



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 904-355-SING No Experience Necessary

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WE ARE IN THE LISTENING BUSINESS

by Brody McDonald
from choirbites.org

Let's face it people, we are in the listening business. In order to be great singers, we have to listen all the time. And I'm sure you understand there is a big difference between listening and hearing. Hearing is just the main physical activity where sound is processed into your brain. Listening is actively processing that sound for content.

To what should you be listening? How about...

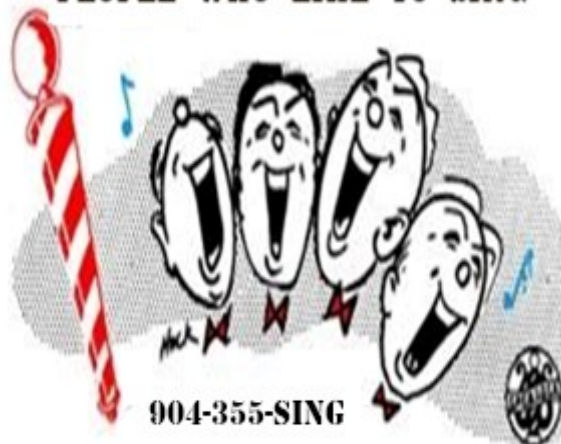
- The director
- The tonal center
- The singers around you
- The vowel shape (formant)
- Entrances and cutoffs
- Music you love
- Music you don't love
- Music you don't know
- Music you on which you are currently working in your choir
- Other groups like yours
- Multiple versions of the same song: multiple ensembles performing the same song in the same style or the same song covered in different genres
- Static noises around you like the refrigerator, the air conditioner, the beep beep of a truck backing up, or even the fire alarm. Can you harmonize with them?
- Groups better than yours for inspiration
- Groups worse than yours for perspective

I used to sing in a barbershop quartet, and we were coached by a woman named Jean Barford. Before she would coach us, she would listen to CDs of champion quartets. She told us she was calibrating her ears.

That's what listening is. We take in information through our ears, analyze it, and use the processed data to improve what we do. We're not just calibrating our ears, we're calibrating our musicianship. We're calibrating ourselves.

WANTED!!

PEOPLE WHO LIKE TO SING



904-355-SING

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For more detailed, timely information see my weekly publication:
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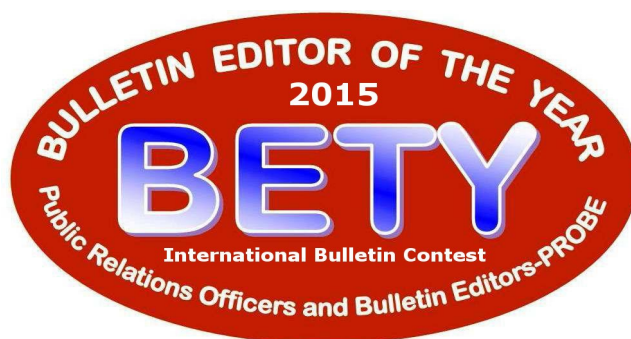
EDITORIAL

We are working toward the fall district contest cycle as well as the Christmas show(s). We are moving ahead, sounding good, and ready to move up to bigger and better things. Don't miss an opportunity to hand out chorus/quartet business cards.

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.



SINGING WITH EMOTION

by Ken Taylor
from askavocalcoach.com

One of the best definitions I've ever heard of music came from one of my college classes where a student defined music as, "*Emotion that you can hear.*"

And really, when you sit back and think about why we enjoy the different music we listen to, it's usually because it makes us feel something or because it's in line with what we're feeling. Sometimes we're aware of this, and sometimes we're not, but think about it...

What type of songs do you listen to when you are:

- Happy?
- Sad?
- Frustrated?
- Excited?
- Angry?
- Overwhelmed?
- Intoxicatingly in love?

My guess is you probably have certain songs or artists that you listen to for each of these.

So why does this work? Well, psychology teaches us two things:

1. We like people that are like us, and,
2. The most dominant emotion in the room is the most contagious.

So, if you're in a mood that's portrayed well by an artist, then you're going to be drawn to their music. But at the same point in time, if an artist connects well with a song, they can start to pull you in that direction emotionally as well, helping to bring you deeper into the song.

