

BBS Embellishments and Nuances

There are numerous kinds of embellishments and each and every one of them, no matter how seemingly insignificant has emotional value. All of them require some degree of finesse to be really effective. Dynamics (dramatic and subtle), vocal textures, ritard, accelerando, lyric inflection, artistic breathing and good, solid vocal production are among the many skills needed to sing truly effective BBS Embellishments and Nuances.

Consider the following when working with BBS Embellishments:

- All embellishments, no matter how small, are worthy of our musical attention and creativity.
- The listener wants (and needs) to hear the parts in motion – even if they are not the melody.
- The “stationary” parts AREN’T. Activate and impassion your sound to give it movement in order to maintain the forward motion of the phrase. (The notes don’t have to be changing to maintain forward motion.)
- Remember, if you hold it-----
 - BUILD IT, or
 - do SOMETHING with it, or
 - BLOSSOM your sound...
- Pick your descriptor, but do more than just “sit” there or “wait” while the moving parts are in play.
- Strive to achieve a “no interval” vocal line – a breath driven sound. Finesse cannot be achieved without this. Remember, an embellishment is *moving sound*, NOT changing pitches.
- An embellishment should always be part of the overall “motion” of the phrase, never interrupting the flow and movement to the ultimate destination: the climax
- Embellishments represent points of emphasis or heightened emotion within your phrasing plan. Use them to help you build momentum toward the climax of the song.
- Maintain context when deciding how to handle an embellishment. The effectiveness of what an embellishment accomplishes within your plan is determined by knowing its context...what precedes and what follows it, as well as ultimately, where the song is “headed.”

Some of the commonly used embellishments and nuances include:

The echo:

- commonly used in BBS arrangements
- the primary lyric and repeat lyric should NOT be executed identically
- consider lyric inflection, rhythmic change, dynamic change, changed vocal color, etc.

The power swipe:

- build and lift before moving the pitch
- the movement of your sound should be in an arc up and away from you before the pitch begins to move down (or up)

The contrary motion swipe:

- usually a three note (or chord) progression
- the two parts in opposing motion passing through an octave (perfectly executed) on the middle chord
- the “stationary” parts must actively participate in the dimension of the swipe

Unison, to be totally effective requires:

- matched pitch
- matched singing space (resonation)
- as well as matched vowel

The peel off:

- frequently begins as a unison of two or more parts
- demands the skill required of the unison,
- followed by the singers’ ability to maintain the shared space created on the unison while moving to separate notes

The melody hand-off:

- a more subtle and, therefore, more demanding kind of vocal nuance
- requires heightened attention to shared vocal space by the two parts executing the hand-off
- frequently found at tags; mostly when melody moves from lead to tenor
- can also happen in the body of a song; most often in this case moving from lead to bass, then back to lead...even in a contest song (generally limited to a maximum of 8 measures of non-lead melody)
- the listener’s tracking of the melody should not be “jarred” as the melody moves from part to part

There’s nothing more “BBS” than the BBS Embellishment. Not much will get a rise out of an audience like an embellishment, so be sure to add these exciting elements to your next performance and get your audience on their feet!

Barbershop Embellishments

Examples

SWIPES

41
smiled - - - - - ! And then the spell was
42

43
cast - - - - - , And here we are in Hea - - -
44 45

46
eh-yn, For you are mine - - - - - , Mine, at last - - - !
47 48 49 50

Unison & Peel Off

Cry
Cry. I made you cry
Cry. I made you cry

*Brian Beck
Sung by Side Street Ramblers, 1983*

Swipe & Melody Handoff

63
mine sweet lov - ey mine lov - ey
64 65 66

3
cu - dle up-sweet lov - ey mine
gliss.

67
mine
68

Patter

59
come on an' cud-dle
so cud - dle up - 3 cud - dle up

19
Ain't cha got no rhymes for me?
Ain't cha got no rhymes for me?

20
Ain't cha got no rhymes for me?

Detailed description: This musical score consists of two systems. The first system, labeled '59', shows a vocal line with the lyrics 'come on an' cud-dle' and a piano accompaniment with the lyrics 'so cud - dle up - 3 cud - dle up'. The second system, labeled '19' and '20', shows a vocal line with the lyrics 'Ain't cha got no rhymes for me?' and a piano accompaniment with the lyrics 'Ain't cha got no rhymes for me?'. The piano part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

Echo

18
That's my ad - vice. Mis-tah

19
That's my ad - vice!

20
That's my ad - vice!

Detailed description: This musical score consists of two systems. The first system, labeled '18', shows a vocal line with the lyrics 'That's my ad - vice. Mis-tah' and a piano accompaniment. The second system, labeled '19' and '20', shows a vocal line with the lyrics 'That's my ad - vice!' and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.