



# The Orange Spiel

News Of The Jacksonville Big O Chapter



<http://www.BigOrangeChorus.com>



Volume 42 Issue 2

February 2022

We meet at 7:00 most Thursdays at Shepherd of the Woods Lutheran, 7860 Southside Blvd, Jacksonville, FL  
Guests always welcome Call 355-SING No Experience Necessary

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## KEEPING UP ON YOUR YARD WORK

by Brody MacDonald  
from choirbites.com

**P**icture Spring. Everything turns green, and then the green things turn shaggy. New growth needs cut and trimmed to make one's lawn pleasing to the eye.

Singing is like lawn work. We want some things to grow and prosper: tone, tuning, phrasing, musicality, etc. We want some things pulled and/or killed, like weeds in the lawn: bad vocal habits of all kinds. And so we find two things are true:

- 1) The best way to prevent weeds from springing up around your yard is to have such healthy, lush, thick grass that weeds are effectively choked out. Great technique, musicianship, and culture will all keep "the weeds" at bay in your choir.
- 2) Once we have grown a thick, healthy lawn, it will need cut to look nice. This is how we make music better: we do more, take more action, make more mistakes in order to get growth. Then we trim off the rough edges to reveal something uniform and beautiful.

So the lawn looks great! Then what? Grass always gets longer. Edging along the sidewalk always creeps back towards overgrowth. Just because the lawn was mowed, it doesn't stay mowed.

No matter how well you prepare your music, it is never done. It requires constant maintenance. Notes that were once solid will eventually slip away with neglect. Chords that used to ring the rafters will dull if not regularly polished. My singers are in grades 7-12, and they suffer from delusional thoughts like "I got it," and "didn't we already do this?" They see songs as being "checked off the list" as if once they reach a performance-ready state, they will always be in such. They might work hard on a song they don't know, but once that is "done" they turn their attention solely to the next song that is not "done." In the meantime, the "learned" material is now growing shaggier by the day.

Well-prepared music must be maintained. In order to best capitalize on our HARD WORK, we must remember to keep up on our YARD WORK.

# WANTED!!

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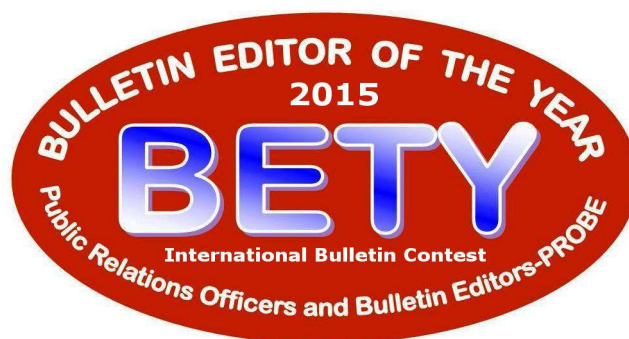
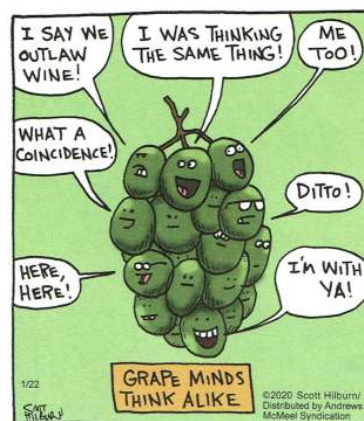
## EDITORIAL

Because of too few registrations, the Sunshine District Spring Convention has been cancelled. We do, however, have Singing Valentines coming soon, also we would like to do a Spring Show, and there is always preparation for the Sunshine District Fall Convention. Lots to do.

Let's see if we can get more people interested in coming to our rehearsals. Ask anyone you know who likes to sing. Invite friends, acquaintances, and even strangers. Singing is fun. Singing well is even better. Performing in public shares that fun with lots of people. Everybody wins.

We have some positions (both board and committee) that need filling. If you can help, as a leader or a helper, please see Jason.

Each and every man, improving, just a little, each and every day, will result in huge advances for the chorus.



## TIPS FOR PRACTICING SINGING: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO VOCAL DEVELOPMENT

by Karyn O'Connor  
from singwise.com

...Continued From Last Month...

### IMPROVING TONE

I have dedicated an entire article to Good Tone Production For Singing, which discusses numerous common technical faults and how to correct them, as well as what good tonal balance (**chiaroscuro timbre**) means. Singing With An Open Throat: Vocal Tract Shaping covers such aspects of tone production as opening up the authentic resonating spaces of the vocal tract and encouraging the presence of both lower and upper harmonic **overtones** in the voice, (characteristic of balanced tone), by assuming ideal positions and shapes of the vocal tract. Correct Breathing For Singing also explains how good breath support and efficient tone are connected.

Many of the same exercises described above and below can be used to develop tone in all areas of the range. My suggestion is to always work on improving the tone of the voice note by note, not attempting to sing a broad range of notes over and over again hoping for different results without making any real changes to technique. Each note of the scale should have an acoustical balance that creates a pleasant, fully resonant sound and ease of production (e.g., no discomfort or feeling of tightness or tension). The key is to always be patient when developing aspects of technique, mastering the entire range one single note at a time.

Readers often e-mail me asking how they can improve their tone in specific areas of their range, and most commonly in their head registers. What I have written in the other articles on the SingWise site should give them a good starting place, but sometimes they hit a plateau and need even more guidance.

Once the most important elements of healthy vocal technique, like breathing and correct postures of the vocal tract, are in place, the singer can then turn his or her attention to further improving head voice tone. If a singer is struggling to sing above his or her secondo passaggio with ease and comfort due to technical errors, for instance, developing tone in this higher register will be impossible. The laryngeal tilt and vowel modification need to be in place in order for the larynx to remain lower and for the vocal folds to stretch and

thin properly, giving rise to higher pitch. Once the student finds singing these pitches comfortable and easy, he or she can then begin the task of resonance tuning or formant tuning, which is the process of balancing out the higher and lower harmonic partials of the voice. The singer will soon begin to recognize when these overtones are present (e.g., the voice will have a fully resonant and vibrant 'ring' to it), and when they are absent (e.g., the tone will sound almost 'one-dimensional', flat, dull, overly dark in colour or overly bright or shrill). Then, with the help of a voice instructor who can offer feedback and tips, the singer can make the subtle adjustments of the vocal tract that are necessary to consistently encourage this tonal balance. Finding this balance every time will become easier with practice.