Truth is, you have the power to do this as well. If you're performing, you are automatically the dominant emotion in the room because you have a mic. From there, all you have to do is choose the right songs to connect with your audience, then sing your song in a genuine and therefore contagious way, and your audience will be eating out of the palm of your hands.

So now that we understand that music is about more than just notes and words on a page that can be translated into flowing melodies, let's talk for a minute about what we as singers can do to make our voices connect with others even more on an emotional plane.

Analyze the Song

In order to help your listeners fully feel a song, you've got to know on a deep level how you, the singer, feel

when you say each part of the song. Some songs have a consistent emotional feel, but most will evolve into different emotions throughout the course of the song.

For example, take the song "Forget You" by Cee Lo Green (which I'll admit to indulging in from time to time). In it, I'd argue that the main emotion of the chorus is hurt/angry, while the verse tends to be a little bit more frustrated in feeling, and in the bridge he's so upset, he breaks out into sounding like a blubbering fool... all the while, the music is fun, upbeat, and makes people feel good (ironic, isn't it?).

Which brings me to my next point... the emotion portrayed in the singers voice doesn't always have to be in line with the lyrics. Sometimes we use sarcasm to evoke emotion in a song (listen to Cake's "Never There").

So, before you start to *really* sing a song, sit back and take a few minutes to break down each line of that song so that you know exactly what feeling you want to portray during in that line. Once you do that, you're ready to start adding the emotion.

Different Ways to Add Emotion into Singing

Adding emotion to a song can be done in so many different ways that it'll make your head spin. You can use variations of dynamics and tone, you can speak the words in different ways focusing on the vowels or consonants, you can color the tone by using vocal fry, growling, breathiness, cracking... the list is endless.

But here's the deal... if you have to manufacture it, it's fake.

Said differently, if you *create* these different tones and colors in the voice, but there's no emotion behind it, then your listeners will know and you can kiss that connection goodbye. Think about it... has someone ever told you that they loved you, but you knew in that moment what they were saying wasn't genuine? Same thing.

We can go through the process of manufacturing these sounds all day long, but without us genuinely feeling what we're saying, it's all for naught. That's why it's so important for us as artists to wear our hearts on our sleeves.

Wearing Your Heart On Your Sleeve

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SINGING WITH EMOTION (continued)

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This can be one of the most difficult things for an artist to do. In order to be successful, we have to make ourselves vulnerable in a way that shows people how we really feel.

Anna Nalick addresses this in her song *Breath* (2am) when she says,

“And I feel like I’m naked in front of the crowd
cause these words are my diaries screaming out loud
and I know that you’ll use them however you
want to.”

Honestly, not everyone can do this. Not everyone can let the world in. Not everyone is willing to give others a window into their soul and show them what it’s like when they’re not wearing their everyday “*everything’s alright*” mask. But, not everyone can touch their audience in a real way either.

Good singers are a dime a dozen... Great singers that connect with their audience in a real way are rare indeed. To me, Singing with Emotion is one of the biggest differences in the two.

So, how do we share that emotion?

Singing with Emotion

There are songs that you have first hand experience with... in other words, you’ve experienced nearly the exact same scenario discussed in the song. It’s by far easiest to connect emotionally to these songs. All you have to do is go back in your head and relive that experience in your mind. But don’t just visualize what happened... feel it in your body. Make it as real as possible to you. Once you’ve done this, your voice will naturally take over.

However, there are some song plots that you haven’t experienced directly. In this situation, it’s easiest to define the main emotions, and try to feel them in your body as well. You can do this by reliving another experience that may have made you feel a similar way, or simply imagine what that emotion would feel like and take it from there. To me, the biggest key is finding a way to physically feel it within your body. If you can do this, you’re golden.

Application

All of this is worth nothing if you don’t take the time to apply it to your singing. So, go now and find a song that you can connect with. Analyze it so that you know specifically how every line should make you feel. Start making yourself feel those emotions and sing through it a time or two and see what comes out. Play with the dynamics, the color of the tone, different inflections, and the length that you hold different notes until you’ve created your own version of the song that is so contagiously emotional that your listeners become putty in the palm of your hands.

Follow these guidelines on singing with emotion with each song you perform, and if you really allow yourself to be vulnerable (and you choose songs that will connect with your audience), then you’ll see a huge difference in the response the crowd gives you. Guaranteed.

