

Rehearsin' Better...

CONFESSION TIME:

Perhaps one of the hardest things to admit as a musical leader in Sweet Adelines is the fact that sometimes we'd rather go to the movies or stay home. Sometimes we just don't want or can't seem to get it together. It is for these times that the following TOP TEN flexibility ideas were created. Nothing can take the place of good solid planning. Good direction requires it and good directors do it. There are, however, times when even good directors just don't have it in them for whatever reason. Hopefully these ten scenarios will be helpful. Pull one of these out on "One of Those Nights." It might help. Always remember, nothing lasts forever. Good luck and good rehearsing!

1. PITCH'NTAG

Work only the beginning and ending of each song in your repertoire. Practice taking the pitches in quick series using various orders. Sing pitches or beginning words if chorus doesn't "pitch-up."

- Alphabetically
- In order of performance or backwards
- Random selection

Tag out each song finding the portion of the music that begins the end of the song. This can often be challenging for the singers to pickup and take off.

2. IN-COMMON CONNECTION

Divide the group by using some facts about the individual member. Once you have the groups, you can rehearse whatever needs work. Groups should be in a circle so that you can stand in the center to listen, fix and encourage.

Examples of groupings can be:

- Eye color, hair color, height

Or as fun as:

- Number of children, make or model of car

This is a good way to change the scenery. It is great for those times when you need to memorize a song. Be creative.

3. ENSEMBLE SINGING

Divide into sections, number from one to four to create small choruses. Choose a challenging section that is driving you crazy. Each group works together in front of the chorus with you directing. Chorus listens and helps by commenting on all the qualities necessary for good singing.

- Well-produced tone, blend/unit/ singing vowels at the same time, tuning, etc.
- Keep it simple and focused.

One of the reasons you are good is that you get to listen every week. Giving your singers that chance occasionally will strengthen the musical product.

4. CIRCLE THE SINGERS

Each section forms a circle around the nest. Usually tenor section is the smallest so they would be in the center. Form four circles inside each other and the director is in the middle. It's another way to group and listen. It's a great way to get off the risers when you need a break.

5. PICK A NUMBER

Choose a number. The singer who picks the right number gets to choose a song to sing. It's a good way to go through repertoire and find our songs that are favorites. It's a fun way to start or end a rehearsal. Do a member survey to find out what songs are favorites and what songs they would drop if it was their choice. It never hurts to ask!

6. BACKWARDS NIGHT OR "TAG IT OUT"

Take your entire rehearsal and reverse it. Warm-ups at the end – that will get their attention. If this is making you nervous, you can take your closing song and work it gently singing on vowels, humming, oohing for a 5-10 minute time-out where the member warms her own instrument. That's really backwards.

7. SWITCH

Nothing takes the place of "walking in someone else's shoes." Singing somewhere else can be an eye-opener. Let every row feel what front row singing feels like; the front row going to the back and feel the heat that only top row folks feel. When you switch, have every row move forward, with the row in front going to the back last. May not be the best sounding chorus for you but there are bound to be benefits in making the switch.

8. WHO? ME?

Ask someone to name her favorite song and invite her to stand in front with you to listen. You can take this further and ask her to try directing it. Careful though, this is a tricky area, some folks just won't let go, so be specific in your instructions and be prepared to let them go. Don't force them but by all means encourage them.

9. HERE COMES DE JUDGE

Four chairs, four pad and pencils, four people and you're all set. Give your singers a chance to evaluate their own group. Blossoming coaches may appear. Be open. It's fun.

10. CHORUS APPRECIATION

It's natural sometimes to want what you don't have – let's give it to them. Got a small chorus? Make them feel like a large one. Push them toward the middle; crowd them together. Have them sing and dance like that. Large choruses need one-half their singers to sit or stand in front of the risers while the other half spreads out. Divide in thirds if it's still too big. We can all learn from this one. Careful what you wish for – you just might get it.

From Vickie Maybury, Master 700 Director of Skyline Chorus

1. Have them record themselves singing a song, then go off and self-evaluate and turn in a self-critique including what they like about their voice. (20 minutes)
2. Switch sides for singing (any amount of time)
3. Pull rows off for character feedback (perform and piece of song) have each member of the row watching call out names of people who had the best character. (5 minutes per row)
4. Break into FIX IT sectionals spot working a key change or interval sectional for repetitions (10 minutes)
5. Pair up and have the ones off watching while the twos perform and give feedback to each other, then switch. (12 minutes)
6. Teach a tag by ear and have everyone tag in a quartet or double quartet
7. Pick four people to sit out and be judges
8. Have the birthday girl sit out and listen to a song and critique.
9. Have each person do their own warm up on the risers (all at the same time – this is a hoot).
10. Have two circles - one inside the other – have them sing to each other and then for every bell (clap) they move to the next person while singing and performing
11. Assign each front row member – members to critique for a PSI (Personal Showmanship Improvement)

“BATTLE STATION” REHEARSALS

For a different approach to rehearsal, on occasion throughout the year you might try the following:

Divide the chorus into three (or two if necessary) mini-choruses (balance as well as possible) and have three activity areas. The areas should have a mix of singing and non-singing activities, time each session for 45 minutes, then ask the groups to switch to their next assigned area.

