

CHOR TEACH



Volume 11

Issue 4



**Practical Teaching Ideas
for Today's Music Educator**

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welcome

Welcome to ACDA's online magazine for choral director/music educators. The articles in this issue have been gleaned from state and division online and paper ACDA newsletters around the United States and from submissions by seasoned choral directors with topics germane to the profession.

ChorTeach, our name, is derived from the German word for chorus, chor. It is pronounced, as many of you know, like the word *core*. I hope *ChorTeach's* articles will be a breath of fresh air for you, provide you with new ideas or techniques that give you a lift, and help your singers reach the goals you and they have set. *ChorTeach* is designed for those who work with amateur singers at all levels.

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Singing Seniors

by Nicole Aldrich

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Older adults can bring a wealth of experience, wisdom, and grace to our ensembles. Along with these, they bring their older bodies and voices. And while the older adult voice is not the same instrument as the one the singer enjoyed in her or his younger years, it is simply not true that older adults should accept voice changes as inevitable. Choral directors can do much to keep their “chronologically gifted” singers performing at a high level for years.

Choir directors typically are most aware of the physical changes that singers undergo as they age because these changes have effects that we can hear in rehearsal: loss of vocal range, change in vibrato rate or size, loss of breath control, decreased endurance, pitch inaccuracies, breathiness, and changes in loudness, etc. Some of these physical changes include muscle wasting and related changes in balance, posture, and coordination, reduced vital capacity in the lungs, and stiffening, thinning, and deterioration of the vocal folds, which can cause the vocal folds to bow. Bowed vocal folds do not close as strongly. This can lead to breathiness, hoarseness, and vocal strain. Hearing loss, side effects from medications, and other health problems are also factors for some older adults.

The good news is that many of these changes can be

halted or even reversed with regular physical and vocal exercise. Otolaryngologist Robert T. Sataloff notes that the bodily changes characteristic of aging are not unique. In many ways, they are identical to those seen in disease and in disuse such as prolonged bed rest or immobilization of a limb. In particular, muscle disuse causes loss of muscle fibers indistinguishable from that seen with advanced age. Exercise avoids or reverses many of these changes in the young, and it appears to have the same effect when the changes are caused by aging.¹

The choir director can help by encouraging singers to get regular exercise, perhaps helping to establish daytime walking groups for choir members, for example. Inviting a physical therapist or trainer to speak to the ensemble may also be helpful since many older singers, especially women, are unaware of the benefits of strength training. Such a professional can lead the ensemble in simple exercises and direct individuals to other appropriate resources. Over time, singers' increased physical strength, stamina, and flexibility can result in improved breath management and vocal endurance, allowing greater control of pitch, loudness, vibrato size and rate, and tone quality.

Directors should also encourage their singers to seek out

voice lessons or vocal therapy. Several studies have investigated vocal exercises to improve voice quality in the elderly. Some of these studies focused on improving speech quality and efficiency, but since they address the same age-related physical changes, older singers who try them may also find improvement in their singing voices.

Authors Juliana Godoy, Kelly Silverio, and Alcione Brasolotto saw vocal improvements in their subjects using the following exercises:

- Tongue or lip trills with continuous phonation
- Nasal sounds such as /m/ or /n/ either sustained or repeated for short durations
- Vocal glides using tongue or lip trills, nasals consonants, or /z/
- Maximum phonation time exercise: the singer sustains a vowel, louder than normal, maintaining adequate mouth opening, without excessive muscular effort, thus controlling the vocal quality throughout phonation
- Semi-occluded vocal tract exercises—voicing bubbles through a tube in one to two centimeters of water
- Semi-occluded vocal tract exercises with the tube in 10cm of water²

Participants followed this regimen either two or four times per week for four weeks. At the end of the four-week period, both groups reported improved vocal quality and quality of life immediately following the therapy with effects for one month. Those who performed the exercises four times per week also experienced reduced vocal fold bowing immediately after the four-week experimental period. Presumably, this improvement would be maintained with consistent exercise. Since people experience different bodily changes as they age, directors should be attentive to their physical needs in rehearsal. Some prefer to sit most of the time; others feel better if they stand occasionally. Some are able to participate in typical warmup stretches. Others have limited range of motion. Older adults tend to need better lighting to read, and those with hearing loss may appreciate reduced background noise where possible.