**Never underestimate the impact
just one note can have on a
song, just one song can have on
a person, and just one musician
can have on the world.**



CORRECT BREATHING AND "SUPPORT" FOR SINGING PART 2

by Karyn O'Connor
from singwise.com

HOW TO DEVELOP BETTER BREATH MANAGEMENT SKILLS

I caution students of voice to not be in a hurry to increase the lengths of phrases or sustained notes, and I encourage them to take a more gradual approach to developing superior breath management skills. I prefer that students build their strength gradually by systematically increasing the difficulty of vocal exercises (e.g., increasing the duration of sung phrases, scales, and sustained notes, incrementally lengthening their lessons, decreasing the amount of breaks or pauses taken between or during exercises, etc.)

Although exercises intended to directly strengthen the muscles of breathing can be, and possibly ought to be, assigned to individual students who need some extra help finding coordination or synchronization between their 'motors' (the breath management system) and their 'vibrators' (their larynxes), these exercises should always be taught in context. The student should be offered a reason for the assigned exercise, and an explanation for why or how it is relevant to singing. These exercises should never involve unnatural use of the support muscles, or use of them in ways that will not benefit the student's breath management (e.g., the singer should be able to 'translate' the actions of the support muscles during these exercises into actions of these same muscle groups during singing, or directly apply them to their breathing during singing).

Below are a few basic breathing exercises that you can try on your own, as well as some general advice. With these suggested exercises, I am not attempting to take the place of a 'live and in person' vocal teacher who can provide you with knowledge, feedback and expert guidance. A good vocal instructor will help a student become aware of his or her breath, and learn how to use it and how to get the most out of it. I am merely offering some tips for starting out toward applying natural and augmented breathing technique to your singing and speaking. I also have included a list of exercises that are commonly assigned by teachers or suggested on Internet forums but that are not helpful or safe ones.

I am not a strong advocate of exercises and breathing techniques that force the singer to do any action that is unnatural, or that violate the natural functioning of the body, and certainly not any that might cause muscular strain or place excessive force on the vocal folds during phonation.

At some point during his or her training, a singer will hopefully discover an effective balance between effort and ease, and will find employing enhanced breathing techniques to require little effort once mastery of the skills has been achieved.

More advice on how to improve breathing for singing can be found in *Tips For Practicing Singing: A Practical Guide To Vocal Development* (at singwise.com).

BUILD A STRONG CORE

Strengthening the abdominal muscles and back muscles outside of and before vocal training can be beneficial for a singer. If the muscles that support the breathing mechanism are well toned, the singer will likely find fewer problems with support later on. Pilates style workouts that target and strengthen the core of the body are great for singers. (Note: For post-partum women, these types of exercises are contraindicated because they can worsen the separation between the main abdominal muscle - the rectus abdominus - that typically occurs during pregnancy, leaving the muscles stretched and more lax. For female singers with this issue, other exercises ought to be used to rebuild abdominal and back strength.)

Having strong muscles, however, doesn't automatically translate to coordinated breathing and singing. The types of muscle contractions that are required during typical abdominal exercises or workouts don't precisely mirror the actions of those same muscles during breathing and singing. (For example, in no other activity is the upward rise of the diaphragm delayed and the last part of the breath cycle intentionally drawn out through maintenance of the initial inspiratory posture.) However, having strong core muscles places the singer in the position of being strong enough to learn how to use the muscles to support the tone. If they aren't strong enough, then they may struggle more to try to learn to use them in a new or demanding way. You won't be able to do so with much success. (If you have ever been placed in a position where your abdominal and back muscles have lost their strength - for example, after pregnancy, C-sections or other abdominal surgery, extended lack of use due to illness, etc. - you would be very aware of the difference between how singing is sufficiently supported by strong muscles and how it is insufficiently supported by weak muscles.)

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CORRECT BREATHING AND "SUPPORT"
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Strengthen the muscles of the body first, then learn how to use them in specific ways later.

