

## I. Areas of Focus

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- A. Look beyond notes and dynamics
  - 1. Wheel of Pedagogy
    - i. Vowel/resonance
    - ii. Blend
    - iii. Balance
    - iv. Vertical tuning
    - v. Linear tuning
    - vi. Psyche
    - vii. Phrasing
    - viii. Text/poetry
    - ix. Text and diction
    - x. Articulation
    - xi. Rhythm/momentum
    - xii. Breath energy
- B. What is the area of focus at that specific moment of the rehearsal? Two outlooks:
  - 1. Planned focus and goal for rehearsal
  - 2. What does the ensemble need at that exact moment
- C. Rehearsal plan based on pedagogical focus
  - 1. Warm-ups that emphasize pedagogical techniques
  - 2. Apply warm-up concepts to repertoire
  - 3. Have exercises and “step-out” lessons to apply to each of the focus areas
  - 4. What is the most efficient way to allow the ensemble to understand the technique?
    - i. Plan ahead and prepare ensemble to succeed
      - a. Take away elements of the piece until there will be guaranteed success
        - 1. No text
        - 2. All on single part
        - 3. Small segment of piece
          - i. “Sounder”
            - a. Section of composition that will sound good and make the ensemble feel successful
      - 4. Rhythm and text only
      - 5. Rhythm only
        - i. Add one section at a time speaking their text or, also, one section at a time singing their part, then two sections, etc.
          - a. Have the rest of the ensemble continue to speak or clap throughout the process
- D. Always ask the question, “why?”
  - 1. Intonation considerations
    - i. Breath energy
    - ii. Psyche
    - iii. Insecurity
  - 2. Rhythmic considerations
    - i. Breath energy
    - ii. Psyche
    - iii. No subdivisions
  - 3. Gesture considerations
    - i. Is the gesture demonstrating the concept?
      - a. Cross-signals between gesture and spoken word?
      - b. Can you demonstrate with just your gesture?

1. Gesture should be a metaphor for what your body needs to do to be successful

## II. Problems, Possible Causes, and Solutions

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### A. Breath energy

1. Frequent and audible gasping breaths
  - i. Poor understanding of breath management
  - ii. Incorrect stagger-breathing/waiting too long to breathe
  - iii. Ineffective prep from conductor
    - a. Exercises should focus on relaxing and healthy breathing
    - b. Preparatory gesture should be low, controlled, and supportive
    - c. Have sections work out staggered breathing places for each singer
2. Phrases lack sufficient breath to sing sustained lines
  - i. Initial breath is hurried and tense
  - ii. Breathing for complete phrase not understood
  - iii. Discomfort with tessitura and text
    - a. Sing phrase without text on vowel that is comfortable and will be successful
    - b. Sing final bar of phrase, then add one bar each time for ensemble to hear the end of the phrase sound good
    - c. Isolate phrase and focus on preparatory breath, then put it back into the context of the piece
    - d. Have singers conduct the phrase while they sing it
3. Airy tone
  - i. Poor understanding of apoggio
    - a. Balance of breath energy to allow supported sound
  - ii. Collapsing of middle at ends of phrases
  - iii. Clavicular breathing
  - iv. Incorrect vowel set for tessitura
    - a. Have singers show apoggio with their hands while they sing the phrase
    - b. Break up the phrase into small sections and work to sing each section successfully, then piece back together
4. Ensemble is hesitant to enter and comes in below the pitch
  - i. Breath is too late to be efficient for entrance
  - ii. Breathing with a closed throat
  - iii. Shallow, clavicular breathing
  - iv. Conductor's gesture does not show breath to adequately prepare the choir to sing
    - a. Have singers conduct their breath and then the phrase
    - b. Have singers count-sing and choose when they should be breathing to enter correctly
    - c. Panting before entering
5. Choir loses supported tone at the ends of phrases
  - i. Rib cage is collapsing as the air diminishes
  - ii. Energy is not maintained through the phrase
  - iii. Choir is tired
  - iv. Singers misunderstand what is needed to complete the phrase
    - a. Sing end of phrase, then add small increments each time, focusing on keeping consistent tone
    - b. "Buzz" through the phrase to keep breath energy consistent
6. Intonation
  - i. Pitch is under
    - a. Insufficient breath energy for phrases
    - b. Incorrect vowel set for tessitura

- c. Lack of energy
      - 1. Exercises that focus on numerous vowels and elision of vowel
      - 2. “Buzz” through phrases
    - ii. Pitch is over
      - a. Clavicular breathing
      - b. Locking of breath
      - c. Locking of jaw
      - d. Feeling of pushing the breath instead of guiding the breath
        - 1. Gesture that focuses on low and relaxed breathing
        - 2. Sing the phrase while holding their tongue
        - 3. Have singers conduct their breath while singing the phrase
        - 4. Have singers conduct the phrase
  - 7. Phrases lack forward momentum
    - i. Singers lack understanding of how to move the breath without expelling too much
    - ii. Singers are not engaging in the breath from the beginning of phrase
      - a. Starting later, once they feel the phrase is lagging, which is too late to help
        - 1. Count sing
        - 2. Subdivide and sing phrase
        - 3. Hand gestures that show the movement of the phrase
  - 8. Thin and strained sound
    - i. General concept of breathing is misunderstood
    - ii. Tension in the throat
    - iii. Tension in the jaw
    - iv. Disconnect between breathing and breath flow while singing
    - v. Disconnect of suspended and inhaled feeling while singing
      - a. “Buzz” sing to help with breathing and connection to singing
      - b. Have singers hold their tongues while singing
      - c. Concept of swallowing an egg or a bullfrog throat
- B. Vowel and resonance
  - 1. Throaty sounding and heavy vowels
    - i. Depressed larynx
    - ii. Pharynx opened too much for breath
    - iii. Tongue tension
    - iv. Wrong resonating vowel
      - a. Clarify vowel used for repertoire and tessitura
      - b. Sensation of breathing like a yawn or smelling a rose
      - c. Sing only the vowels
      - d. Sing while holding your tongue
  - 2. Excessive nasality in tone
    - i. Low velum (soft palate) position
    - ii. Misunderstood concept of correct tone production
      - a. Exercises that focus on yawn feeling and raising of soft palate
        - 1. Inner yawn
  - 3. Connection between vowels is too abrupt
    - i. Breath support is not consistent throughout word, but rather has small breaks
      - a. Exercises that slide through ranges and vowels with no separation
  - 4. Tenors do not keep consistent tone in upper register
    - i. Vowel that is being used to modify is incorrect
      - a. Some vowels assist with resonance, but do not fit into the text at that moment
    - ii. Misunderstanding vowel modification in upper registers
      - a. Exercises that focus on starting from above and descending in a yawn feeling
  - 5. Frontal vowels have too much nasality

