

SEEKING MUSICAL EXCELLENCE

A Chorus Questionnaire

Your Director and Music Staff are looking for ways to assist you in achieving your musical goals. Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions.

What are your top 2 musical goals to grow toward this year?

What kind of assistance would be most helpful to you in meeting those goals?

What kind of assistance would be most helpful in learning new music?

Would you be willing to attend additional section rehearsals?
What day/time?

Would you attend small group sessions to solidify your skills when singing with other parts?

Would you like to have additional PVI's? If so, how often?

Would you attend craft classes on any of the following subjects?

- Understanding the Judging Categories
- How to Give a PVI
- Quartet Workshop for Current or Potential Quartets
- Learning How to Read Music
- How to Sing Your Part Smart

What other ideas/suggestions do YOU have on how we can assist you in achieving your musical and other chorus goals?

WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT??

CHORUS MEMBER MUSICAL RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Sing the right notes and words to all chorus songs as quickly as possible. Use a tape recorder, a piano, a learning tape/CD -- or another singer who knows the part to record. Record a qualifying tape for your section leader within the deadlines set by the director.
2. Attend section rehearsals and chorus rehearsals faithfully and regularly. Attend as many regional and international events as possible.
3. Work at home on breathing, physical and vocal exercises.
4. Learn to Listen. If something sounds wrong, let the director or section leader know about it. Learn to be responsible for the sounds you are making as an individual, both within your section and in your chorus.
5. Be a positive, helpful, involved, contributing member. Be aware of responsibilities specified in the chapter standing rules.

IN OTHER WORDS:

1. Come to rehearsal
2. Learn your music
3. Pay your dues
4. Be kind to each other

DIRECTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Support Sweet Adelines International and its policies.
2. Gain as much musical knowledge and as many different directing and teaching techniques as possible. Attend as many regional and international music education classes as possible.
3. Teach the right notes and words to the chorus. If you lack good teaching skills, utilize other qualified chorus members.
4. Be aware of the sounds the chorus is making. Listen first and foremost for harmony accuracy. Record during rehearsals for evaluation purposes during the week.
5. Be prepared for each rehearsal. Do your homework during the week and have a plan for the evening.
6. Expect excellence from your chorus members. Insist on high standards & praise accomplishments. Take half the blame when things are not perfect.
7. Appoint an assistant director and give her time to work in front of the chorus, giving you an opportunity to "coach" the chorus. Appoint section leaders and music staff members and supervise their performance.
8. Be positive, caring, and compassionate. Encourage members and offer sincere praise at every opportunity.
9. Always remember what a privilege it is to be a Sweet Adeline Director!!

DETERMINING WHY YOUR CHORUS IS AT ITS CURRENT LEVEL:

1. Membership commitment to and general retention of notes and words.
2. Vocal skills level of individual members.
3. Variety of pitches and vocal qualities within each section (where minimal variety is optimal.)
4. Balance of parts (section to section)
5. Complexity of repertoire in relation to current vocal skills.
6. Synchronization errors
 - a. Vowels: some short, some long, some late
 - b. Breathing: different, late, gasping, early
 - c. Difference in internal phrase emphasis
 - d. "Mushy" or poor articulation
 - e. "Choppy" singing caused by tension in jaw and/or tongue
 - f. Lack of mental focus
7. Level of listening skills applied to team effort
8. Lack of energy (a "nice" performance)
9. Oversinging (loud for the sake of loud)
10. Music selection:
 - Too many demanding arrangements?
 - Too many songs?
 - Too few songs?
 - Too many songs of same style?
 - Too many old songs sung in old vocal patterns?
11. Overall member interest and involvement; consistency of attendance.
12. Lack of a general understanding of the art form.
13. Current overall musical ability of the membership.

IDENTIFY THE SOURCE OF ACCURACY ERRORS IN YOUR SOUND.

1. Lack of solid basic technical skills.
2. Was it coached that way? Was it directed that way?
3. Is planned visual movement executed with precision and energy?
 - a. Do gestures begin and end on primary beats of the phrase?
 - b. Do vowels and gestures both land on primary beats?
4. Are committee disagreements carried to the risers?
5. Do you change competition songs every year?
6. Do members "feel" different story lines or rhythm patterns?

