

IDEAS FOR EFFECTIVE CHORAL/VOCAL JAZZ REHEARSALS

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PSYCHOLOGICAL

1. Work to develop a philosophy about music, its significance and its relationship to the whole of life, which is your own. Share and discuss it frequently with your choir.
2. Great music is great literature – it deserves active respect. Performers and conductors are students and servants – both require one's active attention.
3. The creation of significance only comes through effort.
4. Without order and self-discipline, art is not possible.
5. Make sure that equality and "justice" prevail in your choral organization. Each member is equally important and must live up to the same standards.
6. Make your choir a community of care and friendship. The process is the product. The creation of beauty in ourselves is a greater creation than the creation of musical beauty, as lovely as that is.
7. The paradox – only "quality" can produce "quality". Quality is "outside of time."
8. The intelligence i.e. the mind, is the prime instrument of art.
9. Rehearsals are more important than concerts.
10. In the end, beautiful and great performances are 95% a matter of habit. Doing quality rehearsals, however, can never be totally habitualized.
11. Music making in an ensemble requires each member's gift of themselves – a gift of one's spirit and part of one's independence.
12. "Fear" and "joy" cannot co-exist.
13. Thankfulness is the precondition for joy.
14. Trying to "serve" or "impress" the audience makes serving the music impossible. Serve the music and forget the audience.
15. There is only one true and sustainable artistic attitude. It is humility. Work to develop the "soul of a servant."

PHYSICAL

1. Set up good acoustical and physical conditions for rehearsal. (A "dead", quiet room is ideal.)
Use your sound system monitor speakers for vocal jazz.
2. Place singers in quartets, rather than sections, much of the time.
3. Stand more than you sit, but use both positions as appropriate.
4. Have piano in tune and well placed.

5. Use music stands if using microphones.
6. Have pencils in everyone's folders and use them.

Technical / Musical

1. Being able to play the parts correctly at the piano is very important.
2. Dominant 7th chords are the most challenging, especially with 9th s, #9th s, #11th s, or 13th s. The seventh is the most difficult note and bass the most difficult part in "jazz" ensemble singing.
3. The more complex the chord, the more bright and focused the tone needs to be.
4. Isolate difficult chords – practice singing them in a dynamic manner.
5. Go back and forth over difficult harmonic connections. Sing harmonically rather than intervallically.
6. Count the internal rhythmic subdivisions on pitch to establish the "heartbeat" of the music.
7. Use the rhythm section a minority of the time in rehearsal, but give them assignments to listen to or to play together.
8. Establish a tonal model or ideal. Vary it according to the requirements of the work.
9. Structure some rehearsal time to be cerebral / analytical – some to be more emotional / physical, i.e. at performance level.
10. Build a harmonic, melodic and rhythmic orientation to singing.
11. Sing with eyes open, eyebrows lifted, with thankfulness and joy in the "soul".
12. Always sing musically, with forward direction, and a sense of "upness" to the next event.
13. Hearing is what it all comes down to.

SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES OF ARTISTIC CHORAL SINGING

1. Sing the musical phrase, not the notes.
2. Sing always with an inner smile – with joy and "pleasure."
3. Sing always with intensity and commitment.
4. In general, lower notes need to be sung with more focus, brightness and lightness.
5. In general, higher notes need more space and can be perhaps "covered" a bit.
6. Keep the jaw loose and the chin slightly down.
7. "Focus" the tone between your eyes and in your forehead – open your eyes and lift your eyebrows.
8. Descending intervals tend to be sung too low – sing ½ steps and minor thirds high.
9. Sing large intervals as though they were consecutive notes – don't "reach" for high notes of "sing down" to low notes.
10. Listening is "more important" than singing.

11. Diphthongs – sing on the first vowel and move through the second quickly.
12. In legato singing, sing on the vowel as long as possible, and clip the final consonant to the next syllable.
13. The longest notes in any phrase may need a slight crescendo to keep the musical line moving.
14. Be very aware of the inner rhythmic pulse, the “heartbeat” of music, at all times.
15. Start all notes from the center of the pitch and keep the feeling of “rising,” of spinning out the tone.
16. Don't just hold the note at the end of the phrase – it must be sung with a feeling of being anticipatory and moving to the beginning of the next phrase.
17. Keep the inner rhythm moving at the end of the phrase, especially if a ritard is involved.
18. Everything you sing is a pick-up, to the next (note, phrase, or silence).
19. Singing is athletics – be physically balanced, loose, and flexible.
20. Breathe low and in time with the music.
21. Consonants carry much of the textual meaning. Pronounce them with rhythmic accuracy and energy.