- i. Closed, tight jaw
  - ii. No inner space in back of mouth
    - a. Concept of inner yawn and an egg in the back of the throat
- 6. Strident, piercing sound
  - i. One or more resonating cavities is not being used
  - ii. Onset begins without adequate breath support established
  - iii. Singers have maximized horizontal mouth space, but have not explored vertical mouth space
  - iv. Singers produce vowels the same way that they speak
    - a. Trying to pronounce phonetically rather than acoustically
  - v. Conductor's gesture is heavy, tense, or too high
    - a. Exploration of resonating cavities: Exercises that place the tone in many areas and have singers explore and feel those areas with their hands
    - b. Have singers conduct what they feel and how they think that their singing looks
- 7. Vowels are too dark and sound swallowed
  - i. Tongue curved upward or pulled to the back of the throat
  - ii. Pharynx is sitting back and low feeling
  - iii. Singers "covering" because they feel it makes them sound more mature
  - iv. Heavy, set breath
  - v. Lowered soft palate
    - a. Exercises to raise soft palate: sniffing a rose, inner yawn, egg in the throat, bullfrog
    - b. Exercises to breathe to be successful with what is coming up. Placement of breath for the passage that is going to be sung

### C. Blend

- 1. One voice within the ensemble that has an edge to the sound
    - i. Chin raised and/or extended out
    - ii. Neck/spine compressed
    - iii. Lack of apoggio
      - a. No lift to breath
        - 1. Have section sing leaning against a wall with their heads touching the wall. Ask how that feels to the singers
          - i. Helps with alignment for singers who lead with their chin and neck
        - 2. Have specific singers sit on exercise ball to demonstrate proper, relaxed posture
2. Pronounced vibratos
  - i. Other singers are less developed in their vocal technique
  - ii. Lack of proper adduction of the vocal cords or incorrect breath resistance (apoggio)
    - a. If vibrato is wobbly or contrived
      - 1. Listen to a variety of choral styles and voices and have singers discuss the positive elements and challenges of those voices
      - 2. Presentation of basic vocal pedagogy and anatomy to describe why specific voices sound the way that they do
3. Tenors' and sopranos' tone is much more pronounced than other sections
  - i. Tessitura may be too high for section to sing with subtlety
    - a. Other sections are not supporting to sing with full tone
      - 1. Understand the limitations of each section and have other sections support those limitations to enhance the ensemble
        - i. If one section cannot sing piano due to their specific stage in development, then the other sections need to support that
4. One or two voices do not blend due to unnatural vibrato

- i. Tessitura of the piece does not match the ability of the singers
- ii. Singer is in the wrong section and should be re-voiced
- iii. Nervousness
  - a. Inadequate preparation
  - b. Past negative experiences
- iv. Lack of breath support
- v. Other voices are undersigning
- vi. Under-developed breathing and vocal mechanisms for literature
  - a. Create a positive and nurturing rehearsal environment that allows singers to feel comfortable to sing freely and also trust in the constructive analysis that will be given

#### 5. Individual voice

- i. Unaware of blending and listening technique
- ii. Desire to be heard
- iii. Emotional singer
- iv. Poor placement in forward, bright, and wide vowels
  - a. Listen to choral recordings and discuss why those ensembles are successful. Talk about specific sections and blend
  - b. Exercises that focus on cohesiveness of section, with listening and singing with no conductor

#### 6. Inconsistency of vowels throughout the ensemble

- i. Vowel set not established
- ii. Vowel modification technique not explained or understood
- iii. Conductor does not have clear vision of vowel quality wanted
  - a. Explain vowel set concept and set specific vowel sets for each piece

#### 7. Sound within the section is not blended

- i. Standing order incorrect
- ii. Vowel set is not established
  - a. Use numerous standing orders (both sections and mixed) and be open to moving singers throughout the rehearsal process

### D. Balance

#### 1. Altos are too dominant in texture

- i. Notes in chest range of voice
- ii. Misunderstanding production of that tessitura
- iii. Vowels are placed too far back in the mouth
- iv. Lack of shape to phrases
  - a. Exercises that have altos move between registers frequently
  - b. Exercises that ease into lower register from the top (descending, step-wise)
  - c. Exercises that have the placement move forward as the line descends
  - d. Have singers point with their finger as they descend

#### 2. Altos and basses are overpowered by sopranos and tenors

- i. Mismatched numbers in sections
- ii. Strong singers are poorly placed
- iii. Tessitura and placement of voices in alto and bass sections is incorrect
  - a. Place singers according to what you hear and how they will fit into the ensemble
    - 1. Not by what they say is their voice part
  - b. Be willing to move singers to different sections for specific pieces, depending on need

