

OCDA news

BULLETIN OF THE OHIO CHORAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT



The 2008 OCDA Summer Conference: Rejuvenate Your Mind and Soul!

You won't want to miss this year's summer conference, held June 23-25, 2008 at Otterbein College in Westerville, OH. Here is why:

- Inspiring Clinicians: Joe Miller conductor of the Westminster Choir; Randy Pagel, middle school specialist and author of *The Choral Director's Guide to Sanity and Success*; Sharon Rodkey Smith, Children's Honor Choir Conductor; and Raymond Wise, gospel music specialist.
- Outstanding choirs: First Community Church Chancel Choir conducted by Ronald Jenkins; Masterworks Chorale conducted by Donna Wipfli; The Cleveland Youth Chorus, conducted by Frank Bianchi; Oak Harbor High School, conducted by Russ Raber; The Columbus Children's Chorus, conducted by Sandra Mathias; and The OCDA Children's Honor Choir, conducted by Sharon Rodkey Smith.
- Helpful and appealing clinic topics such as rehearsal techniques, choir motivation and focus, vocal development, vocal efficiency, internet tools, gospel history and style, Canadian repertoire, and more!
- Reading Sessions for all choir levels and types.
- Roundtable Sessions according to choir type and level; an opportunity to discuss issues that affect you and your singers!
- Social events with choral directors throughout Ohio: a time to get to know others, network, and share ideas.
- Graduate credit is available. If you plan to register for graduate credit on site, it is important that you bring a copy of your teaching certificate to the conference, for that must be included with your registration.

Conference registration is available inside this publication. For more information, go to the OCDA website at <http://www.ohiocda.org/>

In short, you won't want to miss this conference! Conference planners have been told many times how the OCDA conference rejuvenates the mind and soul. After a busy year of conducting and teaching, this is just what the doctor ordered!

See you June 23!
Gayle

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In the Fall 2008 issue you can look forward to articles from your:

President
Treasurer
Newsletter Editor
Summer Conference Coordinator
Historian
Music and Worship R & S Chair
South Central Regional Chair



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Your biggest untapped resource- PARENTS!

Tracy Gabrielsen, Elementary R & S Chair

Our job as elementary music directors goes beyond score preparation and conducting. We also function as costume and set designer for musicals, fundraising coordinator, sign maker, t-shirt artist, and chaperone. It is often difficult to find enough time in the day to do all that we can for our choirs. In order to keep your precious planning time for planning rehearsals and lessons, veteran teachers agree that parents can be a great resource.

How Parents Can Help

Most parents who are able to volunteer their time at school only need to be asked and they are more than happy to assist. It might seem like more work to organize parents than to do everything yourself, but in the end it is well worth the time to mobilize your parent volunteers. Here are some ways parents can help you keep your sanity:

- **REHEARSALS-** Parents can be helpers for choir rehearsals before, during, or after school. They can help monitor bathroom and drink breaks, escort sick children to the office, or just be an extra adult in the room if you have students with severe medical needs (for example, diabetics or students with severe allergies). An extra set of eyes is also helpful to manage student behavior in large, combined rehearsals.
- **CONCERTS-** Parents can help take attendance at the beginning as well as check students out at the end of the concert. They can help monitor students during the pre/post concert time, or help usher. Parents can also help with sound and lights. With so many demands on classroom teacher time, it is sometimes helpful to ask parents to assist instead of teachers.
- **MUSICALS-** Parents can help with set design and construction, or can create what you envision for the stage. Parents can also help with costume design, sewing, or a run to Goodwill to find certain items.
- **FUNDRAISERS-** Parents can sit at the lollipop sale or bake sale table for you during school, make signs to help advertise, or even facilitate the entire fundraiser if you have a willing Mom or Dad.
- **CHOIR SHIRTS-** If your choir has shirts, consider using a parent to handle the project. A parent can do everything from calling around to get the best prices to keeping track of the money and distributing the shirts when they come in.
- **CHAPERONES-** Parents love to chaperone field trips! The more adults the better when taking students to sing concerts off school grounds.

Getting Started

A great place to start is with your PTA. Consider going to the first meeting of the year (or the last meeting to get ahead for the Fall) and asking for a parent music coordinator. You can also contact room parents to find creative and willing adults.

- Pass out a short music parent volunteer survey at the PTA meeting. Also include the survey in your school's first newsletter. Include items such as parent occupation, hobbies, interests, chaperone availability, and other areas in which they think they can assist the music program at your school. The infor-

mation gathered on the survey will help you throughout the year.

