2017 Texas Choral Directors Association Convention

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The Choir Director as the Voice Teacher: Pushing the Boundaries of Your Rehearsal

Focusing Your RehEARSal

A. Before Rehearsal

1. Listen to several recordings to gather an aesthetic appreciation of the various interpretations of the piece.

2. Sing through each part to gather familiarity of the challenges your singer might encounter. Use whatever tool you may ask your choir to use. (solfege, numbers, count singing)
   a. Take note of:
      1. Range
      2. Tessitura
      3. Passagio
      4. Difficult intervals

3. Re-listen to a single recording and focus your EAR to one voice part. Do this for each vocal part.

4. Redo step 3 but close your eyes and try to hear one voice part at a time.

5. Recite the text of the piece (out of rhythm).
   a. Take note of:
      1. Text stress
      2. Vowels (diphthongs, modification, unification)
      3. Consonants (combinations, pronunciation)

6. Recite the text of each voice part in rhythm
   a. Take note of
      1. Difficult rhythms
      2. Meter changes
      3. Words you do not know or can’t easily define clearly to your students

7. Sing through each line on text

8. Conducting for comprehension
   a. practice the gestures you will use in front of your students
   b. access how effectively those gestures inspired your singers’ vocalism to match your musical expectations

B. Error Detection Hierarchy

1. Rhythm: “The right note at the wrong time is still a wrong note!”
   a. Diction
      1. Consonants
         a. Execution
         b. Placement
   b. Tempo
      1. rushing
      2. dragging
      3. phasing between sections

2. Pitch
a. Accuracy  
b. Intonation  

3. Tone  
a. Quality  
   1. Placement  
   2. Chiaroscuro  
b. Appropriateness for piece  
   1. Genre (madrigal, motet)  
   2. Style (individual composer characteristics)  

4. Sound (Texture)  
a. Performance forces/balance  
   1. a cappella  
   2. instruments  
b. Hierarchy of voices  
   1. melody  
   2. counter-melody  

5. Harmony  
a. cadence structures  
   1. intonation implications  
b. tonal areas  
   1. major vs. minor vs. modal  
   2. relationship to text  

Rehearsal Strategies  

A. Vocal Techniques  
1. Unifying the registers:  
   a. Descending scale (passaggio)  
      Men: falsetto to head voice,  
      Ladies: bringing head voice down (no belt)  
   b. Trumpet exercise (do re do so la so do)  

2. Messa di voce: singing on sustained note maintaining consistent resonance and vibrato while evenly increasing and then decreasing volume throughout the note.  
   Benefits: 1. build stamina through increasing the duration of the sustained note.  
   2. breath management NOT control  
   3. tone builder!  
   4. opportunity to incorporate kinesthetic learning  
   5. builds musicianship  

3. Developing vocalism  
a. Releasing the tone – onset:  
   1. ("e" 4 note exercise)  
   2. physical gesture  
b. Imagination (imagery) – feeling the voice  
   1. Figurative language  
   2. Connecting the Breath to the Voice  
      - Renee Fleming breath: “singing on a cushion of air.”  

c. Modeling  
   1. An efficient method for communicating your musical expectations or ideas: Hissing/Buzzing vs. Warm breath on a cold window  

4. Placement – where singers direct sound  
   - Chiaroscuro:  
     a. Chiaro – bright tone quality (forward)  
     b. Oscuro – dark tone quality (back)  
     c. Chiaroscuro - balanced