

ALL FOR ONE AND ALL FOR ONE

WHY DO WE CARE ABOUT BEING UNIFIED?

- The most enjoyable quartet experiences tend to occur when the foursome is all on the same page.
- The more aligned the group, the greater the chance of achieving success – whatever that means to your quartet.
- The element of “unit” appears in all 4 SAI Judging categories.
- The audience experience of a quartet performance is impacted by the degree of unit displayed by the performing ensemble.
- In what ways do we aim to be unified? Focus on the unification of the music and visual aspects of performance, as well as the non-singing aspects of quartet life – both on and off the stage.
- Plan it! Practice it!

“A boat doesn’t go forward if each one is rowing his own way”
Swahili Proverb

TIPS FOR BUILDING MUSICAL UNITY

- Use warm-ups as skill building and unit building time.
- Break it down: all sing lead, duets, trio.
- While singing, actively THINK about singing as one!
- “Surrender to the unit”.
- Rehearse facing each other while singing.
- Physically connect with each other while singing.
- Lead “direct” the other parts to clarify plan.
- Audio record and listen back together and analyze.
- Utilize internal and external coaching.
- Lead makes a recording of herself/himself for others.
- Pick an area for “unit focus” for each rehearsal and aim to improve in that area for the rehearsal. For example:
 - Focus on breaths being together and of the same variety (free and open).
 - Be clear about the tempo/rhythm of a song. Work with a metronome, or create human metronome.
 - Clarify the interpretive plan for a song – agree on desired word flow, duration of consonants/vowels/breaths and releases.

The Buzz “Six-Step Procedure” for working a song

1. Melody – helps harmony parts learn timing and lead inflections.
2. Unison – SUPER SYNC STRENGTHENER!!
 - Attacks and releases
 - Internal sync
 - Vowels, diphthongs, consonants
 - Vowel resonance
3. All the possible duets – helps strengthen octaves, unity in moving parts.
4. All the possible trios
5. Three vs. One – very helpful in choruses!
6. Reassemble!

TIPS FOR BUILDING VISUAL UNITY

- Use warm-ups as tool to unify physically.
- Rehearse “mirroring” each other.
- Video during rehearsal and review together. Note the areas that require attention.
- Utilize internal and external coaching.
- Pick an area for “unit focus” for each rehearsal.
For ex:
 - posture
 - natural movement while singing
 - facial expressions
 - choreography
 - Discuss and clarify the characterization/emotional plan for a song.

UNITY IN THE NON-SINGING ELEMENTS

- Costume/uniform & other quartet clothing options.
- Make up and hair for performances.
- Quartet personality.
- Whether you are in an existing foursome, or are looking to form a quartet, it’s helpful to spend a few moments exploring your collective expectations. The goal is to find out if you all want the same things, and are able / willing to commit the time and other resources necessary. (Questionnaire)

ALL FOR ONE: Twenty Questions Quartet Questionnaire

1. Why do you want to be in a quartet? What are you hoping the experience will bring to you?
2. What type of quartet do you want to have? Do you want to compete? do public performances? Or “for fun”?
3. What are your goals for the quartet?
4. How often would you like to get together to rehearse? Do you have any schedule limitations?
5. What does your ideal quartet rehearsal look like? How much preparation do you wish to do on your own?
6. Are you willing/able to travel for quartet? Either for rehearsals, attend shows, regional events etc?
7. What qualities are most important to you in the other members of your quartet?
8. How would you describe yourself and the qualities you think you'd bring to the quartet?
9. What kinds of music would you most like to sing in a quartet?
10. How do you learn music? Will you need help in this area? Can you help others in this area?

11. What kind of quartet “image” do you envision?
12. Who is your favorite Sweet Adeline or barbershopper who sings your part?
13. Do you have the financial ability to commit to being in a quartet?
14. If the quartet earns money, how do you believe that income should be spent/split?
15. What other obligations do you have that may take priority over singing?
16. Are there any coaches you’d like to work with? Or NOT work with?
17. Do you possess any special skills/experience that you wish to bring to this quartet?
18. How do you envision the breakdown of responsibilities for the quartet (for example, costuming, picking music, treasurer, scheduling etc)?
19. Is there a costume style that you will absolutely NOT wear?
20. Are you ready to be part of a very special team?