In well supported singing, there is a complex balance between relaxation and antagonism between the various muscle groups that support the breath. Breathing for singing does require relaxation. Singers cannot support their voices well while there is excess tension in their bodies, or if they are attempting to force their breath out in unnatural ways. However, it is impossible to completely relax the torso during inhalation (so that the diaphragm can descend). Muscles are involved and are doing work, so there is some muscular contraction, especially in the back. However, there is a sense of 'lack of tension' that should accompany well coordinated breathing. You shouldn't feel the muscles straining to expand or contract. If you are strong and coordinated enough, you might be aware that they are working, but that work will be easy - like lifting something very light. Building muscular strength makes the work of breathing and supporting the singing tone easier. If you are weak, you will have to work much harder to produce the same results, if you can, but will tire more easily.

In maintaining appoggio, the muscles must have a tremendous amount of control to prevent the premature rising of the diaphragm and to keep the air stream steady and consistent. Weak muscles will sometimes spasm or shake when being worked hard, and this means that the diaphragm will rise at an inconsistent rate and air flowing from the lungs will also be unsteady, leading to an unsteady tone and irregular vibrancy rate.

MAINTAIN STRONG AND HEALTHY LUNGS

It is also beneficial for the singer to achieve good cardiovascular health. A strong heart ensures that the body is well oxygenated, and healthy lungs enable the singer to breathe clearly and to maximize lung capacity.

Of course, anything that is potentially damaging to heart and lung health or affects their ability to function optimally, such as smoking or exposure to second hand smoke, ought to be avoided.

BREATHING EXERCISES

Using Hands and Mirrors For Feedback: A first exercise to help assess whether or not you are breathing properly involves spreading both hands as if you

were wearing mittens (i.e., fingers together but thumbs spread), then placing the fingers over the upper abdomen just below where the ribs meet (pointing forward and toward the centre of the body) and positioning the thumbs (pointing backward) on the lower ribs. This is just below where the diaphragm is located. Breathe in and out deeply and very slowly while making a little 'wind' noise, and feel your hands moving in and out with each breath. Maintain relaxation.

Making a little audible breathing noise - not whistling - is sometimes a helpful source of secondary feedback for some students because it allows them to hear their breath and to increase their awareness of it as it enters and leaves their bodies. Then, they can connect it to the actions that they are feeling in their abdomens, lower ribs and backs. It also tends to encourage deeper, less inhibited breathing. Always ensure, though, that you are not making a sighing noise or gesture (e.g., raising the shoulders and expanding then collapsing the rib cage), as this will cause tensions and will not produce good relationships between the body and the larynx.

You should feel the expansion of the epigastric region - the area between the bottom of the sternum and the navel and extending outward to the lower part of the ribs on each side - as you inhale. (I've heard some teachers describe this sensation or state as "fat and full".) Lower rib movement may be very subtle and a little difficult to detect at first. If your hands aren't moving noticeably in and out, you likely aren't using your support muscles correctly, or you are not inhaling as deeply and fully as you should be.

However, do not try to force expansion of the abdominal wall. Downward and outward thrusting of the abdominal wall actuates tensions in the lower trunk, generating sphincter action also at the level of the larynx, resulting in pressed phonation. It also causes the ribs to move inward and the sternum to fall, and reduces contact of the abdominal musculature with the eleventh and twelfth ribs in the low dorsal area. These actions diminish lung volume and contribute to the rate of rising subglottic pressure. Let the movement be natural and comfortable.

From time to time, you may see singers placing a hand on their upper abdomens while they are performing. When this happens, the singer has likely realized that he or she isn't using his or her breath correctly and is now using the hand on the diaphragm area to serve as a reminder or a physical cue to return his or her focus to that area of the body. Sometimes, it is helpful for new singers to

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CORRECT BREATHING AND "SUPPORT" (continued)

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keep their hands in this spot during lessons or performances until breathing correctly becomes second nature to them - until they do it consistently

This exercise is done most effectively in front of a mirror because the visual feedback is particularly helpful. Your chest and shoulders should not rise as you breathe. Although there may be some subtle movement as a result of the lungs filling up and expanding, there should be minimal chest displacement and the rib cage should not collapse between breaths. Breathe deeply, and feel the muscles in your back and abdomen 'supporting' the diaphragm's movements. Watch for any tension that might be building up in your jaw, neck or chest.

Breathing can also be monitored from a supine position. A singer can lie down on his or her back and watch or feel with the hands the natural movements of the abdominal wall during inhalation and expiration. (As I caution below, though, placing an object such as a book on the abdomen to help watch for movement is not advisable.)

