



The Orange Spiel

News Of The Jacksonville Big O Chapter



<http://www.BigOrangeChorus.com>



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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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SHINE BRIGHT LIKE A DIAMOND

by Brody McDonald
from choirbites.com

Diamonds are valuable, cherished items... sometimes. Sometimes they are relatively inexpensive utility tools, like in the case of record needles and grinding wheels. Valuable diamonds, the kind that inspire TV commercials backed by orchestras, are priced based off of what are known as the "4 C's."

COLOR - is the diamond white, off-white, yellow, blue?
CUT - is the diamond cut well to maximize light refraction and to maximize sparkle?
CLARITY - is the diamond clear or cloudy? Does it have defects?
CARATS - how large is the diamond?

I was recently rehearsing Michael McGlynn's "Dulaman" with my Men's Chorus. The piece is in three parts and relies heavily on a brilliant, ringing sound to exploit a combination of major seconds and open fourths/fifths. I told them I wanted their sound to "shine bright like a diamond" (hat tip to Sia/Rhianna). What are the "4 C's" when it comes to choral singing?

COLOR - What tone color is appropriate to the music? Is it the rich classical tone befitting Brahms or the brassy sound of Broadway? Is it a crystalline tone appropriate to Renaissance or the powerful tone of gospel?
CUT - I think of "cut" as how well the singers do with rhythmic integrity. Not only in terms of note/rest values, but the cleanliness of attacks and releases.
CLARITY - Clarity refers to vowel purity and matching, as well as tuning (overall tuning as well as maximizing fine-tuning to make chords ring and sparkle)
CARATS - Dynamics - how much tone is there? Big diamonds and little diamonds can be equal in quality save for their size, and singing should be the same way. Piano and forte sounds should be equally well-produced, just different volumes.

By paying attention to the 4 C's, we can help our singers "shine bright like a diamond!"

WANTED!!

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For more detailed, timely information see my weekly publication:
Orange Zest

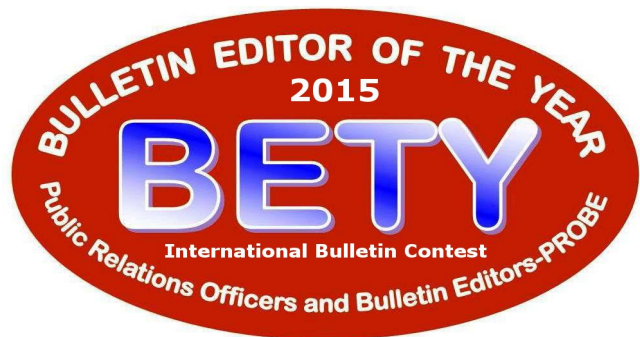
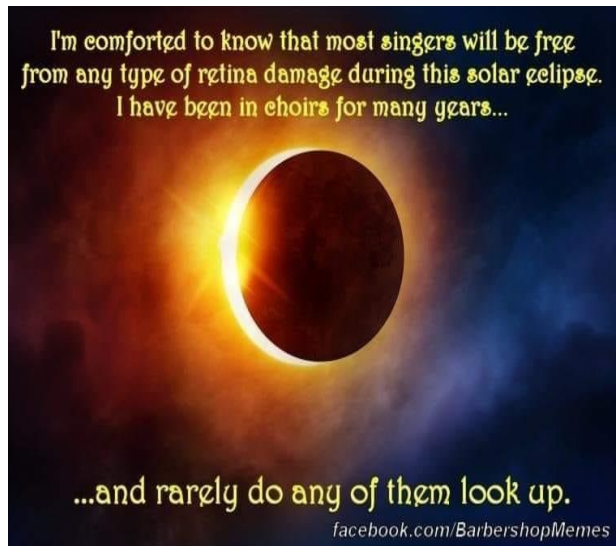
EDITORIAL

The year marches on. We've done some good things. We are moving ahead, sounding good, and ready to move up to bigger and better things. Come join us!

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 Mike.

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



CHORAL BREATHING AND THE QUEST FOR PERPETUAL LEGATO

by Liz Garnett
from helpingyouharmonise.com

I'm on record for feeling somewhat critical of the practice of choral breathing – that is, of singers in a choir managing their breathing points by breathing whenever they feel like, so long as it's at a different time from their neighbours, and they do it in the middle of a vowel rather than shortening a syllable.

I have heard people promoting the idea in terms of vocal freedom, and actually this argument is a compelling one in its favour. People are most likely to tense up and get anxious while singing when running out of breath, so if you remove that as something to worry about, they'll sing with both greater emotional and physical freedom. I do like this rationale, though I am still concerned about the dissociation of technique from musical narrative, and the way that it actively prevents choral singing being a good training ground for solo singing and single-voice-per-part ensembles.

Anyhow, I was thinking about this recently while arranging for a group that uses choral breathing as a matter of course. There was a phrase that I could sometimes sing in one breath, if I remembered it was coming up and got myself organised to do so, but it was kind of touch and go. And it was tempting to think, oh well it doesn't matter, they're going to breathe all over the place anyway. But after sleeping on the question I rewrote that passage to make it coherently singable in complete musical ideas. The chorus who sings it in the first instance might not take advantage of that possibility, but a future quartet shouldn't have to rewrite it to make it performable.

There was a basic principle in the barbershop style definition for contest purposes back when I was a judge that stated a chorus shouldn't do anything (in terms of their arrangement choices) that a quartet couldn't also do. (It might still be there, I just don't carry all the detail around in my head any more.) That could be seen as something of an arbitrary rule, given that, aesthetically, choruses can do all kinds of things that a quartet can't, but it does have some integrity in recognising the chorus as a derivative form of the genre, that emerged out of the original form. It's something I like to bear in mind while arranging, for the practical reason that repertoire is so regularly shared between the two forms of ensemble.

Anyway, this experience got me wondering about the underlying imperative for continuity of sound that encourages choral breathing as a practice. I'm particular-

ly thinking about barbershop here, though its relationship with other chorus genres will become relevant as we go on, and there may be parallel questions to ask about piano pedalling, which also tends to the habitually-connected as a default.

One might suspect that the use of notation programs, which of course do not need to breathe at all, has encouraged the production of arrangements that aren't actually singable as written without choral breathing. But the aesthetic for perpetual legato goes back before the invention of notation software, so whilst I think it probably has facilitated breath-unfriendly arranging practices, it can't be the origin of the taste for obsessively connecting everything together.

