

MODERN A CAPPELLA-POP AND SHOWCHOIR METHODS FOR THE CLASSICALLY
TRAINED MUSIC EDUCATOR

by

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B.M.E., Emporia State University, 2005

A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF MUSIC

Department of Music
College of Arts and Sciences

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2013

Approved by:

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2013

Abstract

University choral music education programs commonly focus on training music educators in the Western Classical tradition, however, the evolving landscape of popular music requires an additional set of skills and experiences that are not a part of the standard curriculum. A cappella groups with vocal percussion and show choirs are increasing in demand due to the popularity of modern vocal music entertainment with television shows such as “Glee” and “The Sing-off” and performing groups such as “Pentatonix” and “Straight No Chaser.” With limited available literature and training, current and future musical educators face the problem of having to acquire these skills on their own. While ensembles dedicated to singing popular music are nothing new, the technical aspects of developing an ensemble that meets the high performance expectations of modern audiences can be intimidating. This report intends to cover the requisite techniques, skills, and resources that modern a cappella pop choirs and show choirs utilize to be successful.

The report covers these topics: 1) a brief survey of the historical origins of choral vocal pop and show choir ensembles 2) defining the purpose, intent, and nature of such ensembles 3) show choirs, pop a cappella choirs, and hybrids 4) roles, responsibilities, and personnel assignment 5) music selection, arrangement, and programming 6) the decision to perform live, with a pre-recorded track, or a combination 7) use of audio and recording equipment in performance 8) rehearsal techniques 9) artistic and stylistic decisions

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Acknowledgements

The author wishes to acknowledge the following people:

Dr. Julie Yu, major professor and thesis advisor, for her contagious energy, focus, creativity, positivity, and excitement that served as a constant inspiration throughout this process and beyond.

Dr. Frederick Burrack and Dr. Phillip Payne, professors and advisors, for keeping me constantly curious about the next discovery.

Dr. Joshua Oppenheim, major professor, for his great expectations and good advice.

Dr. Craig Parker, professor, for putting us all through the necessary academic paces.

My parents – Greg and Deborah Cassidy, who continue to make sacrifices for me and supporting me without reservation from the very beginning.

The Kansas State Singers, for the great sacrifices and investments we made together, discovering how to take it to the next level.

Heather Farney and Tyler Nenaber, choreographer and dance captain, for doing all the things that I could not and making it look so good.

Dr. Reginald Pittman, voice professor, for sharing all his wonderful vocal expertise.

Valerie Mack, show choir director extraordinaire, for establishing a show choir summer camp for high school kids, so introverts like me could learn to be showmen.

To all my family and friends who have made this possible in big and small ways.

Dedication

To my three favorite girls: Tamara, Sophie, and Julia (who was born during the creation of this paper). I have written so many words, and yet none can describe my deep love and thanks for the great blessings you are to my life. I love you so very much.

Chapter 1 - The Historical Origins of Pop and Show Choir Ensembles

The beginnings of independently American popular music date back to the mid-1800s. During this time popular music had taken on the form of show business performance acts. Show business of the time “looked a lot like the red-light district.”¹ After the show, performers would often double as prostitutes, cons, and thieves. Phineas Taylor (P.T.) Barnum helped bring credibility to the entertainment industry by cleaning it up through a new genre called “edutainment.” This was entertainment infused with an educational, family-friendly presentation. Similar to the modern-day circus, there were human oddities, theatrics, freak acts, beauty contests, and musical performances. It is important to note that these events were held in an alcohol-free environment. Barnum was known for dishonest marketing practices and for infamously saying “There’s a sucker born every minute,” but his presentations were the inspiration for the beginnings of the vaudeville movement. The term “vaudeville” was first used around the turn of the century by Boston theatre owner Benjamin Franklin Keith to describe this new theatrical movement, distinguishing it as being more sophisticated than the bawdier, adult variety theatre which took on the name “burlesque”. The word “vaudeville” was an American adaptation of the French *voix de ville* or “voice of the city.”² With demand for this new music form on the rise, music publishers began to develop and print music so people could play and perform this music themselves.

The music publishing industry centered in New York City and was known as Tin Pan Alley. For the first time American popular music, “pop,” was in print for the public. One of the most influential composers who worked with the Tin Pan Alley crew was Irving Berlin. Berlin sought to write a hit ragtime song, but even though ragtime was a well-known and well-liked genre, it had a questionable reputation because of its historical roots in slave songs and the red-

¹ Weaver, 2011. *Sweat, Tears, and Jazz Hands: The Official History of Show Choir from Vaudeville to Glee*. Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Books, 2.

² *Ibid*, 4.

light district. Berlin's "Alexander's Ragtime Band" of 1911 was a breakout piece that revitalized the genre and made him a very popular and wealthy man. It was around this time that gospel and blues started to give way to new music form called "jazz".

As the Roaring Twenties arrived, jazz music began to develop and motion pictures became an industry. Classical blues singers such as Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith led the way for Louis Armstrong and his "Hot Five" to explore vocal jazz. In 1927 the first sound musical motion picture, *The Jazz Singer*, was released by Warner Brothers. It was later credited with single-handedly killing off the silent movie genre.³ Two years later, the Oscar-winning musical film, *The Broadway Melody*, set in motion a rush to produce musicals for the silver screen. Many vaudeville performers found new work in Hollywood as motion picture actors. Because of the demand for motion pictures traditional live vaudeville began to fall by the wayside. The 1930s saw the rise of jazz vocalists. Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald captured audiences with their sultry tones, and Leo Watson pioneered the use of meaningless syllables known as "scat."⁴ During this same time the "Man Who Taught America How to Sing," Fred Waring, began to make a name for himself with a band he formed called "Waring's Pennsylvanians." The ensemble would alternate between playing instruments and singing. They would become hugely popular by recording popular songs such as Broadway tunes, love songs, patriotic hymns, and folk music. Waring was a hugely successful businessman and entrepreneur of music even though he had no formal musical training. From 1923 to 1932, "Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians" became so popular that they sold millions of records. In 1932 Waring quit recording to focus on his radio show. He hired a choral director by the name of Robert Shaw, who later became one of the defining American choral directors of the 20th century. Shaw helped create a performance technique which became known as "Waring's Tone-Syllables" leading to the development of the "Waring Sound." This system, designed to overcome the limited recording quality of 1930s microphones, involved lengthening the vowels and crisply clipping consonants so as to make the lyrics easily understood for the listeners.

With the advent of television, popular entertainment became a visual art form in addition to aural. Waring, the consummate producer/director, noticed the rise of General Electric, and in

³ Ibid, 7.

⁴ Frederickson, 2004. Popular Choral Handbook: New Techniques for Pop, Jazz, and Show Choir Directors. United States: ScottMusic.com, 23-25.

1948 he was able to secure a GE sponsorship for a weekly Sunday night television program called “The Fred Waring Show.” Music had to become memorized so that performers could create an emotional connection with the audience. Dancing, sets, costumes, and staging all became a part of the performance. An hour of music was prepared each week, often requiring rehearsing and writing late into the night. Less than a year into the production of “The Fred Waring Show,” rural community high schools began to develop similar ensembles. Two of these first “Swing Choirs” were the Swing Choir in Lacrosse, Wisconsin, and the Swingsters in Manhattan, Kansas. These schools simultaneously started to produce performances similar to those by Waring. Director of the Kansas Swingsters, Larry Boye did not credit Waring with the idea to put together this type of group; however, the influence of Waring’s approach had already left its mark. Within a few years, several variety shows such as “American Bandstand,” “The Ed Sullivan Show,” and “The Lawrence Welk Show” were established, and school choral directors began to experiment with chorally arranged pop songs and staged choreography.⁵

⁵ Weaver, 1-27.

Chapter 2 - Forming and Developing the Ensemble

Purpose and Nature

Forming a functional and effective ensemble requires multiple things, but most importantly, the group must have a purpose. In order for a performance group to mature it must take on a role that fulfills a perceived gap.⁶ This gap may refer to a genre in the music education spectrum that is not currently covered, or it may refer to an unfulfilled demand for performance of a given type or style.⁷ An ensemble that is a carbon copy of an existing ensemble is educationally redundant. Also, a performance group that cannot interest an audience has little worth and strains student motivation. The purpose of the ensemble dictates its direction and trajectory which form a ‘vision’ of the future of the group. Therefore, when considering whether or not establishing an ensemble would be truly beneficial, evaluating purpose is paramount.

A clear purpose helps define the nature of the group. Once the intents and beneficiaries are outlined, steps can be taken to maximize the desired impact. Music selection can be adjusted to allow for broader student musical exposure or to complement the audience’s background or appetite. Costumes or uniforms can be selected to visually express the ensemble’s purpose and to suit differing tastes. Concepts of tone quality can be developed that emphasize group identity or focus on consistency of style. Size of audience and ensemble membership can help inform decisions about sound reinforcement. If intense choreography is preferred, pre-recorded performance may be a consideration. There are a great number of decisions that can determine the nature of a performing ensemble. Decisions that reflect a sense of purpose and vision give the group added value and longevity.

Budgeting and Fundraising

This section discusses how to manage the costs associated with developing pop and show choir ensembles as well as suggestions for fundraising. In most cases the choir budget will be dictated by administrators, so it is crucial that there is effective communication of needs by the director to the administration. This may involve giving a presentation, or “pitch,” that details the

⁶ Grier, 1986. Room for all. *Music Educators Journal* 73, no. 1: 16.

⁷ Smith, 2007. Repertoire & standards: Showchoirs – traditional choirs and showchoirs. *Choral Journal* 48, no. 5: 32-33.

basis for the need and the expected benefit of the investment. Detailing the positive impacts of the choir, such as community involvement, student retention, and the correlation of higher test scores, can help to influence administrators that aren't motivated by "music for music's sake". Those making the financial decisions may want to see an annual or semester breakdown of expenditures and income.

Organizing a choir involves a number of expenses. Most choirs choose to purchase sheet music, as this is the "textbook" that they use. The size of the ensemble and the number of pieces chosen will have a direct impact on this expense. If finances are particularly tight, students can be asked to share folders of music, but it is important to realize that students are not able to independently study their music when they share copies. Sometimes music educators choose to cut down on this expense by making photocopies of copyrighted scores. This is illegal and prevents composers and publishers from effectively running their business and ends up driving costs up for other purchasers. Another core expense is the pay given to additional personnel such as accompanists, choreographers, etc. This should be discussed with the administration early on so that the appropriate people can be hired with ample time given for them to prepare. In order to offset these costs some programs charge the enrolled students (or all students) an additional fee, similar to the "pay to play" fees athletic departments charge their students.^{8 9} While many students and parents may not have a problem with this, it is important that alternate arrangements be made available for those students who wish to participate but cannot afford to do so. This could involve a service commitment, assisting with the many needs of the program, or they can be allowed earn the extra money through fundraising. Added funds can create extra flexibility for the director, so fundraising can be a helpful tool, but it can be very burdensome if not thought through. The director is responsible for documenting and handling monies, so any large scale fundraising endeavor will naturally involve extra time spent calculating and organizing. The most common fundraisers are through concert tickets, product sales, and services. Charging admission to a concert can limit audience size and raise expectations, but higher expectations can have a positive outcome when production values are high. Product sales usually involve the students selling a particular product or items from a catalog. It is important

⁸ Mack, 2011. Putting the Show in Choir. Milwaukee: Shawnee Press, 101.