- Get a parent to organize the parents! Send out a letter at the beginning of the year with all rehearsal dates, concert dates, and field trip dates if you have them. Let this liaison handle the reminder phone calls for each event. This person can also be available to handle questions for you during busy times of the year.
- Tap into local parent talents- have any dance teachers as parents? Ask them to do choreography. Architects might enjoy helping with set design. A parent that sews might be able to help with costumes. Parents with computer skills could help design concert programs, or even handle email correspondence with your parent volunteer team.
- Create a complete list of instructions for parents, either laminated or in a folder for parents to use.
- Think beyond mom and dad. We even have an aunt and grandma that volunteer to do everything from painting props to sitting at the fundraiser table at my school. Former students or older brothers and sisters who get out of school earlier might be able to help you in some way.

Thank You, Thank You, Thank You

Always send a thank you note and invite them to your school's volunteer recognition tea at the end of the year (if you have such an event).

Veteran teachers who seem to breeze through concerts and music programs would agree: invite parents to help! I would like to thank my wonderful colleagues from the Berea and Medina City School districts for their great ideas and input into how parents can work for and with you.



Dates to Remember

OCDA Summer Conferences

June 23-25, 2008

June 22-24, 2009

June 21-23, 2010

National Collegiate Choral Organization NCCO

Oct. 30-Nov. 1, 2008

at CCM in Cincinnati

There is a call for proposals for the conference.

www.ncco-usa.org

ACDA National Convention

March 4-7, 2009

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

ACDA's 50th Anniversary Celebration

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Why Don't YOU Sing?

Amy Lenzmeier, Middle School R&S Chair

As a young child I had a natural connection to music and movement. I think that this feeling is experienced by many music teachers. Music is something that defines who we are and is something that we cannot live without. My parents used to go crazy on our car ride vacations, some days up to 12 hours, listening to my rambling songs. Oblivious to my surroundings, I was having a blast singing my own little musical creations.

In 5th grade I was given an opportunity to play Tina Turner and sing the solo "Jingle Bell Twist" at our Holiday program. This was a vital experience in my life: I realized at this point that I wanted to sing. Maybe you had some significant happening in your life that made you pursue a career involving singing. Like many of you, I made certain I got involved in any and all choral and performing opportunities during my years in both middle school and high school. At the college level I was immersed in music history, theory, ear training and sight-singing, music practicum, choral conducting, vocal pedagogy, and choir classes. It was here that I was surrounded with music day and night in preparation for becoming a music teacher.

Many of us chose to be music teachers from our wonderful musical memories and wanting to give others the gift of music along with its opportunities. Somewhere along the way we may have forgotten what originally influenced us to teach music. Yes, I have to say that I love listening to the music that my students create. Teaching music is one of the greatest jobs in the world, but singing was what brought me here.

There are many healthy benefits to actively playing the role of teacher and choral singer at the same time. One would think that by devoting part of one's life to singing in a community, college, or church choir that our own choral ensembles might suffer. Yet my own experience has had the reverse effect. I find that I am more consciously aware of my singers' involvement with my expectations. I observe vocal techniques through the eyes of a choir member and am able to experience the struggles or strengths that my students experience. This may include vocal health or just the mechanics of singing a particular phrase. I also am able to further educate myself by watching my director and taking away great rehearsal ideas

that help my singers' progress or will excite them. I feel closer to understanding my students and I think they feel the same, knowing two nights a week I am at a choral rehearsal in their shoes.

Another benefit to singing in a choir is that your reading skills stay polished. I don't think that many directors ever really think about it, but we are mostly exposed to the level of literature that we teach. Obviously the level of music at the secondary or middle school level is not appropriate for challenging our musical reading skills. I find that my reading skills have improved from singing literature at my appropriate musical level. Lilla Gabor, a Hungarian music professor from my masters' degree program, said that you should always practice your reading skills. She has different sight-singing exercises that she uses on a weekly basis to challenge herself. She even suggests singing while playing the piano in canon, backwards, or even upside down (like crab canons.) Hopefully with a practice routine like this you will feel more confident at OCDA reading sessions and not worry about the possibility of singing the wrong pitches.

The students look to me not only as a music director, but also as a mentor. Some of the songs that my choirs sing are sections that have been arranged from larger works that I have sung. At other times my students are singing a piece that relates to the same style as one of the pieces I am singing. I let the students listen to a recording and we discuss the challenges and history of the music. The students always are excited to find out that I am a "current choral performer." It also sets the example that, no matter where your life takes you, never stop singing. Many of my students think that as kids anyone can sing, but as adults they need to be a famous opera singer. We need to set the record straight! Adults need to be able to have the opportunity to vocally contribute to the music-making process.

If you have strayed away from your original connection to music through singing, then find a way to invite the experience back into your life. Talk with others to find out what musical activities or experiences are occurring in your area. I know that you will reap from the many benefits provided to you as a musician and also as a choral director!

