

Region 10 Let It Fly!!! – September 2014 --Becki Hine

Fun With Rhythms

As singing ensembles, we need to understand the type of song we're singing in order to sing that song as a unit. Some songs have sections that take on different rhythmic characteristics which create variety in the song. When that song changes rhythmic tempo, all singers need to understand the new characteristic in order to sing as a unit.

What are the rhythmic characteristics?

Backbeat or Downbeat? Swingy or Driving? Ad lib? Stomp?

How do you want the audience to feel?

Energized? Like dancing? Emotional? Patriotic? Depressed?

Backbeat Characteristics:

- emphasis on beats 2 and 4
- swingy feel---correctly written swing is 12/8—more difficult to synch up, have to feel it. Where the diphthongs go, etc., is all a bit subjective. Swing does not have heavy downbeats. If you sing it against a metronome, it may have heavy downbeats. Needs to have a feel like you're inside of the rhythm instead of with the rhythm.
- still need to feel the downbeats in order to feel the upbeats
- use your hand to tap out beats on leg, then chest
- feel rhythm as boom-chicka, boom-chicka, boom-chicka, boom-chicka
- identify songs—How Many Hearts Have You Broken, At Last

Downbeat Characteristics:

- emphasis on beats 1 and 3, on a 4/4 song
- driving feel
- still need to feel the upbeats, do the math
- tap it out
- feels like a vertical delivery, chords line up more vertically
- feel rhythm as tacka-tacka-tacka-tacka- tacka-tacka-tacka-tacka
- identify songs—Five Foot Two, Midnight Choo Choo, Mardi Gras March, 76 Trombones

Stomp Section Characteristics:

- high energy
- change in tempo
- strong triplet feel
- 12/8 tempo
- Energy is low, in the core
- I Got the Blues exercise with tapping

Rhythm Exercise:

Try different rhythms on the same song: Red Red Robin, How Many Hearts Have You Broken, 76 Trombones, Five Foot Two

- Salsa
- Swing
- Tango
- March
- Waltz
- Others?

Tossing exercise:

Find a partner and use something you have with you that you can toss back and forth. Use car keys, a pen, a watch, a small water bottle, a small book. Suggest using something that is not breakable.

Toss the object back and forth, with the goal of the object landing in your partner's hands on the specified beat. Toss and catch on different beats:

- Beats 1 and 3
- Beats 2 and 4
- Beats 2 and 3
- Beats 1 and 4

Then toss the object back and forth to different styles of music.

The tossing exercise creates an awareness of physical preparation in order to get the object to land on the designated beat. As singers, we need to be able to feel correct tempo and rhythm, so that we know exactly how long to sing a specific note or word sound, in order to get them all to land on the designated beat. It also creates a sense of teamwork. It's just fun!