

1. “An Introduction to Color” will be focused specifically on discussing color notes and extended harmony and tonal context of popular a cappella, based on my experience.
  - 1.1. Complex extended chords, from seventh chords to polychords, are becoming increasingly popular in college a cappella because arrangers are learning how to harness contemporary 20th century harmony compositions to introduce interesting colors into engaging popular music.
  - 1.2. When done right, the group gives an audience an engaging, interesting framework for them to immerse themselves in.
  - 1.3. However, how does one “learn” about these musical ideas in an a cappella setting? A cappella is a beltingly frustratingly difficult form of modern popular music because the voice is such a volatile instrument; reliably playing the most basic chords takes a significant amount of time, effort, and experience.
2. “Having fun” is a positive idea, so what if we approach it from this perspective? How can we help our singers love the arrangement they sing?
  - 2.1. Define “idiomatic” voice leading? One perspective (intentionally biased in order to encourage experimentation and comfort) is that certain movements, placements vowels etc. feel more “natural” and engaging for us to sing. We should study the musical ideas we hear and enjoy in order to use them in our own way; “good artists imitate, great artists steal” to use in their own, wholly unique way. You’ve heard plenty of singers through the years; think about your favorite melodies or ornaments (riffs, details) from your favorite singers.
  - 2.2. A Cappella brings its own specific challenges to the table:
    - 2.2.1. Because we’ve heard autotuned A Cappella before, smaller tuning problems are much more noticeable.
    - 2.2.2. There’s no other type of music where “pop” vocals need to provide the “core” harmonic foundation. Backup singers in a band are singing above a band, but aren’t the ones that tell us what chord we’re in.
    - 2.2.3. Getting from pitch to pitch exactly is extremely difficult; smart arranging minimizes opportunities for error while maximizing opportunities for fun and engaging performances.
    - 2.2.4. You have to practice the same arrangement over, over, and over again.
  - 2.3. To me, it’s more of a “why not?” situation. Collegiate A Cappella groups only have 4-5 years of members before they graduate. It is not a lot of time to learn.
    - 2.3.1. I find that this reasoning is just as practical as it is theoretical. College groups tend to want “fun” and “efficiency/progress” at the same time; this isn’t necessarily a paradox, but they don’t always lend themselves to either.
    - 2.3.2. Smart arranging can help create a positive working environment when people “want” to sing the music. It can help singers grow and keep them entertained while learning all the music the group needs to perform.
  - 2.4. Really think of this course not only as a “building blocks” course, but a “problem solving” course. Arranging is figuring out how best to implement musical ideas for the specific ensemble; what’s the best way to arrange a specific few measures for your group?
3. A lot of music (not just pop music) is built around the idea of “tension and release”; this helps the audience follow along and understand what they’re listening to
  - 3.1. There’s plenty of people who do not study music but listen to plenty; these people tend to “know what they’re hearing” so if you invite them to listen, they can definitely become invested.
  - 3.2. A lot of “tonal” (simply put: music with a discernible key, which includes pop music) music relies on tension and release to make interesting and engaging music.
  - 3.3. Tension and release also helps your singers “understand” what they’re singing, and helps them learn how to sing music more quickly, both in terms of the notes and the “feel”; you’re setting them up for success.
  - 3.4. Even the most complex things that we will talk about today are easier to utilize when thinking about “tension and release”