#### 3. Basses cannot be heard

- i. Acoustics of performance space
- ii. Lack of proper breathing does not allow basses to project

- iii. Placement of vowels is too far back in the throat
- iv. Other sections are overpowering
- v. Lack of section unity due to the fact that they cannot hear each other
  - a. Have section rehearse in a circle to hear each other more clearly
  - b. Have singers point forward as they descend
  - c. Have other sections listen to make sure that they can hear the basses
  - d. Move section/standing in order to help acoustics
- 4. Tenors sing too loud in upper register
  - i. Singers are unable to access their head register
  - ii. Singers misunderstand the term “float” to mean “breathy” and unwanted
  - iii. Singers are not engaging enough breath to sing piano in a healthy way
  - iv. Singers have challenge keeping larynx relaxed as they ascend
  - v. Throat is too tight as notes ascend
  - vi. Placement for that tessitura is too forward
    - a. Pant breathe before each entrance to keep throat open
    - b. Have section stand against a wall with their heads touching the wall
    - c. Sing phrase on vowel starting with an “ng” to get placement forward
    - d. Exercises that start in falsetto and move downward through the passagio
- 5. Tenors sing too quietly in the upper register
  - i. Lack of breath connection
  - ii. Misunderstanding forward falsetto tone
  - iii. Misunderstanding that falsetto needs to be breathy
    - a. Sing phrase on “nge” or “ngah” to help placement
    - b. Downward and upward slides through passagio
- 6. Altos too soft
  - i. Misunderstanding chest voice and head voice
  - ii. Lack of technique to move freely between voices
  - iii. Inability to soften chest voice due to lack of breath support
    - a. Exercises that move through the passagio on various vowels
    - b. Exercises that focus on breath onset and apoggio balance
- 7. Sopranos are dominating the texture
  - i. More mature and trained voices in section
  - ii. Leader attitude, but over-singing to help the section
    - a. Encourage singers to audition for solos and study more advanced repertoire individually
    - b. Listen to recordings of ensembles that have a dominant singer in the section and discuss the sound
    - c. Encourage singers to be leaders in other aspects of the ensemble

#### E. Vertical intonation

- 1. Repeated notes on the same pitch are going flat
  - i. Breath not well prepared from the beginning
  - ii. Breath is escaping: misunderstanding apoggio
  - iii. Singer lacks understanding of musical necessity of the phrase and how their note fits into the harmonic function
    - a. Chord exercises that build chords with octave, then 5<sup>th</sup>, then 3<sup>rd</sup>
    - b. Onset exercise
      - 1. Listen for in-tune chord: what makes that successful?
- 2. Choir consistently sings under pitch
  - i. Lack of understanding of harmonic structure and intervallic relationships
  - ii. Over-reliance on piano during rehearsal
  - iii. Inconsistent vowels throughout sections and the choir
    - a. Use piano only as harmonic support by giving the 5<sup>th</sup> to tune to

1. Do not play each section's part but rather the harmonic structure of the phrase
  - b. Break apart phrase harmonically and discuss which section has the root, the 5<sup>th</sup>, the additional notes, and their purpose
3. Chords do not "ring"
    - i. One or more notes is out of alignment
    - ii. Perception of "how to" tune is misunderstood
    - iii. Singers do not understand the functional harmony of their pitch
    - iv. Octaves are not tuned
    - v. 5<sup>th</sup>s are sung flat
    - vi. 3<sup>rd</sup>s are out of tune
    - vii. Vowels within sections and within the choir do not match
    - viii. Vibrato is too intense: there is no core to the sound to tune
      - a. Exercises with various vowels in mixed-formation octets
      - b. Exercises and demonstrations of stretched 5<sup>th</sup>s and smaller 3<sup>rd</sup>s
      - c. Chromatic scale work to understand distance between pitches
  4. Tenors sing consistently flat
    - i. Breath support is not sufficient for success in that tessitura
    - ii. Singers are unable to mix their voices between head and chest registers so there is a tendency to push as they ascend
    - iii. Singers are using a vowel that is too open to tune with the other sections
    - iv. Singers are tired
    - v. Singers are physically moving their neck and chin to try and sing the notes
      - a. Have singers lie on the floor and sing with their body relaxed and their head aligned
      - b. Exploration of vowels in different tessituras
  5. Octaves are out of tune
    - i. Inconsistent vowels
    - ii. Breath energy, especially based on tessitura
    - iii. Lack of awareness that other sections are singing at the octave
      - a. Take away other sections and have only sections singing octaves sing cadential chord
      - b. Take away text and sing on resonating vowel for that phrase, then add text back in once it is in tune
  6. Cadences out of tune
    - i. Singers are unaware of the functional harmony of their pitch
    - ii. Singers unaware of the harmonic progression of the music and the cadential resolution
      - a. Take away sections and tune fundamental harmonic line, then add in the 5<sup>th</sup> and then other chord tones
  7. Altos consistently flat when singing through the passagio
    - i. Misunderstanding passagio and techniques needed to be successful in that range
    - ii. Poor breath support
    - iii. Low and back placement of vowels, which makes the voice more difficult to move through the passagio
    - iv. Fear of cracking at the passagio, so tone becomes very unsupported and breathy
      - a. Exercises throughout passagio
      - b. Feeling of "narrowing" through passagio by using more vertical vowels allows voice to feel more protected and less likely to crack
- F. Linear intonation
1. Ascending intervals are becoming flat
    - i. Production of tone is too heavy
    - ii. Placement of vowel is not shifting with the ascending line

