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Reflections on the Choral Art: IT'S FESTIVAL SEASON!!

Did you know.....SCVA sponsors the MOST adjudicated choral festivals in the state of California? Last year over 15,000 student singers participated in 65 SCVA choral festivals, many of them putting their sight-reading skills to the test. Why should you – the director – take your students to a sight-reading festival? To validate all of their (and your) hard work, of course! You know the benefits of your students singing at sight, but what if this sight-reading at festivals is new to you and you're afraid of uncharted waters? Here are some can't-fail tips:

- 1) Study the sight-reading rubric on the SCVA website to see what musical skills are required at each level for the festival.
- 2) Determine where your students align in skill NOW. Determine a reasonable goal by your festival date. How many weeks do you have to prepare? Chose a festival level.
- 3) Map out a week by week sequential skill building plan – singing stepwise, skips on the tonic triad, quarter notes, eighth notes, etc.
- 4) Sight sing every day and give them lots of encouragement and praise for their efforts.

With festival as a goal, you will see them engage in the process - and progress by leaps and bounds!

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” — Mahatma Gandhi

I am a member of a women's group that meets monthly for the purpose of goal setting and personal growth. These are professional women, mothers, educators and entrepreneurs. Two seemingly contradictory themes come up time and time again in our presentations: how to find balance in our busy lives and how to live a life that makes a difference. While these thoughtful women strive to juggle family and work commitments, their deep-down desire is to find a way to make a meaningful impact in their communities - to use their education, skills and passions to make a lasting mark on the things that are most important to them.

As busy music educators, sometimes we can barely find time to both serve our students and spend time with our families. Yet we, too, long to make a mark on our larger choral art. Deep-down we have a need to give back to the community that nurtured our passion for music. Rodger Guerrero, SCVA Past President, wrote a wonderful article in this newsletter last month encouraging all SCVA members to consider running for an SCVA board position this year. What a simple, easy and wonderful way to make your mark - to volunteer with the vibrant community that supports the work you believe in. I invite you to find your greater purpose by serving the community that serves you. Please contact Rodger today and join our board. I guarantee you will find greater rewards than you thought possible.

SCVA at CASMEC

February 15-18th - San Jose Convention Center
Visit Booth 109

Reception for SCVA Membership
February 15th McCormick and Schmick's
8:00-10:00 pm.

Come Join Us!

www.scvachoral.org

Come by and visit our booth at the California All-State Music Educator's Conference! Booth 109

and

Join us for wine and appetizers at McCormick and Schmick's -170 South Market St., San Jose.
8:00-10:00 p.m.



**SCVA Contemporary A Cappella & Vocal Jazz Festival
Friday March 9th, 2018**

Featuring *TheFilharmonic*



Evening performance with the amazing group "*TheFilharmonic*"

Thank you for the enormous response to our 2018 SCVA Vocal Jazz and A Cappella Festival!

WE HAVE REACHED MAXIMUM CAPACITY WITH 6 SCHOOLS ON THE WAIT LIST!

We would love to invite you to come see our headliners "TheFilharmonic" Concert on March 9, 2018

Valencia High School Performing Arts Theater, 7:30pm
27801 N. Dickason Dr.
Valencia, Ca. 91355

TO PURCHASE TICKETS FOR FILHARMONIC, VISIT

WWW.BROWNPAPERTICKETS.COM

Search: SCVA or Filharmonic

Want to see / hear more vocal jazz or a cappella groups? See below!

February 9-11th, 2018 LA A Cappella Festival <http://la-af.com/>

March 2nd and 3rd, 2018 Columbia Vocal Jazz Festival <https://www.gocolumbia.edu/jazz/>

March 9 SCVA A Cappella and Vocal Jazz Festival www.scvachoral.org

March 9-11 Monterey Jazz Festival www.montereyjazzfestival.org/NGJF

March 16-17 Santa Cruz Vocal Jazz Festival <http://scjf.org/>

April 12-14 Oceanside Jazz Festival <https://www.oceansidejazzfestival.com/>

April 14th, 2018 Harmony Sweepstakes A Cappella Festival www.harmony-sweepstakes.com

April 20 Fullerton Jazz Festival <http://jazzfestival.fullcoll.edu/>

April 28 ACSF A Cappella Competition verdugohillschorus.org



2018 – 2020 SCVA Executive Board Elections

Rodger Guerrero, SCVA Past President

Advocate (noun): from Latin *advocatus*, “one summoned [to give evidence];” derives from Latin *advocāre*, “to call or summon to;”
1. A person who argues for a cause; supporter or defender;
2. A person who pleads in another’s behalf; an intercessor.