4. We will tackle several musical situations and proposing several “ideal” ways of voicing them (prioritizing tension as well as “singability”), while still taking into consideration more unstable implementations.
  - 4.1. Many of the arranging classes I have personally attended introduce really wonderful abstract ideas, but I give people the concrete examples they need to implement the colors they never knew how to access previously.
    - 4.1.1. All of these notes, handouts and audio recordings will be available on erikfredriksen.com for free.
    - 4.1.2. Take my ideas! Take them all! Do them better than me! Hey, “good artists imitate, great artists steal.”
    - 4.1.3. If you take an idea, think about why you’re taking it, even if it’s just “why does this sound good?” and think about it; there are no wrong answers.
    - 4.1.4. Some of these core ideas are such reliable solutions to problems that you might as well take them and reuse them.
  - 4.2. Our goal is to get to a point as arrangers where we can consciously make musical decisions and fully know the musical and practical consequences of those decisions. Every decision you make is a mix of your in-the-moment intuition as well as your previous knowledge.
  - 4.3. I’m going to keep my language as “layman” as possible, because at its core, this class is intended for all levels. Ask questions if you need a quick definition to a word; it means that I’m taking an unfamiliar concept for granted.
  - 4.4. Remember to always keep your mind open, always welcoming and entertaining new ideas; with practice you’ll be able to do it while still achieving your own arranging “style” since you will probably find some favorites.
5. We will look at some core ideas introduced in most “AP Music Theory” or “Harmony I” classes concerning writing and helping attendees understand while these ideas were created in the first place.
  - 5.1. One prime example I wish to mention is why tuning parallel 5ths are so difficult; perfect intervals such as octaves are significantly more noticeable when out of tune, while consonant intervals such as 3rds and 6ths are more nebulous in each tuning system that nobody truly knows what either of them sound like when “perfectly tuned”. However, it is important to note that parallel fifths and octaves, though perhaps more difficult to tune, produce very specific colors; it is up to the arrangers’ discretion when to write something more theoretically difficult to tune for a particular musical payoff. I also wish to immediately introduce a few common part writing oversights that we’ll cover the rest of the seminar, such as direct fifths and octaves (parallel motion into fifths and octaves), “improperly” approaching and resolving the seventh in a seventh chord, and writing without regard for each singer’s most comfortable parts of their respective ranges.
  - 5.2. What is an interval? We speak of intervals as the distance between two notes in a “scale”.
  - 5.3. What is a scale? A collection of notes. We tend to use scales that use 7/12 notes in each octave, especially “Major” and “Minor”.
  - 5.4. Example: Parallel 5ths (Quick demonstration of what I mean by a “fifth”, and then a “parallel” fifth; hopefully that aren’t familiar with the term can “hear” what it sounds like).
    - 5.4.1. The interval of a fifth is more “rigid” than a third. Theoretical evidence:
      - 5.4.1.1. We know that all sound is waves, and the frequency is what determines the pitch.
      - 5.4.1.2. We hear sounds from about 20 hz (lower than any note on the piano) and 20000 hz (super high pitched buzzing).
      - 5.4.1.3. The frequency ratio (in any tuning system that we would choose to sing in) between a note and the note itself is 3:2; 660 hz (E5) is a fifth above 440 hz (A4).
      - 5.4.1.4. Meanwhile, the ratio for a third is a LOT more nebulous, and it’s different in different tuning systems.
      - 5.4.1.5. It’s true that some tuning systems have an inconsistent fifth, but we deliberately tune the fifth according to this ratio because the sound is so pure and powerful.
      - 5.4.1.6. It’s harder to keep this exact interval constant because the ratio is so rigid.