One exercise that I use for some students to reinforce their upper middle and head registers involves singing staccato then legato. Staccato often helps a singer to find the correct acoustical quality for the pitch that can then be reproduced in legato singing. The exercise below can be sung first in staccato and immediately repeated in legato in the same key. The staccato portion of the exercise can later be removed when the student successfully sings each note with good tone. This exercise involves a variation on a short major scale, making it easy to focus on tone development because of the simple, recognizable pattern and the short intervals.

### IMPROVING TONE EXERCISE 1



### IMPROVING PITCH: EAR TRAINING AND HARMONY

Singing on pitch can be both an easy and a challenging skill to gain, depending on the student and the vocal circumstances. For instance, some students have problems hearing or reproducing pitch accurately, as they may be **tone deaf**. Other singers may experience unwanted pitch deviations only at pivotal registration points (the passaggi) due to their incorrect navigation of the ascending scale (referred to as '**static laryngeal function**') - this is the most common reason for pitch errors that I encounter in my studio. Many singers find that simple, nearly predictable melodies are easy

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**TIPS FOR PRACTICING SINGING**  
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to sing pitch perfectly, but then they struggle with pitch once the melodies become more complicated or require larger intervallic leaps and thus greater technical proficiency. Still others have a fine ear for pitch, but are so self-conscious about singing in front of others that they doubt their abilities to sing on tune and worry that the tone of their voices will sound unpleasant to others, especially in the higher area of the range. (I have dedicated an entire article to tone deafness and other causes of persistent pitch problems that may be worth reading if pitch errors are frequent occurrences for you.)

If a singer struggles with pitch in general, it is best to begin with developing his or her ear by starting out simple. Basic five-note, then one octave, major scales are a good place to start, as most people are familiar with and feel comfortable with the predictability of such patterns. If the singer can manage these scales successfully without deviating from the pitch, then he or she is not truly tone deaf, and developing an ear for pitch will be relatively easy. Eventually, arpeggios and more challenging melodies, as well as scales in minor keys or modes, for example, can be attempted. The student needs to learn to be able to recognize the presence of both discordant and harmonic sounds. It is often easiest to hear pitches on a piano/keyboard or an acoustic guitar.

If 'pitchy-ness' is a significant problem for the singer, that singer should not attempt to teach him or herself how to recognize correct pitch until after it has been confirmed that he or she can indeed hear the differences between pitch perfect notes and sour notes. If a vocal instructor is not available, a friend or family member who has a good ear for music can help the singer by verifying when pitch is correctly matched. If the singer can consistently tell when he or she strays from the desired pitch, the problem is likely more technical in nature, and is most easily remedied by some exercises that will improve how the singer navigates the scale.

I have one very young student who used to consistently go flat around B3 (the B immediately below middle C), and couldn't sing any lower. Her pitch was perfect above this point. This note is not the lowest pitch that even a soprano can sing, so I knew that she should be able to sing a little lower in the scale yet. I soon learned that the problem was that she was not accessing her chest register at all, and was attempting to carry her head voice down as low as possible. Once she began to use her chest voice function, however, her

problems with pitch at the bottom of her scale disappeared, and she gained another half octave in range.

When it comes to **harmony**, there are many different approaches to teaching and learning the skill. I have compiled a list of Recommended Resources for my readers that can be purchased through Amazon. Some of these books and training programs are dedicated to teaching singers how to harmonize. Harmonizing is a useful skill to have, particularly in contemporary genres, whether the singer is singing back-up vocals live or in the studio either for himself or herself or for another singer, or whether he or she likes to add some harmony lines even when singing lead in order to add some drama to the lead melody line. Of course, having an ear for harmony is also necessary in choral settings where the group is divided into four or more different voice parts.

Simple exercises in which a chord is played and the singer attempts to select one of the notes to sing (i.e., the third or the fifth note of the scale) may initially help to develop the ear to hear and come up with basic harmonies. The teacher should sing the melody note or line so that the student has a point of reference and can learn not to get thrown off pitch by hearing other notes of the scale being sung simultaneously.

I've noticed that there seems to be a link between singers who were regularly exposed to multi-part harmony early in life and their ability to harmonize easily as adults, although I have no published scientific research to back up this hypothesis, and this note should not be misconstrued as a prediction of one's ability or inability to learn how to harmonize.

Many of my students sing in choral ensembles at church or school or in community choruses, and this provides a great opportunity for them to learn how to harmonize (if they are not singing the soprano part, which is generally the lead melody of the song). A group setting is pressure free, as no individual voice stands out from the group, and if an individual singer deviates from the harmony line or has difficulty finding it, there are other singers around him or her who can get that person back on track. Every one of my students who sings in a choir has claimed to have become much better at harmonizing with each season spent singing with their groups.

I also encourage my students wishing to learn to harmonize to begin listening to groups, such as barbershop quartets or southern Gospel vocal bands who rely very heavily upon multi-part harmonies for their sound and style. With these groups, harmonies are generally very easy to pick out and easy to fol-

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### TIPS FOR PRACTICING SINGING (continued)

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low. Early pop music from the 1950's and 1960's also made use of a lot of harmony. Even if these styles of music aren't particularly appealing to a given student, they can still make a great educational and practice tool. Also, getting into the habit of singing harmonies to the songs on the radio or one's CDs or I-pod instead of always gravitating toward the lead melody is a really good one to get into because, as with anything in life, we learn and improve most through practice and repetition.

For even more practical tips for correcting pitch inaccuracies and improving overall pitch matching, please read Ear Training For Teachers in my article entitled Tone Deafness (Amusia) and Other Causes of Persistent Pitch Problems.

### DEVELOPING AGILITY, VOCAL FLEXIBILITY AND VELOCITY FACILITY

A more advanced skill for vocal students is gaining agility or flexibility of the voice. Agility enables the singer to execute melodically complicated passages and lines with ease, good tone and control in both the upper and lower extensions of the voice. Agility allows for more interesting embellishments and **melismatic** vocal runs - the singing of a single syllable of text while moving between several different notes in succession. (Although most contemporary genres are more text driven and **syllabic**, where each syllable of text is matched to a single note, in approach and therefore don't require such vocal agility, it is nevertheless a very practical skill to have.)

