

# Getting More From Your Choir

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What makes for a positive choral experience?

- Awesome, high-quality music
- Rehearsals that are fast-paced, focused, challenging, and fun
- Personality of the conductor (let your light shine—be yourself—have fun!)

## **2 Main keys for success:**

#1: Choosing EXCELLENT music

- This takes TIME (don't neglect this!!)
- 3 primary considerations:
  - Quality (is it musically appealing? Is it beautiful? Is it inspiring?)
  - Difficulty
  - Appropriateness
- Some resources for finding music:
  - Hymns (there are so many wonderful hymns to sing!)
  - [www.defordmusic.com](http://www.defordmusic.com) (all music is FREE to download, quality is usually high, this is an excellent resource for ward choirs)
  - [www.ldsmusicsource.com](http://www.ldsmusicsource.com) (music costs \$0.85/copy to download, mostly high quality and not too difficult, another great resource)
  - [www.jackmanmusic.com](http://www.jackmanmusic.com) (largest LDS music publisher, huge selection, most choral music is between \$1.10 and \$1.70/copy)
  - "Hymnplicity" series, arr. Jorgensen, pub. Jackman (choir sings from the hymn book, buy 2 copies only for conductor and pianist, EASY and effective)
- A few of my favorite choral pieces for ward choir:
  - Behold the Wounds in Jesus' Hands (Naylor, Jackman Music)
  - Cast Your Burden on the Lord (DeFord, DeFord Music)
  - Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing (arr. Zabriskie, LDSMusicSource)
  - Jesus, Once of Humble Birth (arr. Kasen, Jackman Music)
  - The King of Love My Shepherd Is (arr. Wilberg, Oxford Univ. Press)
  - There Is A Green Hill Far Away (arr. Lyon, Jackman Music)
  - How Great the Wisdom and the Love (DeFord, DeFord Music)
- Christmas:
  - With Wondering Awe (arr. Dalton, LDSMusicSource)

- Away in a Manger (arr. Hoffman, Jackman Music)

## #2: Fast-paced, dynamic rehearsals

- Come with a plan:
  - KNOW the music, sing through every part
  - What do you want to accomplish?
- SING, SING, SING
- Have high standards! (they never get it the first time)
  - Forget about being “nice”. Insist on excellence!
- Have fun, be yourself (that’s what you’re best at anyway)

## **2 KEY FACTORS for achieving beautiful choral tone:**

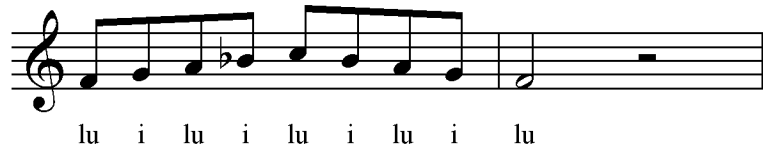
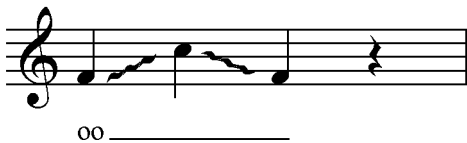
- Open resonating areas (mouth and throat)
- Breath energy

## OPEN THROAT

- Every inhalation should prepare the throat for singing.
- Jaw, tongue, and larynx should release, while the soft palate lifts. This creates the proper resonating space for the tone.

Exercises:

- Pretend that you are about to begin a yawn. Notice how the jaw releases and the soft palate rises. Now sigh on “ah”, beginning high in the range and gliding down.
- “Spooky ghost”. Make a sound like a spooky ghost on “oo”, sliding up and down in pitch.




- Quick fixes:
  - Press in the corners of the mouth (leave the tongue forward and free).
  - Insert two fingers between the front teeth (especially good for “ah” vowels).

## BREATH ENERGY

- Breath energy works best with excellent posture and an energized body. Use movement and encourage good posture.

Exercises:

- Do the following exercise while making the lips buzz together, like a motorboat sound.



(lipbuzz) - ah \_\_\_\_\_

The musical notation shows a treble clef with a sequence of notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The notes are connected by a slur, and there is a fermata over the final C4 note.


- Sing the following exercise with a free, open tone:



sing ah \_\_\_\_\_

The musical notation shows a treble clef with a sequence of notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The notes are connected by a slur, and there is a fermata over the final C4 note.

- Make the consonant sounds very deliberate and crisp.



p t k a a a a a

The musical notation shows a treble clef with notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The notes are connected by a slur, and there is a fermata over the final C4 note. Above the first three notes (G4, A4, B4) are 'x' marks. Below the notes are the consonants p, t, k, a, a, a, a, a.

For very practical information about beautiful singing try *Singing With Mind, Body & Soul* by Betty Jeanne Chipman (Wheatmark Press). This book contains many, many exercises and techniques to teach singers how to achieve beautiful singing.