⁹ Dollins, 2011. Beauty and the beast: The nature of a show choir. *Choral Journal* 51, no 10: 56.

to consider the profit margin, product quality, marketability, and logistics of delivery. Ideally, the product should have a profit margin of 50% or higher, one that has value to the community, and is delivered and guaranteed by the company. Students must be accountable with order taking, money collection, and be prompt with delivery (if required). It is likely during this process that buyers will not receive their product as expected. This may require the director to resolve the problem, an added responsibility. Service projects can include such things as a car wash, waiting tables, raking leaves, etc. This often involves working together with a community business. Students will need to know how to deliver the expected service using the available resources. The director will need to be on hand to help facilitate the process. With all fundraising projects, a booster club can be a great resource for the manpower and community connections required to make it successful.

In the public school setting, some parents will probably choose to pay for all of their student's expenses up front by writing a check. This is helpful in that it brings quick income to the program, but, by opting out of having to raise funds themselves, a student skips the process of having to work to earn the associated rewards. Students who put in this work have a greater investment in the ensemble. Those students have a greater sense of ownership because they have made pertinent sacrifices.¹⁰

Specific to Show Choirs

Since show choirs, by nature, are choreographed and have an additional focus on the visual elements, there are certain unique purchases and expenses that pertain specifically to them. Most show choirs purchase uniforms.¹¹ This is commonly a dance dress for the women and a tuxedo for the men. Dance shoes are also a standard item for both men and women. In many show choir programs the students are expected to pay and care for these items.

Equipment is also a major expense for show choirs. This commonly includes things such as platform risers and sound reinforcement. The risers allow for multiple rows of singers to be seen at a given time even when directly behind each other. Wireless headset microphones are important because they allow for the singer to be amplified while still free to move. The headsets are battery powered and will require fresh batteries frequently. The wireless receivers

¹⁰ Rush, 2006. *Habits of a Successful Band Director: Pitfalls and Solutions*. Chicago: GIA Publications, 24.

¹¹ Dollins, 56.

will need a place to be stored, likely on a traveling equipment cart. In order to control volume levels of the individual mics a mixing board will be needed that accommodates the number of microphones needed. The board will need a preamp and an input for each mic. If it is necessary to have more than one performer on a mic, or if a large area will need to be covered, then a condenser mic (and stand) will be necessary. A condenser microphone picks up sound from a larger area, but they are usually more expensive and usually not as ruggedly built so they can be damaged more easily. Also necessary for sound reinforcement are amplifying speakers. Loud speakers designed to send sound out to the audience are called “P/A speakers” or “mains”. Speakers that are designed to send sound back to the performer for reference are called “monitors”. Note that both types of speakers will need a power source and they come in two varieties. Powered speakers have independent power, usually through a standard power plug, while unpowered speakers draw power from the mixing board. Not all mixing boards provide this kind of power, so research will be necessary.¹² Both receivers and speakers will require cable connections to the mixing board. All of this equipment will need proper storage containers and a secure place to be stored. Since show choirs tend to be traveling performers, the risers and sound equipment should also be transportable. This involves the purchase of transportable cases. Purchasing new risers sound equipment is usually very expensive (thousands of dollars) and will likely require a special grant or administrator permission. Many institutions have some of this equipment already and it is often shared by multiple departments. Sound equipment is notoriously sensitive to being bent, pulled, and dropped, especially wireless headset mics. Students will need to be trained as to the proper handling of cables, wires, microphones, knobs, sliders, etc., to avoid expensive repairs.

Specific to A Cappella Pop Choirs

A cappella pop choirs are usually choreographed less than show choirs and focus more on the aural presentation than the visual; however, there are commonly still elements of scripted or improvised choreography in their performances. A uniform look is also common for these groups, but it is not unheard of for these groups to use a consistent color scheme and allow for various looks that fit in that scheme.

¹²Criswell, 2013. Putting a Studio in the Mix. *Teaching Music* 20, no. 5: 34.

Producing the necessary volume levels in large or open environments will require a sound system. Unlike the show choir, the choreography, if any, for the a cappella pop choir usually requires less of the body. This allows for the singers to use handheld microphones instead of headsets. Non-choreographed performers often prefer handheld microphones because it acts a focus point, gives them something to do with their hands, and shields them full exposure to the audience. Handheld microphones also give the singer greater control over their singing input (dynamics, balance, color, etc.). Wired handhelds are less expensive, shielded from interference, and do not require batteries, but the performers will need to be prepared to properly handle cables and inputs. Wireless handhelds give the user greater freedom to move and they cut down on cabling problems. As with show choirs, the downside to wireless systems are the greater expense, potential battery failure, and potential signal loss or interruption. Since a cappella pop choirs often vocally imitate instruments when performing, they may benefit more from higher quality sound equipment that can present the nuance of that style of sound. In particular, quality subwoofers are helpful to effectively convey the instrumental sound imitated by bass voices and vocal percussionists. Low bass vocals can be easily overpowered by other voices or lost in a large performing space, so a subwoofer can help to produce the “electric bass” sound that is commonly used in pop music.

Holding Auditions

There are a number of things a director can do to improve the audition and the decision-making process. One of the most common and highly recommended ideas is to make an audio/video recording of the audition for later review. This allows for better comparisons between auditions and also serves as evidence of the quality of provided audition in case of a dispute. Another suggestion is to have a panel of judges rather than a single person. This allows for multiple perspectives to be considered and helps to remove real or perceived bias. In order to speed up the audition process and motivate students to volunteer to audition first, allow for the first volunteer to audition a second time at the end.¹³ If auditioning a large group of people, it may be beneficial to have a preliminary round where those interested submit audio recordings of vocals and video recordings of an assigned dance routine. This can allow for the director to limit

¹³ Mack, 10.

the auditions to those who have the basic required skills. Most importantly, the director should be looking for performers who are naturally entertaining and sincere.^{14 15}

The Vocal Component

When auditioning vocals the director should always consider how the performer would be perceived by his or her likely audience. Show choirs and pop choirs draw a different sort of audience than most other choirs. While an audience that seeks out classically trained choral music may be willing to forgo entertainment for the sake of cultural enrichment and fulfillment, the show choir and pop choir audience primarily expects to be entertained and impressed. These audiences expect to “see” the performance and not just hear it. Therefore, it is more important for the performer to have a confident stage presence. Show choir singers will need a greater sense of physical poise, and a cappella pop singers will need to have a strong vocal poise and independence because they will probably have fewer people singing their part along with them. They will also always be exposed and will be more likely called upon to sing a solo.

The vocal audition should evaluate the singer in several ways.¹⁶ First of all, the singer should be encouraged to perform a song that he or she knows very well. This shows how the singer performs with preparation. For show choir auditions, the singer should be allowed to sing with accompaniment, while the a cappella-pop choir singer should audition a cappella. Preferably, the singer should perform another song of a different style, showing his or her flexibility. Another important part to the audition should be to include having the singer sing a few vocal warm-up exercises or “vocalises.” This allows the director to hear the singer’s natural voice as the singer perceives it to be. Using various exercises the director can determine effective range, tessitura, vocal flexibility, consistency, and tone color. Also, pitch-retention and responsiveness to direction can be evaluated through this process. A common component of vocal auditions is sight-reading. Some directors value this more than others as part of a singer’s skill set when auditioning. Show choirs and pop choirs often have fewer classically trained

¹⁴ Alder, 2012. Successful high school show choir directors: Their perceptions about their teaching and administrative practices. D.A., Ball State University. In ProQuest Dissertations & Theses: Social Sciences, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses: The Arts, 100.

¹⁵ Thomas, Repertoire standards: Show choirs - another choir? how about a show choir?, 46.

¹⁶ Ibid, 45.

musicians (i.e. music majors) than other choirs, and so it is not unusual that sight reading skills are not considered to be a requirement of membership.¹⁷

Depending on the performance nature of the group, a cappella pop choirs may or may not perform and/or rehearse with microphones. If microphones are consistently used in performance and/or rehearsal, it may be beneficial to include a portion of the audition that involves using a microphone to determine the singer's effectiveness with the equipment.

The Vocal Percussion Component

Just as jazz developed as an instrumental imitation of the voice, vocal jazz choirs, and more recently, a cappella pop choirs began to use the voice to imitate the effect of instruments. Primarily this involved the imitation of exclusively pitched instruments. Recently, there has been greater exploration of the potential of the voice (and body) to imitate the percussive sounds of drum trap sets and electronically produced DJ effects. This exploration became known as "beat boxing." When "beat boxers" began to join with choirs to create a larger palate of instrumental sound a new role was born. Once considered a simple novelty, vocal percussion has become a legitimate component of a cappella pop choirs.

When auditioning vocal percussionists, it is important to determine his/her ability to establish appropriate beat patterns in different styles, meters, and tempos. It is common for vocal percussionists to use microphones for effect, so if the ensemble utilizes microphones in performance, at least a portion of the audition should include use of a microphone. Similar to the vocal audition, the vocal percussion audition should include a prepared preparation and an interpretative portion. The prepared section allows the performer to demonstrate his or her capabilities to produce a variety of percussive sounds, increase and decrease complexity of patterns, and to change. Since the vocal percussionist will likely settle into a "groove" or repetitive pattern rather quickly, the audition should move through three or four (or more) styles that imitate the kinds of music that will be expected as part of rehearsal. Similar to the sight-reading component in the vocal audition, this should evaluate the interpretive "ear-reading" aural analysis skills of the performer to determine an appropriate percussive accompaniment. Another important part of the audition would be to have the percussionist accompany singers. One way to do this is to have singers from the most recent concert perform one or more of their numbers

¹⁷ Alder, 101-104.

and have the auditioning vocal percussionist join along with what he/she believes to be appropriate accompaniment. Another approach could involve having the vocal percussionist listen to a variety of recordings which he/she will be asked to imitate.