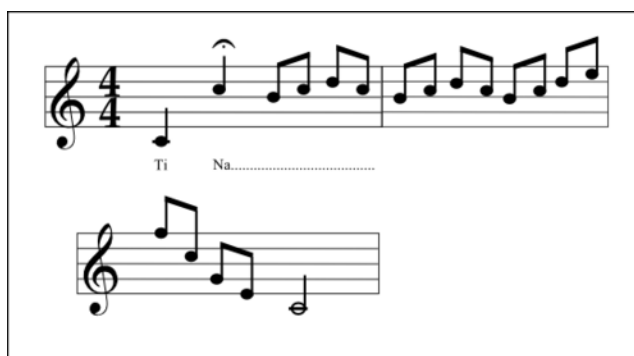
An ability to both sustain and move the voice is acquired through systematic voice training. Agility factors should be introduced relatively early, once a basic control over singing technique and function is obtained. Velocity facility must be acquired in order for **sostenuto** (sustained) singing to become totally free. The mastering of melismatic lines can be accomplished through the vocal gymnastics of advanced technique building exercises.

Start with brief, rapid agility patterns built on scale passages in comfortable low-middle range, first in **staccato** fashion, then **legato**. Agility patterns are freedom inducing in nature. They are intended not solely for voices singing literature that calls for frequent coloratura and fioritura passages, but for voices of every Fach (type) and for singers of all styles. (It should be noted that certain voice types

are naturally more endowed with agility abilities, with lighter voices often having an easier time with agility passages than lower voices with more weight. However, this doesn't preclude singers of other voice types from developing agility.)

The exercise below is particularly useful for developing agility in the upper middle and upper part of the range:

### AGILITY AND FLEXIBILITY EXERCISE 1



Try the combination of Ti-Na, then Ti-No and Ti-Nay. Use the sustained note to establish good tone (e.g., to find the correct "placement" or acoustical balance), singing the note for as long as is necessary, before proceeding to the more rapid part of the pattern. Be sure that each note on the higher part of the exercise is well produced before moving up to the next key.

Another exercise that also develops the singer's ability to smoothly execute (short) intervallic leaps is:

### AGILITY FLEXIBILITY FACILITY EXERCISE 2



The challenges for most students with this exercise include staying on pitch, maintaining smoothness of the legato line and finding consistency of timbre between the registers.

### IMPROVING BREATH SUPPORT AND INCREASING STAMINA

In my article on this site entitled Correct Breathing For Singing, I explain the body's natural way of taking in breath and supporting the tone of the voice. I

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**TIPS FOR PRACTICING SINGING**  
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have also included several basic exercises to help the beginning singer learn to breathe diaphragmatically.

It should be understood that breath management and tone are interrelated. If the singer's tone is unfocused (e.g., 'breathy'), for example, air is lost too quickly due to inadequate closure of the vocal folds. It 'leaks' out between the separated folds instead of facing healthy resistance at the laryngeal level and being used up in a slow, minimal, steady stream. In pressed phonation, air is expelled too rapidly from the lungs in an effort to push apart vocal folds that are too tightly closed. Too much air is used up at the onset of sound in order to set the vocal folds vibrating to begin **phonation** (making sound), leaving the singer with less air for the remainder of the sung phrase. In both cases, excessive amounts of air are used up during the sung phrase, and until these aspects of tone (e.g., vocal fold closure problems) are improved, the singer will continue to lack stamina or endurance.

One very common mistake that many singers make is using up more air than they need for a given vocal task. In an effort to make their voices sound more powerful, they force the air out of their lungs as rapidly as possible. They confuse increased breath usage with improved breath support, and they end up pushing rather than allowing the air to flow out in appropriate levels (amounts) and at an appropriate rate. Doing so may put stress on the vocal folds, will impede resonance and thus natural volume, and will certainly reduce the amount of air available at the end of the vocal phrase. Remember that tone should ride on a steady and minimal stream of breath. It often takes a while for singers to figure out just how much air they truly need for a given vocal exercise or phrase.

Newer and untrained singers also have a tendency to inhale as deeply as they can - this is often referred to as '**tanking up**' for a vocal task - even for a short exercise or phrase, then push out as much air as they can while singing the phrase because they falsely believe that they need to use up all that air in order for the tone to be "supported" well. Then, they inhale again as deeply as they can for the next short phrase. Within a few breaths, they find themselves feeling lightheaded or dizzy because their poor breath management has led to hyperventilation. I sometimes have to remind my students that they can either breathe less deeply for short phrases, or

choose not to take a breath between two short phrases. Having less air in the lungs initially - just enough to sing the phrase comfortably and not feel as though they are going to run out of breath at the end - usually prevents them from trying to push all the air out of their lungs as fast as they can. Pushing out more breath does not create more vocal power. Instead, it leads to strain and a forced sound, as well as less endurance - you'll always run out of air too quickly. Learn not to waste your air, and use correct vocal posturing to obtain optimal resonance.

For students who are struggling to use their breath correctly, I will sometimes have them go home and practice sustaining a note - a comfortable pitch for each individual - at a full volume (not shouting, though) for as long as they can. I warn them not to allow themselves to get to the point where they feel as though there is absolutely no air left in reserve because they will inevitably feel the desperate need to inhale loudly and quickly at the end of the sustained note - to gasp for air - which means that they are not learning to control their breathing well enough, as the whole body will often tense up while taking the next breath. Oftentimes, this exercise will help the singers stop pushing air out faster than is necessary, and they quickly learn to use their air more sparingly. Above all, they learn that using a lot of air and breath pressure is not conducive to maintaining a steady stream of tone - in fact, usually the opposite result occurs when they are forcing, as the tone is shaky or unsteady, the volume is inconsistent and the vibrato rate is unhealthy and variable. They usually return the next week feeling very encouraged by their findings and improved breath management skills.

In general, any exercise that requires either an extended series of notes to be sung on a single breath or long sustained notes (or both in combination) can help to develop breath support and improve the singer's ability to sing for longer on a single breath, so long as good (efficient and clear) tone is in place. A long exercise pattern, such as Blending the Registers Exercise 6, can be gradually slowed down over time so that the singer can be increasingly challenged to use his or her breath more and more efficiently. As the muscles involved in breath support become stronger, the singer will find that he or she is able to sing these exercises more easily, as well as sustain notes for longer and sing longer vocal phrases without the need for taking a breath mid-phrase.