Two Basics: Intonation and Reading

Sandra Mathias, Children's Choirs R&S Chair

This is my first column as your State R&S Chair for Children's Choirs. I pondered over what to write and decided that intonation and reading are two areas that we all strive to master with our choirs. In this article, I will share some ideas that have worked for me. I would ask you to send me additional ideas to share with everyone: jmath27@sbcglobal.net. If you find the following ideas useful and successful, please let me know.

Intonation

Using the solfa syllables has proven to be a successful tool for me for developing intonation. Singers can become acquainted with these syllables in many ways.

1. Sing pentatonic scales (d r m s l r m s l d m s l d r s l d r m - and l d r m s). Singing these scales from the same starting pitch helps singers learn to tune the intervals of seconds and thirds. Beginning with the major seconds and major and minor thirds will help them begin to develop good intonation. Save the half steps until later – they are harder to tune. The pure vowels of the syllables also contribute to good intonation.
2. Once the pentatonic scales are solid, add the fa and ti so that singers can begin to sing each mode from the same starting pitch. If each mode is sung in its pure form, singers only have to sing the half steps of mf and td. Major: d to d' / Dorian: r to r' / Phrygian: m to m' / Lydian: f to f' / Mixolydian: s to s' / Aeolian: l to l' / and Locrian: t to t'. It is amazing to hear them do this so easily!
3. Sing major and minor seconds and major and minor thirds from the same starting pitch: Major seconds: dr, rm, fs, sl, lt Minor seconds: mf, td Major thirds: d-m, f-l, s-t Minor thirds: r-f, m-s, l-d, t-r. This will help singers hear the size of the interval and compare the ones that have the same quality.
4. Sing intervals of seconds up the scale, naming them as you go: dr-major second, r-m major second, etc. Do the same with thirds: d-m major third, r-f minor third, etc. This will help singers hear the intervals in relationship to the scale.
5. Sing triads from the same starting pitch and name the quality: d-m-s major, r-f-l minor, etc. Then sing triads up the scale and name the quality. This can be done by everyone singing up and down the triad and naming the quality, or by sections singing and holding one note of the triad to

build the chord and then name the quality.

6. Once these intervals are strong, expand to fourths and fifths, then sixths, sevenths, and octaves. These can be sung up from do (dr – major second, d-m major third, d-f perfect 4th, etc. You can also sing just the 4ths – both from the same starting pitch and then up the scale: d-f perfect 4th, r-s perfect 4th, etc.

In all of this work, one should aim to establish these sounds in singers' inner hearing. They are comparable to the letters of the alphabet and how they combine to make words. The syllables combine to make intervals and patterns – or 'sound' words. Singers need to be able to hear the music before and as they sing it. A few ways to establish this inner hearing are:

1. inner/outer exercises: sing some parts aloud and others inside - this can be indicated by an open hand/closed hand from the conductor.
2. sign intervals to singers and ask them to sing them out loud
3. point out known songs on a solfa ladder or staff and have singers inner hear and identify the song
4. rehearse without the aid of a piano – the sounds are in the singers' heads, if we give them the time to listen for them.

Work to help your singers develop the ability to sing an A-440 without the aid of a piano. This skill can help them develop a sense of relative pitch.

Working with the pure vowels and intervals can enable singers to never lose their pitch. I have heard it happen. It is exciting and amazing!

Reading

Singers deserve the right to learn to read music. Our job is to empower them to become independent musicians. Using the solfa syllables of 'do' for major and 'la' for minor will result in singers having 'keys' on their instrument – much like pianists, wind players, etc. do. If they know the sound of the interval d-m and see it on the staff, they will be able to read it. Using do major and la minor will also enable them to transfer the sound of a similar pattern to a new key. Once they know the sound of d-m-s, they will sing it correctly anywhere on the staff. If they are singing with 'do' as tonic and have a lot of 'ta's', lead them to discover that the music is in Mixolydian. If they are singing with 'la' as tonic and have a lot of 'fi's', lead them to discover that the music is in Dorian.