GUIDELINE FOR RAISING YOUR PERFORMANCE LEVEL

- I. To go from D to D+ (poor to fair) you need to:**
Begin a long-range vocal development program that will, in time, produce a tension-free, well resonated tone from each of your members.
Require internalization of the words, music and choreography to your competition songs from each member of your chorus / quartet.
Begin a stress management program that will allow each member of your chorus / quartet to sing as well as she is able under the tension that comes with competition.
Learn to choose good but simple competition material.
- II. To go from D+ to C (fair to low average), in addition to all of the above, you need to:**
Continue to learn about and practice good vocal production.
Focus on harmony accuracy in the barbershop style.
Learn how to sing proper vowel sounds together and how to articulate consonants correctly and together.
Understand and be able to sing I the barbershop style.
- III. To go from C to C+ (low average to high average), in addition to all of the above, you need to:**
Continue to learn about practice and good vocal production.
Develop a sense of unity within and between sections.
Learn the proper way of interpreting in the barbershop style.
Learn about and use appropriate dynamics, lyrically and musically.
- IV. To go from C+ to B (high average to good), in addition to all of the above, you need to:**
Continue to learn about and practice good vocal production.
Learn how to balance a barbershop chord properly.
Learn about continuous sound.
Learn about and practice continuous facial sell and learn to move on risers without letting it interfere with your sound.
- V. To go from B to B+ (good to very good), in addition to all of the above, you need to:**
Continue to learn about and practice good vocal production.
Learn about and use energy in all aspects of your performance.
Learn about and use finesse and artistry.
- VI. To go from B+ to EVEN BETTER in addition to all of the above, you need to:**
Continue to learn about and practice good vocal production.
Learn about image, congruity, intimidation and magic.
Learn to free yourself from all of the above and *transcend*.

Music Selection for Directors

I. Points to consider in assessing the level of your chorus in addition to contest scores.

- A. Comfort ranges for each of the four parts pitch wise
 - How do those ranges relate to each other?
 - Do the individual sections work as a unit?
- B. How well do they maintain pitch/tonality?
 - As sections
 - As a chorus
- C. Do they learn and retain the right notes/rhythms/breaths?
- D. Which vowel sounds ring the best for them?
- E. How easily do they handle key changes/modulations/transitions?
- F. What level of stamina do they have at the end of the song?
- G. How well do they handle rubato phrasing?
- H. How well do they sing a smooth vocal line within their parts/as a group?
- I. How well do the individual parts handle their register breaks?
- J. Are Phrase endings lifted?
- K. Is breath support constant?
- L. Is Vibrato excessive? Appropriate?
- M. How well do they execute dynamics?
- N. Are consonants articulated appropriately? Can you understand the words?
- O. Is the sound energized?
- P. Do you consistently hear outstanding voices? Why?
- Q. Chorus ability to keep tempo, do backbeat and syncopation

II. How to assess your own abilities as a director

- A. Knowledge of musical form, chords, music theory, etc.
- B. Understanding of tempo, downbeat, backbeat, syncopation
- C. Ability to direct in tempo, appropriate for downbeat or backbeat material
- D. Ability to be good vocal example for individual parts or provide good vocal example

- E. Ability to teach and apply vocal production techniques
 - F. Ability to develop plan for teaching, directing and polishing a song
 - G. Ability to coach individual sections
 - H. Ability to place your chorus for maximum sound
 - I. Ability to choose and work with a coach
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III. How does the choice of music affect all four categories?

- A. You are what you sing to most audiences -- the material you do says something about you and who you are as a performer.
- B. If singers have to concentrate on technique because the music is too difficult for them, it affects the salesmanship of the music, which affects the showmanship category.
- C. Sound: Part lines of song and how they effect balance (lead/bari relationship)
- D. Lyrical content (hard consonants, open vowels) effects both sound and expression - ability to match vowels effect sound.
- E. Vehicle that demands non-stop breathing patterns effects vocal delivery
- F. Vehicle that calls for lots of choreography, clever physical movement (or the opposite - calls for drama but little movement) puts challenges on all categories because increases chance for out of une/syncopation problems/diction difficulties.

IV. What should the timetable be for determining competition music?

- A. The earlier the better. No matter how hard a director has worked to make sure that the arrangement will be good for the chorus, you never really know until you've learned it. And until you've learned it you don't know if it will show you off or show off your flaws.
- B. Having several competition numbers in your repertoire is a good idea, so that you have choices.
- C. Leave time for other music to prevent boredom and lack of interest.

V. What are the factors that make the music easy/ medium/ difficult?

- A. Rangy melody lines usually require rangy harmony lines that are generally difficult to sing. Same thing is true for wide interval jumps in the melody, especially in uptunes.
- B. Spread voicings – two octave type chords
- C. Baritone lines that stay predominately above the lead rather than below or a mixture of above/below.
- D. Lots of accidentals that affect tuning.
- E. Singable songs need logical breathing places
- F. Key changes
- G. Medleys and the transitions from one song to another
- H. Tempo changes
- I. Degree of drama needed (dynamic changes) to deliver the message of the song

A YEAR IF THE LIFE OF A SONG!