There are all kinds of ensemble techniques and interpretive mannerisms well embedded by the 1980s that promote continuity of sound, especially at phrase ends. Such as 'covering' a pick-up, that is the parts who aren't singing an anacrusis continuing to hold the last note of the previous phrase while the part(s) that are breathe, and only breathing once the anacrusis has started. Or all four singers singing through the end of one phrase, and sweeping into the next, to take a breath for expressive purposes halfway through the next line.

These practices aren't there in the early years of the Barbershop Harmony Society, when, quartets sing in generally quite short phrases, and with a significantly choppy articulation than would be accepted as good practice now. The 1960s sees the introduction of the more conversational style of ballad delivery, which delivers lyrics in longer phrases, although you still get a great variety of articulation in up-tunes than you do 20 years later. (There's also a wonderful lightness and suppleness of tone that gets weighed down with the muscularity of the sound production in 1980s quartets.)

Given that the invention of the barbershop chorus as a performing, and competing, ensemble happened during the 1950s, and quickly became a medium for the delivery of vocal pedagogy en masse, you have to suspect that this was also the means for the introduction of the perpetual legato into quartet techniques.

Legato is a central tenet of classical singing of course. But if you read the American choral conducting literature of the mid-20th century, it talks about a much greater variety of articulation than

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CHORAL BREATHING AND THE QUEST FOR
(continued)

(Continued from page 3)

you'd realise if you took the barbershop adoption of choral techniques as fully representative. The classification of ictus styles into legato, staccato and marcato clearly standard technique, appearing in several texts from the 1940s onwards. So it's not just about classically trained choral conductors coming into the barbershop world, though I'm sure this is part of the story.

That's about as far as I've got with these musings so far, but I'm sharing them anyway in case you find it interesting to think about too. It will certainly affect how I listen, particularly to historical recordings, and if your listening produces anything interestingly relevant, do let me know.

**MAGIC CHORAL TRICK #382**
CELLO BOWING

by Janet Kidd
from betterchoirs.wordpress.com

Legato is always a tricky concept for amateur singers. Here's another kinaesthetic technique that I use. Have your singers sing a slow 5 note scale 1 2 3 4 5 4 3 2 1, using the numbers as lyrics. (Think half notes at about mm 80)

If you notice any energy leaks or lack of synchronization try having them physically mime bowing each note along with you, as if they were playing a cello – one note per bow.

1 – Down bow – as if you're bowing a note, drawing the bow out to your right

2 – Up bow – as if you're moving the bow over the string across the body towards your left side

3 – Down bow – to your right

4 – Up bow....etc

It works well when they understand that there's always some resistance – a bit of grip on the string by the bow because of the rosin on the bow hair. So it takes even, deliberate pressure and pull to create a lovely cello sound.

Once they can imagine this, vowels in the 'lyrics' will become more defined, and longer, without your singers having to deliberately think those thoughts.

Yes, of course, they should know about target vowels and diphthong resolutions to words – but if they are physically bowing each note those things tend to fix themselves.

Once the singers become accustomed to physically bowing the phrases they're singing, sometimes all it takes to bring back the legato into a phrase is for me to mime the bowing as I direct.

And those pesky pick up beats that inevitably get accented when the singers' brains stop working can be radically altered into something much more pleasing by me miming the pick up as a short, but smooth up bow.

SERIAL HOLIDAYS IN MAY

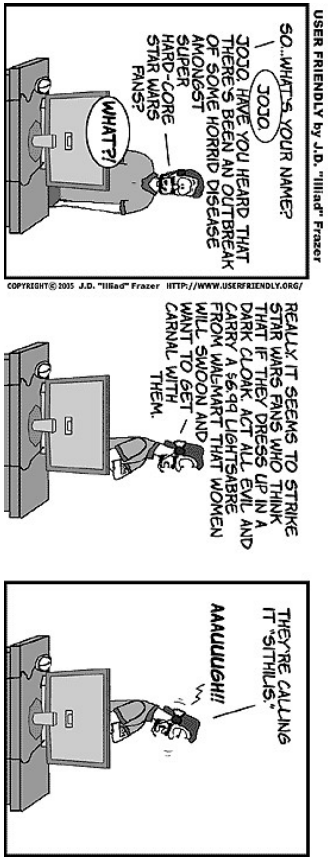
MAY THE FOURTH BE WITH YOU



CINCO DE MAYO



REVENGE OF THE SIXTH



ON THE WRITING OF PARODY LYRICS & COMEDY SONGS

by Liz Garnett from helpingyouharmonise.com

I've had several conversations recently with people involved in writing comedic parodies and/or needing to update references in existing comedy songs. And in the process a few themes have emerged that I thought it worth pulling together a bit so I've got something useful to link to if I find myself having more such conversations.

Have enough jokes

Like the concept of Retroactive Inevitability, this is something that Roger Payne used to talk about. It's very easy to get a brilliant idea for a parody, but end up with essentially just the one joke. For sure, having one major concept you build around is a good strategy for a coherent whole, but you also need regular laugh-points along the way.

On the stand-up comedy course I did way back when, the guide-line we were given was to make sure you never went more than 30 seconds without a punchline. Given that songs tend to be a more compact and less wordy form than stand-up, I wouldn't be surprised if you need them more often than that in music. I tend to measure musical time in bars rather than seconds, and my feeling is at least every 16 bars, but with some at 8-bar intervals., is what you're aiming for.

Crafting your jokes

One of the conversations found us noting the process that the joke-crafting was going through, as we did it in real time, and that feels like a useful thing to capture.

First came the overall concept: what is the joke *about*? At the heart of every joke is a nub of incongruity, whether that comes from something conflicting or absurd in the content, or simple wordplay. The impact of the joke isn't simply a result of the degree of incongruity, however, but may be amplified (or indeed inhibited) by things like relatability or transgression. Getting this in place logically precedes the other stages (even if you sometimes stumble across it when playing with rhyme schemes).

In stand-up, you'd then look at how you craft this into a tellable joke, getting the set-up and punchline to communicate efficiently, and landing on the key word of the reveal at the end of a sentence to make space for the laugh. In songs, you're doing the same thing, but with more constraints because your joke needs to fit into a defined metrical structure.