If you are breathing properly during these exercises and if you are truly making everything connect for the first time, you should feel your **intercostal muscles** - the muscles that wrap around your rib cage, between the ribs themselves - working hard, and they will feel a little tired, just like your other muscles do when they are being used a lot, used in new ways or are being given a good workout. (This is not to be confused with 'intercostal breathing', which is widely believed to be less efficient in terms of breath management.) You won't feel them working hard during normal speech and activity because your body doesn't require as much air to accomplish these tasks, so they don't need to expand and contract as quickly, fully or for as long as they do when you are singing. Eventually, they will get stronger, and it will become easier and more natural to breathe correctly while singing. The stronger that these muscles (as well as the other muscles involved in breathing) become, the better 'supported' your breath will be, assuming that you are able to achieve synchronization between these support muscles and your larynx, and the more efficient you will become at using your breath during singing.

Silent Breath Renewals: In time, silent breathing should be practiced, as silent breath renewals are required during singing tasks. **Nose breathing** is a good solution for singers who are noisy breathers or

who are unable to breath low enough into the body due to a poorly prepared vocal tract. Breathing through the nose slows down the pace at which the singer is able to fill up his or her lungs to capacity, which allows the singer to maintain the gesture of inhalation over a longer period of time. Since during nose breathing the larynx and the body of the tongue lower slightly, and the zygomatic muscles elevate the fascia of the cheek region, thus raising the velum, relaxation of the vocal tract is induced. In other words, this slower inhalation ideally positions the vocal tract, the larynx and the musculature of the abdominal wall. (See Breath Pacing, below.)

'Breathing Out the Voice': In order to better understand the connection between the breath and the voice, it is sometimes helpful to exhale while vocalizing or phonating. Inhale, feeling the movement of the upper abdomen and lower ribs, and then exhale while saying, 'Ahhh'. (This sound should have a duration of two to three seconds.) Towards the end of the exhale, switch to just breath (no 'Ah') and feel the air whoosh out of your body. Breathe out your voice. Feel how the body supports the breath and the action of the diaphragm whether or not there is sound being made at the laryngeal level. Feel how the entire exercise happens on one continuous stream of breath.

Farinelli Maneuver (and a Variation): A breathing exercise that moves the student toward appoggio technique involves learning to keep the diaphragm (and belly and lower ribs) distended throughout the breath cycle, as though the singer is still inhaling during exhalation. (This centuries old concept expressed by great teachers of the past such as Giovanni Battista Lamperti, is sometimes paraphrased 'singing on the gesture of inhalation'.) Gaining better control over the muscles and diaphragm can help to slow down the rate at which you use up your air, which is ideal for situations in which notes, especially high notes, must be sustained for several measures, or during coloratura or lengthy vocal passages.

Inhale deeply and quickly, then suspend (but do not 'hold') that breath while keeping the abdomen and lower ribs in the 'outward' position of inhalation for three seconds. Increase this to four then five seconds once you are stronger and have better control. Exhale slowly, allowing the abdominal wall to return to its resting, inward position by the end of the exhale. Once you have mastered keeping your diaphragm low while suspending your breath, attempt to keep it in the same position while exhaling very slowly. Making the muscles that support breathing work harder like this can increase stamina and

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CORRECT BREATHING AND "SUPPORT"
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strength, allowing you better regulation and use of your airflow. (This is a simpler variation on the Farinelli exercise outlined below because the inhalation phase of the breath cycle is quicker.)

When this exercise becomes easier, begin developing control over all aspects of the breath cycle and increasing the length of time that you are able to maintain the initial position of inhalation. First, slowly pace quiet inhalation over four seconds. Remain in the inspiratory position for a count of four seconds, neither inhaling nor exhaling nor **holding your breath**, which incites laryngeal and abdominal tensions, and will produce overly firm glottal closure and impede flow phonation during singing. Finally, quietly and evenly exhale for a count of four seconds, gradually and slowly allowing the diaphragm to rise and return to its 'resting' position only near the end of the breath cycle. Gradually increase the time spent in each of these three steps until a count of ten - thirty seconds in total - is comfortable. (This exercise is known as the **Farinelli Maneuver** or **Farinelli Exercise**.)

