

FORWARD MOTION

A Sweet Adelines International Newsletter for Members of The Directors Certification Program and Front-Line Directors

More Than An Agenda

By Tim Fredstrom

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Teaching middle school students can be a pure delight. They are energetic, enthusiastic, and capable of making beautiful music and singing with great artistry. Each student, however, marches to the beat of his or her own drum, which can prove challenging for teachers.

At a developmental crossroads in their lives, middle school students are caught between two worlds, being both children and young adults. They want to be seen as mature, yet they cannot help but exhibit child-like behaviors. Working with students at this age presents a unique set of issues for choral directors. Finding instructional strategies that work effectively with students at this age are critical for success at the middle-school level.

One such strategy is simply to let students know specifically what will happen during the rehearsal. Posting the day's agenda or the pieces that will be rehearsed during class on the board makes a difference. It keeps the rehearsal tempo flowing, decreases the number of distractions, and minimizes any surprises for students. It lets students know what to expect during class. However, providing the students with a daily agenda is just one communication strategy. Letting students know the specific objectives their director wants to accomplish and the amount of time he or she plans to spend on each piece could expand the daily agenda.

In their research on skillful teaching, Saphier and Gower state, "Students are far more likely to achieve when they know what it is they are supposed to do, and students are far more likely to attain when they know how well they are expected to do it."* Choral directors can promote student achievement by taking the time to communicate with students the specific objectives for each piece rehearsed in class. Communicating specific objectives could result in improved performance – as opposed to "running through" pieces day after day, waiting for them to come together

for the concert. For example, "Today, our objectives for this piece are to sing measures 40 to 72 two times unaccompanied, beginning and ending in the same key." In this example, students are aware of the expectations of them – to sing measures 40 to 72 unaccompanied twice and stay in the same key from beginning to end. These objectives are specific and measurable; students will know if they achieved the objectives when they compare the final pitches they sang with the pitches played on the piano following the unaccompanied attempt. When students know the specific objectives, they can own their achievements and collaborate with the director to attain the objectives.

Choral directors can foster even stronger partnerships with their choir members if they occasionally ask them what their individual objectives are. For example, a choral director might say, "Yesterday we sang measures

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40 to 72 unaccompanied and in tune. With that in mind, what would be our next step to sing these measures artistically? Let's select one specific objective and determine how we will know we accomplished that objective in our rehearsal today." By taking the time to do this, students begin to think critically about their learning and it promotes their active engagement in the rehearsal. It also fosters a sense of ownership of the process among the choir members. This can be a powerful and motivating force for many middle school students, who are at an age where they are seeking greater autonomy and more decision-making power.

These examples undoubtedly resonate with the experiences of many middle school choral directors, and they are validated by Saphier and Gower's research. When students know specifically what they are supposed to do, they are more likely to work harder toward the objective. Moreover, when students are actively involved in a rehearsal, they are more likely to remember what they learned when they come back to rehearsal the next time.

Middle school students are also more likely to achieve when they know the

time frame in which they are expected to accomplish objectives. Thus, a choral director could include the time he or she intends to spend on each piece planned for the rehearsal with the daily agenda – warm-ups (5 minutes), measures 40 to 72 unaccompanied (10 minutes), for example. When students know they have 10 minutes to accomplish the objective of singing measures 40

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to 72 unaccompanied, beginning and ending in the same key, their sense of urgency and engagement will be more focused, heightening their involvement.

Similarly, speeding up the tempo of the rehearsal is also a useful strategy. By communicating the specific time frame planned for the rehearsal, the overall pace of the rehearsal can be increased. For example, when the pace begins to lag the director can say, "Let's check the schedule since we only have five minutes remaining on this piece to accomplish our objective." Or, when a student asks an unrelated question that

has the potential to take the class off task, the director can respond, "That is a great question, but since we only have five minutes left on this piece, I'll respond to it later. Communicating the time frame (or reminding students of it) can be an effective way to manage the flow of the rehearsals and keep students focused on the rehearsal objectives.

Integrating these strategies into the middle school choral curriculum can improve a choral director's effectiveness. These strategies can promote effective classroom management and greater retention, and increase student engagement. More importantly, by using these strategies, choral directors can increase the likelihood of their students becoming more skilled, artistic, and passionate music makers.

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Note – think of your chorus members instead of students and I think you'll see how well this article applies to most choral situations.

* Saphier, Jon and Robert Gower. *The Skillful Teacher: Building Your Teaching Skills*. 5th ed. Acton, MA: Research for Better Teaching Inc., 1997.

