

“Big Ears”

**Analytical Listening for Directors, Coaches, Music Team, and everyone!
HCNW, 2013**

Vocal Skills

- Posture
- Breathing
- Phonation
- Resonation
- Articulation

Read your “Bible!”

SAI and BHS both make our judging categories as transparent as possible. Familiarize yourself with the categories and levels as much as possible. For many, one area will be focused on with personal “hot buttons;” this is fine as long as it communicated to the ensemble with whom you are working (i.e. sound-emphasis on blend on balance; Music-emphasis on meaningful plans, dynamics, and tuning, etc.,).

Where do I Begin? (Prioritizing the session)

- Identify goals before starting (especially coaching); How much time do you have?
- Listen to more than one song/exercise to identify common themes/areas
- Don’t be afraid to make notes as you go
- Be sure to also make note of what’s going well and share!
- Start at the foundation and build up (Vocal skills, musical, performance)
- Don’t try to fix everything! Focus on several key areas and work those.
- Common vocal production areas (strengths and weaknesses): posture, breath, phrase ends, resonance, vowels/diphthongs, articulation
- Common musical areas: wrong notes, tempo/rhythm, dynamics, tuning (chords and intervals), balance, exploit the Barbershop!!!
- Common performance areas: characterization, choreography (moves vs. how the moves are being performed), focused energy vs. “popcorn,” exploit the Barbershop!!!!
- Directors, make use of a long-range plan to be sure all of the areas you wish to cover get done!

Elements of Synchronization

- Breath unity (timing and space)
- Resonance (shared)
- Vowel matching (targets, diphthongs, glides)
- Word Sounds (singable consonants, inflection)
- Dynamics
- Balance (cone, chord, P-tuning)
- Tempo/Rhythm
- Visual (faces lifted, emotional storytelling, visual plan)

Techniques

- Bubbling
- Duetting/small groups/pods
- off the risers
- who's doing it right?
- “Do” work
- identify BBS embellishments (duets, patter, swipes, echoes, pickups, contrary motion a.k.a. “scissors”)

When in Doubt:

- Are they standing as if they're ready to sing beautifully/excellently?
- How are they breathing (silent? shallow? “hot air?,” TOGETHER?)
- Are all the notes correct?
- Is the cone intact?
- Are vowels matched and resonated as a unit?
- Are there synch errors? If so, why?
- Are there dynamics? Could softs be softer/better supported? Could louds be more free and musical?
- Is the tempo consistent?
- Does the phrase plan fit with the message of the song? Is it meaningful storytelling?

Bibliography/Suggested Reading

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