

Regional Music Workshop – How to build a Ward Choir: Communication and Performance

Marci Taylor: taylormarci@gmail.com; 503-475-2180 text OK

Communication:

1. Create an email list to communicate weekly with the choir. Start by having people that come to choir practice give you their email address and mobile phone number for possible text messages. Include Bishop's counselor, Ward Music Chair, and bulletin person. You may choose social media rather than email for weekly reminders.
2. Put announcements in the ward bulletin welcoming new singers and giving rehearsal information. Invite youth 12 years and older.
3. Plan the year's rehearsals and literature in August. Check out the calendar for Easter dates – sometimes March, sometimes April. Remember this plan has to be flexible. Things always come up, including discovering a song is harder than you expected and you need to postpone its performance. For example below is a link to my current plan:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PjX_9CoKs-uuLt8FvKxBfW5l0MiU4v8/edit?usp=sharing&oid=107687600940822029110&rtpof=true&sd=true
4. Get dates of Primary Program, Ward Conference, Stake Conferences, General Conference, other special Sacrament Meetings.
5. Sing at least once a month. Consider singing Fast Sunday prelude hymns. Performances motivate people to practice/rehearse.
6. Expect absences from Ward Choir practice. Everyone has a full plate and deals with some family illness, travel, etc.
7. Express appreciation for this extra service every singers provides for the ward in addition to Ward and Stake callings. Acknowledge the contribution of their performance to the Spirit in Sacrament Meeting and doctrine that is taught through music.
8. Expect Bishoprics and other leadership to not understand how much time it takes to prepare a 3 minute song.

Performance:

1. Masks, frames, shields
2. Help conducting: Can you find the downbeat? – one on one, shadow leading, circle your hands, What is your biggest concern? Try circling hands and conducting upbeat entrances.
3. Indicating a breath: at beginning of song; after a fermata
4. Changing meter: hymn no. 30 "Come, Come Ye Saints."
5. Know the choir you are conducting. Choose appropriate literature for your singers: ChoirBook; Christmas in Song (lyrics issue). Chandler Sheet Music: 800.445.6874, 928.541.0522, <chandlermusic@aol.com>
6. Accompanists vs solo pianists, private rehearsal
7. Pacing & Practice deliberately looking at conductor for entrances, cut offs, dynamics
8. Vowel unification exercise* – then use "My Lord is Like a Shepherd." p. 3 to implement vowels and address "r" pronounced with English accent

9. "Impromptu Choir" – Announcement to be made by conducting Bishopric member: "You may have noticed "Impromptu Choir" on the program. Any adult or youth that likes to sing is invited to come up to the choir seats and sing Hymn no. 110, Cast Thy Burden for our congregation. Yes, this is unrehearsed. You do not need to be a member of the Ward Choir to participate. Maybe Ward Choir doesn't fit in your schedule but you enjoy singing. Please feel welcome to join us and bring a hymnal with you, turned to no. 110."

Any questions, thoughts or suggestions?

Vowel Unification Exercise:

oo as in boot – point index under nose, pucker lips to touch the finger. Sing pure oo

ee as in beet – index finger and thumb push corners of lips in making puckered lips. Avoid spread ee.

eh as in bet – parallel index fingers pointing from corners of mouth to eyes indicating a tall, vertical vowel

oh as in boat – circle lips and draw circle with one index finger in front of lips. Spin the oh.

ah as in father – draw line from jaw joint to corners of lips and drop jaw to create a tall, spacious ah.

Sometimes demonstrating an exaggerated vowel that is too bright, closed or strident will convince your singers to alter their sound.