Review of DCP Resource Module 11: Creating and Presenting a Sweet Adelines Chorus Performance

So, you're wondering if this new module is something you should add to your library or not. Do you ever have questions or concerns when putting on a performance – ANY performance, from an annual show to a gig at the local ladies' club or even competition? If so, yes, this module is a valuable resource for you.

This module provides pointers for every aspect of performance. It walks you through the common sense items as well as giving ideas for tension releasers, etc. This module will not only benefit the director, but will help anyone in the chorus who has a part in putting together the performance. Since it is part of the DCP program, you, as director may find that you can pull out pieces for help in the planning stages of your

performances for your committee meetings – things to keep in mind as you progress.

The three stages of show development: Preparation, Planning and Performance are broken down quite thoroughly. Even the experienced director will find that many of the points made in this will be reinforcers when working through the process with new people in planning and execution positions.

So, this new module is highly recommended for your library and for you to share with others in your chorus' performance endeavors. Also, know that the companion item to this is the Show Manual.

Did you know—Queen/Director?

Compiled by Joni Bescos, Certified Judge — music, sound and expression categories, Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient, Certified Faculty, Master Arranger, Education Direction Committee, Editorial Review Board, Rich-Tone Chorus, Region 25

- 1954 Nancy Bergman, retired director of Tulsa No. 1 and Tucson Goodtime
- 1955 Jarmela Speta, directs Opus 2000 (formerly Racine) 1st International Champ Chorus
- 1956 Helen Peters, retired director of Heart of Illinois
- 1957 Renee Craig, directs Ramapo Valley (three-time International Champion)
- 1959 Marilyn Conlan, former director of L.A. South Towns
- 1962 Zoe Thompson, retired director of Lakeside
- 1963 Betty Pettibon, former director of Greater Harrisburg
- 1964 Mary Dick, retired director of City of Lakes
- 1965 Ruby Rhea, former director of Arcadia
- 1966 Carolyn Sexton, former director of Jersey Sound and Houston Horizon
- 1967 Iris Cokeroft, director of Goldcoast
- 1967 Ruth Ann Parker, former director of Royal Palm, Houston Horizon, Vienna Falls
- 1968 Jean Shook, retired director of Mt. Pleasant
- 1969 Hilma Mortell, former director of Mission Valley
- 1969 Marie Disher, former director of San Francisco
- 1970 Jarmela Speta again
- 1971 Portia Bolton, retired director of Harmony Hills
- 1971 Betty Meinholz, former director of Birmingham, now Assistant director Magic of Manatee chorus
- 1971 Bron Dixon, retired director of Mobile
- 1972 Connie Noble, former director of San Diego
- 1972 Lee Davison, former director of CES and Great Lakes
- 1972 Sally Whitledge, former director of CES and Seven Hills, now directs Scenic City
- 1973 Dale Syverson, former director of West Suburban, directs Rich-Tone
- 1973 Joan Melling, former director of Calumet Corner
- 1974 Jean Barford, directs Gem City
- 1975 Dixie Dahlke, former director of several chorus'
- 1975 Vicki Gibson, former director of Water Wonderland
- 1976 Kim Hulbert, director of San Diego
- 1976 Pat Vozza, director of Queen City Sound
- 1977 Melodee Wright, retired director of Wichita
- 1977 Theresa Reed, directs a chorus in Memphis
- 1977 Virginia Frederickson, former director of a Region 7 chorus
- 1978 Sandi Wright, director of St. Louis Harmony
- 1980 Betty Clipman, retired director of Houston Horizon, former director of Vienna Falls, 1988 chorus champ
- 1981 Julie Fernstrum, former director of High Country, 1980 International champion
- 1983 Donna Bates, retired director of Crosstown Harmony
- 1983 Maureen Brzinski, director of River City Sound
- 1983 Debra Peters, Director of Edge O' Town
- 1984 Joni Bescos, retired director of Verdugo Hills
- 1985 Carol Ann Bagley, retired director of a Region 3 chorus
- 1985 Karen Breidert, former director of Choral-Aires, director of Spirit of the Gulf
- 1986 Sandi Wright again
- 1986 Diane Huber, director of River Blenders
- 1987 Debbie Hogan director of Sooner Sensations
- 1987 Sally Beck, former director of the chorus Debbie directs
- 1988 Kim Hulbert again
- 1988 Connie Noble again