Following the steps above on Intonation can help develop this 'reading vocabulary'. As you work on developing this 'vocabulary', you can also try the following ideas:

1. As you study for rehearsing a new piece, write the solfa in to find the prevalent syllables. One of those might be 'do' – if the piece is in major. At rehearsal, help the singers discover where the 'do' is by checking the key signature. Tell them to follow the music and sing all of the 'do's, while you sing everything else. What happens? They track the music and they hear other patterns in the music as you sing the other solfa syllables. Sometimes, another common syllable in a major song is 'so'. Sing again and have them sing all of the 'do's and 'so's, while you sing everything else. Continue to add solfa syllables over several rehearsals.
2. As you study for rehearsing a new piece, write the solfa in and find repetitive melodic and/or rhythmic patterns used in the piece. Prepare for reading the piece by putting these patterns on the board and using them for reading exercises during warm-ups.
3. Read these repetitive patterns in a piece first. Once you sing one of them in the music, have the singers find another, and another, etc.
4. Build up to reading the entire piece by working on these 'bits and pieces' first. It should be an exciting day

when you think the piece is ready to be read successfully from start to finish! J

5. Reading the music with solfa should be very solid before you move to the text. You can include expression, phrasing, and articulation as you sing with syllables. When you add the text, they should know the music so well, that they are hearing it in their heads while they focus on the text.

Notes:

*When selecting music, choose some unison and 2-3 part pieces specifically for 'reading pieces'. Know the level of your singers' reading ability and choose appropriately for them.

*Preparing a piece to present for reading is like taking a jigsaw puzzle apart and discovering the best way to help singers put it back together again. It can be exciting!

If these ideas are used consistently, I believe that your singers will develop their music reading skill. Once they are fluent readers, the learning of new pieces will decrease, leaving you more time to 'make music'.

I hope these ideas work for you as they have for me. Happy singing!



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A Self-Diagnostic Checkup for Conductors: Part Two

by Melvin P. Unger, Youth/Student Interest Area Chair

This article is based on a paper presented at the conference “Preparation of Tomorrow’s Conductors IV,” held at the State University of New York at Buffalo, February 12, 1993. It first appeared in the *Choral Journal* 35 (October 1994): 23–30 and is re-printed with the permission of *Choral Journal*. This is the second half of the article: Part One appeared in the Winter *OCDA News*.

Rehearsal Techniques

Having formed a detailed image of the finished aural product through score study, the conductor must convey it to the singers clearly and efficiently. Efficient rehearsal techniques are indispensable to meeting concert deadlines. Amidst this concern for efficiency, however, the conductor must take time to educate, to help singers grow in their understanding and skills. It is possible to become so concerned with short-term results that one neglects issues of long-term growth. To ensure both short-term efficiency and long-term development, rehearsals should include the following six elements.

1. **Training.** Conductors must do more than teach particulars in choral rehearsals. While performance pressures sometimes force conductors into this mode, they should never displace long-term educational goals: learning correct voice production, musicianship, stylistically appropriate performance practices, and rehearsal discipline. Therefore, conductors should ask themselves the following questions: Do my singers sing with proper diaphragm support? Do they place high tones well “into the mask”? Is any still lifting their chins to reach high notes? Can they sing high notes softly? Can they sing softly without losing tonal intensity? Can they sing descending passages without flattening? Do they know when to sing an r and when to omit it? Do they understand the difference between imploded and exploded consonants? Do they know how to stretch sustainable consonants before the beat? Are they able to de-emphasize unimportant words and syllables? Can they lessen their vibratos without constricting their vocal muscles? Do they grasp the difference between Baroque and Romantic articulation? Are they improving in their ability to sight-sing? Do they listen to each other? Do they work as a team? Have they learned the discipline of punctuality? Does everyone always carry a pencil? Do their eyes ever stray in performance or their heads get buried in the music? Have they developed the self-discipline to sing with expression and animation, even when they feel a lack of enthusiasm?

2. **Streamlining the learning process.** Efficient teaching techniques help singers learn quickly. Conductors need to question whether they have done all they could before the rehearsal begins. For example: Have I given copies of the

music to accompanists and potential soloists? Have I informed section leaders about pertinent musical matters? Have I prepared well to anticipate problematic passages and devise solutions? Could I invent warmup exercises that focus on the technical problems in each piece and, therefore, help singers surmount them more quickly? Can I relate new material to main themes or to similar material in the same piece in a way that would be helpful? Do I provide new information only when singers are ready for it, moving from the known to the unknown? Do I give directions clearly, succinctly, and in a logical order? For example, do I identify page first, then system, then measure? Am I ready to disassemble difficult passages in a way that will expose the most problematic aspects and fix them as quickly as possible? Have I taught principles rather than particulars? Students who can transfer knowledge to new situations will learn more quickly than those who need specific instructions each time.

3. **Energizing.** Singers need to be motivated; they must be physically and emotionally energized. Conductors should ask themselves, am I enthusiastic about this music? Are the singers ready to sing; that is, are they mentally focused and physically vibrant? Have I fostered a spirit of inclusiveness in which they sense their initiative is valued? Is the rehearsal space conducive to maximum effort: for instance, is there sufficient light and ventilation? Do I keep singers involved? Do I alternate plodding work with more enjoyable tasks? Do I give reasons for stopping the choir or repeating passages? Should I ask them to stand more often? Would changing formation occasionally give them a psychological boost? Is the performance venue available for an occasional practice? Would taping a rehearsal and listening to it together increase the singers’ concentration and responsiveness to correction? Would it be helpful to choose an SATB quartet from the choir to listen and provide a critique?

