
8. Give feedback. Mindless repetition is useless.
9. Instill in singers a sense of value of warm-ups by making them purposeful.
10. Plan warm-ups as a necessary and vital part of every rehearsal.

VI. Sample warm-ups

Physical: stretching (reach for the ceiling; up on toes; drop to heels but keep rib cage high); nod gently (do not roll head around to the back); “eyebrow pushups” (keep face alert); jog in place, vary tempo; “climb the rope” or “swim” with arms and upper body; shoulder massages (where appropriate and comfortable for people); roll shoulders forward and back into good position; “rag doll” (drop body over, straighten up slowly, one vertebrae at a time, rolling back shoulders and head last); with children, use sports positions (up to bat; make a basket, ski take-off, swim; Positions 1, 2, 3: (relax, sit tall, stand).

Breathing: sit on the edge of a chair, elbows on knees, focus on slow inhalation, feeling expansion around middle, let the air “drop in”; then apply to sitting and standing positions; rhythmic echoes in patterns from the music: hissing, consonant sounds (tap steady pulse); “two-hand check” – the lower hand moves, not the upper.

Phonation: voice inflection (“good morning!”); whimpering; sighs; lip trills; with children, throw (or roll) a ball, while sighing on “whee” and following the arc vocally; trace shapes in the air or on the board while vocalizing; “Whee” (slide down 5 – 1); humming (1 -5 – 1).

Vocalizes: “sigh-oh”/”mee-oh” (desc. scale in 3rds); “thee-ay, ah, oh” (5-1, 5-1, 5 –1-5-3-1); mah/bah/tah (1-3-5-3-1); legato/marcato/staccato; noo/doo/too (SATB on major or minor chord, starting with half-notes, going to quarter notes, then 8ths) – for articulation; “C-ee-B-C” (1-5-3-1) descending smooth arpeggio; oo-oh-ah-oh-oo on sustained pitch with natural cresc/decres.; “Dee-ah” descending chromatic scale, then reinforce whole steps by having half the group sing on “dees” only; reading repertoire on a neutral syllable is a good warm-up strategy.

Selected Resources: *Building Beautiful Voices* – Nesheim and Noble (Dean); *The Choral Warmup Collection*, ed. Albrecht (Alfred); *Successful Warmups* – Telfer (Kjos); *Group Vocal Technique* (DVD/reference cards/book) – Haasemann and Jordan (Hinshaw); *Working with Men’s Voices* (DVD) – Blackstone (SBMP); *Warm-ups for Changing Voices* – Dan Andersen (Hal Leonard); *A Cappella Warm-Ups* – Deke Sharon (Hal Leonard); *Choir Builders for Growing Voices* – Rollo Dilworth (Amazon)

VI. Applications of warm-ups to repertoire:

Composition #1

Composition #2

Articulation
(legato vs. detached)

Phrasing
(long vs. short)

Rhythm
(meter; patterns)

Melody
(smooth vs. angular)

Harmony
(consonance vs. dissonance)

Tonality
(major; minor; modal)

Texture
(homophonic vs. polyphonic)

Dynamics
(range)

Other? Language/diction
 Vocal technique

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