The Dance Component

The dance audition should imitate the type of activity that will be expected from performers during rehearsals. Ideally, the dance teacher will be present so that he/she can deliver instruction in the same fashion as a rehearsal. The choreography should have similar expectations of intensity and pacing. The audition will likely involve having a single large group or a few smaller groups learn the dance routine with music and then present it as an individual or in a very small group. Those auditioning should be expected to give their final presentation without the aid of the dance teacher's example. The dance teacher should only continue to keep teaching the routine to the point where a performer of the expected skill should have it learned. Continuing to repeat the routine past this point may take anxiety out of process, and pressing the issue may make people look and feel awkward, but the intent is to determine who can learn and perform at the expected quality and pace.¹⁸

One significant concern about show choirs is that most groups are mixed gender, and they commonly involve male/female partner dancing. This usually involves physical contact with a person of the opposite sex. As can be expected, this requires a level of trust, respect, and professionalism. The reputation of an auditioner should be considered in addition to his/her skill. Depending on the expected type of choreography, the director and choreographer may need to also consider the strength, balance, mobility, and frame of performers. Certain moves and lifts may not be possible if the performer cannot execute them properly.¹⁹ It is up to the director and choreographer to determine if the performer can handle the expected choreography or if the choreography needs to change to meet the abilities of the performers.²⁰

¹⁸ Ibid, 105.

¹⁹ Jacobson, 1993. *Gotta Sing, Gotta Dance: Basics of Choreography and Staging*. Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Publishing Corporation, 61-68.

²⁰ Lanier, 2007. Repertoire & standards: Show choirs: Keeping the "choir" in show choir. *Choral Journal* 48, no. 2: 37.

The Interview

Since an audition gives very little time to extensively evaluate the suitability of a performer for an ensemble, it is important that the director get to know more about the auditioner than just his/her abilities. An interview allows the director to evaluate the “soft” skills that would otherwise not be assessed. Questions that are unexpected, yet require a thoughtful response, are helpful in determining how a potential member thinks and behaves without pretense. This discovery is significant because, once accepted, this person will have to act as a functional part of a much larger whole. An otherwise exemplary performer may reveal a poor attitude, a sense of entitlement, or a lack of professionalism.

Not all ensemble members are created equal. Whereas some roles are doubled by other members, certain members carry responsibilities that are unique to them. For example, a vocal percussionist is wholly responsible for his/her role in performance. For these types of members, it may be very difficult or impossible for the ensemble to proceed without them, and replacement on short notice may not be possible. These essential members need to be reliable and consistent people. The interview should explore these qualities.

Chapter 3 - Roles, Responsibilities, and Personnel Assignment

Directing a cappella pop and show choirs can be intimidating, because they require many additional responsibilities that are not found in the traditional choir model. A director may be dismayed to find that making music is only part of the job. In reality, much of what the director does is organize people. The goal is to bring people together and unite them to create a show. The director will most likely become overwhelmed and burn out if all of the responsibilities are placed on his or her shoulders. While this presents a problem, it also presents an opportunity. In order to solve this problem the workload must be shared.²¹ Sharing responsibilities with the ensemble members involves taking the risk that those members could fail to fulfill their duty, but it also allows for them to take ownership in the choir. Taking responsibility allows for the members to have a greater stake in the development of the ensemble. It can also help prevent the director from losing a sense of personal identity due to an exorbitant (and unhealthy) investment of time and energy.²²

Roles and Responsibilities

There are some responsibilities that ensemble members should not be accountable for. The director, or some other non-member administrative adult, should be in charge of finances. Sometimes a performer is asked to be the treasurer of the ensemble. This responsibility should not go beyond gathering and totaling income and paying for director-approved expenditures. Even this is risky. Financial discrepancies are a significant problem because they raise questions of trustworthiness because of the potential for embezzlement. The director should also be in charge of decisions regarding member acceptance, member discipline, music selection, and approval of all performances or “gigs”. While it is important to consider the input of the members of the group on these topics, each of these informed decisions should be made by the director because they are core, defining elements of the group.

²¹ Alder, 93-94.

²² Jorgensen, 1995. *Things They Never Taught You In Choral Methods: A Choral Director’s Handbook*. Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2-5.

There are number of responsibilities that may be taken on by the membership. At the secondary school level some of these responsibilities may be accepted by parents. Generally speaking, there are four main areas where ensemble members can (and should) help:

- 1) Membership Relations (Past, Current, Future)
- 2) Public Relations
- 3) Non-Performance Events
- 4) Performance Organization

Within each of these categories there are a number of responsibilities members can accept. Membership relations can involve positions where a member is responsible for organizing recruitment or for getting alumni involved. Public relations can involve positions where a member is responsible for social media, or photography, videography, or working with community businesses. Event responsibilities can involve fundraising, travel, and service projects. Performance organization can involve an equipment management and ticket sales. Since there are a lot of potential responsibilities a “head manager” or “president” should be in charge of organizing and overseeing these other members. It may be helpful to form a hierarchy of committees with committee chairs who are in charge of overseeing others within that given committee. *See Appendix A – K-State Singers Officer Descriptions*

Personnel Assignment

All members should have an assigned role. This keeps everyone invested and prevents 10% of the people from doing 100% of the work as can often be the case.²³ When determining who should be assigned a given responsibility, an evaluation of the member’s reputation is of primary importance, but it is also important to consider the motivation of the member to take on that responsibility. Members bring with them preferences and skills that can affect his or her effectiveness in a given role. Allowing members to take on responsibilities that suit their abilities and interests will result in higher motivation and better results. Therefore, members should be allowed to campaign for various positions, expressing why they would be well suited for each job. The director can assign these roles directly, or the members can discuss and make

²³ Rush, 20.

recommendations. In either case, the director should approve of all assignments before they are made official. It should be clear to all members that each person is responsible for the success of the group and that a failure to fulfill his or her assigned duties affects the rest of the group, resulting in that person being assigned fewer responsibilities.

Chapter 4 - Music Selection, Accompaniment, Arrangement, Choreography, and Programming

Music Selection

Music choice, style, and length should match the uniqueness of the ensemble and director.²⁴ In many ways selecting appropriate music is like choosing the right piece of art to hang on the wall. Just like a larger painting requires a larger room, certain pieces of music require larger forces or certain voice types to be effective. The music must be independently valid. A song should not be selected simply because it “fits the theme” or because “we need another song”. It must complement and fit into the whole of the program. A great individual piece should not be put into a program where it would seem out of place. A consistent theme can be helpful to keep the audience engaged, but themed shows should also have a variety of styles and tempos to maintain a sense of “freshness” to each piece. Music selections should be appropriately challenging to the performer. Eph Ely said, “Give a man a song he can sing, and he will tire of it quickly.”²⁵ A series of easy pieces may give more time for choreography and showmanship, but they can be musically unfulfilling; music that is too hard can leave the audience and performers feeling disappointed. Particularly for pop and show choirs, the music should be entertaining to the audience. The element of “show business” remains. As Dr. Steve Zegree says in “The Wow Factor,”

“As a performer, you have an obligation to consider your audience, especially if they have paid for tickets. You are providing a service, whether it is pure entertainment or pure artistry, or hopefully, a healthy combination of both. Try to figure out how to leave your audience with a sense of completion, fulfillment, and satisfaction.”²⁶

However entertaining a piece may be, it must also be appropriate. There are a number of popular songs that have adult themes, vulgar language, or promote poor values. The tradition of

²⁴ Mack, 6, 11.

²⁵ Jorgensen, 15 – quoting Eph Ely.

²⁶ Zegree, 2010. *The wow factor: how to create it, inspire it, and achieve it*. Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corporation, 110.

vaudeville established a family-friendly approach to show business, and this tradition continues though pop and show choirs.

Programming

It is important to remember when programming music for a show that sometimes “less is more.” Rarely do audiences comment on a concert being too short, but most experienced concertgoers can recall many concerts that were repetitive, self-indulgent, or simply too much. Variety can help provide a sense of “newness” to each selection. This can include changes in genre, style, tempo, forces, etc.²⁷ Depending on the choir, different genres may be explored. For example, singers could perform rap, hard rock, or disco, among others. In addition to performing different genres, audiences may also appreciate hearing a known song performed in a different style. This could mean singing an up-tempo song and adapting it to be performed as a ballad (or vice-versa), or perhaps taking two or more complimentary songs and combining them into a series (medley) or by overlaying them (mashup). The television show “Glee” is a good example of this approach as they frequently employ the use of interesting style changes to help draw an audience. Style change can also involve a change in tone quality. The voice is a very flexible instrument and can provide a number of distinct sound qualities. Effective use of this technique can allow for the choir to actually sound like entirely different groups. Changing tempos can also provide variety. When determining concert order, it is important to maintain a sense of change in the speed and intensity of the songs presented. A program featuring a series of songs that are similar in speed and intensity allows for visual, aural, and physical fatigue to set in for both performers and the audience.²⁸ Another way to provide variety is to change the number of forces presented. Rather than having the entire choir on stage for the whole concert, allowing for solos, duets, small groups, gender songs, guest artists, and the use of various instruments will allow the audience to experience the choir from many different perspectives. It also allows for the individuals to showcase their talents. Not only will changing the forces allow for variety, but it will provide an opportunity for performers to rest and change costumes if necessary.

²⁷ Zegree, 2002. *The Complete Guide to Teaching Vocal Jazz (Including Pop and Other Show Styles)*. United States: Heritage Music Press, 67.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

Accompaniment

A cappella pop choirs provide their own accompaniment vocally, but show choirs traditionally perform with accompaniment. If a director chooses to perform with live accompaniment, then instrumentalists will need to be recruited and/or hired. The small band that accompanies a show choir is commonly referred to as “the rhythm section” or as a “combo”. The rhythm section/combo is usually made up of keyboard (piano and/or synthesizer), bass guitar, electric and/or acoustic guitar, and drum set. The decision to use synthesizer, alternate percussion and brass will largely depend on the particular song and the availability of instruments, printed music, and skilled players. Unless the combo is made up primarily of professional musicians, they will need separate rehearsals before they are ready to be put together with the choir. It is important to establish up front that the combo plays an essential supportive role, meaning that they are a key element to the show but not often in the spotlight. In order to prevent an “us versus them” attitude, both instrumentalists and singers should be encouraged to see each other as equally important contributors.²⁹ For guidelines and suggestions on working with and developing these types of groups consider chapter 4 of “Putting the Show in Choir” by Valerie Mack, and chapter 6 of “The Complete Guide to Teaching Vocal Jazz” by Dr. Steve Zegree.