- iii. Misconception of harmonic context within melodic line
      - a. Play the dominant on the upper part of the piano while they sing the phrase
      - b. Play the pedal tone of the phrase on the lower part of the piano to establish harmonic foundation
      - c. Demonstration of vowel shifting within the mouth as you ascend (chart)
      - d. Exercises that shift the vowel forward
      - e. Have singers point to where the vowel is located when they are singing the phrase
- 2. The first notes after a key change are not precise
  - i. Misunderstanding harmonic relationship between old key and new key
  - ii. Misunderstanding pivot pitches in key relationship
    - a. Have section that has pivot pitch sing the key change and then have other sections join
    - b. Exercise that goes between key relationships outside of the context of the piece
- 3. The choir loses key center throughout the piece
  - i. Breath energy wanes
  - ii. Lack of consistent breath concepts throughout the piece
  - iii. Tessitura of work is too high for too long for the level of the ensemble
  - iv. Ascending intervals are too small
  - v. Descending intervals are too big
  - vi. Conductor's gesture encourages too much breath to be used in phrases so the ensemble is not able to complete a phrase in tune
    - a. Gesture can be less motion, but more supportive
    - b. Gesture should be guiding the ensemble, not pulling it
    - c. Rehearse piece in sections and be successful with phrases and breath in each section before putting it back together
    - d. Sing on only resonating vowel and keep breath and tone consistent before adding text
- 4. Sopranos are consistently sharp
  - i. Too much energy that is misused in incorrect vocal production
  - ii. Tight jaw
  - iii. Clavicular breathing
    - a. Have singers lie down and sing with a relaxed neck and back of the throat
    - b. Sing with tongue out
    - c. Sing only the vowels
- 5. Chromatic passages become out of tune
  - i. Misunderstanding harmonic function
  - ii. Ascending intervals are too small
  - iii. Descending intervals are too big
  - iv. Lack of preparation to understand and sing chromatics successfully
    - a. Exercises that present chromatics in a way that the ensemble will be successful
      - 1. Small sections of chromatic scale with benchmark pitches
      - 2. Sliding through pitches for a long duration
    - b. Using your finger to point up and down as a reminder to sing intervals larger or smaller
- 6. Singers in choir continually push downward musical lines too low
  - i. Lack of keeping breath energy going on "easier" passages
  - ii. Poor concept of descending interval size
  - iii. Heavy breathing mechanism pushes tone lower
  - iv. Back and low vowel placement that swallows sound and is hard to hear and tune
  - v. Misconception of what proper low-range sound should be
    - a. Exercises that focus on breathing for what is coming and what type of breath is

- needed to be successful
  - b. Listening to good examples of lower ranges in the choral setting
  - c. Pointing forward as the line descends and is lower in the range
- 7. Tenors sing flat when leaping to notes above the passagio
  - i. Insufficient breath support
  - ii. Inappropriate vowel mix
  - iii. Misunderstanding vowel placement in upper range
  - iv. Lack of preparation for ascending leap
  - v. Singers misconception of tone production needed for that passage
    - a. Sing interval descending and then ascending on resonating vowel
    - b. Don't sing the leap, rather just the two notes successfully, then eventually add the leap back in
    - c. Sing the upper note from above
    - d. Sing the same interval, but at a lower pitch class and then slowly raise the pitches
    - e. Sing the upper note successfully and then have the section sing the lower note in the same "set" as the upper note

#### G. Psyche

1. Tentative and hesitant in performance
  - i. Conductor is nervous or stressed
  - ii. Conductor is angry or tense
  - iii. Conductor not showing and supporting breath
  - iv. Singers concerned about preparation and repertoire
  - v. Singers unclear about entrances
    - a. Conductor needs to outline rehearsal needs of the ensemble to insure a successful performance
    - b. Singers need to know expectations for preparation
    - c. Conductor needs to be able to put aside personal issues to support ensemble
    - d. Conductor needs to be thoroughly prepared with musical elements as well as logistical elements
2. Singers consistently seem dispirited when a particular song is rehearsed
  - i. Inappropriate difficulty level of repertoire (too difficult or too easy)
  - ii. Conductor is too predictable with rehearsal plan
  - iii. The song is not liked by anyone in the ensemble
  - iv. Lack of understanding of the values of the piece
  - v. Lack of understanding of the genre and performance practice
    - a. Conductor needs to be structured and organized, but not completely formulaic in the rehearsal plan
    - b. Choose repertoire that is challenging, but within reach of success for your ensemble
    - c. Explanation of genre and also purpose of piece within the season or educational plan
3. Sopranos are apprehensive about singing notes above the staff
  - i. Singers do not have a freely produced tone
  - ii. Singers have an underdeveloped or incorrect breathing technique
  - iii. Singers not comfortable in that register
  - iv. Singers have a closed throat
    - a. Exercises that focus on free and supported singing as the voice ascends
    - b. Slides and sighs, both ascending and descending
    - c. Re-voicing of singers, perhaps only for particular pieces
    - d. Panting before entrance to keep throat open
4. Lack of energy and poor tone quality from ensemble