THESE	SIX	ELEMENTS	CHARACTERIZE	SUCCESSFUL	REHEARSALS
r	t	n	o	h	e
a	r	e	r	a	f
i	e	r	r	p	I
n	a	g	e	i	n
i	m	i	c	n	i
n	l	z	t	g	n
g	i	i	i		g
	n	n	n		
	i	g	g		
	n				
	g				

4. **Correcting.** Providing critical feedback is one of the conductor’s most important responsibilities in rehearsals. Conductors must compare their aural ideals with the actual

sound being produced: Does anyone's voice protrude? Is the tone quality acceptable? Do I praise my singers enough? If I must criticize, should I direct my remarks more specifically to particular singers? Do other singers know when they are not part of the problem? Should I have a private chat with anyone?

5. Conveying the artistic shape. The conductor's overarching responsibility is to let the composer speak. Hence, interpreting the work is the supreme privilege and challenge. The conductor's questions should be: Have I been faithful to the expressive markings of the score insofar as these originate from the composer? Within the scope of the composer's instructions, can I add anything that will make the notes come alive? Do the singers grasp every aspect of my aural goal?

6. Refining the performance. In an age of recordings that exhibit impeccable performance standards, our audiences come to live concerts with high expectations. Conductors should ask: Is this piece ready for performance? Would I pay to hear it? Why or why not?

A rehearsal technique that keeps all of these elements in balance will prove successful over the long term. Conductors can monitor their progress with the aid of the acrostic aphorism shown above.

Pre-rehearsal Preparation

Occasionally we experience the frustration of preparing ever so carefully for a rehearsal, only to have it fall flat. At other times we do not prepare at all and yet come away feeling that the rehearsal went rather well. If this is so, why bother preparing at all? Why not simply rely on spontaneous inspiration? Most of us also have experienced the surprise of having a performance fall flat even though rehearsals were efficient, energetic, and purposeful. Why do such seemingly successful rehearsals fail in the end?

Some rehearsals fail because conductors have prepared to the point of rigidity: having worked hard creating a detailed rehearsal plan, they refuse to depart from it when such flexibility is necessary. Other rehearsals fail because preparation has been unbalanced. When conductors concentrate on certain aspects of rehearsal preparation to the neglect of others, their rehearsal technique fails to address the most pressing issues. Focusing on minor matters, they consume precious rehearsal time that should be spent on more significant problems. This tends to happen especially to perfectionists who, by nature, dislike moving on to new problems until they have thoroughly mastered the matter under consideration. The following outline seeks to ensure continuing preparation on all fronts.

1. Schedule. When do I need to order music? How soon must I book venues, additional musicians, or recording technicians? What soloists have not yet responded to my invitation to perform? When do program notes have to be finished? Do I know where the rehearsal "bottle necks" are? Have I spread

out the choir's work evenly over the allotted rehearsals? Do the performers have intermediate deadlines when certain movements will be tested? Have I grouped movements by instrumentation so that I can plan a rehearsal order in which instrumentalists or soloists are not sitting idle? When should I start recruiting singers for the next concert season?

2. Marking. Score marking is largely a perfunctory task. There are basically two kinds of markings: those that highlight existing features and those that add information to the score. Conductors should ask: Have I highlighted score markings that I tend to miss? For example, will I remember accidentals of notes tied over pages, sudden tempo or meter changes, or entries after page turns? Have I marked important musical events, aural reference points between parts, or projected difficulties? Do I need to add any interpretive markings other than those already in the score? What about indications regarding technical adjustments (unstresses, consonant synchronization, etc.)? Have I marked phrasing? Will I need an interlinear translation of the text? Should I write in a phrasal analysis? Have I indicated where I will subdivide the meter? Have I marked the orchestral parts (bowings, breath marks, rehearsal or measure numbers, etc.)?

3. Notes. Knowing the notes ranges from the ability to detect errors to memorization of the complete score. A conductor should ask himself or herself: Are the notes of each part in my ear? Can I sing each part? Can I sing a conducting line moving from part to part and incorporating the most important musical event at any given moment? Do I know the notes well enough to look up from the score? Do I understand the notes functionally? Should I memorize all or part of the score? Which sections will cause the greatest difficulties for the performers? Have I read through the instrumental parts to anticipate each player's needs and concerns? Do markings in the instrumental parts from previous performances provide clues to potential danger spots?