- 5.4.2. Because it's so powerful, it can mess up your sense of key.
- 5.4.3. Example with parallel fifths and octaves (parallel octaves are similarly difficult but can be used to similar to parallel fifths).
- 5.4.4. This one without parallel fifths is more "stable".
- 5.4.5. Depending on the sound you're looking for, either choice is very much artistically valid and with li success. However, it's important to know where that parallel fifth because it could be something t be worked on specifically in rehearsal.
- 5.4.6. The goal is to be able to make these choices deliberately, taking as much into consideration as p
- 5.5. A few more examples:
  - 5.5.1. "Improperly" approaching and resolving the seventh in a seventh chord
  - 5.5.2. Writing without regard for each singer's most comfortable parts of their respective ranges.
    - 5.5.2.1. Your group probably has a lot more baritenors than tenors because it's a common voice about having your tenors continuously hover above a middle C; it gets tiring up there and some work to get good technique to mix healthfully and support your pitch.
    - 5.5.2.2. Tenors and sopranos can feel comfortable singing lower than you'd think.
    - 5.5.2.3. Sopranos generally don't need to sing that high/sing high all the time.
    - 5.5.2.4. The baritones and basses don't need to be that low/sing low all the time.
  - 5.5.3. Changes in range are ways to make different portions of your arrangement stand out/give your s chance to rest and explore different areas of their voice.
    - 5.5.3.1. If a singer is singing in same five note range for the entire arrangement, they will sing in w of their voice is most comfortable
    - 5.5.3.2. If the notes stay the same, it's easier for a singer to subconsciously sing the same way th time
- 6. Extended chords (7, 9, 11, and 13 chords);
  - 6.1. General notes
    - 6.1.1. When allocating singers for each note, we prioritize notes in this order:
      - 6.1.1.1. The root
      - 6.1.1.2. The 5th (having more 5ths than roots is ok; having more 5ths isn't as noticeable as havin any other chord tone)
      - 6.1.1.3. The 3rd
      - 6.1.1.4. Everything else (let's call all these other notes "color notes")
    - 6.1.2. Why?
      - 6.1.2.1. We want the chord to "lock", and the 5th is the clearest interval that "locks" (other than a
      - 6.1.2.2. The "3rd" determines major or minor, which is important too though still more nebulous t
      - 6.1.2.3. Since color tones don't "support" the core triad of the root, 3rd and 5th, it's important th quiet so that they aren't distracting.
    - 6.1.3. What does this mean?
      - 6.1.3.1. Color notes can be held through chord changes, which may make it easier to sing things more complex
      - 6.1.3.2. These chords can more easily be thought of as "stacking 3rds" (give example), but this o lead us to a trap; the voices are so close together that it's hard to maneuver them around
      - 6.1.3.3. Try making chords that feel more "open" (larger gaps between notes) and some that feel "closed" (notes are closer).



- 6.2. Relationship between major and minor chords
  - 6.2.1. Major 7 chords are similar to minor 9 chords (where major and minor refer to the third)
  - 6.2.2. Major 9 chords are similar to minor 11 chords and so on
  - 6.2.3. We're grouping chords here by similar color
  - 6.2.4. Chords can have multiple color tones at the same time; best in large groups when you can dedicate people to each one.
- 6.3. Minor 7 chords/Major 6 chords:
  - 6.3.1. Note that these chords "feel different", even with the same notes; it has to do with the way the chord resolves
  - 6.3.2. The minor 7th tends to resolve down by step (aka right after the 7th chord, the 7th goes down by step in the scale)
    - 6.3.2.1. Consider this option often; it feels very natural to sing this way
    - 6.3.2.2. It helps the chord settle nicely; there's this important feeling of tension and release.
  - 6.3.3. Keeping it still could be cool; helps make that color tone feel important
  - 6.3.4. Can be cool resolving up if the whole group is also going up; group motion is powerful
  - 6.3.5. For the minor 7th chord, I personally prefer this chord with a closer voicing; stacking 5ths is really cool (think A C E G vs. A E C G; those two 5ths can stick out like a sore thumb)
- 6.4. Major 7 chords/minor 9 chords:
  - 6.4.1. These chords are tough because of the major 7 interval (demonstrate). It's definitely doable, but it's better to approach the 7th from above; it will help distinguish it from the root both for the audience and the singer
  - 6.4.2. I tend to keep the color tone in a different octave than the:
    - 6.4.2.1. Root (in major chords)
    - 6.4.2.2. 3rd (in minor chords)
  - 6.4.3. When in the same octave the dissonance becomes really noticeable, but it can be pleasing with some movement; leading; build tension into the minor 2nd and then release.
  - 6.4.4. A nice straight tone into vibrato can work wonders with these chords
  - 6.4.5. Really try to limit the number of singers on these color notes; too much weight can make the chord feel imbalanced.
- 6.5. Major 9 chords/minor 11 chords:
  - 6.5.1. These chords tend to be more neutral than the aforementioned chords; easier to sit in
  - 6.5.2. Creates a very different color, depending on the order of the notes (using this color tone in different ways can completely change a chord's sound.
  - 6.5.3. Work well with Major 6/Minor 7 chords; the open voicing now has enough foundation to be really cool while still clearly hinting where it's going to go.
- 6.6. Major 11 chords/minor 13 chords:
  - 6.6.1. Major chords with an 11 usually use the sharp 11; it's a tritone from the root, but if it's placed far enough (more than an octave) it can give a really interesting, ethereal vibe
  - 6.6.2. Locks really well with major 9th/minor 11th.
- 6.7. Building chords with intervals other than 3rds (namely 4ths, 5ths and 2nds);
  - 6.7.1. 4ths feel "closed"
  - 6.7.2. 5ths feel "open"
  - 6.7.3. 2nds are "closed" but when you resolve them, there's a great tension and release
  - 6.7.4. I generally try not to leave a gap in a chord that's larger than a 6th (7th and octaves certainly viable cases)