- i. Time of day
- ii. Event of the day
- iii. Time of year
  - a. Change rehearsal order
  - b. Change standing order and location in rehearsal space frequently throughout the rehearsal
  - c. Have impromptu “performances” for other areas of the school or community at the end of a rehearsal
  - d. Social events to plan and look forward to
- 5. Choir is bored: singers have poor posture and look unengaged
  - i. Misconception that music is only about the notes and rhythms
  - ii. Misunderstanding meaning of piece due to language
  - iii. Singers are not challenged enough
  - iv. Expectations from conductor are not clear
    - a. Presentation and exploration of the many aspects of music and the different levels of comprehension and mastery needed
    - b. Chose appropriate repertoire that can challenge all singers but not be out of reach for the less developed singers
    - c. Set standard high, but also create foundation and support to allow singers to be successful
    - d. Set clear outlines of expectations and commitment needed to be successful in ensemble
- 6. Tempo is inconsistent and rushing
  - i. Ensemble is excited
  - ii. Ensemble is nervous or tense
  - iii. Accelerando is happening too quickly
  - iv. Ensemble is pairing crescendo with accelerando
  - v. Ensemble is pairing melismatic passage with accelerando
    - a. Take away text and sing on resonating vowel with open and relaxed tone
    - b. Rehearse small sections at a variety of tempi and focus on keeping each specific tempo steady throughout
    - c. Vary rhythm of melismatic passages
      - 1. Insert dotted rhythms into running eighth notes to elongate the feeling of the phrase and allow singers to “settle”
    - d. Have singers lie down and sing passage
    - e. Exercises that work on controlled accelerando by using a metronome in increments during a repeated eighth-note exercise
- 7. Insecure performances
  - i. Lack of pride in ensemble
  - ii. Lack of pride in music that is being performed
  - iii. Choice of repertoire does not fit performance situation or intended audience
  - iv. Singers feel as if they are not supported by their peers, family, or community
    - a. Successful “mini-concerts” as dress rehearsals for the larger performance
    - b. Active public relations and promotion of ensemble, program, and performances
    - c. Establish an identity for the ensemble and promote it
    - d. Establish a leadership team within the ensemble for promotion, social events, and spirit
- 8. Intonation issues
  - i. Choir is too over-confident and not listening within the ensemble
  - ii. Singers are bored with the repetition of repertoire and have stopped working on listening and vocal production while singing
    - a. Conductor needs to vary interpretation and gesture each time that the piece is

- rehearsed or performed to keep singers engaged in active musical production
- b. Conductor should choose a variety of repertoire and always have pieces that the choir is rehearsing, not just prepare a “performance set” and perform that for the whole season
- 9. Detached performance of piece
  - i. Singers are not united as ensemble
  - ii. Singers do not have trusting and connected relationship with conductor
  - iii. Singers do not understand what the piece is about
  - iv. Singers do not understand the performance practice of the genre
    - a. Presentation and discussion of ensemble as a musical group, but also a social group
    - b. Conductor and ensemble able to communicate openly and with mutual respect
    - c. Discussion of meaning of text and setting of piece
      - 1. Personal stories are sometimes appropriate, depending on situation
- 10. Singers are expressionless in a joyful piece
  - i. Singers are tired
  - ii. Repertoire is too difficult for the level of the ensemble
  - iii. Focus is on correct notes and not style or meaning
  - iv. Frustration with progression of learning on piece
    - a. Break piece into very small sections and work on the section that will make the ensemble feel most successful in the smallest amount of time
    - b. Take away elements until success is insured
      - 1. Just rhythm
      - 2. Just text
      - 3. Singing on resonating vowel
    - c. Use repertoire as a teaching piece and don't plan on performing it that season, but rather to help build the skills in the program for the upcoming years

#### H. Phrasing

- 1. Phrase lacks shape and relationship to text
  - i. Unclear sense of text meaning (especially with foreign languages)
  - ii. Wasting of breath at the beginning of phrases, which inhibits singers from singing the phrase with full support
  - iii. Breath not sustained from note to note. The breathing mechanism collapses between notes
    - a. Have text translations available for piece
    - b. Start towards the end of the phrase and sing so the singers can feel what it is like to complete the phrase successfully
    - c. Exercises that slide between the notes, which does not allow them to collapse their breath; then apply it to the phrase
- 2. Pieces consistently have a choppy and uneven feel
  - i. Over-emphasis on consonants without underlying focus on sustaining vowel
  - ii. Poor breath management
    - a. Sing phrases on resonating vowel or “oo” and have singers trace the phrase with their hand
    - b. Have two sections sing vowels only and two sections sing consonants only as a demonstration of how the vowel must continue to sustain and that the consonants are just the decoration around it
    - c. Onset exercise and focus on legato singing throughout rehearsal
- 3. The motion of the musical line lacks shape and purpose
  - i. Conductor's vision of phrasing is unclear
  - ii. Breath energy is not sufficient to complete the phrase

- iii. Unawareness by singers of musical phrase and shape
      - a. Present the ideas of phrasing and shape aurally and visually, and also have the singers physically show the phrase with their body
      - b. Breathing exercises that focus on breath management throughout the phrase
- 4. Singing is consistently forte on all pieces
  - i. Singers want to hear themselves over the other singers
  - ii. Team concept of singing is misunderstood
  - iii. Singers have misconception of what the music should sound like and how phrasing is created
  - iv. Ensemble has a lot of energy, but is only used with dynamics
  - v. Singers aren't aware of how their parts fit into the whole scheme of the piece
    - a. Have sections sing in smaller circles without a conductor to listen to each other
    - b. Have ensemble sing in a large circle or four interlocking circles
    - c. Discuss how phrases are created and how to achieve forte through taking away before it and after it. Preparation for loud sections as opposed to jumping into them
    - d. Discuss the many elements of the music and also of the performance and where the energy needs to go to be successful.
    - e. Have the ensemble "track" the melody the first time that they read the piece and all sections should sing the melody throughout
    - f. Have the section that has the melody raise their hand throughout the piece
- 5. Energy is not maintained through the rests
  - i. Breathing is rushed and shallow
  - ii. Singers are wasting breath during the phrase and are tired during the rests
  - iii. Singers view rests in the music as breaks in their focus
  - iv. Misunderstanding text meaning and complete story of the piece
    - a. Have sections hiss eighth-notes throughout phrase to show the continued underlying rhythm of the piece
    - b. Make sure to rehearse the "seams" so the ensemble doesn't let the energy down at those places
    - c. Explain the text and the overall story and concept of the piece
- 6. Extended notes are decaying
  - i. Poor breath management
  - ii. Premature release of energy too early in the phrase
    - a. Exercises that focus on sustained pitches and chords
    - b. Hissing of eighth notes through those phrases to remind singers of underlying energy of the music
    - c. Exercises that start with shorter lengths of extended notes and then increase in length as the breath management techniques become more solid
- 7. No dynamic contrasts or distinct articulation
  - i. Breath management not being maintained throughout the phrase
  - ii. Initial tone is pushed, so the sound is unable to change its dynamic level
  - iii. Misunderstanding poetic stress and meaning
  - iv. Misunderstanding form of piece
    - a. Exercises that help ensemble sing with supported tone on all dynamic levels, focusing on inhalation and suspension of breath during decrescendo
    - b. Explanation of text and discussion of meaning
    - c. Explanation of overall form of piece
- 8. Inability to sustain long notes, with inappropriate breathing throughout the note
  - i. Poor breath management
  - ii. Underlying rhythmic energy not present
  - iii. Misunderstanding forward momentum of phrase, even during sustained notes