There are other ways directors can adapt their rehearsal techniques to help singers with hearing loss. Waiting for

silence in the room before speaking is very important. If the final chord is still ringing in the room, or if someone is coughing, it will be difficult for a singer with hearing loss to hear what the director is saying. Because many people with high-frequency hearing loss may read lips to help differentiate between consonants, directors should only speak with their heads up, never looking down at the piano. Finally, if hearing loss has disrupted a singer's sense of intonation, the director can work with that person one-on-one to develop a physical sense of the vibrations that come from a well-matched pitch.³

Older adults often assume that changes in their health are an inevitable sign of aging; however, some of these changes could point to a treatable health problem, such as hypothyroidism or gastroesophageal reflux disease (both are very common in the elderly). These can affect the singing voice, as can medication side effects such as dry mouth and tremor. Choir directors should encourage singers to talk to their doctors about these problems. A change of medication or other new treatment regimen could be all that it takes to return the voice to normal.

Depression is another illness that often goes underdiagnosed in older adults and can affect singers' participation in choir. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention notes that the elderly are at greater risk for depression, yet healthcare providers may mistake an older adult's symptoms of depression as just a natural reaction to illness or the life changes that may occur as we age, and therefore not see the depression as something to be treated. Older adults often share this belief and do not seek help because they don't understand that they could feel better with appropriate treatment.⁴ Directors should watch for common signs of depression in their singers and urge them to find the help they need.

Even older adults without depression may experience loneliness, increased isolation, and grief. A choir director can help those persons stay connected to other choir members, perhaps by arranging outings for a group or by including time for coffee and chatting before rehearsal. Singers who no longer drive or only drive during the day might need the director's assistance arranging rides to and from rehearsal. Simple gestures such as birthday cards or occasional phone calls can go a long way toward easing loneliness and sadness.

In addition to these rather challenging emotions, people may also experience increased anxiety and frustration as their physical and mental abilities change with age. They

may make more mistakes and have more trouble remembering musical instructions and details from one rehearsal to the next. They need more time to process the director's comments in rehearsal. The director should make it clear in both word and behavior that it is perfectly fine to make mistakes and ask questions in rehearsal. Being very precise and taking one's time when giving instructions about where to go in the score next is also useful (page 6...second system...third measure...beat two). Directors can also spend some of their own score-study time anticipating problems their singers might have so that they have solutions available.

Working methodically in rehearsals is very helpful to singers who are experiencing age-related changes in speed of recall or processing information. Focusing on a limited number of details at a time is important. It may be too much to ask these singers to try to improve the cutoffs, the diction, the dynamics, and balance chords in the same run-through. After the choir works on these goals separately for some time, some of the details may be automated enough that they do not require the singer to dedicate conscious attention to them. By structuring rehearsals in this way, the director can help reduce frustration and anxiety in older choir members.

Because of memory changes that are a part of even healthy aging, directors may find that their singers need more repetition, both within a single rehearsal and over the entire course of preparing for performance. For the church choir director, this is especially challenging, since those performances come every week! These directors may wish to mix easier repertoire in with more difficult works and structure long-term rehearsal plans to allow weeks or even months to learn the challenging music.

It may also be helpful to provide aging singers with recordings to use for practice at home. Even those who have always been excellent music readers may find recordings helpful as their memory retrieval slows down. Having opportunities to recall the music between rehearsals can keep singers from becoming discouraged or apprehensive.

Repertoire selection is also critical when working with older adults. Women's voices generally get lower as they age, while men's voices tend to shift a little higher. Choosing music that takes these changes into consideration will result in a more satisfying experience for all. Judicious transposing or rescoring can also be helpful in church settings. Because aging singers tend to lose vocal stamina, directors should structure rehearsals to allow periods of rest or relatively easy singing. A director might also decide to feature solo voices on the most vocally challenging passages of music and have the

entire ensemble sing the more accessible sections.

Even with the tools mentioned above, there may come a time when an older singer puts away his or her choir folder for good. Some singers will decide this action on their own. Others may retire after a difficult conversation with the director. When this happens depends on the goals of the group. A church choir or unauditioned community chorus may have more room for an aging voice than a semi-professional choir, for example. Some singers are relieved when they stop singing, while others experience grief, embarrassment, or other complex emotions. It can be helpful for the director to find ways for the retiring singer to stay involved with the ensemble by serving as librarian, hosting a pre-rehearsal coffee hour, serving as a ticket seller, or an organizer of social activities.

