

Pedagogical Arranging

Deliberate Arranging to Improve Group Musicality and Stimulate New Arranging Paradigms

1. Goals of this class
 - 1.1. Help singers to grow over time while in their a cappella group.
 - 1.2. Create positive, healthy rehearsal environments
 - 1.3. Reward active participation
 - 1.4. Reward growth
 - 1.5. Without putting unnecessary burden on each member
 - 1.6. Take advantage of your group's musical strengths
 - 1.7. Use arrangements to help your group constructively work through its weaknesses
2. Why Learn Through Singing?
 - 2.1. Not everyone can read sheet music. This is totally ok!
 - 2.1.1. Not everyone is trained the same way, or at all!
 - 2.1.2. Not all people know the Italian used in conventionally in western art music
 - 2.1.3. Many people are trained in non-western music tradition
 - 2.2. Group leaders can be and can create resources for any person to learn their music effectively/efficiently
 - 2.2.1. If people learn through singing, they're more likely to do it (muscle memory)
 - 2.2.2. Do you know how you use your voice approximately for every note and every dynamic?
 - 2.2.3. Do you know you have to get louder, but realize you have trouble staying on pitch simultaneously?
 - 2.3. Singers enjoy singing, so the learning process is more fun and engaging
 - 2.4. How practical is this? Am I, the music director, really able to provide extensive and customized support to all of my singers?
 - 2.4.1. It's very easy to say during auditions "oh they don't know this? We can teach them!" and then never end up following through.
 - 2.4.2. This is why we're attempting to combat differences in musical knowledge as close to the source as possible; we can focus on learning as soon as we begin arranging.
3. The "Etude": A musical work that is intended as practice for a musical technique/idea, while standing on its own as a piece of music.
 - 3.1. Instead of practicing singing scales on their own, what if we practiced singing scales by writing an arrangement that has a lot of well thought out scales in it?
 - 3.2. Arrangers can create exercises to isolate and teach musical concepts
 - 3.2.1. Effective because a successful etude is a good piece of music.
 - 3.2.2. If we give someone something fun to sing, it's likely that they will want to sing it over and over again.
 - 3.2.2.1. What if, instead of "drilling" repetitive basic warm ups as practice, we practiced the same ideas in a real arrangement?
 - 3.2.2.2. What if we changed our warm ups depending on what we want to work on in rehearsal that day?
 - 3.2.2.3. Now, we get easy access both to education and fun music making; rehearsing the same sections over and over again starts to feel a lot less like "work" and a lot more like "fun".
 - 3.2.2.4. Theoretically, we can make "creating great 'music'" and "having fun in rehearsal" are synonymous.



- 3.2.3. Singing a good arrangement well is one best possible tangible rewards that the group can experience; it's fun, and awesome to listen to and experience.
- 3.2.4. Less talking about things singers don't care about.
- 3.2.5. Less talking in rehearsal about rehearsal because EVERYTHING is structured around the arrangement.
- 4. Can't Feel My Face (Rehearsal Mark A)
 - 4.1. Problems:
 - 4.1.1. Choral vowels aren't blending
 - 4.1.2. Tuning 2nds between voices
 - 4.1.3. Poor phrasing; singers go on autopilot.
 - 4.1.4. People don't memorize their music
 - 4.2. Solutions:
 - 4.2.1. Keep everyone on the same vowel at all times
 - 4.2.2. Create moving parts that naturally phrase themselves as they go up and down
 - 4.2.3. Differing rhythms between voices
 - 4.2.4. Allow 2nds that naturally resolve
 - 4.2.5. Practice tuning chords while voices move
 - 4.2.6. Barbershop uses Pythagorean tuning and Just Intonation: every chord tunes to the root
 - 4.2.7. It's easy to remember
 - 4.2.8. These 8 bars happen 3 times
 - 4.2.9. Each time the solo/vp are different
 - 4.2.10. Can be done one level louder/softer
 - 4.2.11. ONLY 4 PARTS INCLUDING BASS
- 5. Arranging to Teach Musical Concepts
 - 5.1. As part of a warm up
 - 5.1.1. The easiest way to isolate problems in an explicit manner
 - 5.1.2. Simple warm ups can be twisted in 100 ways that are easy to learn on the spot
 - 5.1.3. Keeps warm ups fresh and helps them feel as rewarding and interesting as singing arrangements
 - 5.2. As part of a performance arrangement
 - 5.2.1. Imposing artistic constraints can inspire artists in unique ways
 - 5.2.2. Problem with [concept] -> write something cool with [concept] with good voice leading
 - 5.2.3. Allows us to stretch that concept to its musical limit
 - 5.2.4. The ultimate way to make an exercise feel "musical" is to write music; that way, the reward is the music itself.
- 6. Using the Arrangement to Structure a Rehearsal
 - 6.1. Tailor warm ups to what the group will be rehearsing
 - 6.1.1. Easy to set up situations where "Teachable Moments" occur naturally
 - 6.1.2. Provides an arc or narrative to the rehearsal, helps rehearsal feel meaningful
 - 6.1.3. Isolating problems before putting music behind it might help some
 - 6.1.4. Can take a familiar warm up and change something small (volume, tempo, vowel, placement)
 - 6.2. Using the Arrangement to Structure a Rehearsal
 - 6.2.1. Notate very clearly what you want so people can "get" what you want with.
 - 6.2.1.1. No really; notate as much as you reasonably can
 - 6.2.1.2. Use text to describe ideas that may require notation that looks convoluted, since that defeats the purpose (ex: multiple swells in a row can leave a page riddled