- a. Exercises with sustained “hissing” to have aural representation of sustained breath
  - b. Onset exercise to focus on apoggio, then expand the length that the note is held
  - c. Sing phrase with subdivision of eighth notes in all sections and then have two sections repeat while the other two sections sing on their text or on resonating vowel
- 9. Constant decay of sound at the end and in between notes
  - i. Ability to maintain apoggio is not developed
  - ii. Misunderstanding connection of breath to phrase
  - iii. Consonants are too early
  - iv. Breath support is stopping during consonants
  - v. Vowel collapses as it is sustained
    - a. Exercises that focus on balanced breath support
    - b. “Buzz” through phrases to maintain breath support
    - c. Subdivide on eighth notes
    - d. Have two sections subdivide while the other sections speak the text in rhythm with emphasis on consonants
    - e. Exercises that focus on opening resonating vowels, then transfer that sensation to the text of the phrase
- 10. Dynamics are not appropriate for the phrase and/or the text
  - i. Air flow during tone production is not appropriate for dynamics
  - ii. Breath management technique not fully developed
  - iii. Misconception of what the proper technique is for producing dynamics
    - a. Exercises that keep breath support at a piano level
    - b. Exercises that develop foundational skills in apoggio and breath management
- 11. Consonants are consistently not together
  - i. Unawareness of placement of consonants
  - ii. Underlying rhythmic subdivision not established or understood
  - iii. Insufficient breath support to complete the phrase successfully, so the phrase is ended prematurely
    - a. Clear and explained phrase markings in the music
    - b. Speak through the phrase to clarify consonants
    - c. Count-sing the phrase, focusing on initial and ending consonants
    - d. Sing phrase with subdividing eighth notes to establish rhythmic momentum

#### I. Text/poetry

- 1. Lack of overall line and connection of phrase
  - i. Repeated rhythmic patterns are dominating focus
  - ii. Misunderstanding phrase structure
    - a. Speaking of text in rhythm
    - b. Explanation of phrase structure and discussion of overall feeling of piece
- 2. Singers accent the last syllable of every phrase
  - i. Mismanagement of breath control. Singers are running out of breath and pushing towards the last word
  - ii. Misunderstanding text stress for meaning
  - iii. Conducting gesture has a strong ictus on unaccented text
    - a. Speaking of text and discussion of meaning
    - b. Singing of final word with correct breath, tone, and emphasis
    - c. Have singers conduct while singing to see their understanding of text
    - d. Analysis of conducting gesture and focus on rebound around final word and end of phrase
- 3. The message of poetry is not being communicated by the choir
  - i. Misunderstanding poetry meaning

- ii. Meaning not unified throughout the ensemble
- iii. Singers disagree with meaning and feel uncomfortable singing the text
  - a. Discuss meaning of text, but perhaps not at the beginning of the rehearsal process
  - b. Talk individually with singers that have challenges with text meaning, if needed
- 4. Singers consistently stress unaccented syllables
  - i. Misunderstanding text and poetic meaning
  - ii. Composer has placed unaccented syllables on stressed beats
  - iii. Singers arrive at unaccented syllables with too much breath energy, which they expel in order to continue with the next phrase
  - iv. Singers do not have understanding of the nuance of the language. This occurs frequently in foreign-language texts
  - v. Singers accent final note of large leaps
    - a. If text is in a foreign language, have translation available. Present text with both literal translation and poetic translation if necessary
    - b. Discuss the musical stress versus the poetic stress and which one should dominate during each phrase. Are there differences based on the musical context and the textural emphasis?
    - c. Sing the end of the phrase with successful breathing and textural stress and then apply it to the whole phrase
    - d. Focus on how the final note of a large leap can be well placed and then come at the leap from that successful placement
- 5. Foreign language is being mispronounced, even with repeated review
  - i. Singers are not understanding mouth shape for authentic vowels
  - ii. Singers are not hearing nuances of foreign vowel pronunciation
  - iii. Singers are placing the vowels incorrectly to be successful
    - a. Listen to recordings of text
    - b. Record rehearsal to allow singers to hear their pronunciation
    - c. Reference to vowel chart for specific placement and visual affirmation of where the vowel should be in the mouth
- 6. Lack of word emphasis to highlight text/poetry
  - i. Lack of connection with the meaning of the text
  - ii. Inability of breath management to execute the emphasis well
  - iii. Misunderstanding connection between musical line and text
    - a. Discussion of text meaning
    - b. Speak text in rhythm, focusing on text
    - c. Discuss how you would speak the text outside of the context of the song and then apply that to the phrase
    - d. Have singers use their hands to draw the phrase with “dabs” for the text emphasis, but continual line for the rest of the phrase
- 7. Disconnect between lively text setting and lifeless presentation by choir
  - i. Vowels are too dark to bring out the excitement and liveliness of the text
  - ii. Dislike of piece by singers
  - iii. Misunderstanding breath management and energy needed to sing the text successfully
    - a. Exercises that focus on bringing placement forward
    - b. Have singers point forward as they sing the phrase to remind them to keep placement forward throughout the phrase
    - c. Discuss the importance of the piece for educational and developmental purposes
    - d. Discuss the importance of the piece within the context of the program