The following exercise is intended to train the singer in appoggio technique, which is designed to slow the

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### TIPS FOR PRACTICING SINGING (continued)

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rise of the diaphragm so that air is retained in the lungs for longer and used up more slowly. The entire exercise should be sung on a single breath. With each section of the exercise, the muscles that support inhalation should be encouraged to return to their initial positions, with the upper abdomen and lower ribs expanded as much as they were at the time of inhalation, thus preventing the premature rise of the diaphragm, as well as strengthening the muscles. The mezzo-staccato (dotted) notes should be sung with no breath taken in either before or afterwards, but with the abdominal muscles moving outward as though inhalation is occurring during them. Different vowels should also be tried. Remember that the clearer the tone of the voice and the slower the rise of the diaphragm, the more breath will be available to sing the entire exercise. If you run out of breath at some point during the exercise, either speed up the tempo of the exercise a little so that you are able complete it on a single breath or sing as far into the exercise as you can, then take a very small, quick breath between notes so that you can finish the pattern. In time, your stamina will improve, and the length of the exercise will no longer seem so daunting.

### BREATH SUPPORT AND STAMINA (APPOGGIO TECHNIQUE) EXERCISE 1



### ENCOURAGING HEALTHY VIBRATO

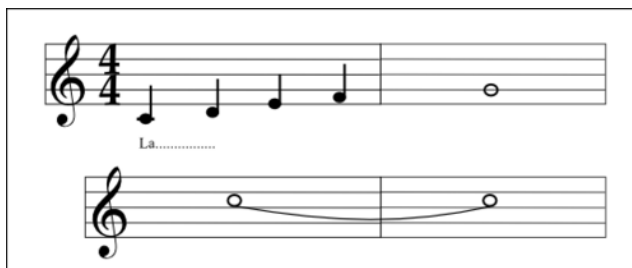
I have written an entire article on the topic of vibrato and how to develop it naturally, also published on this website. As I explain in that article, I don't directly teach vibrato to my students because it often places unnecessary pressure on them to produce one, often by artificial and unhealthy means, and prefer instead to allow their vibratos to develop naturally through good technique (e.g. balanced tone, with all the overtones of the voice present, good breath support, and vocal freedom).

With that being said, however, the presence of vibrato in the voice can be encouraged through exercises that require the student to sustain a note on a single vowel sound for a measure or two. These

exercises encourage correct, efficient breath management, which is also necessary for the vibrato rate to be optimal.

One such exercise is:

### VIBRATO EXERCISE 1



In this multi-purpose exercise, the first five notes are sung **legato** (smoothly), the fifth note should be held for (nearly) a full measure. There should then be a slide (**portamento**) up to the octave note, which should be sustained for two full measures, or longer if the singer feels ambitious. The vibrato should be encouraged to be present at the start of the sustained note, rather than deferred until the end of it, as is customarily done in contemporary styles of singing.

Another exercise involves sustaining the note earlier in the exercise instead of at the end:

### VIBRATO EXERCISE 2



As with all of the exercises that I have suggested in this article, the singer should try using different vowels and vowel-consonant combinations in order to achieve a more complete and text-applicable vocal training that more closely matches the language requirements of song text.

Vibrato is generally easier to develop in the upper middle and upper range due to the increase in breath support required, as well as the increased vocal fold tension and the decreased amount of mass involved in the vocal fold vibratory cycle. However, a singer should not neglect developing a natural, healthy shimmer in the voice in the lower part of his or her range.

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**TIPS FOR PRACTICING SINGING**  
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The key is to not attempt to induce, force or fake vibrato, because doing so may be unhealthy, and will likely create a vibrato that doesn't sound natural. All other elements of technique, from efficient breath management to balanced tone, are the building blocks to vibrato and can't be neglected or bypassed.

**APPLYING VOCAL TECHNIQUE TO SONGS**

The value of technique training is often only fully realized when a singer begins to apply his or her new vocal skills to songs. The success of lessons is also gauged by how well a singer can execute the songs in his or her repertoire. Singing isn't about scales and arpeggios, which are merely practice tools for developing technical abilities that will enable a singer to sing songs of his or her choosing with greater skill and artistry, and scales and arpeggios should not be taught without also explaining what skills they are useful for building and how to apply them to repertoire.

When I'm working through songs with my students, I will spend most of our time focusing on how technique is being applied to the piece. (Since I am not a vocal coach, I don't tend to spend very much time offering guidance in how to interpret lyrics, or how to emote or gesture or arrange the music.) Students might come in complaining about particular areas of a song that they are struggling with, and I will diagnose the problem and help them develop the technique necessary to master those sections of the song. These problems are most often related to registration, pitch, breath management and tone. If necessary, we will break from singing the song and try an exercise that will help to further develop that particular technical skill.

When I personally prepare for a concert or gig, I work through each song, line-by-line, note-by-note, rather than singing the entire song from beginning to end, hoping that any problem areas will somehow be magically erased through global repetition. I want every single note to sound perfect, and every line to be flawless, and this requires breaking down the song into its smallest parts. Once those sections have been mastered individually, the entire song can then be flawlessly executed, and I'll be freer to focus on expressing the emotion behind the lyric and music and connecting with the audience when I'm performing it. It's tough

for most singers to suppress their desire to sing through an entire song just for the love of singing and, instead, spend much of their initial practice time working through the tedious elements of technique and correcting the minor errors in their execution, but this kind of nitpicking and perfectionism are always worth the time and the effort in the end, when highly skilled artistry shines through in their performances.

During lessons, there are many bad or unproductive vocal habits that tend to appear for the first time when a vocalist is singing a song. For example, many singers use overly nasally tones when they are singing repertoire, even when they don't apply the same nasality to their vocal exercises. Oftentimes, singers have a tendency to nasalize non-nasal vowels. Also, many students of voice tend to forget their breathing technique when they begin to sing songs, or they struggle to find places in a song where they can inconspicuously take quick breaths. These are the kinds of technical aspects of singing that I help a singer work through and apply correctly to their repertoire.

