

# INSPIRATION RESOURCES

There are many places to go for ideas and inspiration. This list will give you some ideas to start, but the ideas can come from anywhere! I carry a small notebook to jot down ideas and have even taken photos/video of great movement if I can. Here's just a start:

## ***Film & Television***

- Movie musicals – look for productions from the same time period as the song
- Glee, So You Think You Can Dance, Dancing with the Stars, etc.
- Children's programming - they utilize big movements to convey story (ballads!)
- Non-Barbershop performances – refresh your view by seeking out other interpretations

## ***Live Performance***

- Musical Theater – from professional to community, all skill levels can offer ideas
- Concerts – There's often dancing behind that singing! Look for attitude, story, creativity
- Street/Community Performance – how do they draw people in? What made it compelling?

## ***Non-Barbershop Music***

- Listen to alternate versions of your music and see how YOU move
- Research the history of the song – from a show? Time period? Original audience?

## ***Other places***

- Dance it out yourself – how do you move? How is the character working for you?
- Dance it out with your team – do some movements happen naturally? Can you build on them?
- Watch your chorus perform the song – is someone already doing something awesome? Steal it!
- Watch your director lead the song – is he/she doing something that will work for the group?
- You-Tube
- Old chorus videos/DVDs – anything you can recycle from another song?
- Past International chorus videos/DVDs – watch with no sound on

After you have soaked in some inspiration, **stop** looking at other performances and start creating your own. I find that watching another chorus perform the same song blocks up my own creativity, so I'll watch video of similar songs instead. Make sure you're creating your own work instead of only modifying someone else's... yours might be even better!

# TEACHING TIPS AND TRICKS

Now that you've created the plan, how do you get it out of your brain and into theirs?

## ***In Rehearsal***

Teach in sections from the tag backwards – they know the destination!

Complex songs may need more than one session – break it up

Set up the ground rules before you begin the session – my list:

- Please do not talk
- Please do not help each other
- I will not take questions until the end

**Stick to your rules.** If you said no questions, don't take any!

Keep the pace up – too much explaining/lag time gets boring

Use your director – have them there to direct their tempo and musical plan

Break complex moves into parts, then assemble the whole

Repetition is key – run small sections several times, then add longer section

## ***Stick It***

***Choreo CPR*** – members create tools that work for **THEM**

Record the session and make it available to members

- For learning: Record from **their** view – you from center of top riser or once from each side, top riser
- For reference: Record from the audience view

Teach a small group ahead of time – they can anchor the rest

The usual – early rehearsals, rehearsing by row or riser section

## ***General***

Figure out your teaching style – stick with what feels authentically you

Work with your director – what is his/her vision for the song?

Choreograph to the final interpretation, not the learning track

Enlist helpers for choreo review, characterization examples, etc.

Mix it up – have a great dancer? Join the visual team and let them design it

Your most tragic performers can become your strongest, don't give up!

Stay on the risers for a few weeks – give them time to miss you out front

Be a good example – if you don't perform your best, why should they?

# CHOREOGRAPHY DEVELOPMENT & TRIAGE

## ***Identify the “Core Emotion” and the Character***

- Imagine the “reason” this song was written – what was the lyricist saying?
- Establish one specific mood/emotion in the song
- Choose attitudes of strength (coy rather than sweet, passionate rather than sad)
- Describe the character – make an analogy to a well-known person, texture, color

## ***Block or “Stage” the Song***

- An attention-grabbing opening - establish mood/character
- Reinforce the musical peak - physically grow, spread, sustain phrase
- Support transitions - changing tempos, new song in a medley, etc
- Distinguish repeated passages – simple the first time, then develop complexity
- Careful with the tough spots – challenging passages need support, not choreo
- A memorable closing - strength and clear character

## ***Create Actual Moves, with the following factors in mind***

- Alignment - always keep the body in good singing alignment
- Simplicity - strong/simple moves communicate unity/power
- Spontaneity - avoid constant specific gestures that act out the lyrics
- Precision - precise unit poses/moves are tough, does the song require this?
- Continuity - character poses can serve as a unifying theme
- Visibility - keep riser moves above chest height for maximal visual effect
- Surprises - unexpected attitude changes are fun and visually exciting!
- Individuality – fun to include times when everyone can “do her own thing”
- Plan “Kodak Moments” when the audience sees a still and unified picture.

## ***Why isn’t this working!?!?!***

- Singing skills are compromised
- Inadequate breakdown of movement parts
- Characterization mismatch or confusion
- Doesn’t match interpretive plan
- Doesn’t suit style of group

## ***What can I do!?!?***

- WATCH – look for what’s working or not working, assess from a distance
- DANCE – Can it be made more intuitive? What voice part are you listening to?
- Show, don’t explain; provide small and immediate breakdown comments
- Adjust the move to suit the interp/chorus style/character
- Removing choreo is NOT a punishment