We are all choral advocates summoned “to give evidence” in a multi-tiered manner. Every child deserves a chance to sing. We must continually communicate to all around us that choral music participation benefits are boundless and significant. When our voices seem individually insignificant, we must leap aboard the advocacy train of organizations that effectively plead on our behalf. As the only California choral organization ***dedicated to the advancement of vocal music at all grade levels in the schools of Southern California***, SCVA is certainly an effectual advocacy organization.

SCVA sponsors a multitude of activities that benefit SoCal school choral directors and singers. These activities are planned and coordinated by ***volunteers*** who give so much time and energy to the choral music cause. My final act as SCVA Past President is to present a list of proposed officers for the 2018-2020 term. The list must be approved by the current Board at the end of April and voted upon by you – the SCVA membership – in early May. As choral music advocates, all of us should want to volunteer to become members of the SCVA Executive Board. ***All current SCVA members are, in fact, eligible.*** Those who are sincerely interested should contact me for more information. After fourteen years of service, I understand well what each office requires. The names, bios, and pictures of those who decide to run for an office will be placed on the May 2018 ballot.

Others must see us to believe us. We must all become strong ***choral music “activocates.”*** Choral music advocacy cannot succeed without a ***collective commitment to active and visible participation in the choral organizations that acutely benefit all of us.*** There is no finer choral music advocacy organization than SCVA, and there is no finer group of advocates than the SCVA Executive Board.

Junior High/Middle School/Ninth Grade Honor Choir

Marcelo Martínez, VP-JH/MS/9th Grade Honor Choir

By the time you read this, auditions will be over and the Honor Choir selection will have been made. Congratulations to all students selected and their teachers. Thank you to everyone who encouraged their students to audition and for teaching your students the important skills they need. Students will be receiving their music soon so they may begin preparing for the regional rehearsal in March.

Dr. Angel Vázquez-Ramos is excited to work with your students and has already chosen the repertoire for this year’s Honor Choir. As in other years, we will also feature a guest choir before the main event. Christopher Luthi, staff accompanist at Fullerton College, will again be the accompanist for the Honor Choir.

Regional Rehearsal will be Saturday, March 27, 2018 at Mesa Robles MS in Hacienda Heights from 9:00am-1:00pm. The Final Rehearsal and Concert will be Saturday, April 21, 2018 at Portola HS.





SCVA Member, 4 Years

Ariel May

Ariel May is in her fourth year as Director of Vocal Music at Canyon High School in Anaheim Hills, where she teaches five choirs.

She was recently featured in a special on KPCC about inclusiveness in the classroom. To read and hear more, visit bit.ly/safechoir.

**MEMBER
SPOTLIGHT**

What are one or two things you do to create a safe and inclusive environment for all of your students?

I am intentional about the language I use so that students don't feel excluded or that unnecessary expectations are put on them, especially with regard to political and religious views, gender expression, and sexuality. I also try to have a dialogue with students about how the program can be more inclusive. My students are some of my greatest teachers!

What is one thing you've learned in your own classroom which wasn't necessarily taught as part of your degree?

I am continuing to learn how to create a classroom environment that is more inclusive for LGBTQ+ students. This is something that I didn't learn much about while in school. The needs of my students have helped me adopt different practices, like referring to the formerly titled "Women's Choir" as Treble Clef and adding more concert attire options so that students feel welcome and comfortable, regardless of their gender.

What is one thing you do to prepare your choirs for Festivals?

After memorizing, we go back into the text and delve more deeply into the meaning of each song. Students share their personal relationship with the text and I almost always find that the song takes on a deeper significance. This also reduces festival anxiety because students shift their focus from getting that Superior to the art of the music; it brings us back to why we do what we do as a choir!

Give a shout out to a Choir colleague who inspires you.