An alternate approach to live accompaniment is to use “karaoke” style accompaniment tracks. For the track to work, it should be all instrumental. All vocals, including background harmonies, should not be present. Not only will this conflict with the ensemble’s singing, but the audience will find it disconcerting to hear sounds that are not visually represented on stage. Also, the track should have similar quality and instrumentation as the original. Some available tracks will be disappointing in this regard. One of the obvious advantages to using this type of accompaniment is that it relieves the director from organizing a band. Another significant advantage is that the accompaniment is consistently the same every time so the performers and director can cut out the variables of intonation, balance, tempo, and segue complications. The length of the track can be altered precisely through cutting and pasting using software programs such as GarageBand. While live instruments do have the flexibility of playing in several different keys, most karaoke tracks are available in more than one key (usually a whole step up

²⁹ Mack, 51.

or down) if a change in range is desired. These tracks can be queued up to play at specific intervals to keep the pacing crisp. Having an electronic track also allows for the director to know the precise total length of the music presented, this can help when programming to know whether or not an intermission will be necessary and where it will fall. Using an accompaniment track will require precision and consistency from the singers because the track cannot improvise, vamp, or adjust as a live band could. For example, once the track has started, the singers must be prepared to perform, otherwise the track will progress without them, and the only available solution is to pause or restart the track, which is disconcerting for both the audience and the singers. Also, if for whatever reason, the track should not play, skip, or otherwise fail, there is no quick solution, and the performers could potentially be stuck mid-song without a track. Of course, these types of unexpected, show-stopping equipment failures can happen to electronically powered live bands as well.³⁰

Arrangement

Popular music for choirs is often not published until after the song's popularity has already begun to fade. In order for directors to keep up with popular music, they must often seek out contemporary music arrangers or arrange the music themselves.³¹ It is important to note that copyright law protects music that is not in public domain so the arranger must contact the publisher of the song and get approval before arrangements may be used legally. If an arrangement is unavailable but desired, then one must be made. There are a few things to consider when arranging a piece of music. An arranger must stay within the limits of the performance abilities of the group. Many professional musicians possess an uncommon level of talent, which along with sound engineering, may pose transference challenges. When writing for voices, the key and register will influence the ability of the singers to imitate the appropriate timbre of the original. Ideally, the arrangement will be set in a register/key that allows for the same voice type (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) as the original to take the lead melodic vocal line, however, a change in gender or voice type can also be effective if arranged appropriately. One example of this is the rearrangement of Katy Perry's "Teenage Dream" for men's choir on the television show "Glee."

³⁰ Ibid, 63-64.

³¹ Alder, 57.

Arranging for the A Cappella Pop Choir

Writing for the a cappella pop choir is unique because the voices are expected to produce the effects originally presented by instruments. Listening to recordings by “Pentatonix” and “Straight No Chaser” will demonstrate these effects. While a vocal percussionist should be expected to instinctually determine his/her part, the other vocals will need to know the specifics of what to sing. The standard arrangement will call for one or two soloists with the rest of the choir functioning in the role of instruments. The bass voice will most frequently serve the role of the bass instrument, usually bass guitar or double bass. The other voices will represent the other rhythm instruments such as piano and guitar or melodic instruments such as brass, strings, or woodwinds. Usually the bass voice will be paired with one or two other voices to provide the rhythm section and the other voices will serve melodic or counter-melodic function. The bass will sing the macro ostinato while another voice, often tenor/alto, will provide the interior, micro ostinato through a rhythmic, repeated note pattern. The other voices, commonly soprano/tenor, will provide support through longer note values and sometimes add a secondary, counter-melody. The vocalists will be imitating instrumental effects, and several vowel and consonant sound combinations can be employed to create this effect. An example of this is the use of “dum” or “thum” to represent the strumming of a bass guitar. Another effective technique is to have the rhythm singers use some of the song lyrics in their rhythm line. For example, the basses could sing the first word of each downbeat while the part singing the micro rhythm could use some of the interior words in a repeated pattern. The addition and subtraction of voices can be its own effect. Starting without the rhythm section voices can be an effect that gives the entrance of the rhythm voices greater impact and momentum. Also, having the rhythm voices (or all voices) drop out or begin singing in unison can produce the “surprise” effect as well. As the song reaches the climax, it may be helpful to thicken the vocal texture by putting a voice part in divisi to allow for the addition of another melodic motive.³²

Arranging for the Show Choir

For show choir the arranger must determine if instrumental parts will need to be written in addition to the voice. Some director-arrangers will use a karaoke-style performance track and write a vocal arrangement to accompany it, rather than writing for the instruments. Director-

³² Applied adaptation taken from a conversation with Dr. Craig Weston 3/14/2013.

arrangers who choose the live band option will need to write parts for the instruments. This section will focus on creating vocal arrangements for a karaoke track.

In order to develop an effective vocal arrangement for a karaoke-style track the arranger must choose an appropriate track. There are often several versions of instrumental tracks available, but many of them will possess certain characteristics that make them unsuitable for use. Since the audience expects the show choir to present all the vocals for the performance, it is important to avoid tracks that have background vocals still present. If this sort of track is used, the audience will likely feel unsettled by the presence of “mystery singers” that they are not expecting to hear. Secondly, these tracks sometimes vary significantly from the original form of the song. Certain interludes, choruses, verses, etc. may have been cut, extended, repeated, or otherwise modified. Also, these tracks may be set in a different key than the original. It is important to not only be aware of this, but also to determine if the change causes difficulties for arrangement, such as vocal registration problems. In order to better assess the form of the track, it may be helpful to purchase both the karaoke version of the track and the one with a lead vocal present, so comparisons can be made between the original and the karaoke track. Another important consideration is instrumentation. Many karaoke tracks use synthesized instruments that are poor substitutes for the originals.³³ If a different instrumentation is present, it is important to evaluate if this is effectively executed and whether or not this will present any challenges to making a quality vocal arrangement.

After selecting an appropriate track, the arranger must decide if the song should be adjusted for length. Some songs are too long for live performance, and become repetitive and dull because of repeated sections.³⁴ Show choirs can often benefit from a shorter track because they can perform a greater number of songs in a shorter time span, thus building momentum. Audio software programs such as GarageBand, Logic, or Audacity can be used to cut and paste sections of music. One effective technique is to cut the second verse and chorus of a song and have the first chorus segue directly into the bridge and then into the recapitulation of the chorus. This cuts down on song length while maintaining the core of the recognized musical form. The

³³ Mack, 51.

³⁴ Callahan, 2000. *The Collegiate A Cappella Arranging Manual: Anna’s Amazing A Cappella Arranging Advice*. Southwest Harbor, ME: Contemporary A Cappella Publishing, 21.

choreographer may also desire to shorten or lengthen certain sections to better accommodate the choreography.

Once the track is chosen and cuts are determined, then the arranger will need to begin writing for the voices. A leadsheet of the original music can be very helpful as a guide to creating an effective arrangement. While the arranger should avoid a wholesale “copy and paste” approach, the leadsheet will provide a basic template. The leadsheet can offer insights into pitch, rhythm, key, time signature, harmonic structure, etc. However, it is important to evaluate the accuracy of the leadsheet, as it may contain subtle (or significant) errors that detract from the appropriate style of the song.³⁵ For example, the “R&B” style of singing often involves the frequent use of improvised melismas. These may be overly simplified or incorrectly translated on the leadsheet. Compositional software programs such as Finale or Sibelius can play back music so the arranger can determine whether or not the written music is congruent with his/her conception. If harmony is desired, then the arranger will need to determine when it will occur, what pitches will create the intended sound, and how many parts there will be. Harmony is an effective tool for creating musical texture. Varying the texture of the composition will maintain a sense of “progress” for the listener.³⁶ Here is an example of a common usage of variation in harmonic texture in popular music:

- 1) Verse 1 begins with a solo (monophony)
- 2) End of verse 1 or “pre-chorus” changes to unison tutti (reinforced monophony)
- 3) Chorus 1 is sung with a harmonized melody (homophony)
- 4) Bridge is sung with a melody plus independent figurations (figural monophony)
- 5) Chorus 2 is sung with harmonized melody with added independent figurations (figural homophony)
- 6) Final chorus is sung with addition of counter-melody(ies) (polyphony)
- 7) Ending is sung in unison tutti or as a solo (monophony)

³⁵ Lanier, 35-36.

³⁶ Taken from a conversation with Dr. Craig Weston 3/14/2013.

Popular music primarily employs vocal monophony and homophony with occasional polyphony for effect. Arrangements that are stylistically accurate will reflect this practice.

Choreography

Movement naturally pairs with music.³⁷ Choreography allows for choirs to be kinesthetically expressive in addition to being visually and aurally expressive. Choreography is essentially structured dance that adds specified movements to the formations of staging. It can come in a variety of styles, complexities, and difficulties. When considering whether or not to incorporate choreography, it is important to answer certain questions:

1) Does choreography fit with the performance style of the choir?

Choreography is not suited for all choirs or for all audiences.³⁸ Choosing to add choreography can change the character of the ensemble and can influence the literature selection.

2) How appropriate is choreography to the music that is being performed?

Much of the existing literature does not benefit from choreography. The use of movement should be a natural extension of impulses created by the music.

3) Are the singers open to the possibility of performing with choreography?

Some singers may disagree with the choice to implement choreography while others may feel embarrassed.³⁹ Dancing that involves partnering with people of the opposite sex can cause some members to feel uncomfortable.

4) Do the individuals possess the skills/experience necessary?

Some choreography may require the singers to have certain background knowledge or skill in order to be successful. Certain moves require a degree of coordination that can take time to develop.

³⁷ Tiboris, 1983. The show choir movement: Uses and abuses: A symposium. *College Music Symposium* 23, no. 2: 28.

³⁸ Smith, 33.

³⁹ Ibid.

5) Will most or all songs be choreographed?

Making choreography a regular part of the performance process can have significant implications on how the ensemble should be organized. Personnel, rehearsal scheduling, literature, etc., can all be impacted by this decision, and should be considered accordingly.

6) How challenging/complex will the choreography be?

Intense or complicated routines may require a certain degree of physical conditioning. If singers will be expected to perform live, the choreography should not be so difficult that it inhibits the ability to sing well.⁴⁰

7) Is there a person available to create and teach the choreography?

Unless the music director plans to design and teach the choreography, a choreographer will be necessary to design and/or teach each routine.

8) Does he/she have the necessary skill, experience, availability, flexibility, etc.?

The choreographer will need to be able to design choreography that is appropriately fitting, appealing, challenging, etc. He/she will need to have the ability and time to meet these expectations.

9) Will he/she be compensated? How?

Student choreographers may be willing to provide their services simply for the prestige it offers, however, most choreographers will need to be compensated for their services. This may require a specific budget for this purpose. The form and amount of compensation should be negotiated in advance.

10) How will adding choreography affect the rehearsal process?

Learning choreography will require rehearsal time and structure. This should be reflected in the rehearsal schedule and pacing.

⁴⁰ Lanier, 37.

11) Does the schedule allow for enough rehearsal time to reach proficiency?

Depending on the choir and the choreography the choir may simply not have enough time to develop the routine to the necessary proficiency. Developing a master schedule that includes pacing goals allows the director to assess the progress and make adjustments before problems arise.