Another common question that my students come to me with pertains to vocal registration choices. Sometimes, singers don't know if they should be singing in chest voice or middle voice in a certain section, especially in those areas of the range where either choice may be appropriate. In many cases, I help these students with their blending so that registration isn't an 'either or' or a 'black and white' issue, but a tonally 'grey' area in which they can incorporate a blended or mixed sounding tone. Sometimes, the **tessitura** of the song - the pitch area in which much of the song's melody is sung - is simply not suited to a singer's particular voice type or range, and the key of the song needs to be either raised or lowered. Since I know each of my student's voices very well, I can help them make the best choices in these areas.

It is important for vocal students to select songs that are a good match for their current vocal abilities. The songs should be challenging enough that they will need to work a little bit at it, (though not for so long that they become bored), and will feel a sense of accomplishment when it comes together, but not so difficult that they won't be able to sing it and become frustrated or discouraged. (I have written an article entitled *Selecting the Right Songs For Your Voice* that contains more practical tips on how to choose a suitable song.)

**TRACKING PROGRESS**

Taking note of how much one is improving (or not) is a good way for a singer to evaluate the quality of his or her voice lessons or practice program.

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**TIPS FOR PRACTICING SINGING**  
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One valuable tool for tracking one's progress is a sound recording. Some singers will bring in a cassette tape or CD to an early voice lesson to record how they sing the vocal exercises before they have had any training, and then periodically record their lessons. Listening back to earlier recordings and comparing them to later recordings often reveals marked improvements that isn't always taken note of when progress tends to occur slowly but steadily, rather than dramatically. (It's like how a parent doesn't really notice how much his or her child is growing day by day, but when a friend or family member sees that same child after a period of absence, the growth is definitely more noticeable or obvious.)

Another way of using a sound recording to track progress is to select a favourite song and record yourself singing it onto your computer. A few months into your voice training, re-record the same song and take note of how much you have improved. In yet another few months, re-record it again. Having objective 'proof' of your progress is encouraging, and will inspire you to continue learning and developing as a singer. It will also help you to pinpoint the specific areas of improvement as well as which areas of your technique still need attention.

Hearing positive feedback from others is also helpful. For instance, it is one thing for a singer to believe that he or she has improved over time and with practice and lessons, or for a voice teacher to tell that student the areas in which progress is most notable. It's another thing, however, for family members or even fans to comment on the differences that they hear. (As a teacher, it's even encouraging for me to hear parents of my younger students tell me that they have begun to hear a significant difference in their children's voices. I don't usually solicit the feedback, but it is certainly always welcome and wonderful to receive.)

When actively seeking feedback from a friend or family member, it is important to find someone who will be honest (e.g., not overly flattering simply so as not to hurt your feelings or discourage you) in his or her assessment of your vocal skills, but also someone who will not be overly harsh and critical and who understands that your singing voice is still a work in progress. Also, you must be prepared to humbly hear and graciously accept

whatever that person says about your voice. If that person genuinely cares about you, he or she will only want to help you reach your singing goals.

Keeping a training journal is also a good way of keeping track of progress, since we don't always remember the details about such things as our range or our specific limitations when we first started out singing. Early on in training, or even before starting lessons, a singer can write down, for example, his or her uppermost and bottommost notes. (If the singer doesn't have knowledge of music or play an instrument, the teacher can tell that student what those notes are.) A few weeks or months into vocal training, the singer can again make a record of his or her highest and lowest pitches, then take note of how much his or her range has increased. Specific notes about registration challenges, breath management problems and other technical issues can also be taken. Then the singer can make an entry whenever there has been a breakthrough in one of those areas, and see how far he or she has come vocally.

A diligent student might even jot down some notes during or after every lesson. These notes might include specific comments or critiques made by the instructor, new information about the scientific aspect of the vocal instrument that might have been explained, specific areas of improvement or areas that were problematic, voice function notes (e.g., vocal health related), a new exercise that was taught, its purpose and specifically how to practice it at home (e.g., the notes or pattern), any vocal health tips, products or resources that might have been recommended by the instructor, dates for upcoming recitals or auditions, etc.. During the week between lessons, a student might record how practice or rehearsal times went, or jot down the titles of songs that he or she might like to begin working on with his or her teacher during lessons.



## A PRACTICE STRATEGY THAT COULD POTENTIALLY BE TWICE AS EFFECTIVE AS REGULAR PRACTICE?

by Dr Noah Kagyama  
from [bulletproofmusician.com](http://bulletproofmusician.com)

I'm not sure where I got this idea, but for most of my life, I assumed that practice = repetition. And that the more "perfect" repetitions I could do, whether that meant playing slowly, with rhythms, or with a metronome or tuner, the better I'd play.

I quietly (and sometimes not so quietly) resented this kind of practicing, because it all felt like a chore. Like having to do a bunch of the same type of math problems over and over again.

Fortunately, research in the last few decades tells us that practice doesn't have to look like this. Or more accurately, that practicing *shouldn't* look like this. In that simply maximizing the numbers of repetitions we can fit into a given period of time doesn't make for better learning. And that effective practice is much more challenging (in a good way) and engaging than regular ol' repetition-based practice.

For instance, there's a study that came out a few years ago (Wymbs et al., 2016) which got some attention<sup>1</sup> because it suggested that we may be able to *double* our rate of learning.

At first glance, it's one of those things that sounds way too good to be true. But on the other hand, wouldn't it be nice if there really was a way?

### Learning how to SVIPT

86 participants, split into three groups, were trained in a "sequential visuomotor isometric pinch task" or SVIPT.

Yeah, I know that sounds pretty technical, but basically it just entailed learning how to use a little doodad that controls the placement of a cursor on a computer screen based on how hard you squeeze it (a.k.a. the most annoying mouse in the world).

Everyone got 120 practice attempts, and then left the lab.

### Training session #2

Six hours later, two of the groups came back to the lab for a second training session (the third group was the control group, so they didn't have a second

training session).

Oh, and why six hours? Well, in much the way that it takes jello a few hours to "set," our brain needs a few hours to "consolidate" our new experience into long-term memory. They wanted to let the memory stabilize before bringing them back for more training. You'll see why in a moment.

Anyhow, both groups were given 15 practice attempts to get reacquainted with the squeezey mouse thing, and then resumed with their training.