4. Gestures. Although conducting gestures comprise the first level of the hierarchy of conducting skills and although they can be learned in the short term, they should be practiced and reassessed throughout one's career. The maxim "talk little, conduct much" is good advice—but only if the conducting gestures clearly convey the messages intended.

Conductors must answer questions such as these: Can I conduct through this piece without pause, showing everything I want to hear? Are my gestures truly expressive of the rhythms, dynamics, and articulation in the score? Which cues, cut-offs, or special gestures are needed? Are my preparatory motions to sections with abrupt, fast beginnings clear? (This is particularly crucial for irregular meters such as 5/8 and 7/8.)

5. Interpretation. Can I identify the expected tempo, dynamics, or articulation for any given measure of the piece? What is the general mood of each section of this work? Can I

(continued on following page)

defend my interpretation on structural and historical grounds? Is the piece convincing the way the choir and I are performing it? Are there sections that are compositionally weak? How can such sections be helped?

6. **Attack plan.** Throughout the rehearsals, the conductor should have one overriding concern: to facilitate and guide the learning process. He or she should also ask: What proportion of the next rehearsal should be devoted to issues of long-term musical growth? As for learning the repertoire, now that I know what I want, how can I achieve it most effectively? Will I need to sell this piece to the performers? How should I introduce it: by a read-through or some other way? In what order should I rehearse the pieces? What are the physical demands of each piece, and what bearing might this have on rehearsal sequence? How will I keep the rehearsal energized? Should I employ sectional rehearsals? Should I use a “macro” approach, correcting the grossest errors first before mentioning the lesser ones, or should I use a “micro” approach in which I disassemble the piece completely, and then put it back together bit by bit, adding each new component or layer only after it is completely mastered?

Once again, an acrostic aphorism serves as a simple aid for remembering the checklist. Conductors may wish to design their own. The one in the figure on the following page encourages students not to rely on artistic intuition alone.

SUCCESS	MEANS	NOT	GOING	IN	AIMLESSLY
c	a	o	e	n	t
h	r	t	s	t	t
e	k	e	t	e	a
d	i	s	u	r	c
u	n		r	p	k
l	g		e	r	
e			s	e	p
				t	l
				a	a
				t	n
				i	
				o	
				n	

Conclusion

Conducting instructors must do more than demonstrate the “how” of their craft; they must encourage students to think about the “why.” Imitation alone will produce little more than conducting clones. Many student conductors realize sooner or later the limitations of their teachers and seek out other masters to emulate. As they compare teachers, students develop a hybrid model, a new composite image of the ideal conductor, which combines the strengths of each of them. In the process students become more analytical, less blindly accepting. Why not encourage students to start thinking for themselves from the very outset? Let us encourage conducting apprentices to analyze, to evaluate, to experiment, and to discover.

Repertoire Search Strategies

James D. Niblock, NY ACDA Re&S Chair for Male Choirs

Reprinted with permission from Choral Cues, the official publication of the ACDA of the New York State, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Winter 2008)

As another concert season begins, many choral directors breathe a sigh of relief, having finally tracked down the music that we need to keep our choirs thinking, learning, and singing for a few more months. It is the first step in the cycle that we follow -program, practice, perform. Among these phases, programming is uniquely solitary. It is undertaken in the absence of performers, and there is no real-time feedback by which one might gauge success or choose to make adjustments. Selecting music can be tiresome and frustrating as lead time evaporates, but the path to the perfect program order is paved with purchase orders and littered with back orders. Still, the nagging question resurfaces time and again: "Where will I find repertoire that will lead to a wonderful experience for my singers and a polished performance for our audience?" Those of us who direct a men's or women's choir have become especially adept at bemoaning the lack of repertoire appropriate to the number, skill level, or intellectual capacity of our singers. The truth is, the music is out there -but you've got to track it

down. Here are a few clues to help you stay sane while you search.

1) Do not let yourself get locked into one mode of procuring music. You wouldn't assume that your choir could thrive indefinitely on the music of one composer, would you? Nor would you guess that one publisher could fill all present and future needs. So why would you count on one catalog, one convention, or one distributor to fill every void? Branch out! There are many ways to obtain quality music. You may never explore all possible paths, but don't get locked into any-one for all of your music needs. If you peruse a single catalog from a single distributor and call it a day, you and your singers will miss out on some great possibilities. Look at samples, go through catalogs, shop online, listen to recordings, trade with colleagues, and read repertoire lists.

2) Remember your favorite composer(s). Don't assume that they haven't written anything that your choir can sing. At

(continued on page 15)

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The following bed and breakfast inn is a one-block walk from Riley Auditorium, the main conference site. A group of three rooms have been reserved on a first-come-first-served basis until June 7; call early. Please refer to the Ohio Choral Directors Association when placing your reservation. All bed and breakfast rooms must be reserved by June 7.