GROUP TOPIC SUGGESTIONS:

1. VIDEO ASSESSMENT – MOVIE TIME SHOW AN INTERNATIONAL TAPE

- **Use international competition video tapes to familiarize everyone with what a topnotch performance looks like.**
- **Discuss why it was such a good performance**
- **Discuss what you could use from that performance to enhance your performance, i.e. facial involvements et al.**

2. CHOREOGRAPHY

- **Polish existing moves using chorus tape.**
- **Teach new moves.**
- **Work on posture and faces.**
- **Practice acting techniques.**

3. VOCAL SKILLS WITH THE DIRECTOR

- **Work on vocal production.**
- **Work on specific music.**

4. MAKE-UP SESSION

- **Practice with current chorus make-up.**
- **Stage make –up demonstration from local little theatre company**

5. MUSIC THEORY

- **Teach the basics of reading music.**
- **Give a simple test at the end which the participants mark for themselves.**

6. STUDY THE JUDGING CATEGORIES

7. USE YOUR IMAGINATION – THE POSSIBILITIES ARE UNLIMITED!!

BARBERSHOP CONCEPTS: *HOW WE SANG TODAY*

Measures 1-8:

Octave locks: *-mor-*, *-row-*, *day* (first chord), *pray*—strongest octave voicing

Some 7th chords: *to-*, *-er*, *and*, *be*, *to-*, *geth*—final three in strongest voicing

Pythagorean tuning opportunities:

- Scale step 3—D: leads/baritones
- Scale step 6—G; basses/leads
- Scale step 7—A, tenor
- Accidentals going north—Tenors on B natural in measures 6-7

Measures 24-36:

Open and closed voicings—“family” vs. “sister” chords

Flow of musical line up and down

Good singing area for all parts

Other factors:

Measures 17, 27—Bass octave leaps

Measures 17-20—Baris accidental tuning challenges

Measures 33-36—Descending line in bass; relative balance; baritone tuning; lead hanger elevation; tenor strong in measure 34

Baritones above and below leads throughout this song

7th chords on these vowels: OH, EH, AH, UN

Breath plan:

Structure (AABB)

Measures 1-16—Declarative assertion of three “givens”

Measures 17-24—Imperatives and declarative assertion

Measures 25-36—Re-assertion and affirmation with parallel repetition of *I'm glad we laughed, I'm glad we loved, I'm glad we sang*—cf with lyrics in measures 21-22

Two meanings of the word *How*

Other aspects that can be taught: Lyrical expression, word sounds, chord balance, part lines, intervals, rubato, dynamics

HOW WE SANG TODAY!

A song in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Sweet Adelines International

Words, Music and Arrangement by VICKI J. UHR

Dedicated to the memory of BEV SELLERS

Tenor Lead

Bari Bass

To - mor - row's an - oth - er day I hope and

pray we'll be to - geth - er To - mor - row this to -

day will be a yes - ter - day that's gone for -

to - day

ev - er So take my hand, my friend, I want to

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How We Sang Today!

say, to say, I'm glad we laughed and loved and sang to - geth - er to

Measures 19-22: Treble and bass clef staves with lyrics. Measure 19 has a whole note chord. Measure 20 has a half note chord. Measure 21 has a half note chord. Measure 22 has a half note chord.

day, to - day, So take my hand, my hand, I want to take my hand.

Measures 23-26: Treble and bass clef staves with lyrics. Measure 23 has a whole note chord. Measure 24 has a half note chord. Measure 25 has a half note chord. Measure 26 has a half note chord with a triplet of eighth notes.

say, want to say, I'm glad we laughed, I'm glad we

Measures 27-29: Treble and bass clef staves with lyrics. Measure 27 has a whole note chord. Measure 28 has a half note chord. Measure 29 has a half note chord with a *(same note)* annotation above it.

loved. I'm glad we sang Oh. how we sang!

Measures 30-32: Treble and bass clef staves with lyrics. Measure 30 has a whole note chord. Measure 31 has a half note chord. Measure 32 has a half note chord with a triplet of eighth notes.

How we sang to - day! day! How we sang to - day!

Measures 33-36: Treble and bass clef staves with lyrics. Measure 33 has a whole note chord. Measure 34 has a half note chord. Measure 35 has a half note chord. Measure 36 has a half note chord.