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ON THE WRITING OF PARODY LYRICS
(continued)*(Continued from page 5)*

So we tend to do this in two stages. The rhyme scheme is the key element of framework to get in place first, and I've written about this in considerable detail before, so no need to repeat that. Once you've got your end-rhymes in place, you need to craft the rest of the lines for scansion and singability. They need to have the right number of syllables, with the emphasis in the right place, and with patterns of vowels and consonants that fit readily in the mouth. You don't want to be stumbling over awkward sequences of syllables when you're trying to deliver a joke.

The bigger picture

You also need to decide which jokes go where in the overall form. To a considerable extent, this is determined by the overall story you are telling; some comedic subjects lend themselves to a clear sequential narrative, though others are more loosely theme-based and require you to make more decisions about how to navigate through it.

Within your overall arc, you need to get your musical and comedic moments lining up coherently. More than once in the conversations that prompted this post, I've found myself saying: this joke isn't strong enough for this place in the music. Not every joke has to be a belter - indeed, as with the challenges of building a set out of one-liners, it's arguably better to have a variety of comedic impact levels in the same way you want light and shade in your musical phrasing. In the same way that surprising words in the wrong place can unbalance a phrase, too funny a joke in a spot that is musically just *en passant* will mess up your flow.

But you do need your big musical moments (ends of sections, key changes, things that are signalled in any way as a climax), to have the best jokes on them. If the music is getting all worked up to elicit a stronger emotional response, you need your comedic material also to have its greatest impact at the same time.

I am starting to think
I will never be old
enough to know better.

RETHINKING THE WAY
YOU PRACTICEby Kevin Keller
from The Harmonizer

In the early 1990s, I sang in the St. Louis Symphony Chorus for the late Tom Peck, perhaps the most underrated choral conductor of all time. During one rehearsal, he stated, "I despise performances. They are an interruption to the pursuit of musical excellence."

Inside, I disagreed with him. I loved performances—they always sounded better and were more cohesive and were the culmination of all our work. His lament also sounded too much like the sentiment, "I despise contests. They are an interruption to the pursuit of musical excellence." Again, hard disagree. As a frequent competitor, contests drove me to hone my skills and to learn new ones.

Over time, however, I began to see value and truth in Tom's challenge.

As a coach, I see obsessive behaviors in polishing and refining. "This chord is out of tune." "Bari are too loud in this phrase." "Okay, the final month we're only going to run through our contest set." I've learned that after a certain point, too much time spent in refinement stops growth. An unbalanced attention to polishing can interrupt the pursuit of musical excellence. And, often our performances come off as less genuine as well.

Many will disagree, saying that "Errors detract from the musical product." True. And yet, we all sing out of tune and have errors to the degree of our skill sets. Audiences ultimately want to be musically and emotionally moved. Fears of making mistakes might create error-free performances, but perhaps not compelling performances.

During judge feedback sessions, we try to coach some new technique; often, the performance is instantly better, and the skill can sometimes be adopted immediately. "Where were you earlier today?!" they joke. But the coaching was effective in that moment largely because they felt it was okay to make mistakes. The outcome was better, and there was little disruption to unity. They improved because they were open to growth.

So how do you break the cycle? Don't stop growing because you fear to make mistakes. Practice skills that make you, individually, a better performer. Learn that skill and take on the next skill. Don't wait

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RETHINKING THE WAY YOU PRACTICE (continued)

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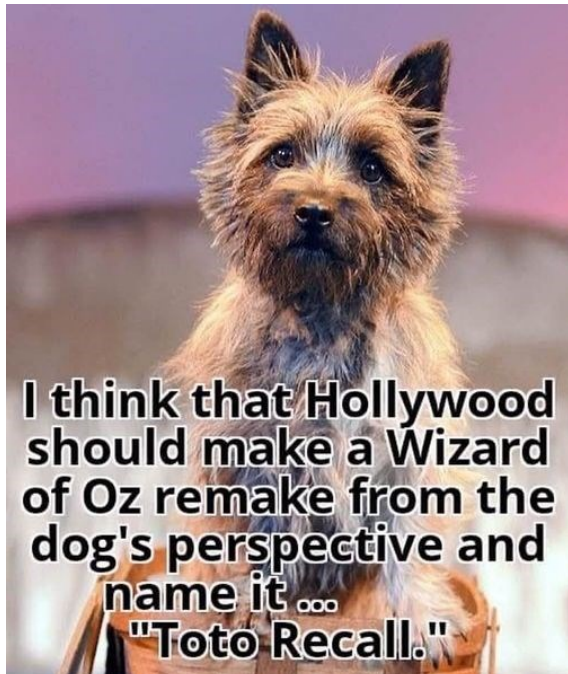
for others to catch up. Don't focus on tuning a chord. Don't focus on details unless your score starts with a 9!

At the last minute, refine your skills within the ensemble for that contest moment. Then start acquiring new skills to make you a better singer/performer. Be relentless in growth, not refinement.

GROWTH MATTERS MORE THAN POLISH

Consider: One month before contest, your rough, unpolished 72 level was where you drew the line and started refining. Polish, polish, polish. You performed on stage and got a polished 72. Same score, just more refined. Growth stopped. To get to another level, you have to learn a host of new skills and break old habits. Why are you polishing and deeply ingraining habits that you will later break? Constantly be in a state of learning, not polishing.

Kevin Keller is a renowned coach, arranger, teacher, judge, director, and quartet singer. A BHS Hall of Fame member, he was recently elected to Society EVP.



A GENTLE WAY TO HELP KIDS (OR ADULTS) BUILD PERFORMANCE CONFIDENCE?

by Dr Noa Kageyama
from bulletproofmusician.com

We tend to think of reading as a calming and relaxing activity. Something we do to wind down before going to sleep at night, or on vacation while sitting poolside with a frosty cold strawberry lemonade.

But for many young children, reading can actually be quite stressful and cause a lot of anxiety.

Because it's one thing if you're naturally curious about reading and take to it pretty easily, but a very different story if you struggle at first, feel judged by teachers, or get teased by classmates.

When that's your experience, confidence can quickly spiral downhill and lead to a destructive cycle, where you avoid reading, fail to improve, get more anxious, make more mistakes, lose even more confidence, and so on.

That sounds like a pretty crummy spiral to get sucked into, of course... But it also sounds much like some of our own experiences with performing a musical instrument can be, no?

Noooo!!!