- e. Have singers draw the phrase with their hands and acknowledge when they are losing breath energy, and then address how to maintain breath support at those points

## J. Text and diction

1. Vowels sound muddy and muffled
  - i. Placement of vowels is too far back for the text and style of the piece
  - ii. Misunderstanding placement of foreign language vowels
  - iii. Apoggio is collapsing, which is pushing the vowel placement into the back of the throat when breathing
    - a. Exploration of vowel placement within the mouth, using the vowel placement chart and sensory benchmarks
    - b. Listening to foreign-language choirs to understand aural recognition of vowel placement
    - c. Exercises that promote breathing “forward” and suspension of breath throughout phrase
2. Diphthongs are prevalent
  - i. Misunderstanding the length of the diphthongs while singing
  - ii. Misunderstanding concept of diphthongs
  - iii. Improper breath management forces singers to close mouth and vowel too early
  - iv. Singers are not accustomed to leaving the mouth and tongue in the same position for the duration of the vowel
  - v. Singers associate phonetic symbols of foreign language with sounds that correspond to their language
    - a. Explanation of diphthongs
    - b. Exercises that promote pure vowels
    - c. Exercises that focus on clean and easy movement between vowels to help facilitate diphthong movement in text
3. Text is unclear
  - i. Lack of unified vowels
  - ii. Misunderstanding emphasis of text in phrase
  - iii. Breath energy is lacking, so the full word is not understood due to lack of continuity
  - iv. Pronunciation of foreign text is incorrect
    - a. Speak text in rhythm, focusing on clear consonants and diction
    - b. Exercises that focus on clear, unified vowels throughout the sections
    - c. Sing the text on unison “drone” pitch, focusing on energy through the phrase
4. Inaudible final consonants
  - i. Singers unclear on underlying rhythmic energy
  - ii. Singers tentative to use plosive consonants
  - iii. Singers unaware that final consonants are not prominent enough
  - iv. Focus has been on “cut-off” and stopping of sound rather than breathing to go on
    - a. Exercises that focus on breathing to move on rather than shutting down the sound during consonants and rests
    - b. Exercises that focus on plosive consonants and breath energy needed to execute them successfully
    - c. Speak text in rhythm, focusing on initial and final consonants
5. Endings of phrase and text are ragged and unclear
  - i. Breath management is not developed enough to execute phrase successfully
  - ii. Misunderstanding when the phrase is ended and length of final notes
  - iii. Underlying rhythmic subdivision is not established or understood
  - iv. Vowels are collapsing prematurely
    - a. Singing phrase only on vowels
    - b. Subdividing on eighth notes with the resonating vowel

- c. Count singing of phrases
- 6. Internal consonants are unclear
  - i. Underlying rhythmic energy not established so consonants are not together
  - ii. Misunderstanding importance of internal consonants for correct pronunciation
  - iii. Tension in throat
  - iv. Acoustics of room prevent text being heard clearly
  - v. Vowels are too dark, so the articulation of the consonants is not frontal
    - a. Speak text in rhythm
    - b. Move sections to accommodate acoustics and focus on rhythmic precision
    - c. Exercises that bring placement forward
    - d. Have singers touch where they feel that the tone is being placed and explore different placements throughout the exercises
    - e. Pant before singing to keep throat open
    - f. Have two sections subdivide on eighth notes while the other two sections sing on the text

#### K. Articulation

1. Onset of notes is consistently hard and glottal
  - i. Singers are not singing with open throat
  - ii. Breath connection is not established before the onset of the tone
  - iii. Singers are not allowing enough space at onset of tone
  - iv. Misunderstanding apoggio and need for breath for balanced and healthy tone
    - a. Exercises that focus on balanced breath energy and non-glottal onset
    - b. Panting before singing
    - c. Exercises that open the back of the throat, such as sniffing a rose or the feeling of an internal yawn
2. Intonation suffers when text is added to phrase during rehearsal
  - i. Placement of tone changes once text is added
  - ii. Jaw tension returns once the focus is on text instead of vowel and breath
  - iii. Consonants disconnect breath energy
  - iv. Breath support is not considered when executing consonants
    - a. Sing phrase with proper placement, asking singers to physically touch where the placement is in their face and mouth, then speak the text, keeping that same placement
    - b. Sing with tongue out
    - c. Sing consonants in rhythm with underlying subdivision present, either through counting or with metronome
    - d. Exercises that focus on the placement of consonants and the movement of the consonants through the mouth
3. Onset for forte notes is too severe
  - i. Singers are using glottal stop to release air rather than suspending it when breathing
  - ii. A plosive consonant is stopping the air too severely and singers are not thinking of the resonating vowel around the consonant
  - iii. Choir is misusing their abundance of energy
  - iv. Tessitura is high for singers
    - a. Panting before onset
    - b. Exercises that use a variety of consonants and move from more labial to plosive consonants throughout the exercise, focusing on relaxation and successful execution
    - c. Have singers lie down and sing phrase, focusing on good alignment of head and relaxation of neck and shoulders
    - d. Sing phrase at lower pitch level (transpose intervals) and have singers feel successful and then slowly move the pitch upwards