Working with a Choreographer

Hiring a professional or student to teach choreography is a significant decision. It is not only important to select the right person for the job but also to make the most out of the partnership. When selecting a choreographer it is important to discuss his/her philosophy, experience, flexibility, dance skill, and educational skill. Choreographers have their own philosophies about the place and process of dance in music. The music director will need to determine if the choreographer's philosophy will be compatible with his/her vision. A choreographer that is not willing to modify choreography at the director's request or one that makes up choreography "on the fly" may not be the right person for the job.⁴¹ Choreographers need to have the right kind of experience. Choreographers who work primarily with professional adults may have unrealistic expectations or a harsh approach that is unsuitable for children and adolescents. The choreographer for the cheerleading squad may create great routines for women, but the men may feel emasculated by having to perform feminine dance moves. If the choir is expecting to learn advanced routines, the choreographer will need to have the dance skills to match. A choreographer may have all these qualities, but he/she will not be effective if he/she is not a good teacher. The choreographer will need to be able to not only teach the routine but to evaluate the progress of the performers and adjust accordingly.⁴²

In order to have the best experience possible when working with a choreographer it is essential that the music director and the choreographer establish good communication. Expectations should be discussed and contracts should be negotiated before rehearsals begin. Depending on the director, the choreographer may be involved in the artistic decision-making process. Allowing the choreographer to have input on personnel, literature selection, costuming,

⁴¹ Ibid, 36-37.

⁴² Zegree, *The Complete Guide to Teaching Vocal Jazz*, 65.

program order, etc., can allow for them to work off of his/her strengths.⁴³ Choreographers can benefit from having access to the same resources the director has. He/she should be given sheet music in advance with all the cuts as well as a recording of the accompaniment as a reference for designing a fitting routine. Choreographers who are unfamiliar with the choir will benefit by being told the number of individuals in the group (for designing formations) as well as their overall talent level. The director will need to communicate any expected limitations on choreography, such as partnering and lifts. Positive, professional interactions can help develop an effective working relationship between the director, choreographer, and choir. The choir should be instructed to treat the choreographer as a special guest with plenty of respect, and the director should only raise concerns about a routine's effectiveness in private. Publicly recognizing the choreographer's contributions can help to build rapport and lead to him/her becoming a continual resource for the choir.⁴⁴

⁴³ Alder, 78.

⁴⁴ Mack, 32-33.

Chapter 5 - The Decision to Perform Live, Pre-recorded, or Hybrid

One of the most controversial topics of professional level performance is the use of pre-recordings in live performance.⁴⁵ There is a healthy debate as to the merit of such performances. This chapter will not attempt to draw a conclusive argument in either direction; rather, it will discuss the pros and cons of both types of performance and to identify the distinctive elements that will help a director make a decision regarding which to use.

Why Perform with a Pre-Recorded Track?

One of the major concerns and criticisms for directors regarding pop and show choirs is that choreography may detract from the musical quality.^{46 47} While there are exceptions, music educators generally agree that musical quality is of greater importance than choreographic quality.^{48 49} Yet, the visual elements are also considered to be of great value to the audience, and so these elements “deserve as much forethought and attention as the purely music ones.”⁵⁰ This explains the willingness of concertgoers to pay large sums of money to watch performers in live performance. A pre-recorded track allows for the performer to present both the peak aural quality and the peak visual quality without having to make sacrifices for either.

Another concern may be that the performers could have limited ensemble time with the technical staff. Also, the acoustic and logistic challenges of a given performance venue may raise the likelihood of technical problems. These issues may also be compounded by the overly high expectations of modern audiences who are regularly exposed to highly produced material on television and the internet. Producers, determined to meet or exceed these expectations, may choose to pre-record all or certain parts of the performance. Pre-recorded performances are not uncommon in the professional music industry.

⁴⁵ Fredrickson, 277.

⁴⁶ Itkin, 1986. Dissolving the myths of the show choir. *Music Educators Journal* 72, no. 8: 41.

⁴⁷ Powell, 2010. Keeping the “choir” in showchoir. *Choral Journal* 50, no. 10: 45-46.

⁴⁸ Mack, 10.

⁴⁹ Frederickson, 35, 37.

⁵⁰ Zegree, The Wow Factor, 108.

Why Perform Live?

While the benefits of performing live may seem fairly obvious, it is important to identify them in distinction to a pre-recorded performance. Live performances allow for the performer(s) to create music in the moment. This can serve as an “inspirational” or “transcendent” experience for the performer in a way that simply cannot be replicated. Audiences expect to observe this and share in that moment. When an audience is confronted with inconsistencies that may be present in pre-recorded performances, such as obvious lip-synching, the “suspension of disbelief” breaks down, and the moment is lost. Live performance also allows for performers to improvise. This can be done intentionally for musical effect, or out of necessity, such as “vamping” for costume changes.⁵¹ While consistent, pre-recording reduces or sometimes eliminates options of flexibility and ties the performer to a set outcome. Certain songs and styles, such as jazz, include improvisation as a core musical component and are more appropriately performed live. Another important advantage of live performance is that recording equipment, software, and files need not be employed and maintained. Pre-recorded performances are heavily reliant on the functionality of the recording.

Why Use a Hybrid of Pre-recorded and Live Performance?

Considering that there are benefits to both live and pre-recorded performance, some directors choose to employ both approaches. A hybrid approach allows for the powerful visual and sound elements of a pre-recorded performance to be present while still providing aesthetic, “in the moment,” experiences. This can provide consistent performance quality on challenging routines and opportunities for audience connection. Hybrid performances also limit the exposure of the audience to the inconsistencies present in both live and pre-recorded performances. From an audience perspective, the live performances give the pre-recorded performances more credibility for two reasons. First, the live performance proves to the audience that the performer is actually singing, and they will continue to believe this until proven otherwise. Second, if an inconsistency is exposed in the presentation of the pre-recorded performance, the audience is more prone to “suspend their disbelief,” because they are presented with further legitimate, live performing, creating a greater sense of consistency than inconsistency.

⁵¹ Alder, 76.

Making the Decision

Determining the type of performance that best suits the expected outcome involves a few important considerations. Answering these questions may help to clarify the decision:

- 1) Does pre-recording violate core beliefs about appropriate performance practice?
- 2) Would the audience appreciate a well-presented pre-recorded performance?
- 3) Would pre-recording allow for a significant increase in perceived level of performance?
- 4) Would pre-recording allow for a significant increase in the quality of choreography?
- 5) Is there a person available who can function as a sound engineer?
- 6) Is appropriate recording equipment available? Can a quality recording be made?
- 7) Is there enough time to polish the recordings?
- 8) Once recorded, will the performers have enough time to match the performance to the track?

Chapter 6 - The Use of Sound Reinforcement in Performance and Rehearsal

Since the use of sound reinforcement and audio/video recording equipment is becoming more prevalent, it is important to consider the various ways that this equipment can be used to improve the performance, rehearsal, and educational process.

Incorporating Sound Reinforcement Equipment

Sound reinforcement equipment helps to address the naturally occurring problems of projection and balance in performance and rehearsal. Large or open air environments often require a greater volume that is more appropriate for instruments than for voices. Vocalists tend to compensate for this by singing at volumes only achieved with unhealthy production. Sound reinforcement allows for the singer to maintain a healthy volume while still projecting to a larger space. This allows for groups to give longer, more physically demanding performances in a greater range of venues and to larger audiences.

Purchasing this equipment comes with certain commitments. There are varying grades of fidelity, durability, sensitivity, and functionality available. Top quality equipment can often be prohibitively expensive, but most performing groups will be satisfied with the benefits that entry or mid-level gear provide. Equipment purchase is a four-fold commitment. The equipment will require an educated operator, appropriate storage, qualified maintenance, and the associated financial investment. The person using the equipment will need to be trained to utilize its full potential, prevent it from getting damaged, and teach others to do the same.⁵² The equipment will need to be stored in protective containers in a location that is structurally secure and free from damaging humidity and temperatures. In the course of use, it is natural for the equipment to become worn, damaged, or broken. A qualified technician will be needed to maintain or repair/replace necessary components.⁵³ Purchasing and maintaining the equipment will require a budget set aside for this purpose.

⁵² Alder, 137-139.

⁵³ Lanier, 36.

The Complications of Sound Reinforcement Equipment

There are also certain complications that come with the use of this equipment. Four common complications are: compatibility, signal interference, feedback, and logistical limitations. The sheer volume of equipment options can be very intimidating, and many of them are not compatible with each other. It is important to know the compatibility requirements for each piece of equipment. For example, a 16 channel mixer may support 16 XLR connections, yet may only have 12 microphone pre-amps, meaning that only 12 microphones would be usable at a given time even though 16 could be connected. Companies that specialize in audio equipment sales, such as Sweetwater or Musician's Friend, usually have technicians available to advise consumers on compatibility issues.

Signal interference is a common problem with wireless microphone systems. These systems use radio waves in the same manner as other wireless devices such as the ubiquitous cell phone. This inevitably leads to interference by overlapping or competing signals. In some cases, not only will the signal be disrupted, but it will be "hijacked" by the competing device, causing the signal of the competing device to come through on the wireless microphone system. While the audience may find it humorous to hear a person's cell phone or a trucker's CB radio suddenly amplified on the sound system, it is hardly the desired effect. In order to prevent this, additional antennas can be set up to improve signal strength. Professional technicians should be consulted for proper antenna selection and installation. Wired microphones are commonly shielded from such interference, but sometimes electrical interference will occur due to poor connections or wire shortages. This can cause a persistent "hum" or "whine" sound.⁵⁴ Cable connectors should be frequently inspected for loose or damaged components. Most cables are sheathed to provide strain relief, but a cable that has been pulled tight or yanked too hard may have a damaged wire. Generally speaking, wires that have to carry a larger signal current or carry over longer distances will need to be of a larger gauge to prevent degradation of the signal.

Feedback is another complication that can be very disruptive to the performance atmosphere. Feedback occurs when an audio signal travels in a continuous loop. When a performer sings in to a microphone the signal passes to a speaker to be reproduced and amplified. If sound from the speaker is strong enough to be picked up by the microphone then

⁵⁴ Criswell, 34.

the microphone sends the signal yet again to the speaker which travels back to the microphone, and so forth. This loop causes a loud “whine” or “screech” sound that can be surprising and highly unpleasant. Feedback is most commonly a problem when monitor speakers and/or microphones are set on a high volume (gain) setting. Monitor speakers are designed to send sound back to the performer(s) so they can hear themselves and adjust accordingly. To avoid feedback, the performer should not take the microphone too close to the monitor speakers and to keep the receiving end pointed in the opposite direction. If feedback should occur, both the performer and the sound engineer should be made aware how best to respond. The performer should move away from the monitors and lower input volume. The sound engineer should lower the gain on the mixer for the monitor and/or the microphone quickly before the noise becomes intense. If this becomes a recurring problem, alternate placement and usage of equipment should be considered.⁵⁵

The other significant complication of sound reinforcement equipment is that it creates logistical limitations. Wireless systems have a limited operational range while wired systems require cabling that can inhibit movement and can become tangled. A 32 channel mixer and a large subwoofer may provide for added options and effects, but they may be prohibitively immobile. The advantages of the sound equipment must be weighed against the inherent limitations that come with use.