Music Search	8 Wks.
<i>Send for arrangements, analyze w. music team</i>	
Arranger Interface	3
<i>Changes?</i>	
Director's Time with Song	4
<i>Plan interp, spot challenges, etc.</i>	
Section Leader/Choreo Team Meeting	1
<i>Introduce song plan, discuss visuals</i>	
Learning Tapes	3
<i>In-house team or learning tape service</i>	
Introduce Song to Chorus	1
<i>Distribute Learning Tapes</i>	
First Rehearsal/Sectionals	1
<i>Song plan to Chorus, first Section Review</i>	
Learning Rehearsals	3
<i>Getting the notes, Section unity</i>	
2nd Sectional	1
<i>Clean-up and Unit Work</i>	
General Rehearsals	4
<i>Solidify 4 parts</i>	
COACHING SESSION # 1	1
<i>Vocal production, interp, problem spots</i>	
Coaching Follow-Up & Introduce Choreography	2
<i>Reinforce coaching, any changes</i>	
In-the Trenches	4
<i>Choreo, interp, V.P. & Sectionals</i>	
COACHING SESSION # 2	1
<i>Visuals, vocal & emotional performance</i>	
Review	4
<i>Reinforce coaching, choreo changes, Sectionals</i>	
COACHING SESSION # 3	1
<i>Fine-tune the performance</i>	
Polish	2
<i>Solidify the "fine-points" coaching</i>	
"Security" Rehearsals	4
<i>Ingrain! Perform! Final Sectionals</i>	
"Crisis" Factor	3
<i>For anything not anticipated! The "extra" time we always wish we had ...</i>	

CONTEST PERFORMANCE

WEEK 52 !!

TYPES OF COACHES

COMPLETE COACH

This type of coach is qualified in all phases of the barbershop art form. The coach is entirely responsible for music selection, interpretation and presentation. The coach selects costumes and advises on all things barbershop, both on and off the stage. The group essentially makes no decisions without the input of the complete coach.

ALL AROUND COACH

This coach is also qualified in all phases of the barbershop art form. The coach and the group together make the best decisions for the group. The coach advises the group when it seems reasonable to get other outside coaching in some phase of performing, arranging, costuming and showmanship.

SPECIALTY COACH

This coach is primarily an expert in one or two important elements of the barbershop art form. This type of coach is often used by a group in addition to any regular coach they may have.

CHORUS DIRECTOR OR QUARTET MEMBER COACH

This type of coach usually has a limited amount of time for coaching, but can be a valuable resource, because of her musical experience, and can be of great help to local groups.

FIFTH EAR

This person could be anyone who has a good ear, time, and a willingness to listen and tell the group what flaws they hear in the performance. The fifth ear may not always have a coaching solution to the problem, but can be a valuable resource pinpointing areas that need improvement.

ANALYST

Finds the problem – just says, “fix it.” Doesn’t always have a solution but recognizes the problem.

TECHNICAL/LEFT-BRAIN

Takes the technical approach to all problems and solutions. Does not relate well to imagery or feelings. Suggests solutions from the technical approach.

CREATIVE/RIGHT-BRAIN

Talks about feelings and sensations, Relates word pictures and images, uses descriptive adjectives. Might not always understand the technical aspects of singing or doesn't want to introduce that element when trying to solve creative problems

DEMONSTRATOR

Is able to define problems, and then successfully demonstrate the vocal quality, tone or visual picture desired. Sometimes uses taped or video examples of desired performances for group to imitate.

TYRANT

Tends to bully the group. Makes them conform to specific techniques and ideas. Aggressive personality—not afraid of confrontation. Her way or the highway!

PERMISSIVE

Has a very gentle approach—tends to avoid criticism. Believes you get more from the singers by always being positive. Works a lot on building confidence and self-esteem of the singers.

ARRANGER

Works through the arrangement to obtain the best creative musical product. Usually works with higher-level groups who have excellent vocal skills and who understands the art form.

PART SPECIALIST

Spends biggest percentage of time coaching one voice part—not the best choice for using as an all around coach, but excellent for building individual part skills.

VOICE TEACHER

Focuses most attention on building individual vocal skills of each singer. Is mostly interested in techniques to help build the group skills as a whole by improving each individual singer's skills.

CATEGORY SPECIALIST

Works on specific category to increase overall knowledge of the group. Ideal to have a coach in each category—ideal but probably not available to most groups.

SUPER COACH

Able to combine many or all of the above styles. Recognizes the most important needs of the group and is able to prioritize the problems. Sees the overall big picture.