I still remember my daughter's first studio recital, where one of the other students flat-out refused to get on stage, crying and grabbing hold of his mom when it was his turn to play. I don't know if it was his very first recital, or if he had already had a negative experience with performing, but it was a little heart-breaking to see, and we could all empathize with both child and parent.

Whether we're that child, or the parent, or teacher, is there anything we can do to help build up a student's confidence and make performing a more positive experience?

Well, a bunch of programs have been developed over the years to help younger readers gain confidence and reading skills. And there's one strategy in particular that caught my attention, because it reminded me of something my mom had me do when I was a child. And what might that be?

Making reading a positive experience

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A GENTLE WAY TO HELP (continued)

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Well, I'll describe my mom's exercise at the end of this article, but the program that intrigued me involves reading out loud to...dogs.

This might sound a little goofy at first, but some studies have found that dogs can have a calming effect that reduce some indicators of stress. And given that they are (at least as far as we can tell) a non-judgmental audience, the idea is that perhaps reading to a dog could be a way to encourage struggling readers to do more reading practice, and help to build their skills and confidence.

Could that really work?

Research on struggling readers

Well, it turns out there is a bit of research in this area! A 2014 South African study (le Roux et al.) looked at 106 third graders who received low scores on a standardized reading test, and were struggling to read at grade level (75% were reading at a Grade 1 level, and 25% were at a Grade 2 level).

Once identified, the students were randomly assigned to one of four groups.

One group served as the **control group**, and continued with their regular classroom activities.

The students in the other three groups, however, received opportunities to read aloud in different conditions.

One group of students read aloud to a trained adult volunteer (**adult group**), a second group read aloud to a teddy bear in the presence of a trained adult volunteer (**teddy bear group**), and a third group read aloud to a trained therapy dog and the owner, who was also trained to facilitate the reading process (**dog group**).

10 weeks with a reading buddy

For 10 weeks, the students met with their new reading buddy – adult, teddy bear, or dog – for a 20 minute read-aloud session. Mostly, the sessions involved reading books out loud and explaining the difficult words to their live, stuffed, or canine audience.

To see if there would be any changes in reading

ability over time, the students' reading skills were assessed before the program began, after the program concluded, and eight weeks after the end of the program to see if the changes were lasting.

So...was there any difference between the groups?

Speed, accuracy, comprehension

The researchers assessed reading **speed, accuracy, and comprehension**.

And at the end of the 10-week program, students who read to a therapy dog demonstrated higher reading **comprehension** scores than students in the other groups. And when assessed again eight weeks later, the dog group continued to score higher in reading comprehension than the other students.

So the results are intriguing, but could this strategy be applied to building confidence among kids who are not so keen on the idea of performing in front of an audience? Well, it's not apples to apples, of course, but this study did remind me of something my mom often had me do from a very early age...

The "Cinderella exercise"

I grew up a few miles outside of a small midwestern town, in a heavily wooded area, surrounded by birds, squirrels, frogs, and other critters. I also had some chickens and ducks that wandered around the yard and swam in the pond a dozen yards or so from the side of our house.

Like most kids, there were days when I didn't feel like practicing. So often, my mom would "trick" me into doing a run-through or mock performance by setting up a stand on the porch, and suggesting that I give the animals a performance (you can see me trying to get one of the ducks to stick around a bit, in the photo above).

The challenge she gave me was to see if I could get the animals to respond to my playing. Whether it was one of the ducks, the birds at the bird feeder, or the rogue chicken which broke from the other hens and lived in a grove of trees behind our house (that chicken actually made it into the local newspaper), the goal was to see if I could play beautifully enough to get them to approach me – like that scene in Cinderella where all the animals help her make a dress.

A different mindset

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A GENTLE WAY TO HELP (continued)

(Continued from page 8)

It may sound a little silly, but in hindsight, I think this exercise helped me practice a particular performance mindset, which seems to be in line with what the advocates of reading to dogs describe as being part of the benefit of the exercise.

Whereas anxious readers have some of their cognitive resources tied up by worries about what others might think, and thus cannot engage as deeply in the reading itself, more confident readers seem to be able to immerse themselves more effectively in the book, and read more proficiently.

Aiming for beauty vs. perfection

Likewise, when playing to attract an audience of birds, squirrels, and chickens, my focus was on playing expressively, rather than worrying about playing “perfectly.”

I think somewhere in my 8-year-old brain, I assumed that the key to getting a squirrel to approach, or a bird to sing, or frog to croak lay not in flawless intonation, but in my ability to create a beautiful sound or project some sort of emotion in my playing. Which was a mindset that more naturally transferred over to performances even when my audience was no longer composed of animals, but people.

Takeaways

The idea of doing mock performances for the family pet may sound a little quirky. And it’s a big leap to take the little research on this reading practice strategy and apply it to music performance. But if you have students who aren’t comfortable with the idea of performing in front of an audience, perhaps it could be a helpful exercise to try.

Because this may be the rare context in which students can practice performing for a real, but totally non-judgmental audience, and cultivate a mindset that prioritizes playing beautifully, rather than striving to avoid mistakes and worrying about what others might think.

After all, that “don’t screw up” mindset pretty much sucks the fun out of performing, for any performer, at any age, whether it’s in one’s backyard or on stage in front of a packed house.

SYNC ERRORS ARE WORSE THAN TUNING ERRORS. CHANGE MY MIND.

by Dr Phillip Grant
from The Harmonizer

Errors Happen. They are not failures, they are not shameful, and they usually have no lasting consequences. They simply tell us we don’t have a complete grasp on something yet. And when addressing these helpful and fascinating events, ensembles should prioritize sync errors over tuning errors to maximize improvement and growth.

TUNING VS. SYNC ERRORS

A tuning error is pretty self-explanatory: it’s when a singer sings sharp or flat. Numerous vocal and ear training issues negatively influence pitch, while various physics-based factors often lead to what is known as pitch drift. Synchronization, on the other hand, refers to the coordination achieved in executing chord progressions and word sounds. More specifically, good sync involves precise timing and attention to various elements such as pitch onset, vowels, consonants, pitch changes, and the cut-off, as well as uniformity in the pulse-beat and tempo.

Following are the three main reasons sync errors are worse than tuning errors.

1. IMPACT ON THE AUDIENCE

Audiences come to our concerts to feel something; every technical and artistic element must be executed together to eliminate distractions and allow the listener to hear and understand the story. Somewhat counter-intuitively, audiences are quite forgiving of tuning errors. Most don’t even notice, including our judges! But it’s very difficult to hide jarring synchronization errors, even from the uninitiated.