- with crescendos and decrescendos all over the place; just write “swell through phrase”
- 6.2.1.3. HOWEVER, the burden of explanation is always on the arranger/music director; don't be afraid to clarify if people are confused.
- 6.2.2. Make sure arranger and MD are on the same page about any possible problem sections.
- 6.3. Come to rehearsal prepared!
 - 6.3.1. Know which parts will need work before rehearsal
 - 6.3.2. Know what you're going to say so you don't ramble
 - 6.3.3. Be able to sing all the parts to help people that have trouble with sheet music
 - 6.3.3.1. Sing through everything to double check voice leading; does this part feel good to sing?
 - 6.3.3.2. It is common that people who learn music primarily by ear... are really good at learning by ear!
 - 6.3.4. Sectionals can be extremely helpful
 - 6.3.4.1. Think about whether or not your arrangement is conducive to sectionals
 - 6.3.4.2. Careful with having too many parts, can make sectionals really hard
 - 6.3.4.3. Know your section leaders
 - 6.3.5. When the group trusts you to guide them, it becomes easier for them to see how your rehearsal techniques are helping everyone improve individually and as a group.
- 6.4. “The hardest thing about being a Music Director is learning your own part.” - Me
- 7. Can't Feel My Face (Rehearsal Mark B)
 - 7.1. Problems:
 - 7.1.1. Tuning major 2nds in multiple contexts
 - 7.1.2. Both voices moving in the same direction
 - 7.1.3. Voices in unison splitting
 - 7.1.4. Split voices becoming unison
 - 7.1.5. Blending deliberately bright vowels
 - 7.1.6. Tuning 'Nah's (The 'n' sound is out of tune)
 - 7.1.7. T1s are flat AGAIN
 - 7.2. Additional Constraint: Feel like a trap drop
 - 7.2.1. Subverts the idea of a “half time” section being loud
 - 7.2.2. Tastefully remix the song, just how it could happen in any trap remix
 - 7.2.3. We just got a really good VP, showcase him
 - 7.2.4. Elaborate upon the harmonic structure without going too far (no crazy stuff)
 - 7.2.5. There is no inherent value to this musical decision, but there is tons of potential
 - 7.3. Solutions:
 - 7.3.1. T1s supply clear harmonic foundation so T2 and Bari don't go out of tune
 - 7.3.2. T1 part allows staggered breathing, so tenors can control their breath at their own pace
 - 7.3.3. Rhythm is covered by bass and VP so singers can focus on phrasing
 - 7.3.4. Harmony is not significantly different:
 - 7.3.5. Old: VII, VI, i, i
 - 7.3.6. New: iv, VI, i, (basically VI, i)
 - 7.4. Implementation and Execution:
 - 7.4.1. Do familiar warm ups with bright 'ah's
 - 7.4.2. Practice tuning 'nah's on an 'nn' -> 'ah' and back again
 - 7.4.3. Easy to isolate T2 and B parts, tell T1s to sing one of the parts in rehearsal
- 8. Rehearsal language
 - 8.1. We want our group to be a fun and healthy community.



- 8.2. We want to make great music.
- 8.3. How do we have fun while legitimately trying to make great music, whatever that may mean to us?
- 8.4. Please consider the following idea: if we focus on creating positive and professional learning environments, we can foster high morale while constantly increasing our musical potential.
 - 8.4.1. The membership of a collegiate group is generally 4-5 years max.
 - 8.4.2. Since people are constantly joining and leaving, it's hard to keep a steady stream of knowledge.
 - 8.4.3. If learning is a core part of the experience, the veteran members will more naturally teach the newer members about musical concepts and also about the group itself because rehearsals are fundamentally structured around learning.
- 8.5. Please also consider: don't use the word "bad".
 - 8.5.1. Why ever say something was bad during rehearsal if the point of rehearsal is to improve?
 - 8.5.2. We can improve without classifying our learning experiences as "singing badly".
 - 8.5.3. A note for veteran members: everything you say is taken to heart by impressionable newbies. What ideas are we ok with being misunderstood because the newbies have less context for everything?
 - 8.5.4. There's never a reason to say bad when you can just say what your group is going to work on next; it's literally a waste of your breath.
 - 8.5.5. I could make an effort to think of theoretical exceptions, but I still think it's a good idea to always be thinking about and focusing on creating positive experiences and interactions.
 - 8.5.6. People sometimes simply take things personally in situations where you wouldn't; why leave room for those types of miscommunications?
 - 8.5.7. Of course people will take things personally sometimes! This is a part of your college experience which will end at some point; people want to make the most of it and it hurts personally when we feel like your time isn't being used as well as it could be.
 - 8.5.8. We want to foster a "community", and I say "community" instead of "family" because I find that "family" members can end up having implicit expectations of each other based on their own definition of "family". Communities are more lenient, and if everything is explicit, positive and healthy, miscommunications significantly decrease.