4. Poor projection
  - i. Apoggio is not understood and/or executed correctly
  - ii. Misunderstanding breath-to-projection connection
  - iii. Throat is tense or closed
  - iv. Soft palate is lowered
  - v. Placement of vowel is not in correct resonating area
  - vi. Breath management techniques are not developed, so the sound is breathy and unable to project
    - a. Exercises that focus on balance breathing and breath energy
    - b. Onset exercise
    - c. Exercises that raise the soft palate and open up the face
    - d. Panting before onset
    - e. Have singers do “push-ups” against the wall, focusing on the tucking of their abdominals throughout the length of the phrase
    - f. Sing with tongue out
5. Singers are putting accent on incorrect syllable
  - i. Lack of breath energy to carry through the word or phrase, causes the singers to “vocally lunge” towards the end
  - ii. Misconception of diction or text meaning
  - iii. Setting of text leads to incorrect articulation
  - iv. Difficult transition for singers between frontal-placed vowel and back-placed vowel
  - v. Misconception of breath energy needed to release the end of the phrase successfully
    - a. Sing the end of the phrase successfully and then add small segments, moving backward until the whole phrase is successful
    - b. Discuss the challenges of the text setting so the singers are aware of what needs to be accomplished
    - c. “Buzz” through phrase to establish breath support connection and awareness of how much breath is needed to complete phrase
    - d. Discuss textural meaning
    - e. Speak text in rhythm, focusing on “stress and release” of the natural curve of the text
6. Staccato notes are too short and lack breadth
  - i. Insufficient breath energy to maintain core of note
  - ii. Consonants are too early and don’t allow the note to sound fully
  - iii. Rhythmic unawareness by singers
  - iv. Misunderstanding that staccato is an articulation, not a length of note
  - v. Vowel is too closed and does not allow voice to “ring”
    - a. Sing phrase on an open vowel that allows the voice to phonate freely
    - b. Focus on resonating vowel and making the tone more open within that vowel
    - c. Onset exercise, focusing on the core of the sound
    - d. Subdividing on eighth notes and then having specific sections sing with varied articulations, keeping the core sound intact and the rhythmic accuracy present

#### L. Rhythm and momentum

1. Choir is behind the tactus of the conductor
  - i. Internal rhythmic momentum is not established
  - ii. Conductor’s gesture is too laborious and heavy
  - iii. Conductor’s gesture is too large for the style and tempo of the piece
  - iv. Breathing technique is not established for the tempo of the piece
  - v. Breathing is too late and too rushed, so singers feel behind and out of breath
  - vi. Singers are unfamiliar with pitches and/or text
  - vii. Misunderstanding meaning or effect of piece

- a. Exercises that focus on a variety of breaths, depending on what is needed to continue successfully
  - b. Subdivision of beats into eighth notes while singing the phrase
  - c. Conducting gesture should be smaller and lighter if the choir is behind
  - d. Conducting gesture should reflect the placement and style of breath needed to maintain tempo and vitality
  - e. Discussion of effect of piece and text meaning
2. Rhythm between sections and/or within sections is irregular
- i. The piece is rhythmically difficult and perhaps above the ability of the technique of the choir
  - ii. The choir is sight-reading and focusing on pitches more than rhythm
  - iii. Singers cannot see the conductor
  - iv. Different sections have different views of the conducting gesture
  - v. The conductor's gesture is inconsistent or unclear
  - vi. Singers cannot hear their section or other sections of the ensemble
    - a. Exercises that break down the elements into successful sections, such as rhythm only, speaking text in rhythm, and pitches on resonating vowel
    - b. Exercises that teach foundational sight-reading concepts
    - c. Move sections around the rehearsal space to allow singers to see conductor from another angle
    - d. Videotape conducting in rehearsals from numerous angles and analyze gesture inconsistencies
    - e. Have sections sing in small circles to facilitate better hearing across the section
    - f. Have ensemble sing in one large circle
    - g. Have the ensemble sing in smaller circles, intertwined
3. Rhythm is consistently sung inaccurately
- i. Rhythm was learned incorrectly
  - ii. Tempo is too fast for the ability of the singers
  - iii. Tempo is too fast for the phrase
  - iv. Singers are anticipating rhythmically challenging phrase
  - v. Singers are misunderstanding subtle differences between rhythms of like phrases
    - a. Present rhythms in exercises without connection to piece
    - b. Complete score study of rhythms before rehearsal
    - c. Present small differences between rhythms in like phrases and discuss the differences, why it might have been written that way, and "red flags" to help them remember
    - d. Keep track of tempi used in rehearsal and refer to them before starting to rehearse piece
    - e. Notate whenever the tempo is increased and then try and keep it at that tempo, if not faster, if you are trying to increase the tempo
4. Piece loses momentum during slow, soft, and/or legato sections
- i. Misunderstanding concepts of legato, piano, and tempo
  - ii. Misunderstanding connection of slow tempo and dynamics
  - iii. Conductor's gesture is heavy and too big
  - iv. Singers are not subdividing
  - v. Apoggio is not consistent during sustained passages
  - vi. Breaths are too labored and heavy
    - a. Exercises that focus on varied tempi and dynamics
    - b. When rehearsing, vary the tempi outside of the suggested speed to explore how the singer must modify their breath and placement to be successful
    - c. Conducting gesture should show foundational breath support while encouraging the singer to not be too heavy with the voice

- d. Onset exercise
  - e. Singing phrase piano and legato while subdividing on eighth notes
5. Rushing
- i. Over-excitement of ensemble
  - ii. Singers apprehensive about rhythmic accuracy or tessitura
  - iii. Rhythmic foundation has not been established
  - iv. Singers are releasing their breath energy too quickly
  - v. Singers are taking shallow and gasping breaths
    - a. Subdividing into eighth notes
    - b. Count singing
    - c. Rehearsing at a variety of tempi, especially slower, to allow the singers to stay relaxed and breathe freely
    - d. Sing on neutral vowel to allow singers to be successful with breath and completion of phrase in a controlled manner
    - e. Speak text at a variety of tempi

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