Choral conductors are fortunate to have a variety of tools to assist a singer in working through the physical, mental, and emotional changes of aging. With the help of the director and the use of some of the suggestions above, it is possible for older adults to participate in choir and share their voices, their experiences, and all the other gifts they possess for years to come. ■

NOTES

- ¹ Robert T. Sataloff et al, "The Aging Adult Voice," *Journal of Voice* 11, no. 2 (1997), 157.
- ² Juliana Godoy, Kelly Silverio, and Alcione Brasolotto, "Effectiveness of Vocal Therapy for the Elderly When Applying Conventional and Intensive Approaches: A Randomized Clinical Trial," *Journal of Voice* (in press).
- ³ Brenda Smith and Robert T. Sataloff, *Choral Pedagogy and the Older Singer* (San Diego: Plural Publishing, 2012), 44.
- ⁴ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Depression," <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/mentalhealth/depression.htm>, accessed 2/15/2019.



The Concert Spiritual—It is Closer to Western Classical Music than You Might Think

by M. Roger Holland

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History of Spirituals

Most of us are aware of the origins of the Negro Spiritual. This folk music emerged in the crucible of American slavery when Africans were brought to the Americas in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries and labored under the harshest of circumstances. Infusing elements of their African culture along with Bible stories they learned from Christian missionaries, they sang about their present plight and desire for freedom. These “sorrow songs,” later called spirituals, became a huge part of what sustained the enslaved African community, gave them a sense of hope, and affirmed their humanity. The Negro Spiritual (or spiritual) is what musician and scholar Wendell Whalum refers to as the root and trunk of black music.¹

After emancipation, many freed blacks wanted nothing to do with anything that was reminiscent of slavery and sought to divorce themselves of any vestiges of this terrible history, including the singing of spirituals, seeing this music as unsophisticated and an indication that one was uneducated.² This mind-set no doubt contributed to the reluctance of the students at the Fisk Free Colored School (now Fisk University) to sing spirituals as they toured to raise money to support their school. Eventually, a small group of classically trained singers known as the Fisk Jubilee Singers embraced this folk music of their heritage and enthralled audiences worldwide.

The spirituals, as sung by these trained singers, were more

formalized, arranged in their presentation, not like the more spontaneous, raw singing that occurred in the community of enslaved Africans in the antebellum South. These concert spirituals were arranged and sung by trained groups of singers like the Fisk Jubilee Singers. Later, other college groups presented spirituals on the concert stage. The first arrangers of the choral settings of these songs were the likes of H.T. Burleigh, Hall Johnson, William Dawson, Evelyn La Rue Pittman, Margaret Bonds, and John W. Work, to name a few. These composers also created solo arrangements of the spirituals for concert artists such as Marion Anderson, Roland Hayes, and Paul Robeson. All of these composers were trained in the style of western, classical music. Their arrangements reflect that training.

Spirituals and Gospel Music

It is important to be clear about the distinction between the spirituals and gospel music. The spirituals predate gospel and are what I would call the mother of black music. The spirituals have given birth to many genres, among which are the blues, gospel, jazz, R&B, hip-hop, and many others. Gospel music developed over the decades following emancipation and the Great Migration, with its formal appearance around the time of the great depression of the late 1920s and 1930s. Thomas Dorsey, the father of gospel music, called it gospel

because it was “good news.” Tony Heilbut calls it good news and bad times.³ This music emerged in urban centers across the country in the twentieth century among freed, though socially and economically oppressed, peoples of color. It was not sung in the hush harbors of the invisible church like the spirituals but in visible churches, community centers, and concert halls. It was influenced by the blues while inheriting the rhythm and pathos of the spirituals of slavery. Gospel music encourages improvisation by both singer and pianist (or other accompanying instruments). In fact, it is expected.

The concert spiritual is a different matter. Arrangers of concert spirituals expected their music to be performed as written in the same way other composers of the Western tradition expected performances to be as written. André Thomas in his book *Way Over in Beulah Lan’* states that some conductors will impose rhythm and blues, gospel, and jazz techniques on all performances of spirituals in an effort to create a “black” sound... All of this may be full of good intention; the result, however, is often an experience fraught with stylistic abuse and, ultimately, a mockery of the intentions of the arranger.⁴

Performances of Negro Spirituals may be met with trepidation, including fear of appropriation and black face caricature. As an African American male choral conductor, I encourage my colleagues to approach this music with the same care you employ in the music of the Western tradition. Research the history, culture, and style of the music and seek to render a musically authentic performance that honors the intent of the composer or arranger. Please do not “gospelize” concert (arranged) spirituals unless the arranger has so indicated in the score.