Educational Impact

Working with sound reinforcement equipment in the educational setting can be beneficial or detrimental depending on the circumstances. If student performers plan to perform with this equipment, practicing with it in the same manner is consistent with the expected outcome. Students should be familiarized with the physical and technical nature of the equipment so as to be versed in proper use. The students will need to develop problem solving skills to handle unexpected issues such as feedback, balance, and connection problems. Having the sound engineer(s) present will also allow for them to know what to expect from the performers and the equipment allowing for better adjustments. The overuse of this equipment may also be a problem. If the student performers are reliant on the equipment to solve core musical problems, then they do not develop these skills. The equipment can help to improve balance, projection,

⁵⁵ Mack, 62-63.

and certain elements of tone, but these should not be used as an attempted substitute for musicianship. Performers will need to develop independent musical ensemble skills.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Lanier, 36.

Chapter 7 - Rehearsal Techniques

The performance product of show choirs and pop a cappella choirs is significantly different than the standard classical model. These unique qualities should be reflected in the techniques used in rehearsal. Show choirs must practice and clean choreography, while pop a cappella choirs must add visual elements to a highly stylized sound. The “show business” elements of these performing groups are not found in the traditional choral experience and so require some distinctly different techniques. As with other choirs, these contemporary choirs will benefit from rehearsing in a manner consistent with their planned performance.

Consistency with Performance Design

The saying goes, “perfect practice makes perfect.” This “perfect” practice can go beyond rehearsing music and choreography like it should be performed. The technical and logistical elements of the show should also be a part of the rehearsal process. If the show will involve costume changes, audio equipment, platform risers, timed transitions, etc., then all of these things should be a part of the rehearsal process. The sooner these elements are introduced to the rehearsal process, the more natural they will become a part of the performance. Often these elements are not added until just before the performance. The performers will learn how to address technical problems as they arise, but they must be given time to experience the conflicts that may arise in order to develop solutions to them, otherwise the problems arise during the performance. It is important to note that these technical elements require forethought, extra personnel, and extra setup and teardown time. It is likely that many rehearsals will be spent addressing the core elements of music and choreography, however, once these are in place the technical elements should be added quickly.

Teaching Vocal Technique

Compared to the canon of literature sung by traditional choirs, show and pop choirs’ collection of literature is almost wholly exclusive to what has been composed within the last century. The music performed by these choirs is primarily music that has been previously produced by the music recording industry. This music is generally labeled “popular” music, or “pop,” although there are several sub-genres that can be identified within this generic, overarching label, such as rock, jazz, swing, hip-hop, etc. The two most distinct elements of pop

music vocal technique in contrast to classical vocal technique are the use of tone quality and diction.

As with other choirs, developing an ideal, healthy tone is a primary concern.⁵⁷ Compared to vocal classical music, vocal pop music artists frequently use a “brighter” tone, focusing more on mouth resonance and less on head resonance and soft palate lift.⁵⁸ While this is not always the case, pop singers will likely need to employ a different concept of tone when singing in this style.⁵⁹ Singers who participate in other choirs or who have a history of singing in the classical idiom will need to be instructed to develop a new conceptualization of a tonal baseline when singing in the modern choir.

Popular music tends to explore a wide range of dynamics and register. In particular, men are commonly expected to sing loud in their extreme upper register, and women are expected to sing loud in their extreme low register. This, in combination with the shift in tone quality and the implementation of choreography, can cause singers to develop unhealthy singing habits. In order to avoid damaging the voice, the director should choose repertoire that fits the practical ranges of the performers, and healthy vocal production should be habitually practiced, especially when adding choreography.⁶⁰ If healthy singing production cannot be achieved due to physically intensive choreography, then the choreography should either be changed, or pre-recording should be considered.

Popular music commonly draws from the vernacular language.⁶¹ This language is highly influenced by regional dialect. Pronunciations are modified from the standard linguistic form, establishing a unique sound character. Occasionally this presents a conflict between accuracy of style and intelligibility. Popular artists often take liberty with vowel and consonant combinations for artistic effect. In these situations it is up to the director to determine whether intellectual clarity or artistic style takes precedence. Generally speaking, singers should sing with diction that mirrors vernacular speech, adding pure vowel and consonant sounds unless these conflict with the appropriate style. Scott Fredrickson says:

⁵⁷ Powell, 45-46.

⁵⁸ Alder, 107-111.

⁵⁹ Lanier, 36.

⁶⁰ Powell, 45-46.

⁶¹ Woody, 2007. Popular Music in School: Remixing the Issues. *Music Educators Journal* 93 no. 5: 34.

“The goal is to sing normally and produce pure vowel and consonant sounds, unless they do not sound correct. At that point, *SING IT LIKE YOU SAY IT* becomes operative. Singers must develop a universal English, as devoid of dialect as possible, reflecting without snobbishness – an ideal that is established as goal and norm for all educated speech.”⁶²

The director will need to address questions regarding the effective use of consonants, vowel formation, placement, and diphthongs so performers can develop an approach that is artistically sound and stylistically accurate.⁶³

Communication

Effective communication is vital for any group endeavor. Expectations should be presented clearly both verbally and in writing. A choir handbook may be created that contains all of the operating procedures and expectations for the group. The director is responsible for letting the group know exactly how he/she plans to communicate to the group and how he/she expects the group to communicate with him/her. Multiple forms of communication should be encouraged. In addition to face-to-face conversation, members may choose to utilize modern technology such as email, social media, and group texting. For example, if a choreographer is unable to be present for rehearsal, he/she can upload a teaching video to Facebook for the dance captain to learn and then teach to the group. This method also allows for the group members to review the dance steps multiple times outside of rehearsal if they are having difficulties with it or if they happen to be gone from rehearsal. This same method can be used in reverse to have the group upload a video of themselves performing the routine so the choreographer can evaluate and give constructive feedback. Group texting is very helpful in communicating a change in rehearsal schedule or location on short notice. Texting etiquette should be observed when using group text because each text will be sent to every member, which could lead to an inordinate number of texts being sent if not used properly.

⁶² Fredrickson, 61.

⁶³ Ibid, 60-64.

Pacing

Pacing should reflect a “worry early” mentality. The more that can be accomplished sooner, the better. It is highly unlikely that a group will go into the final week before a big show feeling like every aspect of their performance is perfect. The more common scenario is that of long, high-stress rehearsals that attempt to resolve problems that could have been addressed much earlier. The “we’ve got plenty of time” mentality produces poor time management habits and inefficient use of rehearsal time. Music should be learned and memorized quickly and accurately to allow for further development of the visual and technical elements.⁶⁴ The creation of a master schedule that includes achievement goals will help to assess pacing and progress.⁶⁵

Assignments

In order to reach these goals, it is important to have regular assessment of member progress. With audio/video recording features becoming standard on most computers, it is now feasible to assign recording submissions. Singers can be asked to submit audio recordings of themselves as individuals (or groups) singing selected sections of music to an expected proficiency. This allows the director to better assess the progress of the individual singer and plan rehearsals accordingly. Video submissions of dance routines may also be assigned in a similar fashion. A performer who is absent from a dance rehearsal may be assigned to submit a video recording of him/her performing the routine that was missed. Logistical and administrative assignments can also be assigned to various officers as discussed in chapter 3.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 105.

⁶⁵ Alder, 62.

Chapter 8 - Designing Performances

The primary consideration for designing an effective show is music selection. This is discussed in Chapter 4. Besides choice of music there are several logistical elements that can influence a show's success.

Partial Performances

Partial performances include paid “gigs” and unpaid promotional performances. Paid performances that are by application or by request are commonly called gigs. The performing group usually travels to the location set by the paying party and the performers present their show. There are several factors that can influence this type of performance. The performance venue may be negotiable, but usually the customer will select the venue and the performers will need to adjust. It is likely that the dimensions of the performance space will be different from the practice space. The performers will need to determine what adjustments will be necessary. This may include changing the choreography, setlist, or personnel. A small stage may simply be too small to accommodate all performers. Another consideration is the audience. When selecting which songs to perform it is important to consider which songs the audience would appreciate most.⁶⁶ Younger audiences gravitate towards contemporary music while older audiences tend to appreciate established classics. It is also important to consider the nature of the engagement for which the group has been to perform. Dramatic or mature themed songs tend to be better suited as contrasting material on full concerts, while up-tempo, light-hearted songs are more universally appreciated.

Promotional performances are done to increase group status, prestige, or to build awareness about upcoming performances. These performances have the added benefit of providing the singers with performance experience leading up to the full concert. Promotional performances are usually unpaid, partial performances of one to three songs and are often a part of another program. Frequently this becomes symbiotic relationship between two or more promotional organizations. For example, a philanthropic fundraising organization may ask performing groups to entertain as part of the presentation to build interest in their own organization. This allows both the fundraising group and the performing group to benefit. There

⁶⁶ Ibid, 74.

are more impromptu approaches as well. The “flash mob” is a recent development in impromptu performance. A flash mob is designed so that the performers set up in a populated area such as a mall and pretend to be just a part of the crowd. At a specified moment the performers begin to sing without warning, catching the audience off-guard. This often involves a single person boldly singing a solo much to the surprise of the people around him/her, and then other performers join in.⁶⁷ Flash mobs are risky in that the audience, proprietors especially, may consider the performance more of a nuisance than a pleasant surprise, however, they can be highly effective at getting an audience interested in finding out more about the group. It is advised to secure permission of the owner of the establishment before deciding to do a flash mob.⁶⁸ Unlike the standard promotional performance, flash mobs do not identify themselves and so the audience is often left wondering who the group is, and this question drives the audience towards seeking out more information.⁶⁹ This approach tends to increase the “word-of-mouth” interest in the group because unanswered questions foster discussion.

Promotional performances often offer a greater freedom of choice as to when and where the performance will take place. Ideally the performance will be given to the largest possible audience in a venue where the performers are not limited. If space is a factor, then it will need to be determined and secured ahead of time. Location is important because it dictates how the audience will see (or not see) the performers. It is important to take into consideration the natural limitations of venue options. Distance, viewing angle, and lighting are just a few considerations. Acoustics should also be evaluated. A ballroom will require different sound projection than singing outdoors in the park. If performing outside, then weather may be a factor, and a secondary performance location may be necessary. Probably the best way to assess a performance environment is to evaluate these elements from the perspective of a variety of places in the audience and adjust accordingly.