The second training session was much like the first one, in that both groups practiced the same skill for another 120 trials. However, while Group 1's controller remained the same, Group 2's controller was modified slightly. Specifically, the amount of pressure that was needed to move the cursor kept changing from one trial to the next. Not enough for them to notice, but enough to force them to constantly make subtle adjustments in order to maintain a high level of speed and accuracy. It would be like if the amount of force you needed to turn the steering wheel in your car changed every time you made a turn (a.k.a. the most annoying car in the world).

### Who improved the most?

The next day, all three groups came back to the lab for a testing session, to see which group improved the most from the first session to the last.

The big winner was Group 2 – the group which had to make continuous subtle adjustments in the second training session. Their performance improved nearly *twice* as much as Group 1 (the group which simply repeated the same exact task again in their second training session)!

Furthermore, there was *no significant difference in improvement* between Group 1 and the control group from the first training session to the test. It's almost as if they might as well not have bothered to practice again. Criminy!

### Why...?

So why did Group 2 improve so much more than Group 1?

Was it simply because they had to practice the task with more variability thrown in?

Nope. The researchers had another group go through the same training program but made them do the variable practice in their first training session instead of

(Continued on page 11)

## A PRACTICE STRATEGY THAT COULD (continued)

(Continued from page 10)

the second. Alas, it didn't have the same effect. Group 2 – the group which did variable practice in the second training session – still improved more.

They even tried putting a group through variable practice in *both* training sessions. Group 2 still came out ahead.

It seems that there is something about learning a skill, waiting for it to stabilize, and then coming back to it for more practice but with a slightly modified set of parameters that strengthens the learning of the original skill.

The authors explain that this has to do with how memories are formed and edited. A set of processes called consolidation and reconsolidation.

### Consolidation and reconsolidation

The gist is that when new skills are learned, the memory is initially pretty fragile and takes a few hours to “set” (a process known as consolidation).

But these memories are not necessarily set in stone. Like opening a Word document that has been sitting in some forgotten corner of your hard drive, whenever we retrieve a memory, it is temporarily susceptible to being edited, modified, or in the case of this study – strengthened – before it “sets” once again but in a slightly different way (i.e. reconsolidation).

So what does this all mean for us?

### Takeaways

There are a number of interesting takeaways from this study, but here are the top 3.

#### 1. Reconsolidation

It appears that we have the ability to boost our learning if we a) wait for the new skill to consolidate a bit first, then b) return to the skill and try to achieve the same (or higher) level of performance, but force ourselves to make adjustments by using a different bow, different mallets, piano with lighter/heavier touch, etc. Something that makes the task slightly more challenging and forces us to explore a wider range of the possible motor

movements available to us.

#### 2. Flexibility

One important side note: there were individual differences in how beneficial the variable practice was in strengthening learning. The folks who benefited most from this training were the ones who were the best at making adjustments and maintaining a high level of accuracy despite the fluctuations in grip pressure required to control the cursor. Where rather than doggedly sticking with the same old way of squeezing the cursor controller, they explored new strategies in order to maintain their level of performance. Which reminds me a bit of this study on how errors can sometimes enhance learning.

#### 3. Established skills vs. new skills?

Before we get too excited and start making plans to halve our practice time, it's important to note that this study looked at our ability to strengthen a new skill by leveraging the reconsolidation process. It's not clear how well (or if) this would work on skills that are already more well-ingrained. And I don't know that you can expect to double your progress day in and day out. But for new music or skills, this certainly sounds like a strategy worth experimenting with!





## IMPROVE YOUR VOICE BETWEEN REHEARSALS

by Steve Kovach  
from Harmonizer

Many of the men in my choruses have asked me what they can do between rehearsals to keep their voices nimble and warm. The easy answer to that question is, well ... sing! But there are other techniques that will help you not only pick up where you left off at the last rehearsal but also actually improve between rehearsals. The best part is that you don't need to schedule time for these - you can do most of them while driving your car.

Sing with a recording of your weekly rehearsal throughout the week

This is the best tool for improvement and learning because it conditions both your voice and your mind. Don't record just the singing portion of the meeting; record your directors' comments between songs. Consider this plan:

- Record a repertoire song during a rehearsal
- Throughout the week, listen to that recording and analyze what you hear from your own voice
- Listen to what the director has to say regarding the improvement of that song and how you're singing it
- Improve upon what you recorded by implementing your director's suggestions while singing along with your recording between rehearsals

By the time the next rehearsal rolls around, you've had hours more practice, singing and learning than if you hadn't recorded your rehearsal. You win as a singer and the chorus wins for having your leadership on the risers!

Perform simple vocal exercises

Don't be passive when you do singing exercises, but instead pay attention to the purpose and technique of each exercise. Exercises do far more than warm up or maintain your voice - they train you to use your vocal mechanism properly so that the best techniques eventually become deeply ingrained habits. There are as many vocal exercises as there are men in the Society, but here are a few easy and effective exercises:

- Simple humming. This is my favorite way to keep warm during the week. You can choose the pattern of notes that suits you. Start on perhaps a B b and simply hum up the major scale 1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1, raising the pitch by a half step after each scale.

- Create space while you hum. When you do the above exercise, be sure to provide the space needed for proper tone production. Take in a breath as if you were about to yawn. You should feel the soft palate raise and the tongue lower. This is the space you need for a free and open tone. After taking this "yawn breath," maintain that space as you hum. You should feel an "aw" vowel being produced inside the hum. You'll be surprised at how much more relaxed you'll sing and how much more resonance you'll produce.
- Sing on the "ng" syllable. After taking a "yawn breath," keep the mouth in an "aw" feel and close the back to an "ng." With that syllable in place you can do any number of scales or arpeggios. One of the patterns I like to use is this: 1-3-2-4-3-5-4-2-1, again, raising the pitch by a half step after each scale. On the "ng" syllable, you can also slide (portamento: a smooth slide from one note to another in which notes are not separately discernible) from a low pitch in your range through your break into falsetto and back down. This is a great exercise keep your vocal chords limber and loose. Plus, the "ng" sound will help you feel the sound vibrating or resonating throughout your face and head. As you learn to create that resonance in everything you sing, you will greatly improve your vocal quality and put less strain on your voice.

Not sure if you're doing these exercises correctly? Break out that tape recorder again and record your exercises and listen to what the microphone hears. Chances are, you've heard a lot of great singing—you can be your own coach! If you're not sure how to improve what you hear, ask your section leader or director to listen and evaluate your taped practice session. I'm sure they'd be glad to help!