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Tone building through unison singing

Franklin Green, R&S Chair for Women's Choruses, Georgia ACDA

Reprinted with permission from Georgia Sings!, the official newsletter of the Georgia branch of the ACDA, Volume 7, issue 1 (Spring 2008)

The Southern Division ACDA Convention in Louisville was an uplifting event. To many of them, I was delighted with the repertoire for treble voices. All the choral performances were the fruit of several years work by directors and choristers: the songs were well chosen, well learned, interesting, and expressive. Even as I was thoroughly pleased by the performances, I couldn't help but notice a common flaw in most of the choirs with treble voices—an increasing tension in the tone quality as the singers moved into their upper ranges, particularly in approaching that E-F-F# zone of terror (upper passaggio), followed by a fair amount of out of tune singing above that range. A few groups were masterful in dealing with these issues, but many struggled.

I'd like to challenge directors of treble choirs to consider a strategy in tone building that requires you to step back from your usual work with choirs. We are all looking for the most complicated, yet performable pieces we can find for our singers. We develop their part independence, their rhythmic sense, their ability to sing harmony and dissonance, and to tune all that complexity. But think how differently we are teaching the choirs from how we were taught as voice students—(if you have never studied voice, it is not too late now!). We were forced to use a large portion of our useful ranges on almost every piece we prepared. (Some of our choral "altos" seldom rise out of their "belting" ranges. Many of our sopranos rarely ascend above the upper passaggio and interesting unison or nearly never sing in the bottom of unison their voices.) As voice students, our issues were creating a relaxed and perfect space for each vowel on each pitch. Remember singing through your literature on only one vowel at a time? Remember hearing yourself on recording and realizing that you didn't pronounce the words very well at times?

I think you can build your singers' vocal abilities by occasionally shedding the complexity to just work in unison. Choristers may think it insulting to tackle a unison piece when they can handle multiple parts, but if you insist on exquisite beauty and consummate expressiveness, a unison piece for a beginning or advanced choir may turn out to be an audience and choir favorite in the end. Failing the use of a "unison throughout" piece, find one that has extensive unison sections. Then work on it as vigorously as you do on those complex pieces. The vocal technique they learn by matching their vowels in unison to create beautiful tone quality will help them on all their other work. Allow their unison singing to be loud. Remember that unison singing seems louder than part singing even when it is not (a psycho-acoustic phenomenon), but soft singing is a more advanced technique, so allow them

to work at a moderate to full dynamic. I cringed to see nearly closed-mouthed singers wailing away on high G's and A's. I'd work on posture, keeping the ribcage high, the head in line with the body, relaxing the muscles under the chin and in the back of the mouth, and letting out a wail!

Some suggestions of literature follow:

Jerusalem, Charles H. H. Parry, Gordon V. Thompson Music, c/o Warner Bros., VG196.

Two by Handel, (Ombra Mai Fu and Lascia Ch'io Pianga), George Frideric Handel, ed. Z Randall Stroope, Alliance Music Publications, Inc., AMP 0607.

Simple Song (from Mass), Leonard Bernstein, Boosey and Hawkes Music Publishers, OCTB6916.

Two Songs of Winter, (God Bless the Master and Wassail Song) Ralph Vaughan Williams, Oxford University Press.

Let Beauty Awake, R. Vaughan Williams, Boosey and Hawkes Music Publishers, M-051-46591-0

This Shall Be for Music, Mark Patterson, BriLee Music Publishing, BL363.

Bist du bei mir, J. S. Bach, accompaniment by S. Calvert, Gordon V. Thompson Music, c/o Warner Bros., VG-183.

To Music (An die Musik), Franz Schubert, edited and arranged by Doreen Rao, Boosey and Hawkes Music Publishers, OCTB6366.

Wie Melodien zieht es mir, Johannes Brahms, edited by Henry H. Leck, Plymouth Music Co. HL-S24.

Fancie, Benjamin Britten, Boosey and Hawkes Music Publishers, OCTBS611.

Let everyone sing all the time creating a mostly unison piece with:

The Lord Bless You and Keep You, SA, John Rutter, Hinshaw Music Inc., HMC-1169.

A couple of easy ones:

Sleep My Baby, (Suo-Gan) Welsh Slumber Song, arranged Alec Rowley, Boosey and Hawkes Music Publishers, OCTBS449.