Flash mobs require careful planning as well. Since flash mobs work off the element of surprise, the performers must have a plan to “infiltrate” the audience without being noticed as well as a plan on how to leave afterwards. There must also be a signal that can be given so the performer(s) know when (or when not) to begin. Performers must be prepared for the variety of

⁶⁷ Sussman, 2011. The Power of Public Performance. *Choral Director* 8, no. 1: 3.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

responses that a surprised audience may have. For instance, a business manager may speak up during the performance and ask the singers to stop because the performance is interrupting sales. In order for the flash mob to be successful, these possibilities must be considered and planned for.

Full Concert Performances

The full concert is the opportunity for the choir to give a comprehensive presentation of their prepared performance. Full concerts require extensive preparation, as mentioned in the previous chapters, but they allow for the choir to present the full spectrum of what they have to offer. A top quality show is produced by realizing the full potential of the visual, aural, and temporal elements.

Pacing and Transitions

One of the most commonly underutilized performance resources is time.⁷⁰ Proper use of pacing and transitions allows for the performers to establish a sense rhythm and momentum with the audience. So many performances involve lengthy breaks between songs. This fails to keep the audience engaged and entertained. Ideally, each song should flow naturally into the next song with a smooth transition. It is important that the transitions be treated with as much care as the in-song moments because the audience perceives transitions as a part of the performance. In order for pacing to be maintained through the transition, the next performing act should always be prepared to come on stage as the previous one exits. The end of the audience's applause should segue directly into the introduction of the next number. This keeps the audience actively and constantly engaged by eliminating the "dead" time between songs. Props and costume changes can complicate this process. This requires the performers and directors to think like stage managers. Effective programming, as explored in chapter 4, can allow for performers to change costumes without disrupting the flow of the performance. For example, during a mid-song formation change a performer can discreetly exit the stage before the song is over so he/she can get a head start on the costume change or prop collection for his/her solo number that comes next. After performing, this same person can also enter discreetly during a formation change in the next group number after changing costumes again. Alternating solos and group numbers

⁷⁰ Alder, 75.

allows for short costume breaks between each song for all performers. Additional stagehands backstage can help make this process more time-efficient. Props and costumes should be neatly organized back stage with tables and neon tapelines demarcating where everything is located for easy and quick access even in low light. Performers will also need to have an understanding of which side of the stage they will be between songs so that they can plan to have the necessary clothing and props on the appropriate side at the right time. As discussed in chapter 7, rehearsing this way during practice will allow for the performers to resolve problems that may occur before the actual performance.

Staging, Space, and Audience Engagement

Effective use of staging and space can keep the audience refreshed by changing the sense of depth and the direction of focus. Moving the singers into different positions and formations can keep the presentation from becoming stagnant. Rows, columns, diagonal lines, offset lines, arcs, and clumps can help provide visual variety.⁷¹ Riser platforms can be used to provide a greater sense of depth and vertical space. Performers are not required to sing from the stage only. They can begin performances from behind, to the side of, circling around, or from within the audience. Judicious use of this technique can keep the performance fresh by breaking the barrier between audience and performer.⁷² Another way to create sense of audience-performer connection is to have the performers directly acknowledge and interact with the audience during the performance. The singers can reach out to the audience both literally and figuratively.

Unless the performers rehearse regularly in the performance space, it is important that they plan for extra rehearsal time in the actual performance venue before putting on the show. Oftentimes the stage will have different dimensions than the rehearsal space. The choir will need time to make adjustments for spacing and distance. The use of tapelines and dots can help to provide a better sense of spatial awareness. Show choirs with heavily choreographed routines will require significant time to adjust to a change in space. Choirs will also benefit by rehearsing in the new acoustical atmosphere as each space will provide different aural feedback which will require adjustments from the singers.

⁷¹ Jacobson, 107.

⁷² Zegree, *The Wow Factor*, 111.

Sound Equipment Management

As with staging and space, it is important to rehearse with the sound equipment in the performance space. Many stages have preset “house” equipment that performers will be expected to use. Having a sound technician and engineer for this process can be crucial.⁷³ Compatibility and connections will need to be established for all equipment. Placement of microphones, cables, speakers, stands, mixing boards, transceivers, power supplies, etc. will need to be determined. Performers will need to be informed as to the proper procedure and necessary equipment for running a sound check. All microphones and speakers will need to be checked and leveled. Battery levels will need to be monitored, and replacements should be on hand. If there is a transfer of equipment (i.e. a “mic trade”) that is to occur backstage during the performance, it is important that that element is rehearsed. Stagehands will need to rehearse the specifics and timing of any sound equipment brought on and off the stage.

When working with sound engineers and technicians, it is important to communicate the expected volume levels and balance. The more time that the sound crew has to work with the performers, the more sensitive to the performance they can be. If each individual will be independently amplified, then each person will need to work with the sound crew to establish the proper sound level. Experienced sound technicians will be able to apply appropriate effects such as compression and reverb to the sound. If the performance is pre-recorded, then the main responsibility of the sound crew will be to set the track’s volume at an appropriate level. The performers will sing along with the track so the physical act of singing is visually consistent with the audience’s expectations. However, if the track volume is too low, then the audience may begin to recognize an aural discrepancy between the live sound being produced on stage and the pre-recorded sound that is being amplified. It is recommended that pre-recorded tracks be played at a high volume setting to prevent the audience from noticing any aural/spatial inconsistencies.

Lighting Management

Lighting effects can add another exciting artistic layer to the performance. The most basic purpose of lighting is selective visibility. Entertaining choreography is of no use without the ability to be seen, and transitions between numbers may benefit from darkness. Lighting can

⁷³ Lanier, 36.

also provide focus and mood. Floodlights provide large area lighting and spotlights provide focused lighting. Special equipment such as strobe lights, laser lights, black lights, fog machines, and disco balls can provide added effect. Front and side lighting can add to the sense of depth. When using lighting equipment, it is important to remember, just as with sound equipment, trained technicians can and should be used. Lighting technicians can help to set proper light placement and provide added effects such as color, theatrical gobos, and powerful lighting transitions. The technician should be able to observe the rehearsal of the performance in order to devise a proper lighting setup and to set light cues. If spotlights are to be used, then trained individuals will need to rehearse the proper placement and timing as well.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Mack, 64-66.

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Appendix A - Kansas State Singers Officer Descriptions

K-State Singers Officer Descriptions

Committee Structure

- The group is divided into four committees:
 - Membership Committee
 - Director of Membership (chair)
 - Director of Recruitment
 - Director of High School Relations
 - Director of Alumni Relations
 - Business Manager
 - Public Relations Committee
 - Director of Public Relations (chair)
 - Director of Graphic Design
 - Director of Social Media
 - Webmaster
 - Director of Photography
 - Director of Videography
 - Events Committee
 - Director of Social Activities (chair)
 - Director of Trips
 - Director of Fundraising
 - Director of Service & Philanthropy
 - Performance Committee
 - Director of Performances (chair)
 - Equipment Manager
 - Director of Ticket Sales
 - Choreography Student Assistant
 - Business Manager
- Business managers are responsible for overseeing all the committees and ensuring group wide goals are met
- Each committee chair is responsible for the overall coordination of committee goals, timelines, and task deadlines
- Each committee chair is responsible for knowing the responsibilities of each committee member and supervising these responsibilities
- 30 Minutes of class time should be devoted to business meetings every other week, with these times being scheduled in advance
 - The beginning of this time should be devoted to committee meetings, with everyone then coming together to meet as a group

Managers

Business Managers (1-2)

- Responsible for the overall coordination of K-State Singers functions and activities
- Plans and facilitates committee and group-wide business meetings, determining a consistent meeting time

- Meet with committee supervisors to ensure committee performance
- Works in depth with each project and officer while maintaining a broad view of the focus of K-State Singers on helping the groups develop a team attitude
- Develop a communications calendar complete with tasks and deadlines
- Manage the K-State Singers Facebook group (not page)
- Responsible for coordinating with the music directors to distribute music to the group as well as ensuring practice tracks are online in a timely matter, ensuring that the K-State Singers come to class musically prepared
- Work with the directors to manage finances and relay information to committee chairs
- Maintains the K-State Singers listserv, records regular meeting activities, and manages the K-State Singers supplies, and the K-State Singers office
- Will plan officer transitions whenever a member's position is changed where necessary resources will be passed along.
- Handles all group purchases, such as t-shirts, event tickets, etc.
- Work with directors and choreographer to ensure all member absences are made up
- Facilitates discussion about the long-term planning of K-State Singers
- Represents and promotes K-State Singers to the University
- Manages a close-knit relationship with the departments of music, theatre, and dance by representing K-State Singers as a student-performer
- Should understand how to lead and motivate peers, be a team leader, and have a strong vision
- Should display proven leadership skills and be willing to further develop those skills in weekly meetings with advisors
- Needs excellent organizational skills, attention to detail and motivational abilities. Must be patient and dependable
- The co-managers will divide these responsibilities, ensuring each knows their specific roles
- Assist all members and chairs as needed

Membership Committee

Director of Membership (Chair)

- Be aware of all committee member responsibilities and supervise over the Membership Committee
- Work with committee members to develop committee goals, timelines, and task deadlines
- Coordinates the selection of K-State Singers members including recruitment of applicants, and organization of all components of the auditions
- Assist with the New Member Retreat and K-State Singers Banquet
- Responsible for organizing the fall and spring K-State Singers member retreats for developing group cohesiveness and setting semester goals
- Will hold primary responsibility for developing leadership and training skills of K-State Singers members
- Must be committed to personal development and have an interest in teaching and leadership training
- Must be very "others" focused, a good listener, highly self-motivated, flexible and organized
- Assist the Business Managers as needed

Director of Recruitment

- Serve as a member of the Membership Committee
- Is responsible for coordinating the recruitment efforts of the K-State Singers
 - Coordinate outreach to choirs at K-State
 - Coordinate outreach to the K-State Marching Band
 - Coordinate outreach to the music, theatre, and dance departments
 - Coordinate outreach to other musical groups and organizations on campus
 - Coordinate the receiving of recommendations from current group members
 - Work with the Director of Public Relations to coordinate the outreach to K-State Greek Chapters
 - Work with the Director of Graphic Design to coordinate the creation and audition fliers and work with the Director of Public Relations to ensure distribution throughout the K-State Campus and Manhattan Community
 - Coordinate the outreach to other impactful student groups on campus
 - Coordinate receiving personal recommendations from K-State music, theatre, and dance professors
 - Contact K-State Admission Representatives to receive information of students interested in K-State Singers
 - Research K-State and Greek Idol participants to recruit more potential K-State Singers Members