Melva Morrison, my second mother and beloved high school director. She poured herself into her students and gave me numerous opportunities that paved the way for me as a musician. She is super woman!

How to Prepare for Festival – Practicality and Creativity

Melva Morrison, VP Festivals

Second semester is upon us – festivals are coming – have you prepared your choirs for significant performance moments?

On the practical side (an area that many of us sometimes let slip- yours truly included!):

School calendar (including testing schedule) researched; festivals registered for; payment secured; BUSES ordered (attending entire festival is expectation) allowing plenty of time for travel, restroom use, warm-ups; accompanist nailed down; music for two adjudicators (original – not copies); recording device ready; administration aware of significance of festival; and choir members/parents notified.

On the creative side (lots more fun!):

LITERATURE – (most significant decisions we make!) – consider using one or more pieces you performed in the fall to aid in preparation; variety is essential – period, style, tempo, language, accompanied or not, text, sacred/secular. etc. (save pop/musical theatre for other occasions); sing in different venues – an exchange with another choir, local church, outside under cement overhang, etc.; rehearse in different set-ups and practice stage left/right/other entrance; discuss the joy of hearing different choirs/different levels/different approaches; rehearse pieces in the order you plan to perform them altering your tempi to prepare for new situations; use your brief warm-up time on stage by singing a bit of each piece in the new acoustic in preset standing arrangements (rather than singing "warm-ups"); open your own heart/mind towards other choirs/directors supporting them as well as your own. Happy singing!



STUDENT LEADERSHIP IN THE CHOIR CLASSROOM

Patty Breitag, VP – Show Choir

The Choral Educator wears many hats in the choir classroom. In addition to teaching our students to respect the art of choral music and to learn the correct techniques to achieve our individual concept of choral tone, to understanding balance of parts, tone color and vowel unification – through our guidance, we also help students acquire confidence, self-esteem, work ethic, team spirit and develop leadership qualities. We are the ultimate classroom!

Through our guidance, students can become mentors by taking on responsibilities that include holding and leading sectional rehearsals, sharing singing experiences, sitting and singing next to another student who may not have the same singing experience or is still learning the basic skills, or leading dance rehearsals with the guidance of a staff choreographer. Student leadership skills can be learned through our rehearsals.

These concepts apply to show choir as well. A successful show choir program will have student leaders with specific skills to step up to be a positive influence in rehearsals and during competitions. These student leaders are usually veteran choristers with at least two years of show choir experience. They can be elected by students or selected by educators as section leader, dance captain or costume assistant (to name a few). There are many leadership roles in which a student can contribute.

My choral program has always had a student led choir council that meets with me regularly to discuss fundraising ideas, program ideas, to find bonding activities and to promote a positive, inclusive singing classroom. One year we called the year, “The Year of Positivity”. Our student leaders would focus on treating all students with respect by taking the extra time to help with new singers, to hold sectional rehearsals, to listen to grievances and to work one-on-one with students who needed extra help. In the classroom, at extra rehearsals, on the bus, at dance rehearsals, at competitions and festivals, these student leaders helped students keep on task and brought attitudes and ideas that were centered around creating a positive attitude, which then created an environment of unity, support and team spirit. A group with strong student leadership that works together well creates that positive, safe environment and work ethic that will result in achieving excellence in performance. Encourage student leadership in your choir classroom and the result will be extraordinary!

The 2018 SCVA Show Choir Spectacular is May 5, 2018 at Diamond Bar High School. The Diamond Bar High School Women’s Show Choir, “Solitaire” is looking forward to hosting your school at this annual competition. You can apply on the SCVA Website and pay through PayPal or send a school check to register.

French - It's not as hard as it seems! or French Diction for Dummies

Matthew Netto – VP High School Honor Choirs

Often choral directors are wary of approaching French choral literature solely due to the linguistic problems associated with pronouncing the French language. This won't solve all the complexities and exceptions of the language but it can be a reasonable starting point. Additionally, I will recommend a few SATB pieces you might try with a high school choir so you can "test-drive" your new found skills.

Though French vowels can be approached similarly to Latin or Italian, the French language contains mixed and nasal vowels. The "mix" is of the tongue (inside the mouth) and the lip (outside the mouth) positions. These vowels are difficult to produce because they feel mismatched. The letters "n" and "m" trigger the nasal vowels. The chart below provides some practical instructions for you to give to your students in rehearsal.

