***The 3 R’s – Repertoire, Rehearsal & Results Practical / Efficient / Results Oriented***

***REPERTOIRE SELECTION***

1. Create a flow of selections that will sustain interest throughout the performance – that will engage the audience (judges), singers and conductor. Set a mood / take a journey. I, personally, am not necessarily interested in programming for the elite or esoteric. I want to connect with the audience and then MOVE THEM.
2. Consider your choir’s strengths and weaknesses - *Custom fit* your selections just for your choir. What are the strengths and limitations of your group? What are your limitations?
3. Consider your accompanist’s abilities and the amount of time you will have with them.
4. Start strong – this sets the tone for the entire performance.
5. Think in terms of an *opener,* a *closer* and contrasting *middle pieces*. Where does a piece fit in the program? Consider an “anchor” piece.
6. Beware of selections that are too stylistically similar or share the same key, tempo or dynamics. Variety is the key. Each piece should demonstrate something different.
7. Consider varied languages and varied historical styles.
8. Choose *worthy* repertoire that is achievable by your choir. *Harder*

 does not necessarily mean *better.* How many easy, medium &

 difficult pieces on the program?

1. Consider the amount of rehearsal time available prior to the performance. Vary difficulty.
2. If possible, preview the concert by listening to good recordings of your selections – listen in concert order, in one sitting. Does the concert have a natural progression? Is there good variety? Is the music engaging? Does it fit your choir? Can you teach the music in the time you have available? When completed, this exercise should have given you an objective perspective regarding the concert you have chosen.

Remember, choosing a great program with good flow consisting of outstanding repertoire by master composers is *not a guarantee* of a successful concert experience. Obviously, consistent, sequential, focused day-to-day instruction is a MUST! However, a great program will certainly help pave the way to success.

***REHEARSAL TECHNIQUE***

What is rehearsal technique? Do I have one? Where can I get one?

For better or worse, whatever you are doing

day after day, week after week is

**YOUR TECHNIQUE!**

Here are some questions to ponder:

**How should I start and end rehearsal?**

**Do I have a rehearsal plan?**

**Do I keep the students engaged and excited?**

**Do I “hear” and know how to efficiently “fix” problems?**

**Are the students progressing and successful?**

**How do I improve my rehearsal technique?**

***S.M.A.R.T. GOALS***

***Specific, Measurable, Accountable, Realistic, and Timed***

***So how do we become SMART in our choral rehearsals?***

1. **Great rehearsals are fundamental to building great choirs.**
2. **Appropriate music selection by the conductor is paramount.**
3. **Score preparation is *crucial.***
4. **Rehearsals must be exciting, creative and stimulating.**
5. **Rehearsals must be *efficient* and *planned* to the minute*.***

***Sample Rehearsal Plan based on a 50 minute period***

* Warm-ups / Vocal Technique (5 minutes) with a purpose
* Sightreading / Rhythm Drills (10 minutes) related to the music
* First piece (6 minutes) review – build confidence – fix small problems
* Second piece (15 minutes) maximum effort, most intense work
* Third piece (9 minutes) – work specific measures or section
* Announcements (2 minutes) - painful but necessary
* Final piece or activity (2 minutes) – conclude with a sense of SUCCESS
* Summarize and tell them they did a good job! (1 minute)

***Rehearsal Basics for the Teacher / Conductor***

Classroom management:

* Be incredibly well prepared
* Strive for consistent discipline and high expectations – *everyday*
* Establish a routine
* Begin instruction / activity immediately
* Give precise directives – “sing more – talk less”
* Inspire, motivate, encourage, support – avoid being a “negative corrector”
* Keep the rehearsal pace FAST and ENERGETIC – a quick and continuous flow of teaching - singers should have to work and concentrate to keep up
* Audio / Video record rehearsals – *OFTEN*

***RESULTS***

***Rehearsal Efficiency – “How to Fix the Problem”***

* Always plan effective sight-reading and warm-up exercises. As often as possible, related to the music to be rehearsed (transfer of knowledge).
* Begin rehearsal of repertoire with a song (or part of a song) that the singers can do well – this immediately builds confidence.

Second repertoire effort should be the most demanding – while singers are still “fresh” and confident.

Last emphasis should be enjoyable, exciting and on which they can succeed with ease - thereby, sending them on their way with high spirits and a positive morale – looking forward to the next rehearsal.

* Use a structural approach to rehearse a new selection – (occasionally, work from the back to the front, section by section).
* Even when “note learning”, address vowels, phrasing, dynamics, etc. – do not “compartmentalize” - avoid having to break bad habits
* Practice moving into tricky spots called “seams” or “lead-ins” – approach the “seam” from a few bars back.
* Rehearse only those passages that need it – refrain from “BACK TO THE BEGINNING” for no specific purpose.
* Insist on accuracy – stop immediately when something is sung inaccurately or improperly. Be sure you know every part – ERROR DETECTION is a must.
* Correct ONE thing at a time: EVALUATE – DIAGNOSE – PRESCRIBE

re-teach and reinforce as much and as often as is necessary for accuracy.

* Give advance instruction for potential problem areas in the music – then

 go back and progress through the “problem” with *first time success.*

* On demanding music (this could be *any*  music for young or

 inexperienced singers), sit or stand in section circles to reinforce each

 singer’s work.

* After learning a selection on solfege, go to a neutral syllable such as

 “doo, doo, doo” before adding the text – this allows the singers to focus

 completely on the fundamental accuracy of the pitches, rhythms and

 phrasing.

* Sing slowly - enough that the singers (and conductor) have the ability to

hear and evaluate that which is being sung (this is particularly true when

sight-reading)

* Speak or clap (not sing) difficult or complex rhythms until accurate –

 then, and only then, sing them (gradually getting faster).

* If one section needs considerable work on its part alone, have all the

women or all the men or the entire choir sing with them – this adds

 confidence, as well as, keeps boredom and off-task behavior to

a minimum. (If you are fortunate to have an assistant, divide.)

* Instruct the accompanist (if you are lucky enough to have one) - they,

 too, must understand the fast pace of the rehearsal and respond

 accordingly (good ones can “read your mind”).

* Early rehearsals – conduct less, listen more

 Closer to performance – conduct more; but, still listen.

* Be a “vocal coach” - teach the principles of fine SINGING *everyday –* it is

 the most important thing we teach – it is the FOUNDATION of the choral

 art.

* Remember, “yes you can” if you “plan, plan, plan”

Clinic Presentation by Dianne Brumley, Director Emeritus of Choral Studies

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Dianne.brumley@utb.edu