Two examples of a gospel arrangement of spirituals include *Guide My Feet*, arranged by Avis D. Graves, and *We Are Climbing Jacob’s Ladder*, arranged by Horace Clarence Boyer. Both are published by GIA Publications. Boyer’s arrangement explicitly says gospel arrangement. Even though Graves’ arrangement does not explicitly say that his arrangement is a gospel arrangement, anyone familiar with the gospel idiom understands this fact within the first few measures, especially if one listens to the recording GIA also makes available. When in doubt, ask a trusted colleague who knows! 

NOTES

- ¹ Wendell Phillips Whalum, “Black Hymnody,” *Review & Expositor* 70, no. 3 (Summer 1973): 353.
- ² James Weldon Johnson, *The Books of American Negro Spirituals*. Vol. 1 (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc. 1989), 49.
- ³ Subtitle of Tony Heilbut’s *The Gospel Sound* (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc. 1971)
- ⁴ André J. Thomas, *Way Over in Beulah Lan’: Understanding and Performing the Negro Spiritual* (Dayton: Heritage Music Press, 2007), 87-88.

Getting Inside the Mind of the Composer

by Carl Ashley

Used with permission of North Carolina's
Carolina Caroler, Spring 2018



Have you ever stopped to think about why composers compose? Many, if not most, of the great composers agree that composition cannot really be taught. Stravinsky once said, “A composer is or isn’t; he cannot learn to acquire the gift that makes him one... The composer will know that he is one if composition creates exact appetites in him, and if in satisfying them he is aware of their exact limits. Similarly, he will know he is not one if he has only a desire to compose or [a] wish to express himself in music.”¹

It is the performer’s responsibility to strive to recreate the composer’s intent. Composition is a form of artistic expression, just as performance is. If we do not fully understand the composer’s thoughts, we cannot fully understand his or her creation. One contemporary arranger once noted that she could only write down about ten percent of what was in her head. Because of this, some people claim that approaching a work from the perspective of the composer is impossible, since we can only have limited knowledge of the instrumentation, acoustics, or traditions of performance. In addition, our audience may come from a different background and culture, and not relying on the composer’s view gives the performer freedom. On the other hand, how can the music be truly appreciated unless it is performed as intended?

So, how do we best discover a composer’s intent? The short answer is that it depends upon the composer. Roger Sessions said, having discovered the composer’s intentions as

best he can, he [the performer] must then apply himself to the task of reproducing them with the utmost conviction.² Brahms, on the other hand, is reported to have said, “Do it how you like, but make it beautiful.”³ Beethoven is known for holding firm to the finished form of his compositions. Durufle constantly reworked his scores, even after publication.

A composer’s mode of composition is also worthy of consideration. Tchaikovsky needed to have a grand piano in his bedroom to write opera, while Honegger did not claim to play the piano. His music was composed mentally. In order to get inside the mind of the composer, I believe one must strive to answer the following questions:

To what degree does the composer want you to interpret the music his or her way as opposed to your way?

Some composers (maybe most) see the realization of the score as a collaborative effort between composer and performer. Still others will insist on their way being the absolute correct manner in which to perform a work.

What can you learn about the composer’s life?

What were his or her life experiences up to the time of composition? What was his or her musical training up to that point? For example, you would likely not want to approach Mozart’s first opera written at age twelve in the same way

as you would *Die Zauberflöte*, written the year of his death.

What can you learn about the period in which the composer lived? How did this affect the composer's writing?

Was there war or rampant disease, etc.? What were the politics of the time? Literature of the time? philosophical and religious influences?

Did the composer write anything about the work?

Did anyone else, such as a critic or reviewer, write anything about the work? How reliable are their thoughts?

Why did the composer choose a particular key, the tempo, the form, genre, instrumentation, text, forms of expression and dynamics, phrasing, articulation, particular intervals, rhythmic values, and types of word-painting?

The choice of key could be the result of instrument range accommodation or fingerings. Perhaps the composer was trying to make some kind of emotional statement with a sharp key, traditionally sounding “brighter,” or a flat key, traditionally sounding “darker” or “warmer.”

Incidentally, taking this assumption to its logical conclusion, what kind of emotional statement does the key of F[#] make compared to G^b? It is important to note that Schumann said, “We can agree...that any feeling may be expressed in any key.”⁴ Key choice could also have a theological interpretation. E^b major, for example, with its three flats, has been used as a symbol of the Trinity.