Vowel	IPA	Example Word(s)	Instructions	Notes
a	[ɑ]	La, voilà	Like the vowel in the word bought	
a	[a] (bright a)	Ami, âme	Say the vowel in "at" with a British accent	
ai or é	[e]	J'ai, était, dirai	Closed e sound like saying bay but stopping halfway through before the glide [j]	
au, eau	[o]	Beau, l'eau	Like the o in low	
en, em, an, am	[ɑ̃]	Jean	Say oh, but do it through the nose	Nasal vowel
e	[ɛ]	tête	When it is one syllable, say [tɛt], if two syllables say [tɛtø]. See notes on the French schwa	Exception: femme is [famø]
-e	[ø] French schwa (unaccented mixed vowel) Diction books use [ə]	De, me, te, le, se	Say [o] with the lips and say [ɛ] inside the mouth. Ask your students to say the [ɛ] vowel and freeze the inside of the mouth, then while frozen, move their lips to [o] and say [ɛ] again.	The word femme could be pronounced [fam] or [famø] depending on the number of notes.
eu	[œ] accented mixed vowel	Bleu, professeur	Say [ɔ] with the lips and say [e] inside the mouth. See the instructions above using the new vowels.	
in, im	[ɛ̃]	imprinter	Say ahh, like at the doctor, but through the nose	Nasal vowel
i	[i]	fille	Like the vowel in the word bee	
oi	[wa]	Roi, toi, bois, vois	Like the Wa in Washington	
o	[o] or [ɔ]	Rose, morte	Just like Italian vowels	When in doubt use [ɔ]
on, om	[ɔ̃]	Comblé, ombre	Lips make an [u] while saying [ɑ] nasally	Nasal Vowel
ou	[u]	Trou, coup, vous	Like the English vowel in the word who	
u	[y]	Tu, ennui,	Say [u] with the lips and say [i] inside the mouth. See the procedure under schwa	This is a very closed vowel. Trumpet the lips to produce.
un, um	[œ̃]	Un, parfum	Say "an" nasally without closing to the n	Nasal Vowel

Consonants (these are general guidelines and there are exceptions)

- Drop final consonants from the pronunciation. Examples: 1. pas = [pa] 2. attentat = [atɑ̃ta] 3. Viens = [vjɛ̃] 4. Parlent = [parl] 5. Voyere = [vwɔjɛ] 6. Dirait = [dire]
- When singing, make the r flipped instead of in the throat. It's easier and native French singers do this too.
- French treats the double l as a [j] glide. Example: fille = [fijø] grenouille = [grønujø]
- Do not pronounce the "n" or "m" after nasal vowels. Example: 1. entrer = [ɑ̃tre] not [ɑ̃ntre] 2. Sont = [sɔ̃]
- Pronounce the "n" or "m" when the nasal has a double consonant. Example: recommande = [røkɔ̃mɑ̃dø]
- The final e hardens final consonants. Ex. 1. petit = [pøti] vs. petite = [pøtit]

Resources And Repertoire

- Great Article: <https://www.thoughtco.com/understanding-the-french-language-using-ipa-4080307>
- "Mon Coeur se recommande a vous" by Orlando Di Lasso on CPDL
- "Je ne l'ose dire" by Pierre Certon on CPDL
- Matt Netto matthew_netto@jusd.k12.ca.us feel free to ask me anything about French Diction.

Southern California Vocal Association

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IMPORTANT DATES & DEADLINES

Diva Day	February 3, 2018
Vocal Solo/Small Ensemble Auditions	February 3, 2018
SCVA Reception at CASMEC	February 15, 2018
SCVA Exhibitor's Booth at CASMEC	February 15-17, 2018
California All-State Honor Choirs at CASMEC	February 15-17, 2018
Vocal Solo/Small Ensemble Auditions	February 17, 2018
Festival Application Deadline	March 1, 2018
CMEA State Choral Festival	March 8, 2018
Vocal Jazz & A Cappella Festival/Clinic	March 9, 2018
Show Choir Spectacular	May 5, 2018