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- 1990 Pam Pieson, director of Harborlites
- 1990 Gerry Papageorge, director of Sounds of Harmony and Verdugo Hills
- 1990 Bonnie McKibben, director of Greater Harmony
- 1991 LeAnn Hazlett, director of Spirit of Detroit
- 1991 Sylvia Karpinsky, director of Great Lakes
- 1992 Jo Lund, director of a Region 15 chorus
- 1994 Bonnie Fedyski, Associate director Choral-Aires
- 1995 Nancy Shumard, directs Smoky Mountain Harmony
- 1995 Penny Mensik, directs a Region 3 chorus
- 1996 Pat Rygg, director of Vallee de Croix
- 1997 Susan Ives, director of Sunflower Harmony
- 1998 Peggy Gram, director of Top of the Rock (currently on leave)
- 1998 Dale Syverson again
- 1999 Janet Ashford, director of Pride of Baltimore
- 2000 Kim Hulbert again
- 2001 Connie Noble again
- 2001 Gerry Papageorge again
- 2003 Sandy Robinson, director of Lions Gate
- 2003 Lynn Gerard, directs Green Heart
- 2003 Elaine Cotton, former director of West Coast Harmony
- 2004 Karen Breidert again
- 2005 LeAnn Hazlett again

Directing Without Arms

By Alice Linskey, Director of Education

As a director, you use your entire body to get the musicality you want from your members, don't you? Sometimes, you even feel that if you could use your feet more than stand on your toes, it would help, right? How many directors/conductors have you seen who have no arms? Any??

My suggestion to you, today, is to rehearse at least one time without using your arms to direct. This will be a major challenge to many, I'm sure. What will you do in their place? Do you need to substitute something or not? No fair asking your assistant to direct for you!

How will you begin the song? How will they know the tempo? How can they possibly know when to crescendo or decrescendo? How will they know how long to hold the fermata and how in the heck will they ever cut off all together at the end? You have practiced and practiced to get them to watch YOU. Are they watching your face? Your hands? All of the above? None of the above? What exactly is it, or are they, that really do the job?

There are many times when our hands get in the way and I know ALL of you can attest to that. We get better with more experience and more practice but there are still times when what we do with our hands, doesn't get the chorus to give the

results we are looking for. So, do we change what our hands are doing? Or do we verbally explain what our hands are after so that the chorus then can equate the two, their singing with our hands?

The longer I am in this organization, the more I think we can direct without our hands and get what we need. When I first began directing a barbershop chorus, I had no clue that you could deviate from the waving pattern that was so ingrained in my college classes. For a while, leaving out some of the pattern felt scandalous and it was just plain scary. I had no idea that the chorus could manage a few beats together without me waving at the same time. Boy – did I have a lot to learn.

I'm not advocating stopping all use forever of those expressive hand and arm movements. I am suggesting to give one rehearsal a shot at freedom of arm movement. How will your body react and how will your chorus do? Experiment – it could be more fun than you could imagine. You just might free yourself up for a new way of expressing yourself. If you do, please let us know what happened!!! Inquiring minds want to know.

Good luck and enjoy the journey.

DCP Advancements

March

Peggy DiSunno, Certified, Region 15, Long Island Sound Chorus

April

Gail Bartz, Certified, Region 10, Brazos Crossing Chorus
Melissa Bomben, Certified, Region 19, Pride of Baltimore Chorus

Kim Cairns, Certified, Region 35, Whangarei Harmony Chorus

Rosemary France, Certified, Region 35, Rhythm of Canterbury Chorus

May

Sandra Cahill, Certified, Region 24, Pride of Portland Chorus
Dayle Ann Cook, Certified, Region 21, Tucson Desert Harmony Chorus

Howard Donley, Certified, Region 8, Yellowstone Harmony Chorus

Tracey Larder, Certified, Region 1, West Island Chorus

Anja Lindstedt, Certified, Region 32, Pearls of the Sound Chorus

Susan M. Murphy, Certified, Region 10, Lone Star Chorus
Janice (Boatright) Sievers, Certified, Region 3, Great Lake Sound Chorus

Cathy (Pinkerton) Wehrwein, Certified, Region 3, Prairie Echoes Chorus

June

Lea E. Baker, Master, Region 34, Endeavour Harmony Chorus

Candace Johnson, Master, Region 24, Five Valley Chorus

Judy Pozsgay, Certified, Region 26, Lions Gate Chorus

Barbara Smith, Master, Region 35, Waikato Rivertones Chorus

July

Jan McCarthy, Certified, Region 34, Wollongong Harmony Chorus

Are You An ACDA Member?

If you are a front-line director and also a member of ACDA, you can advertise your chorus on the ACDA Web site under community chorus. This is a great way to market your chorus and its activities.