Sync errors: 1 – tuning errors: 0

2. EXPANSION (LOCK & RING)

Synchronization plays a crucial role in achieving consonance and the expansion of sound, as singers must coordinate their timing and phrasing so that overtones can emerge. Lack of sync can expose balance discrepancies, which also negatively impacts expansion. Conversely, an ensemble can still lock and ring even when it collectively loses pitch.

Sync errors: 2 – tuning errors: 0

3. DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH

The data is in (email me for it): all ensembles have a tendency to drift in pitch. All of them, no matter how

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SYNC ERRORS ARE WORSE THAN TUNING (continued)

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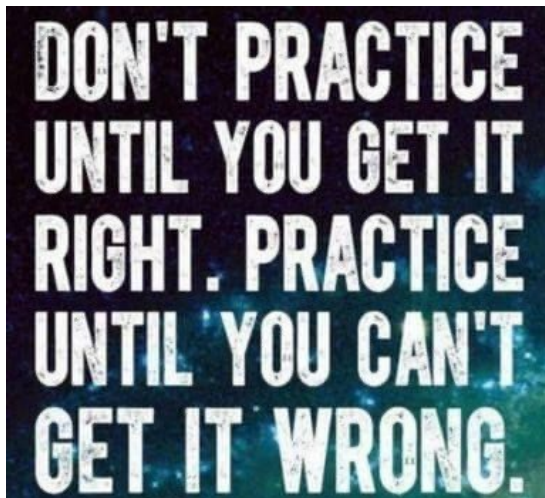
much effort they put into avoiding drift. On the other hand, the research shows that precise and consistent synchronization can improve rather quickly with practice. So, while many ensembles spend a disproportionate amount of time working on tuning, they will progress—including in tuning—more quickly by instead focusing on synchronization. Here's the hidden secret: due to cohesive forces and forward motion, good sync makes it harder to sing out of tune.

Sync errors: 3 – tuning errors: 0

While tuning does require some love and attention, ensembles that spend their time focusing on sync will make a bigger impact, ring more chords, and ultimately develop more quickly. For those of you who see it differently, I hope you'll change your tune and that we'll be in sync.

Sync errors have far more impact; improving sync will improve many areas, including tuning

Dr. Philip Grant, a BHS Singing judge, is a barber-shop coach who has taught the bio-mechanics of artistic singing at HU since 2019. He sings with his wife, Donya, and her brothers in EVG District champ Metzlin' Around



**DON'T PRACTICE
UNTIL YOU GET IT
RIGHT. PRACTICE
UNTIL YOU CAN'T
GET IT WRONG.**

HOW TO SING BETTER AND UNLOCK YOUR POTENTIAL: ESSENTIAL SINGING TIPS

from vocalist.org.uk

Foundational Techniques

Before you can belt out power ballads or master intricate runs, it's essential to have a strong foundation. This section dives into the elemental aspects of singing that are often overlooked but are critical for anyone learning how to sing properly. We'll cover breath control, posture, and other fundamental singing techniques that form the bedrock of vocal excellence. These are the building blocks that will pave the way for you to become a better singer, providing the groundwork for more advanced skills down the line.

Master Your Breathing

Before you can hold those long, soaring notes or tackle complex melodies, you need to get your breathing right. Mastering diaphragmatic breathing is crucial to enhancing your vocal power and sustaining your voice. This technique involves breathing deeply from the diaphragm rather than shallowly from the chest, allowing you to take in more air and, in turn, produce a more robust and controlled sound. In essence, learning how to breathe correctly is the first step in your journey on how to become a good singer.

Perfect Your Posture

Maintaining the correct posture is more than just standing up straight; it's about aligning your body in a way that optimises airflow and vocal projection. A poor posture can restrict your diaphragm and limit your breathing, causing strain and affecting the quality of your voice. Whether you're standing or sitting, aim for a relaxed but upright posture. Keep your shoulders rolled back and down, and your chest open. This will free up your diaphragm, allowing for better breath control and, ultimately, a more powerful and clearer voice.

Open Your Mouth Wider

It might seem like a small detail, but the width of your mouth opening can significantly affect the sound you produce. A wider mouth opening can help you achieve a fuller, richer tone and make it easier to hit those high notes. It can also improve your diction and the clarity of your words. While it's

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important not to overextend your jaw, a generous but comfortable mouth opening allows for better resonance and can enhance the overall quality of your singing.

Know Your Range

One of the quickest ways to improve your singing is to understand your vocal range. Knowing the lowest and highest notes you can comfortably hit will guide you in choosing songs and keys that suit your voice. Attempting to sing out of your natural range can lead to vocal strain and may not showcase your voice at its best. By understanding your vocal range, you can focus on songs and techniques that highlight your strengths while gradually working on expanding your limits.

Vocal Warm-Up Tips

Before hitting those high notes or diving into intricate melodies, a proper vocal warm-up is crucial. This section offers a curated selection of practical warm-up exercises designed to prepare your voice for the rigours of singing. From gentle humming to full-on vocal sirens, these tips will guide you through a comprehensive routine that enhances vocal clarity, range, and stamina. Set aside just 10 to 15 minutes before your next practice or performance, and experience the difference a well-executed warm-up can make.

Warm Up Properly

Skipping a vocal warm-up is a risk you don't want to take. Warming up properly prepares your vocal cords for the strenuous activity of singing, helping to prevent strain and injury. A good warm-up includes a mix of breathing exercises, scales, and gentle humming to gradually bring your voice to its optimal performance level. Spending just 10 to 15 minutes on a thorough warm-up can make a noticeable difference in your vocal clarity, range, and stamina.

Hum to Warm-Up

Humming is a simple yet effective way to initiate your vocal warm-up. It activates the vocal cords without putting too much stress on them, making it a safe starting point for your routine. To start humming, keep your lips relaxed and closed, then produce a soft, continuous sound. You can experiment with different pitches, but aim to stay within

your comfortable vocal range.

As you hum, focus on sending the resonance towards the front of your face, almost as if you're directing the sound out through your forehead. This helps in activating the facial resonators, which will contribute to a fuller, richer tone when you sing. Humming for a few minutes can prepare your voice for more complex vocal exercises and singing tasks ahead.