The Path to the Moon, Eric H. Thiman, Boosey and Hawkes Music Publishers, OCTB6114

Repertoire Search Strategies

(continued from page 10)

this past year's national convention in Miami, attendees were treated to a performance of *A Sea Symphony*, by Ralph Vaughan Williams. While few directors will be putting that into the folders any time soon, some might be wondering, "What did Vaughan Williams write for my choir?" Dig up a list of his works and you might find the answer. Easier said than done? If you have access to the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians in print or online, look through the listed works by your favorite composers. If you are not able to access this particular resource, use other online indices. For example, a Google search will reveal the online home of the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society, complete with lists of compositions, arrangements, and the voicing of each piece.

3) Figure out who arranges well for your choir. Look past the trendiest names, set aside your style preferences, and consider the craftsmanship involved in a few pieces that have worked well for you in the past. This might give you some clues about what fosters interest, singability, and elegance. Be pragmatic and narrow the field based on the ability level and voicing of your ensemble. If the alto parts are too low or the tenor parts are too high in the first four selections you see, there is a good chance that this person is not arranging with a choir like yours in mind. As a first year high school teacher, I was asked by one of my students "Why do we keep singing pieces that are arranged by Robert Shaw and Alice Parker?" My reply was simple "They're the best at what they do, and I want you guys to have the best." He thought I was being smug, but it was true. The pieces had only one thing in common - great arranging for a TTBB chorus.

4) When you meet a piece that works well for your choir, find out if it has a cousin. Pieces are often published in a series, but how often do you follow up to see whether or not another piece from that series is equally appropriate for another day? A series that is specific to one voicing can be especially helpful to nurturing a fledgling group. Read the listed works on the backs of octavos that you've enjoyed to look for other possibilities. Perhaps a favorite tune or poet will jump out at you. This can be especially helpful if you program thematically. Titles may reveal enough to pique your curiosity. Order a copy and take a look.

5) Long before all else fails, look online. You may not find the most comprehensive or scholarly sources available, but you'll certainly find something! Use web sites to discover new titles. Once you know a piece exists, you're a whole lot closer to getting your hands on it. Here are just a few starting points:

google.com - look for concert programs, repertoire lists, library databases

wikipedia.com - lists of works, external links

cpdl.org - public domain scores, Midi files

choralnet.org - repertoire lists and forums, links to sheet music retailers

sheetmusicplus.com - find octavo numbers or see if a piece is still in print
 acdaonline.org - repertoire resources by area; especially fine list for women's voices. Intercollegiate Men's Choruses - concert programs, reading session lists

publishers' websites - peruse catalogs, listen to samples, sort by voicing

composer's websites - sound clips, arrangements for alternate voicings

Edifying, beautiful, fulfilling music is available for every ensemble. Spend some time refreshing your memory as to where you might find it. The best chance for a great experience arises from the most appropriate repertoire for your group. Best wishes in your next round of selections! Here are some successful program choices for anyone looking for fine male voice repertoire:

Gather Ye Rosebuds - Robert Herrick/Laura Farnell TB - Southern Music Co. SC677

Codfish Shanty - arr. Vijay Singh TB, piano - BriLee Music BL331

Masters in this Hall - arr. Earlene Rentz TB, piano - BriLee Music BL372

Jamaica, Farewell! - arr. Bradley Nelson TB, piano, perc. - Kjos Music Co. Ed. 5570

Opera Choruses for Male Voices - John Rutter, ed. TB - TTBB, piano, Oxford

Seeing Nellie Home - arr. Emily Crocker TTBB, piano - Hal Leonard 08551492

Two Renaissance Chorals for Men - arr. Russell Robinson TBB - Belwin Mills OCTMOOOOI

The Pasture - Randall Thompson TBB, piano - E. C. Schirmer 2181

In Flanders Fields - arr. Roger Emerson TBB, piano - Hal Leonard 08741443

Georgia on My Mind - arr. Ed Lojeski TTBB - Hal Leonard 08742130

Down Among the Dead Men Ralph - Vaughan Williams TTBB - Galaxy Music 1.5025

La Tarara - arr. Robert Shaw/Alice Parker TTBB - Lawson-Gould 51046

Spanish Ladies - arr. Robert Shaw/Alice Parker TTBB - Lawson-Gould 51051

Spaseniye sodelal - Pavel Chesnokov, arr. Morosan TTBB - Musica Russica Cn176mc

Live-A-Humble - arr. Peter Bagley TTBB - Alfred 21803

Rainbow 'Round My Shoulder - arr. Robert DeCormier TTBB - Lawson-Gould 51757

Inveni David - Anton Bruckner TTBB - Peters 6318

When I Have Sung My Songs To You - Ernest Charles, au. Timothy Seelig TTBB - piano Shawnee Press C0314

Gentle Annie - Stephen Foster, arr. Shaw/Parker TTBB - guitar Lawson-Gould 859

Blow Ye the Trumpet - Kirke Mechem TTBB - piano/org, G. Schirmer HL 50481989

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