- Work with the director of PR to get audition information in “The K-State Collegian”, “The Odyssey”, and “The Manhattan Mercury”
- Coordinate promotion of the K-State Singers at events such as Orientation and Enrollment, Activities Fairs, and Vocal Music activities
- Work with the Director of High School Relations to coordinate recruitment efforts to high schools
- Work with the Director of Alumni Relations to receive recommendations from previous alumni
- Work with the Director of Ticket Sales to also promote auditions at the booth
- Work with the Director of Social Media and Webmaster to ensure promotion through social media and the website
- Ensure audition information is included in all K-State Singers Programs and materials
- Work with the Director of High School Relations to ensure audition information is available when touring high schools

Director of High School Relations

- Serve as a member of the Membership Committee
- Develop relations with high school vocal directors throughout the state
- Maintain a database of Kansas High School Choral Directors and leaders throughout the state and contacting this group as necessary
- Develop relations with statewide organizations such as KMEA and KCDA
- Explore possibilities of performing at annual statewide conferences such as KMEA
- Work with the Director of Membership to promote K-State Singers auditions to high school seniors
- Coordinate concert promotion to high school directors throughout the state
- Work with the Director of Trips to plan and promote high school performance tours throughout the year
- Plan a dual concert with the show choir at Manhattan High School
- Promote K-State Singers auditions at statewide contests such as state large group vocal ensembles contests and state solo vocal contests
- Assist the Director of Membership as needed

Director of Alumni Relations

- Serve as a member of the Membership Committee
- Responsible for coordinating activities with K-State Singers Alumni
- Maintains accurate records and database of K-State Singers Alumni
- Identify opportunities where alumni can build K-State Singers’ future in a way that is beneficial to them and the organization
- Work with the Director of Membership to reach out to Alumni for potential K-State Singers members
- Work with the Director of Fundraising to coordinate alumni fundraising efforts
- Explore the possibility of developing a K-State Singers annual alumni newsletter by delegating articles to different group members
- Coordinate alumni concert promotion efforts
- Coordinate alumni banquets following K-State Singers Performances
- Work with the Webmaster to develop an alumni section on the website
- Develop and manage social media for alumni
- Assist the Director of Membership as needed

Public Relations Committee

Director of Public Relations (Chair)

- Be aware of all committee member responsibilities and supervise over the Public Relations Committee
- Work with committee members to develop committee goals, timelines, and task deadlines
- Coordinate communication and promotion related to all K-State Singers programs and events
- Develop additional opportunities for K-State Singers promotion
- Reserve K-State Singers booths at all activities carnivals and concert/audition promotions
- Work with individual officers in promoting all K-State Singers activities and programs
- Responsible for recognition and thank-you cards sent throughout the semester
- Work with the Director of Graphic Design to develop a brochure promoting K-State Singers activities and auditions

- Work with the Director of Membership to distribute K-State Singers audition fliers
- Send out news releases to “The Collegian”, “The Odyssey”, and “The Manhattan Mercury” promoting events and stories
 - Auditions
 - New Member Recognition
 - Fall Show
 - Spring Show
 - Other Notable Events
- Coordinate K-State Singers performance flier creation and distribution including all group members
- Coordinate K-State Singers chalking promotion on campus including all group members
- Coordinate t-shirt and polo design and orders by working with the Director of Graphic Design or other companies
- Design the K-State Singers booth presence
- Assist the Business Managers as needed

Director of Graphic Design

- Serve as a member of the Performance Committee
- Work with all directors assisting them with any graphic design work they may need help with
- Develop a K-State Singers brand that can be used consistently for all K-State Singers entities
- Design annual group t-shirts
- Design individual performance t-shirts or others as needed
- Work with the Director of Performance to develop programs for each semester performance
- Work with the Director of Public Relations to develop a K-State Singers flier to be used for promotion
- Work with the Director of Public Relations to develop a new booth presence
- Work with the Webmaster and assist with any graphic design needed for the website
- Work with the Director of Membership to develop a K-State Singers audition poster
- Work with the Director of Performances to develop K-State Singers performance posters
- Work with the Director of Social Activities to develop a program and invitation for the annual banquet
- Work with the Director of Social Activities to develop a slide show for the annual banquet
- Assist the Director of Performances as needed

Director of Social Media

- Serve as a member of the Public Relations Committee
- Responsible for managing social media related to K-State Singers
- Ensure that all social media is linked to each other
- Work to increase social media page followings
- Use social media to promote K-State Singers events
- Coordinate and update the K-State Singers Facebook page
 - Manage posts, information, events, photos, and videos
- Coordinate and update the K-State Singers Twitter account
 - Manage tweets, information, and followers
- Coordinate the K-State Singers blog
 - Manage the posts by distributing specific times for people to create a blog post on different subjects
 - Attempt to make a post at least every other week
 - Use posts to spark interest and involvement in the group as well as promote event interest
 - Assist the Director of Public Relations as needed

Webmaster

- Serve as a member of the Public Relations Committee
- Work with the directors to manage and maintain K-State Singers website
 - Ensure all website changes are approved by directors
- Link all other forms of social media into website
- Work with all other members to keep information on the website current and relevant
- Work with the Director of Graphic Design to make the website visually appealing
- Integrate member biographies, group photos, videos, mp3s, audition information, and schedule into website
- Use the website as a tool to promote K-State Singers events and auditions

- Assist the Director of Public Relations as needed

Director of Photography

- Serve as a member of the Public Relations Committee
- Coordinate photographers to be present at K-State Singers events
- Arrange promotional photo shoots throughout the year including organizing photographers, locations, and dates
 - Should include photo shoot as early in the year as possible as well as identifying other opportunities and organizing other shoots as needed
- Manage Flickr account as a photo database
- Keep the Flickr account organized into events
- Ensure the Flickr account is linked to all forms of social media
- Ensure there is significant photo presence on website and other promotional materials
- Assist the Director of Graphic Design as needed
- Assist the Director of Public Relations as needed

Director of Videography

- Serve as a member of the Public Relations Committee
- Coordinate all video efforts of the K-State Singers
- Record K-State Singers rehearsals as necessary and then post to the K-State Singers Facebook group
- Provide the group with practice recordings of full run-throughs of each individual song as soon as possible
- Work with coordinators of “Wildcat Watch” to promote the K-State Singers on TV
- Coordinate videographers to be present at K-State Singers events for professional recordings
- Manage the K-State Singers Youtube account depending on copyright issues
 - Manage information and video posts
 - Use the Youtube account as a promotional tool for K-State Singers events
 - Work with directors to ensure all videos posted are in accordance with copyright laws
- Assist the Director of Public Relations as needed

Events Committee

Director of Social Activities (Chair)

- Be aware of all committee member responsibilities and supervise over the Events Committee
- Work with committee members to develop committee goals, timelines, and task deadlines
- Responsible for the coordination and development of the K-State Singers banquet in the spring, including invitations, meal planning, program, and all other details
 - Program should include thank-yous, recognition, gifts, awards (paper plate?), and other things to enhance the banquet experience
- Responsible for the coordination of the awards to be presented at the K-State Singers Banquet
- Will coordinate the planning of all social activities, outside of K-State Singers time focusing on recreation activities to enhance the cohesiveness of the group
- Responsible for the coordination of watch-parties following K-State Singers semester performances
- Must be very others focused, a good listener, highly self-motivated, organized and creative
- Needs strong written and oral communication skills as well as strong logistical planning abilities
- Assist the Business Managers as needed

Director of Trips

- Serve as a member of the Events Committee
- Coordinate and develop all trip plans/itinerary throughout the semester
 - Ensure a detailed trip schedule and itinerary is completed and communicated prior to the trip
- Work with the Director of High School Relations to plan high school performance tours throughout the semester, attempting to visit each K-State Singers member’s former high school

- Time should be set the summer before the school year or as early in semester as possible, strategically planning the tours to be as efficient as possible
- Responsible for reserving university vehicles for all trips when needed
- Work with the Director of High School Relations and local K-State Singers member to develop local contacts for each high school to help with sponsorship and promotion
- Work with the Director of High School Relations and local K-State Singers member to promote each individual concert
- Assist the Director of Social Activities as needed

Director of Fundraising

- Serve as a member of the Events Committee
- Coordinate and manage events to raise money for K-State Singers activities and equipment
- Should attempt to coordinate at least two events per semester
- Work with the Director of High School Relations and the Director of Trips to coordinate donation booths following tour performances
- Contact businesses and seek sponsorship for K-State Singers program advertisements
- Coordinate fundraising timeline for events requiring outside funds and assess the necessary fundraising amounts
- Work with the Director of Performances to coordinate donation booths following McCain performances
- Work with the Business Managers to manage fundraising money
- Assist the Director of Social Activities as needed

Director of Service & Philanthropy

- Serve as a member of the Events Committee
- Coordinate and manage at least one service/philanthropy activity for the K-State Singers per semester
- Develop a show choir related program to be held for younger students
- Identify additional opportunities for service and philanthropy throughout the semester
- Coordinate benefit concerts throughout the year as seen fit
- Work with K-State Proud Chairs to plan a benefit concert supporting and fundraising for the philanthropy
- Assist the Director of Social Activities as needed

Performances Committee

Director of Performances (Chair)

- Be aware of all committee member responsibilities and supervise over the Performances Committee
- Work with committee members to develop committee goals, timelines, and task deadlines
- Work with directors to create each show set-list
- Create and print set-lists and costume-lists for each performance
- Responsible for working with the directors and choreographer to determine costumes for the semester performance as well as the acquisition of the costumes
- Work with the Director of Graphic Design to develop program for semester performances

Equipment Manager

- Serve as a member of the Performance Committee
- Manage all equipment belonging to the K-State Singers
- Inform and educate the group of proper equipment care and maintenance
- Coordinate equipment set-up and tear-down times for each performance
- Responsible for properly packing and unloading the equipment trailer
- Assign duties to each K-State Singers member for equipment set-up and tear-down
- Assist the Director of Performances as needed

Director of Ticket Sales

- Serve as a member of the Performance Committee

- Identify opportunities for ticket sales and concert promotion to increase attendance at performances
- Work to contact groups interested in bulk ticket sales
- Work with the Director of Public Relations, the Director of High School Relations, and the Director of Alumni to promote ticket sales to the respective groups
- Coordinate ticket sales of individual K-State Singers members
- Track weekly process and ticket sales and create awards for meeting certain benchmarks
- Assist the Director of Performances as needed

Choreography Student Assistant

- Serve as a member of the Performance Committee
- Work with the head choreographer and assist them as needed
- Be willing to assist the choreographer outside of class time to develop and learn choreography
- Responsible for thoroughly knowing the choreography of each song and act as a resource for other group members
- Lead choreography rehearsals when the head choreographer cannot be present
- Be able to lead and teach a group of K-State Singers members when the group is divided to learn separate choreography
- Assist the choreographer with the documentation of any choreography as needed
- Assist the Director of Performances as needed