Use Lip Trills

Lip trills are an effective and fun way to warm up your voice. They help in loosening the lips and engaging the diaphragm, facilitating better control over your breath. To perform a lip trill, simply blow air through your closed lips, making them vibrate or "trill." You can also glide up and down your vocal range while trilling to further warm up your vocal cords. This exercise is not only good for warming up but also for improving your breath control and pitch.

Practise Sirens for Range

The siren exercise is a fantastic way to engage your entire vocal range, from the lowest to the highest notes you can comfortably reach. This exercise not only warms up your voice but also improves your vocal flexibility. To do a siren, take a deep breath and sing a continuous, sliding note that ascends from your lowest pitch to your highest, and then back down again, mimicking the sound of a siren.

The key is to keep the sound smooth, avoiding any breaks or abrupt changes in pitch. This will help you identify any 'cracks' in your range where your voice might transition between different vocal registers. Performing sirens at the start of your warm-up can help you gauge your vocal condition for the day and prepare your voice for more intricate exercises and songs.

Cool Down After Singing

Just as it's essential to warm up before singing, cooling down afterwards is equally crucial. A proper cool-down helps to relax your vocal cords and reduce any swelling caused by vigorous vocal activity. Gentle humming or soft scales can be effective for this. Spending a few minutes on a cool-down can help maintain the health of your vocal cords and prepare them for your next singing session.

Breath and Voice Control

Mastering the art of singing goes beyond just hitting the right notes; it's about how you control your breath to produce those notes. This section delves into the

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HOW TO SING BETTER AND UNLOCK
(continued)

Project Your Voice

(Continued from page 11)

critical aspects of breath and voice control that can make or break a performance. From learning how to sustain long notes to mastering the subtleties of vocal dynamics, these tips will equip you with the skills you need for more nuanced and controlled singing. By understanding and applying these techniques, you'll be well on your way to elevating your singing from good to great.

Stay Relaxed

Maintaining a relaxed posture is crucial for optimal voice control and breath management. Tension in your shoulders, neck, or jaw can hinder your vocal performance, restricting your range and affecting your tone. To ensure you stay relaxed, take a few moments before singing to do some light stretching or focused breathing exercises.

During your performance or practice, be mindful of any signs of tension. If you notice yourself tensing up, pause and take a few deep breaths, consciously relaxing your muscles. Keeping a relaxed demeanor not only improves your vocal quality but also enhances your overall stage presence and comfort while singing.

Mind the Tongue Position

The position of your tongue can have a significant impact on the clarity and quality of your sound. An improperly placed tongue can cause constriction in the throat, leading to a nasal or muffled tone. For most vowel sounds, the tongue should lay flat at the bottom of the mouth. For consonants like 't' and 'd,' it will naturally rise to the roof. Being mindful of your tongue position can improve your articulation and help produce a cleaner, more resonant sound.

Use Anchoring Techniques

Anchoring techniques involve using physical cues or "anchors" to help maintain consistent vocal quality. This could be a particular stance, a hand gesture, or even a facial expression that enables you to focus and stabilise your voice. For example, some singers plant their feet firmly on the ground to help control breath and diaphragm movement. These anchors can serve as a physical reminder to employ good technique, particularly during complex passages where it's easy to lose focus. By incorporating anchoring techniques into your practice, you can achieve a more reliable and controlled vocal performance.

Learning to project your voice is crucial for capturing your audience's attention and delivering a compelling performance. It's not about singing louder, but rather about using your breath and diaphragm to send your voice further with clarity and strength. Good projection ensures that even those at the back of the room can hear you clearly without you straining your vocal cords. This skill is essential for all types of singing environments, be it a small gathering or a large venue. Mastering voice projection can make a significant difference in the impact of your performance.

Vocal Techniques and Exercises

Once you've got the basics down, it's time to move on to more advanced vocal techniques and exercises. This section is your guide to mastering the finer aspects of singing, such as pitch control, vocal tone, and resonance. These are the tools that will add depth and versatility to your performances. Whether you're looking to hit those high notes effortlessly or aiming for a richer, fuller sound, these singing tips are absolutely essential when learning how to be a better singer.

Master Your Vowel Shapes

The way you shape your vowels can dramatically affect the tone and clarity of your singing. Different vowel shapes can either enhance or muffle the sound you produce. A helpful exercise to improve this is to practice singing scales while focusing on each vowel shape (A, E, I, O, U). Pay attention to how your mouth and lips move, as well as how the sound resonates in your vocal tract.

To get started, sing a simple five-note scale (C-D-E-F-G) on the vowel 'A.' Notice how it feels and sounds. Repeat this for 'E,' 'I,' 'O,' and 'U.' Your goal is to produce a clear, resonant sound for each vowel without straining your vocal cords.

Practice Pitching

Pitch accuracy is vital for any singer, and fortunately, there are several techniques you can use to improve it. One effective exercise involves matching pitch with a piano or a tuning app. Simply play a note and try to match it with your voice, focusing on hitting the pitch precisely without any wobble or drift.

Another technique is to record yourself singing and then play it back to identify any pitch issues. You can also practice scales and arpeggios, concentrating on hitting each note squarely in the middle of the pitch.

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HOW TO SING BETTER AND UNLOCK
(continued)

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Lastly, practising with a metronome can help you maintain a steady pitch, especially during more complicated runs or fast passages. With consistent practice of these techniques, you'll find that your pitch control becomes more reliable, enhancing your overall singing quality.

Expand Your Vocal Range

Increasing your vocal range can open up a whole new repertoire of songs and styles for you to explore. One effective way to start expanding your range is by using the "slide" technique. Begin by singing a note that's comfortably within your range and then slide up or down the scale to stretch your limits. Make sure to do this gradually to avoid straining your voice.

Another approach is to practice scales that go beyond your comfort zone, but only by a note or two at first. As you become more comfortable hitting those notes, you can extend the scales further.

Consistent practice, combined with proper warm-ups and cool-downs, can help you safely and gradually extend your vocal range.

Improve Vocal Tone and Resonance

A rich vocal tone and good resonance can make all the difference in your singing. One way to work on this is through "open-throat" singing exercises. Start by taking a deep breath and imagining your throat opening up as if you were about to yawn. Sing a scale or a simple melody while maintaining this open-throat position.

Hum for Resonance

Humming is a simple yet effective exercise for improving vocal resonance. Begin by taking a deep breath and humming a comfortable note. Feel for the vibrations in your face, particularly around the nose and mouth area. These vibrations indicate that you are achieving good resonance.