Regularly repeat this process a number of times every day. (It can easily and inconspicuously be practiced in the car, on the bus, while sitting at a work desk or in a classroom, etc..) Be careful not to push air out at the end of the breath cycle, especially in an effort to dispose of the 'old' air and quickly replenish the lungs with 'fresh' air. Put differently, be careful not allow yourself to get to the point where you feel as though you are completely out of air and must gasp for air. Breath renewals should be relaxed, quiet and well paced.

Breath Pacing: Breath pacing is a practice that singers must perfect during singing tasks if they hope to be able to regulate their air efficiently. In **breath pacing**, the singer learns to match the amount of air taken in during breath renewals to the amount of air required for the given vocal task and also avoid unsteady breathing throughout the breath cycle, from inhalation to the expelling of air during phonation, by taking in air at regular intervals. This means that, in time, the singer will learn to not 'gasp for air' during quick breath renewals, 'tank up' or hold the breath in advance of the next phrase, or use up more air than is necessary for the given vocal task. Breathy onsets will also be improved.

Rhythmic breath pacing exercises should be tried in a comfortable range. For example, at a moderate tempo, sing onset measures of quarter notes, taking a silent breath (a quarter note of rest) either through the mouth or through the nose after each note. Each measure or two of quarter notes can be concluded with a brief sustained note. With notes being so short in duration and breath renewals happening so frequently, the singer must be careful not to inhale too deeply, or else he or she might begin to feel lightheaded or hyperventilate.

The tempo of the exercise and the duration of the individual notes can be altered, and pacing can be shortened or lengthened to correspond to the intervals of rest between phrases. In time, the singer learns to inhale more appropriate levels of air for the phrase that will follow and learns to take breaths at more regular intervals while singing. The goal is to achieve control and steadiness over the breath cycle and a sense of calm and relaxation in how the singer approaches preparation for singing a phrase.

Application: Once you are breathing with the correct mechanism, discover how your breath is connected to your voice - how it fuels it - by applying it to your singing.

Sing a single line of a simple song, paying special attention to all aspects of your breathing. Inhale silently and only take in enough air to comfortably complete the phrase and support the tone without feeling as though you are running out of breath at the end. Then sing two lines of the song in succession, being sure to pace your breathing and to match your air levels to the phrases. Do not rapidly push out the breath, and do not hold back the breath energy. Keep your breathing steady and controlled. As you build your technical skills, gradually increase the level of difficulty of the songs that you sing. Practice pacing your breathing.

BREATHING EXERCISES TO AVOID

Exercise One: One exercise that some instructors have their students try involves lying down and placing a thick book on their chests. The premise is that lying on the floor encourages relaxation and allows the body to be still enough for motion in the diaphragmatic region to be more readily seen, and the book makes the movement of the diaphragm more pronounced. The students receive feedback about the correctness or incorrectness of their breathing by watching the movement of the book. If the book moves up and down, then the singer is breathing thoracically - from his or her chest - rather than diaphragmatically. (Remember that all of the body's movement while breathing should be seen in the soft, abdominal area.)

CORRECT BREATHING AND "SUPPORT"
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This exercise, while not likely to be harmful, encourages the use of weight or resistance that is unnatural. It is highly unlikely that a singer will ever be placed in the uncomfortable position of having to sing while a weight is stationed on his or her chest. Also, a singer seldom, if ever, finds himself or herself lying down during singing tasks. It is better, instead, to develop the connection and coordination in ways that mimic real life or normal singing situations.

Exercise Two: To exaggerate the movement of the diaphragm, some misguided teachers have their students place a heavy book on their stomachs instead of their chests. The students breathe in and out deeply and watch the up and down movement of the book to ensure that the movement during breathing is originating from the diaphragm. If the book doesn't move up and down with the students' breathing, then the students are either breathing from the chest instead of the diaphragm or are not breathing deeply enough.

However, I especially do not recommend this variation on the exercise, as it risks placing strain on the support muscles, especially in singers and new students who have not yet developed good strength and control of these muscles. Furthermore, with an object putting excess and unnatural weight on the part of the abdomen that should be freely expanding during breathing, students are inclined to expand the hypogastric (pelvic and lower abdominal) area instead of the epigastric area or the chest and will attempt to use other muscle groups to force the abdomen to move, which means that they aren't learning to breathe properly. It is better to develop these muscles gently and gradually, and I feel that it is neither necessary nor safe to use artificial forms of resistance, such as books, to strengthen the breath support muscles.