"Build for your team a feeling of oneness, of dependence on one another and of strength to be derived by unity." Vince Lombardi

THE NON-SINGING MOMENTS OF A PERFORMANCE

CAPTURING YOUR AUDIENCE - COMMAND & STAGE PRESENCE

Why does unified stage presence matter for quartet performers?

- “Impressionism” – what kind of impression does your performing group make on the audience?
- Professionalism and the sophisticated modern audience.
- Capture the audience and put them at ease.
- In SAI competition, this element is part of the showmanship category.
- As performer, your experience will be more enjoyable.
- Plan this! Practice this!

CONSIDER THE “FIVE ELEMENTS”

1. ENTRANCE

- Ideal: well planned, rehearsed and executed as a unit.
- All performers greet the audience with huge, sincere smiles indicating that they are thrilled about the opportunity to entertain.
- Energized physical posture and confident stride from the unit.
- A well-timed audience greeting followed by a fluid retreat from the edge of stage to the “starting position” at the microphone.
- A strong connection with the audience from the moment the quartet hits the stage that is maintained throughout by the unit.

2. PITCH PIPE TECHNIQUE

- To take pitch or not to take pitch? That is the question. There really is no question – if it will set the unit up for a strong, confident, in-tune start to your song/performance then YES!
- No points given for not taking pitch. However points can be lost if as result of not taking pitch your performance is shaky or otherwise negatively affected.
- What does audience assess? Showmanship judge? Fluidity & timing and how it is incorporated into the performance.
- Plan who will blow pitch, when it will be blown, how and where the pitch pipe will be stored and removed for the next song. And then practice this as a quartet.
- The manner in which the pitch pipe is blown can also assist with the setting of the mood.

3. TRANSITIONS / TIMING AUDIENCE APPLAUSE

- Planning and rehearsing these as a unit supports the professionalism of your performance.
- Must keep the audience connection/interest. Don't want them to use this break in the music as time to leave to use the restroom!
- Remember, you are still on stage and you are all visible! Do not adjust your costume, scratch your face etc. Maintain the energized posture, involved face and be attentive to what is happening.
- Strive for fluidity - if you are between songs, move as a unit with purpose from one place to the next.
- Applause Acceptance : Gauge your audience while you are accepting applause and begin to retreat back to the microphone (or leave the stage) when you feel the crest of the wave of applause. You do not wish to be standing in "applause acceptance" mode when the applause has started to wane; this leads to a gap in the flow and can create audience & performer discomfort.
- Setting the Mood : The transition period can help establish the atmosphere/mood for your next song. Facial expression, body posture, speed and timing all assist the performer in preparing the audience for a ballad or uptune performance. It can be jarring to the audience if a conflicting message is provided during the transition/set up of the next song.

4. EMCEE SPOT

- The manner in which the speaker approaches the microphone and addresses the audience (energy, posture and manner of speech) can maintain the audience connection. All members should reflect this.
- Non-speaking members are still in performance mode and should remain engaged and energized while taking a "back seat" to the emcee. You are the supporting cast.
- All should pay attention to what is happening – you never know when something might happen on stage and you might need to improvise!
- If you don't appear interested in what your quartet-mate is saying to the audience, the audience won't be interested either! Remember, the audience takes their cues from you the performer!
- Know where all should be looking during an emcee spot.
- Emcee spot should flow with the rest of the performance and the transition in and out of the emcee spot should be seamless. All members are involved.

5. EXIT

- You are almost done! You want to leave a positive, lasting impression so be sure you are still performing until you leave the stage!
- The same confident, energized manner with which you took the stage is the ideal way to leave your audience. Maintain eye contact, have gracious smiles and leave the audience feeling like it was your pleasure to have entertained them!
- If you are unhappy with your performance, or the audience response, or one of your quartet-mates, don't let the audience know! An otherwise wonderful audience experience might be tainted with a hasty quartet retreat from the stage, or faces that reveal discomfort or unhappiness with the performance.
- If appropriate, you can show some creativity and incorporate the character or theme from your performance into the exit. Do so as a unit!

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On or off the stage, strive for unity in all aspects of your quartet life for the highest sense of satisfaction and enjoyment. A successful quartet experience is not all about accolades and applause – at the end of the day, you are a team...a team that ideally will be in step with each other both on and off the stage. All for one and all for one!