- Practice proper breathing. The foundation of good vocal production is to stand and breathe properly. The key is to use the diaphragm muscle located just below your rib cage to breathe in and out. While standing, place your hands on your sides at the base of your rib cage. Take in a slow breath by letting your diaphragm expand outward and feel your hands expand outward. (If your hands don't expand naturally with each intake, you are breathing with your chest rather than your diaphragm. With each intake, your upper chest should be relaxed and barely expand at all while the area below your rib cage should both relax and expand considerably. While breathing out, you should feel your hands naturally close back to their beginning position. You are now using your diaphragm properly. You can do this as you sing in your chorus rehearsals as well it's

*(Continued on page 13)*



IMPROVE YOUR VOICE BETWEEN  
(continued)*(Continued from page 12)*

a great check for proper breathing.

- Do “choral sit-ups.” Put a piece of paper on a smooth wall at about eye level. After breathing deeply with the diaphragm, exhale the air as if blowing through a large straw. Blow that column of air right at the paper on the wall. See how long you can keep the paper “stuck” to the wall. Each time you try this exercise, it’s like doing a sit-up specifically for the diaphragm. You’ll feel the burn!

Just sing it

This entire issue could be filled with scales, exercises and warm-ups to follow during the week. Many are good and helpful. At the end of the day, you’ll improve if you simply make the effort to sing—with proper vocal production—between rehearsals. Sing your rep songs. Sing your contest songs. Sing your chorus warm-ups. Most important, record your rehearsal and sing with it during the week. This practice will help you three-fold. It will provide you a starting point—something to sing with. You will hear your progress and recognize what you need to work on. It will make you a stronger, more prepared chorus member. What a great gift for you and your chorus!

Our previous Society President Roger Lewis always said, “Singing is life ...” Well, friends, life happens seven days a week - not just during your weekly rehearsal! Make an attempt to sing all week. You and your chorus will benefit greatly!

HOW DO I PLACE MY VOICE  
CORRECTLY? AND WHAT DOES  
THAT EVEN MEAN?by Chelsea Wilson  
from thebalancedsinger.com

“Placement.” It’s a word singers love to use. I’d say it’s right up there with “breath control” as one of the terms singers use most often!

But what *is* placement? And how do we actually find the “placement” we’re looking for?

Shooting hoops—what leads to good placement?

Let’s compare vocal placement to shooting a basketball. (Go with me on this!)

When an athlete is shooting hoops, you know they’ve made a decent shot if the ball goes into the basket. If the ball misses the hoop, the athlete needs to figure out what they did wrong so they can adjust their next shot for a better result.

The result of a *good* shot is that it lands in the hoop. **But the ball landing in the hoop is just that, a result! The specific act of the ball landing in the hoop is *not* the work of the athlete.** The athlete’s actual work happens right *before* the ball goes through the hoop—it’s when the player is coordinating their wrists, legs, and core to ensure the ball leaves their fingers and goes where they want it.

You can throw the ball and affect whether or not it goes in the basket, but you don’t actually put it (or place it) in the basket! (Unless you’re dunking the ball, but let’s leave that out for the sake of this analogy, since we’re talking about shooting it from a distance.)

Placement is a helpful tool of perception

For us singers, the idea of placement is similar. Talking about placement can be a useful way for singers to remember a feeling or sensation, but it’s even more important to remember the process that led you there.

Chances are, something related to the three systems of singing (breathing, phonation, and resonance) is what’s leading you to feel that a sound is “placed” in a particular spot. This may include certain exercise flows, phrasing choices, vowel shapes, or dynamics that may have resulted in that awesome feeling you experienced on a particular note.

To be clear, it’s the choices you make that affect

*(Continued on page 14)*

## HOW DO I PLACE MY VOICE CORRECTLY (continued)

*(Continued from page 13)*

placement; you don't just choose placement itself. Placement is an effect of the choices you make within your airflow, phonation (how heavy or light), and vowel shapes.

So the next time you feel like a sound is "placed" somewhere that you really like or that feels awesome, remember what the process was that led you there!

Pinpointing this process is a much more effective way to increase the accuracy of your singing rather than crossing your fingers and hoping that you can place your sound in your mask—or your forehead—or your toes!



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Thanks in advance!!

Editor's Note: The latest version of the Amazon app (both android and iOS) now has an option to activate smile in the app, so that you can get the charity donations for purchases made in the app (if you enable it). Open the app and find 'Settings' in the main menu. Tap on 'AmazonSmile' and follow the on-screen instructions to turn on AmazonSmile on your phone.

**FREE YOUR VOICE**

by John Newell, Lead, *Realtime*  
from Let It Out ©2013 Used by permission

The epiglottis is a flap of cartilage that guards the opening to your vocal folds and tracheae (wind pipe). When you swallow it folds down and closes to prevent food or liquid from entering the trachea. (when I refer to the epiglottis, often I mean the entire epilaryngeal tube and not necessarily the epiglottal flap only.)

What has the epiglottis to do with breathing? A great deal. While you cannot feel it, you use it often. Think of how many times a day you swallow and you get an idea of how much you use the epiglottis and its surrounding tissues and muscles. As a result, you have very subtle control over it, so it can also act as a brake or pressure valve for outbound air. It is where you close the trachea to hold your breath underwater. It is where the breath flow gets strained under great pressure when you lift a heavy weight. It is where you croak and growl and it is immediately next to where you clear your throat. When singing it is so important to allow this area to be natural so air can flow unimpeded.,

To find the epiglottal area, hang your jaw down low and swallow a few times with your mouth wide open. Where the tissues touch and rub/close is in the area of the epiglottis. Additionally, hold your breath as if under water. Where the air is prevented from escaping is the area in question.

Notice when you sing high, you might restrict or pressurize the flow of air coming out of you, because your epiglottis is being used as a pressure control valve. Notice when you sing or speak softly, you may tend to reduce the air flow in similar fashion.

The epiglottis has an effect on vocal sound because it is right next to the larynx and the base of the tongue. Any tension in one of these areas will cause tension in the others. Tension reduces resonance. When singers use the epiglottis as a pressure valve, they make it much more difficult to produce a 'ringing' sound with strong overtones. With inexperienced singers, it is very obvious on higher notes. The outward air clearly gets caught in the tube, behind the epiglottis, and is placed under pressure so it cannot flow out naturally or easily.