- 6.7.5. I tend to consider the “bass” its own instrument; since it’s mixed loudly (and is sometimes an octave higher) you can have chords that are far above the bass because the ensemble and bass can operate independently.
- 6.7.6. Try all combinations! Examples:
  - 6.7.6.1. Ensemble, loud/quiet in higher register close together, with a low bass
  - 6.7.6.2. Ensemble spread apart, with a higher bassline (cross voice?)
  - 6.7.6.3. Have everyone in their low chest voice, bass low or mixing\
- 6.7.7. With these ideas, you can focus on constructing extended chords, or even construct entirely new ones that aren’t built off of “triads” (the root, 3rd and 5th of a chord, which is usually how you identify a chord).
  - 6.7.7.1. “Cluster chords” (basically a bunch of notes close together) can be cool, but always hint at a tonal center
  - 6.7.7.2. You can hint at a tonal center by having more singers on notes that could construct a triad on their own, or in how you lead in and out of the cluster chord

## 7. Modal Mixture:

- 7.1. Using chords where the “root” (the bottom note in a “triad”) is in the key, but the rest of the chord isn’t necessarily in the key.
- 7.2. It’s surprisingly common; sometimes substituting in a major chord for a minor (or vice versa) is enough to make it feel fresh.
- 7.3. “Harmonic minor scale”
  - 7.3.1. The 6th and 7th are raised on the way up
  - 7.3.2. The 6th and 7th are lowered on the way down
  - 7.3.3. Makes sense; makes us really feel like we’re going “up” then “down”
- 7.4. Could present some interesting, surprisingly “natural” voice leading.
- 7.5. Who knows what the “circle of fifths” is?
- 7.6. Given a home key, the most common keys to play with:
  - 7.6.1. The key a fifth above (example: E major is the key a fifth above A major). In the home key, the 4th degree of the scale is raised.
  - 7.6.2. The key a fifth below (example: D major is the key a fifth below A major). In the home key, the 7th degree of the scale is lowered.
  - 7.6.3. Relative major/minor
- 7.7. Common compositional techniques to be superimposed over familiar melodies;
- 7.8. Chromatic/stepwise basslines
  - 7.8.1. Take a section of the arrangement, put a bass line that goes down by step underneath the melody and then arrange around it
  - 7.8.2. Non-functional harmony; the bass’s movement holds the chord together, so you can get some of those surprisingly natural sounding chords and movement
  - 7.8.3. Can be a really powerful melodic counterpoint (aka a melody that complements the main melody)
  - 7.8.4. You can alternate between going down the scale and going down chromatically (aka just going down on a piano)
  - 7.8.5. You can go up too! Wow!
- 7.9. Putting a chord progression over a constant, repeating bass line
  - 7.9.1. In this case, the voices have no loud bass to keep their chord together; make sure that the voices can communicate everything you want to communicate
  - 7.9.2. Keep it relatively high so that the bass line doesn’t compete with the baritones; keep each part





