The tempo at which a work is performed may well be affected by a number of factors. It is well known that Brahms experimented with different tempos in his *Ein deutsches Requiem*. Remember also to be careful not to assume that a tempo marking in a printed score is from the composer. One great example of that is found in “Nel cor più non mi sento.” One edition of this Italian song indicates that the dotted quarter note should be performed 56 to 63. Since Paisiello died the year after the metronome was patented, it is a safe bet to assume that the marking is not that of the composer. Some scholars argue that time signatures imply certain tempo indications, especially in Bach's time. Mahler said “A tempo is correct when everything can still be heard.”⁵

Regarding genre, you should return to the work's historical context. Was the composer experimenting or ahead of his or her time? Were different groups of instruments used

to represent certain themes or ideas? Is there any symbolism in the instrumentation? A trio may also be symbolic of the Trinity, for example.

Never ignore the text. Purcell wrote, musick [is] the exaltation of poetry.⁶ Monteverdi declared, “Let the word be master of the melody, not its slave.”⁷

What didn't the composer write down? Why not?

Is the omission of crescendos and decrescendos, for example, due to the fact that the work was composed before these markings were invented? Does that necessarily mean that crescendos and decrescendos were not performed?

What were the performance practices of the time?

Be sure to do your homework here. Do not assume that what you know or have been taught is correct. New information is being uncovered constantly. What about vibrato, for example? Was it just an ornament?

On the printed page, what is actually the work of the composer rather an editor?

Bad editing is found everywhere, unfortunately. Signs of bad editing may include the use of modern clefs, barlines when none existed, dynamic markings, tempo markings, alternate texts, deleted sections, note corrections, simplifications of the music, and key changes.

Know that there are often many editions of one work, and many contain mistakes unknown to an editor. When possible, look for an edition that lists all the sources, strives for accuracy of the composer's intent regarding notation, dynamics, instrumentation, and even ornamentation. Find the original manuscript if possible. **CT**

NOTES

¹ Robert Craft, *Conversations with Igor Stravinsky* (Faber and Faber, 2011), n.p.

² Josiah Flag, ed., *Composers on Music: Eight Centuries of Writings* (Northeastern, 1997), 331.

³ Leonard Van Camp, *A Practical Guide for Performing, Teaching, and Singing the Brahms Requiem* (Alfred Music, 2002), 100.

⁴ Josiah Flag, ed., *Composers on Music: Eight Centuries of Writings*, 92.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁷ Kurt Pahlen, *Music of the World: A History* (Crown Publishers, 1949), 108.

The Missing Link: An Intermediate Step for Introducing New Music to Your Choir

by Bo Shirah and Micah Bland
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Since the time of early American singing masters who traveled from town to town selling their music books and teaching the public how to read music using a sol-fa system, the process of introducing and learning a choral work has seemed to remain relatively unchanged. Currently, two main approaches dominate the secondary American educational system. The first being rote teaching, in which the teacher plays or sings the notes, with the students echoing until the content is learned. The second being a sight-reading method incorporating alternative syllables that represent a correlating pitch, such as solfege or numbers.

It is in this second method that many educators approach the music learning process in a ritualistic fashion where students first count the rhythms, chant the solfège syllables in rhythm, and finally sing the syllables in rhythm. While this method is effective and utilized by many educators, there remains a missing step in this sequence of music teaching.

The challenge many students face when sight-reading choral music is the amount of information they must interpret. A page is filled with symbols that must be translated into text, pitch, rhythm, articulation, and dynamics. While

more advanced students have no difficulty interpreting these symbols while reading music at a fast pace, other students struggle to keep up. To accommodate these challenges, it is advisable to add an intermediate step in which the rhythmic values are removed, allowing singers to focus solely on pitch (see Figure 1). In other words, this additional instructional step allows the singer to become familiar with the melodic and harmonic content separately from the rhythm and text. In addition, it allows each student time to interpret musical notation, as opposed to relying on the leaders in each section.

The Approach

Using a short section of concert music (Figure 2), create a chord chart by transcribing the original pitches into whole notes (Figure 1). Repeated notes are not included unless the chord changes (see Figures 1 and 2, m. 20). In addition, sustained notes are notated again if a different voice changes pitch, thus changing the chord (see Figures 1 and 2, m. 18). In essence, the teacher notates every chord change using whole notes. It is also suggested that the teacher place

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brackets at the top of the system to designate the corresponding measure numbers found in the original music.