My approach is to think of the epiglottis as relaxed, loose and natural at all times, so that air can flow in or out through the tube and trachea without impediment. Even when not singing, let it be loose and natural.

...to be continued next month

**FREE SINGING TIPS**

by Yvonne DeBandi  
from [a2z-singing-tips.com](http://a2z-singing-tips.com)

V = Vibrato. Vibrato is a natural or forced fluctuation of a singing tone. Do not concentrate on learning how to sing with vibrato. Instead, concentrate on the basic foundations of singing, breathing and support. When the proper coordination is achieved, vibrato will occur naturally.

**FREE SINGING TIPS**

by Nicole LeGault  
from [a2z-singing-tips.com](http://a2z-singing-tips.com)

V is for Visualization. Many vocal coaches use visualization techniques for the placement and projection of the sound. For one example, if you imagine the sound appearing out of nowhere above and just in front of you, you can aim more accurately with your pitch (no fading, or "dipping" into the note) and from there, project it away from you (pushing with your diaphragm). Project in an outwardly round manner for a fuller sound.

**FREE SINGING TIPS**

by Mick Walsh  
from [a2z-singing-tips.com](http://a2z-singing-tips.com)

V. Vibrato Still on the subject of Sopranos, in relation to vibrato, Tony Soprano would say "forget about it"! Just let vibrato happen of its own accord. If it ain't happening just yet then it will, believe me. It can't not happen as your singing technique improves. Never try to force vibrato it will sound horrible.

**FREE SINGING TIPS**

by Teri Danz  
from [a2z-singing-tips.com](http://a2z-singing-tips.com)

V= Vocal Exercises -- Vocal exercises are critical to maintaining and building your instrument. Do NOT underestimate them. They warm up your vocal chords in ways just singing a song cannot and will not. Lip rolls are a good way to start any warm up routine and can be done on a variety of scales.



## QUARTET CORNER

Our quartets are practicing social distancing or re-grouping.

What is YOUR quartet doing? Don't have one? Find three other guys and start one! Can't find a match? Drop me a line and I'll run a list of guys looking to quartet up here in the bulletin. It's one of those really fun things that you don't fully understand until you've done it.

It's never too early to be thinking about Singing Valentines. Quartets are always needed, officially formed or pickup. It's only a few easy songs. Learning more than one voice part to these songs can help make you easier to fit into a quartet.

## CHAPTER QUARTETS



### On Point (disbanded)

Dillon Tidwell, tenor  
Daniel Pesante, lead  
Timothy Keatley, baritone  
Alex Burney, bass

### Slice!

Terry Ezell, tenor  
Eric Grimes, lead  
Jason Dearing, baritone  
vacant, bass

### No Name Yet

? tenor  
? lead  
? baritone  
? bass



# Big Orange Chorus



## REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

Thu	03 Feb	Shepherd of the Woods
Thu	10 Feb	Shepherd of the Woods
Thu	17 Feb	Shepherd of the Woods
Thu	24 Feb	Shepherd of the Woods
Thu	03 Mar	Shepherd of the Woods
Thu	10 Mar	Shepherd of the Woods
Thu	17 Mar	Shepherd of the Woods
Thu	24 Mar	Shepherd of the Woods
Thu	31 Mar	Shepherd of the Woods

## BIRTHDAYS

Marc Cammer	04 Feb
Les Mower	05 Feb
Phil Warmanen	12 Feb
Tom Frutchey	15 Feb

## PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

Mon	14 Feb	Singing Valentines
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...more to come

## RECENT GUESTS

Chuck Cashin	Jim Akers
Willy Vidmar	Mike Morgan
Dale Pratt	Hudson Pratt
Dan Newsom	Trans Maynard
Asrul Dawson	Bill Caruso
Ethan Erastain	Alex White
Tristan Arthurs	Mark Murillo
Roger Erastaine	Ron Blewett
Jon Greene	Jim Harper
G Lane	Brandon Edwards
Joe McLean	Adom Panshukian
Christian Cornella-Carlson	
Ray Parzik	Michael Reynolds
Ed Fitzgerald	Kyle Batchelder
David Brown	Thomas Barhacs
Pat McCormack	David Brown
Thomas Barhacs	Richard Breault
Justin McGhie	Emily Dearing
Sean Henderson	Doug Owens
Chris Redman	Steve Moody
Jeff Fullmer	

⇒ **BIG O BUCK\$** ⇐

## BIG O BUCKS SCHEDULE

...more to come

I'll talk to anyone about anything,  
but sooner or later I'll tell him I sing.  
I'll invite him to visit on Thursday night  
and if he likes what he hears, he just  
might become a member and maybe  
he'll bring another good man  
who likes to sing.

# WELCOME

## NEWEST MEMBERS

Les Mower	April
Ray Parzik	August
Ed Fitzgerald	September

## 2021 DIRECTING TEAM



Jay Giallombardo  
Front Line  
Director

## 2021 OTHER CHAPTER LEADERS



Dave Walker  
Uniform  
Manager

PHOTO  
NOT  
AVAILABLE

vacant  
Chorus  
Manager



John Alexander  
Bulletin  
Editor



Frank Nosalek  
Webmaster &  
Technology

PHOTO  
NOT  
AVAILABLE

vacant  
Show  
Chairman



vacant  
Big O Bucks  
Coordinator

### EDITOR'S NOTE

Article and column submissions are solicited.  
Help make this a better bulletin. Send me stuff!  
The deadline for March is 26 February  
Items without a byline are from the Editor.

*The Orange Spiel*  
John Alexander, Editor  
2429 Southern Links Dr  
Fleming Island FL 32003

Back issues are available online at:  
[www.bigorangechorus.com/newsarchive.htm](http://www.bigorangechorus.com/newsarchive.htm)  
More specific and timely performance information  
is in my weekly sheet, *Orange Zest*.

**Print off two copies  
of this newsletter  
to share – one with  
your family and  
one with someone  
you are bringing to  
a chapter meeting.  
Let them know they  
belong here!**

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**IMAGINE 80 MEN ON THE RISERS  
BE A SINGER-BRINGER**



John Alexander, Editor  
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