

Pillars of Choral Excellence

Non-Negotiables from Which to Begin for Magical, Musical Performances

TCDA Thursday, July 25, 2019

2:45 PM, Room CC221

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The following are possible with intentional planning, honest self-assessment and constant monitoring throughout the year.

As it is with discipline, **CONSISTENCY in EVERY rehearsal**, EVERY DAY is mandatory.

The nuts and bolts are PITCHES & RHYTHMS - “givens” in the hierarchy of learning.

Ideally, each pillar should be developed after intentional study and implemented through clear, concise lesson plans and reinforced through creative repetition in the rehearsal.

Sound & Musicianship for all choirs (from varsity level to least developed)

- I. Beautiful tone. Define it and record your warm-ups. Are they producing the sound you want consistently?
- II. Homogenous vowel production- within a section and from section to section.
VOWEL GUIDE: OO->EH->EE & OO->OH->AH
- III. Phrasing: macro (over-arching phrase) and micro (smaller phrases within) that have purposeful destination. [End -> Beginning]
- IV. Dynamic “vocabulary”
- V. Syllable and word stress: no two 8th notes alike
no two quarter notes alike.
- VI. Style – an understanding of performance practices for varied periods of time.
- VII. Articulation
- VIII. Bonus – change of tone/timbre based on style of song.
- IX. If using rote teaching for younger/beginning learners, what is the “plan” to move from rote to read? Needs to be in place now.

Repertoire Selection - Programming

Repertoire selection and programming are curriculum & meal planning all rolled into one.

Each song is a text book.

- I. Difficulty of repertoire - Allow for one “breather” of sorts – all of your music should not be from the 5 list (HS) or 3 list (MS). “Challenge” them artistically as well as vocally.
- II. Beginning of the year repertoire should NOT be so hard that you are killing yourself and your students to get it learned. Consider music that builds tone, focuses on the musical line and is ACCESSIBLE.
- III. Do not select repertoire that is beyond their reading ability AT THAT TIME.
- IV. Variety is extremely important:
Tempo
Style/Period
Key center

Divisii
Harmonic language/complexity
Rhythmic complexity
*Language (could add 1-2 weeks)

V. Save yourself perusal time!

Artistic vs hard

Polished or “almost” (needs 2 more weeks)

Time to SR a few times a week or having to call extra rehearsals because rep is taking all of the rehearsal time

Plan for Sequential Teaching

1. Teach rhythms before looking at song (including all like patterns throughout)
 - a. Extract and breakdown rhythms for better understanding and skill development
 - b. Learning rhythm doesn't only include chanting - singing is also encouraged
 - c. Include emphasis on strong beats - always keep the text in mind
2. Add solfegge – always with appropriate, desired tone
 - a. Introduce the key of the song through previous sight-reading
 - b. Extract only the melodic contour in solfegge (before looking at song) for greater mastery later
 - c. Chant solfegge in rhythm - add emphasis on strong beats
 - d. Chant text in rhythm to reinforce understanding
 - e. Add syllabic and word stress emphasizing desired vowels
3. Sing on solfegge – with desired vowels and tone
 - a. Focus on accuracy
 - b. Add in syllabic / word stress
 - c. Add in final consonants for rhythmic releases and onset of sound
4. Sing on neutral syllable – with desired vowels and tone
 - a. Focus on accuracy
 - b. Add in syllabic / word stress
 - c. Add in final consonants for rhythmic releases and onset of sound
5. Monotone chant and sing the text – with desired vowels and tone
 - a. If singing in parts, separate to different notes of the tonic chord
 - b. Add in syllabic / word stress
 - c. Repetition of the release of final consonants will, most likely, be needed
6. Sing on text – emphasizing desired vowels and tone
 - a. Focus on pitch accuracy
 - b. Add in syllabic / word stress
 - c. Explore combinations of voice parts
 - i. sop 1 / alto
 - ii. sop1 sop 2
 - iii. sop / bass
 - iv. alto /tenor
 - v. alto/bass
 - vi. sop / tenor
 - vii. women
 - viii. men

REPETITION IS YOUR FRIEND and the key to successful learning.

(Always emphasize and insist on desired tone and vowels)