After creation of the chord chart, instruct students to sing the handout at a moderate tempo, using your preferred sight-reading method, with every pitch receiving four beats (as notated in Figure 1). Once students are comfortable with the pitches at this tempo, ask them to sing the same exercise but with each whole note receiving only two beats. To further challenge your students at this stage, perform the exercise *a cappella*, if not already incorporated from the start. Finally, at a slower tempo, instruct students to perform the exercise with only one beat per measure.

While introducing the pitches, a similar process should occur with corresponding rhythms. If the rhythmic values are challenging, provide students with progressive rhythmic exercises that culminate in the notated rhythms found in the song (Figures 3 and 4). For ease, these exercises can easily be notated on a dry erase board. Figure 3 demonstrates this rhythmically progressive exercise. The first line is broken down into the most basic rhythmic subdivisions, allowing students to connect with the underlying rhythmic pulse. Line two is a transitional line incorporating ties that equal the actual rhythm in the score. It is also helpful to tell students to count line two without the ties first, further reinforcing the underlying rhythm. Finally, line three replicates the actual rhythm from the original score.

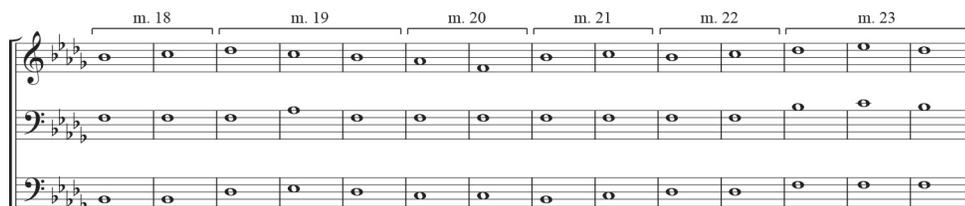


Figure 1. Micah Bland, arr., *Spanish Ladies*, mm. 18–23.
Chord Chart

Unpublished (2017). Used by permission.



Figure 2. Micah Bland, arr., *Spanish Ladies*, mm. 18–23.
Original Music

Unpublished (2017). Used by permission.



Figure 3. Stephen Foster, *Dolcy Jones*.
Rhythm Exercise

Stephen Collins Foster and H. Wiley Hitchcock, ed., *Minstrel-Show Songs*.
New York: Da Capo Press, 1980. Music from the public domain.



Figure 4. Stephen Foster, *Dolcy Jones*.
Original Music

Stephen Collins Foster and H. Wiley Hitchcock, ed., *Minstrel-Show Songs*.
New York: Da Capo Press, 1980. Music from the public domain.

Suggestions for Implementation in the Classroom

This process takes about one week in a standard fifty-minute class that meets every day. Typically, only sections of the original concert music are excerpted and should be more rhythmically or harmonically challenging or reprised later. For instance, example two is rhythmically simplistic and would most likely not require this approach in a beginning high school ensemble.

While these instructional steps are effective at the middle school and beginning high school level, they are not intended for a more advanced high school ensemble, since these students are usually more capable of reading music. In addition, it should also be mentioned that these methods are intended to be used with concert music, not contest sight-reading exercises.

When making copies of the handout for the class, print the chord chart on different colored paper. When asking students to take out the music, indicate the color used as opposed to the title of the song. This prevents confusion and helps to specify if students are to take out the handout or the music itself.

For teachers with poor piano skills or those who prefer to challenge their students by not using the piano, the chord chart allows singers the opportunity to successfully sight-read music without the aid of a piano. Many educators today strongly encourage the removal of the piano at times in the learning process in order to lessen reliance on it and promote singer accountability.

Possibly the most valuable aspect of the chord chart is the opportunity for the teacher to correct vocal issues such as intonation and tone quality early in the learning process. As is often found, inexperienced singers use poor vocal technique when learning new music; however, by removing extraneous music notation, students and their teacher are able to focus on healthy vocal production. In addition, the slower harmonic tempo allows the ensemble time to listen and tune each chord. Upon successful completion of the chord chart and rhythmic exercises, the ensemble is ready to transfer its knowledge, combine rhythm and pitch, thus continuing the traditional music learning process. Depending on the rhythmic difficulty of the work, it is suggested that students chant the solfège in rhythm prior to singing.

This additional instructional step, although time consuming for the teacher, is incredibly valuable for the ensemble. Through the use of the chord chart, students receive sequen-

tial instruction in the music learning process. As a result, students feel more successful, since they focus on pitch and rhythm separately. In addition, the ensemble gains a greater understanding of the harmonic content, allowing the singers time to listen to other sections. Also, the director has an opportunity to correct vocal technique. **CT**