To take it a step further, you can hum while gently placing your hands on your chest and throat. This will help you become more aware of how your voice resonates throughout your body. Make it a habit to include humming exercises in your vocal routine to boost your resonance and improve the overall quality of your voice.

Don't Push for High Notes

It's tempting to push your voice when trying to reach those high notes, but doing so can lead to strain and even vocal damage. Instead of forcing it, focus on proper breath support and placement to help you reach higher pitches. A helpful exercise for this is to sing a scale up to your highest comfortable note and then try to go one or two notes higher using only breath support, not force.

Another technique is to tilt your head slightly up when approaching high notes, as this can create more space in your vocal tract, making it easier to hit those challenging pitches. However, the key is to remain relaxed and not to push your voice beyond its natural limits. With consistent practice and proper technique, you'll find that those high notes become increasingly attainable.

Avoid Jaw Tension

Jaw tension can be a significant hindrance to achieving a clear, relaxed vocal tone. A clenched or tight jaw can restrict your vocal range and even lead to muscle strain over time. To check for jaw tension, place your fingers on your jawline and open your mouth as if you were going to sing. If you feel any tightness, try to consciously relax the jaw muscles.

A useful exercise to alleviate jaw tension is to gently massage the jaw muscles before singing or practising. You can also try exercises that involve opening your mouth wide and then relaxing, repeating this several times to encourage jaw flexibility.

Focus on Phrasing

Phrasing in singing refers to how you break up lines and passages in a song to convey emotion and meaning. Proper phrasing can add depth and nuance to your performance. One way to improve your phrasing is to practice singing along with songs that have strong emotional content. Pay attention to how the original singer breaks up the lines and try to emulate that style.

Another approach is to experiment with different ways of singing a line or phrase. Try elongating certain words, adding pauses, or changing the dynamics to add emphasis. The key is to make the phrasing feel natural and in tune with the emotional message of the song.

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HOW TO SING BETTER AND UNLOCK (continued)

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Focus on Resonance Spaces

Understanding and utilising different resonance spaces in your vocal tract can drastically improve the quality of your voice. Resonant spaces such as the chest, throat, mouth, and nasal passages contribute to a unique tonal quality. For example, chest resonance gives your voice a fuller, richer sound, while nasal resonance can add brightness and projection.

To explore these resonance spaces, try singing a single note or a simple melody while shifting your focus from one resonance space to another. Notice how the tone changes as you move from chest to nasal resonance. Experimenting with these spaces will help you discover a more versatile vocal tone.

Master Your Registers

Your voice has different registers, such as chest voice, head voice, and whistle register, each offering a unique sound and texture. Learning to transition smoothly between these registers is crucial for a well-rounded vocal performance.

One exercise to help with this is the “siren exercise,” where you start in your lowest note in chest voice and slide all the way up to your highest note in head voice, and then back down.

Another method is to practice scales that cross the break between your chest and head voice, focusing on making the transition as seamless as possible. The goal is to eliminate any noticeable ‘flip’ or ‘crack’ as you switch from one register to another.

Practise Runs and Riffs

Runs and riffs add flair and complexity to your singing, but they require control and precision. To get started, choose a simple run or riff from a song you like and slow it down. Break it into smaller segments and practise each one until you can sing it cleanly. Gradually increase the speed as you become more comfortable.

It’s crucial to maintain good breath support and pitch accuracy while practising runs and riffs. Start slow, and don’t rush the process. With consistent practice, you’ll find that your ability to execute these intricate vocal embellishments improves sig-

nificantly.

Vocal Health and Lifestyle Tips

A good voice isn’t just the result of natural talent and practice; it also requires a healthy lifestyle. This section is your go-to guide for maintaining optimal vocal health. With tips ranging from hydration to sleep and physical fitness, you’ll discover how to keep your vocal cords in prime condition. These guidelines are not just vital for your immediate performance but are integral to ensuring the longevity of your singing career. Adopt these habits, and you’ll be on your way to achieving and maintaining vocal excellence.

Hydrate

Hydration is key to vocal health. Water acts as a lubricant for your vocal cords, helping them vibrate more efficiently and reducing the risk

of strain or injury. Aim to drink plenty of water before, during, and after singing to keep your voice at its best. Room temperature or warm water is often recommended, as cold water can constrict your vocal cords.

Avoid Dairy Before Singing

Dairy products like milk, cheese, and yoghurt may taste great, but they’re not the best friends of a singer. Consuming dairy can lead to the production of excess mucus, which coats your vocal cords and can affect your voice quality. This mucus can make it harder to hit those high notes and sustain a clear tone. If you have a performance or practice session coming up, it’s best to steer clear of dairy products for at least a few hours beforehand.

Get Quality Sleep

Adequate sleep is crucial for optimal vocal performance. Lack of sleep can result in vocal fatigue, reduced range, and a lack of control. Aim for at least 7-8 hours of quality sleep per night, especially before important performances or recording sessions.

Good sleep supports not just your voice but also your overall health, improving focus, energy levels, and emotional stability—all essential elements for a compelling performance. Making quality sleep a priority is an often-overlooked but essential aspect of becoming a better singer.

(to be continued)

FREE YOUR VOICE

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

(continued from last month)

SOFT PALATE (cont)

Strategies and Exercises

- There is a fine line between over-arching the soft palate and lifting it subtly. I suggest the following:
 1. First relax your soft palate and sing with it (and thus the rear of your tongue) in a natural resting position.
 2. Get accustomed to that for a few minutes.
 3. Raise it 1 millimeter (or a 16th of an inch), no more. You cannot measure this, obviously. It means it is essentially the smallest movement you can make.
 4. Imagine the soft palate is displaying the tiniest hint of a smirk. This is more of a mental image than a physical action.
 5. Maintain that vague hint of a smirk comfortably and consistently throughout all breaths, pitches, and vowels.
 6. Now *allow* your sound to rise through and beyond the soft palate to your face and up into the cavities of your head.
 7. When you sing a more classical style, increase the soft palate smirk sensation to more of a grin, but do not overdo it!
- Consistent space in the rear of your mouth is crucial. Resonating vowel sounds should join as closely to each other as possible by having a rear mouth space that is *very* subtle and always there. For me, a tiny smirk in the soft palate is enough and is the image that works.
- If the image of a smirk in the soft palate does not work for you, try imagining that your soft palate is widening or broadening.
- Some singers aim to sing every word and pitch through the same internal vowel sound. This requires some experimentation to find the vowel or shape that works for you. Read more about this in the chapter on vocal placement. This approach works for some and does not for others. (For my personal set-up, it is too mechanical, muscular, and fatiguing.) You might find your own descriptive image.

(to be continued next month)

FREE SINGING TIPS

by Yvonne DeBandi
from a2z-singing-tips.com

U = Unique Voice Under Construction. Remember that your voice has its own unique fingerprint and is constantly changing with our actions, environment, health habits, etc. With this in mind, listen to your own voice often and use vocal training tools to keep your voice on the right track.

FREE SINGING TIPS

by Nicole LeGault
from a2z-singing-tips.com

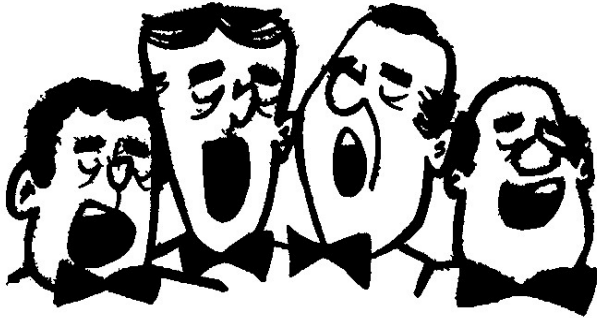
U is for Undaunted. People often take their singing ambitions very seriously, and then along comes some person of authority who says "It's unrealistic to think you'll ever be a professional" for whatever reason. Think for a moment and try to come up with the names of five superstars to whom this person would be likely to say the same thing!

FREE SINGING TIPS

by Mick Walsh
from a2z-singing-tips.com

U. Understanding. If you don't understand what your coach has told you or why you are doing a particular exercise please ask. We need feedback in order to provide you with a better service and sometimes we make mistakes. Last week I told a 6 foot four 185 lb MAN that he was a Soprano. Duh!! I didn't even realize I'd made that mistake until he came back the next week and told me what I had said. So don't be afraid to ask questions if there's something you don't understand. Still can't believe I said that!!!

CHAPTER QUARTETS



QUARTET CORNER

Our quartets have re-formed. We need more.

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.



On Point

Taylor Gaspar's tenor
Daniel Pesante lead
Timothy Keatley baritone
Alexander Burney bass

Four More Guys

Dan Kulik tenor
Ken Moyer lead
Jason Dearing baritone
John Alexander bass



FlipGive

Here's a simple way to financially support the Big Orange Chorus, at no cost to you! If you shop at any of the more than 400 merchants or like to purchase eGift Cards, FlipGive will give us back from 1% to 20%, depending on the merchant.

To sign up, visit <https://www.flipgive.com/f/570688> and start shopping.

Thanks in advance!!

Big Orange Chorus

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

| | | |
|-----|--------|-----------------------|
| Thu | 02 May | Shepherd of the Woods |
| Thu | 09 May | Shepherd of the Woods |
| Thu | 16 May | Shepherd of the Woods |
| Thu | 23 May | Shepherd of the Woods |
| Thu | 30 May | Shepherd of the Woods |
| | | |
| Thu | 06 May | Shepherd of the Woods |
| Thu | 13 May | Shepherd of the Woods |
| Thu | 20 May | Shepherd of the Woods |
| Thu | 27 May | Shepherd of the Woods |

BIRTHDAYS

| | |
|-----------------|--------|
| Bob Thau | 05 May |
| Mike Sobolewski | 13 May |
| Frank Nosalek | 28 May |
| Emily Dearing | 30 May |

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

| | | |
|-----|----------|---------------------------------|
| Wed | 01 May ? | Icemen possible game 6 |
| Sat | 11 May | Honor Flight reunion |
| Sat | 11 May | Jacksonville Festival of Choirs |
| Sat | 29 Jun | Brooks Rehab Assisted Living |

...more to come



I'll talk to anyone about anything, but sooner or later I'll tell them I sing. I'll invite them to visit on Thursday night and if they like what they hear, they just might become members and maybe they'll bring another person who likes to sing.

RECENT GUESTS

| | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Mike Ryan | McKayle Callan |
| Dale Patricu | Gary Weddel |
| Stephen Gramza | Curt Shepherd |
| Conner Barber | Craig Dopp |
| Julian Bryson | Bob Lemons |
| Jim Hughes | Chris Loken |
| Elias Dandar | Dean Lang |
| J Brown | Bill Mumford |
| Margie Phillips | Shamus McIner |
| Sirlister Smiley | Rob Taylor |
| Peter Gugisberg | Toby Max |
| Carl Kircher | Dante Alcantara |
| Jon Woodbine | Bob Crino |
| Cody Rios | John Rios |
| Peyton Rios | Kadin Rios |
| Ian Bula | Bill Woods |
| David Ferriss | Henry Rodriguez |
| Bill Woodbeck | Missy Reardon |

WELCOME

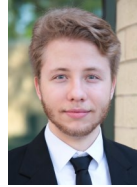
NEWEST MEMBERS

| | |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Daniel Pesante | March |
| Kenneth Moyer | June |
| Richard Chapman | July |
| Taylor Despars | September |
| Dan Kulik | September |
| Steve Moody | September |
| Margaret Phillips | September |
| Lee Hillman | October |
| Ken Huang | October |
| Ron Blewett | January |
| Bob Crino | February |
| Bob Ice | February |

2024 DIRECTING TEAM



Daniel Pesante
Front Line
Director



Timothy Keatley
Assistant
Director

2024 OTHER CHAPTER LEADERS



David Walker
Uniform
Manager



Les Mower
Chorus
Manager



John Alexander
Bulletin
Editor



Frank Nosalek
Webmaster &
Technology



Ken Moyer
Equipment
Manager

EDITOR'S NOTE

Article and column submissions are solicited.
Help make this a better bulletin. Send me stuff!
The deadline for June is 24 May.
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
More specific and timely performance information
is in my weekly sheet, *Orange Zest*.

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

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Tenor
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Jason Dearing
Bari
Sec Ldr



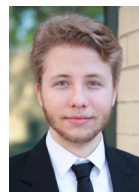
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Coordinator

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



John Alexander, Editor
2429 Southern Links Dr
Orange Park FL 32003



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