Exercise Three: Another exercise that is thought to strengthen the muscles that support breathing - see *Anatomy of the Voice* for more information on which muscle groups aid in breath management - and help the singer make the larynx-lower body connection involves exhaling with rapid, forceful breaths. The singer is supposed to inhale deeply and quickly, taking in as much air as he or she can, as quickly as he or she can, and then push the air out of the lungs in three staccato (short and quick) breaths, using the third breath to rapidly expel as much of the remaining air as possible.

(Think of an imaginary fist delivering three consecutive imaginary punches to the stomach, 'knocking' a third of the 'wind' out of you with each blow to the gut.) Oftentimes, at the end of the breath, the student is asked to suck the stomach inward at the spot where the ribs come together in the front, or pretend as though he or she is drawing the stomach back toward the spine. The student should see and feel the upper abdomen move inwards and upwards dramatically with each quick exhale, and pause between each of them. The student is encouraged to watch that he or she is not simply creating the illusion of forceful exhalation by making noises solely with the mouth rather than using the diaphragmatic muscles to vigorously push the air out, which creates the sound. In other words, the staccato breaths should be originating from the brief, rapid and forceful pushes of the diaphragmatic and partner-ing muscles.

The inherent problems with this exercise are that it does not mimic what happens during singing tasks because a singer does not exhale in several quick fits and starts and that it does not train the singer to maintain the initial inspiratory position - to 'sing on the gesture of inhalation'. Instead, it encourages a rapid, forceful and irregularly paced rising of the diaphragm, which is not beneficial to the singer in the long run for many reasons. **Rapid breath expulsion** has no relationship to controlled breath management because it does not train the singer to pace airflow for the tasks of the literature to be sung. While this exercise might help to strengthen the support muscles because of the rapid contractions required - just like those used in abdominal 'crunches' and other core strengthening exercises - a singer should never breathe with this much force, rapidity and unevenness during phonation (singing or speech) as it will place too much air pressure on the vocal folds and lead to pushing and vocal injury. It will also negatively impact endurance and vibrancy (e.g., vibrato rate).

Exercise Four: One exercise commonly taught by those who teach singing techniques for the theatre employs a **Lamaze** style of rhythmic breathing that is sometimes taught during childbirth classes. Lamaze was developed to allow labouring women to maximize the control that they have over their breathing and to get into rhythmic patterns that would ensure that they would not hold their breath during contractions or pushing, (thus allowing both mother and baby to maintain good oxygen levels), and to distract them and help them manage their pain. Unfortunately, this '**panting**' mimicks neither the natural breath cycle nor the augmented breathing patterns associated with well-supported singing, and it can easily lead to lightheadness and hyperventilation. It does not assist the singer in breath pacing.

(Continued on page 10)

CORRECT BREATHING AND "SUPPORT" (continued)

(Continued from page 9)

The notion that there must be consciously induced breath emission over the vocal folds in order to produce a singing tone is false, and leads to the development and teaching of exercises like those described above that cause a student to believe that if the muscles of the abdomen are not moving inward and upward energetically and noticeably during phonation, the tone is not well supported. Distension of the abdomen and lower ribs upon inhalation may be minimal (especially when the phrase is shorter, requiring less breath) and the inward and upward movement of the diaphragm and abdomen subtle during well-supported singing.

Also, rigidity of the support mechanism and tension often ensue whenever a singer attempts to control the breath process directly at either the abdomen or the larynx. Even strong muscles need to be able to move freely - to be flexible - so that stiffness does not interfere with the sound's freedom.

< WIRELESS EMERGENCY ALERTS

Presidential alert

THIS IS A TEST of the National Wireless Emergency Alert System. All leads must now sing baritone.

Oct 3, 2:18 PM

WE'VE REACHED DOUBLE DIGITS!

ONLY 99 SLEEPS UNTIL CHRISTMAS!



BRINGING SINGERS TOGETHER IN HARMONY AND GROWING THE INFLUENCE OF BARBERSHOP

by Fletcher Lanning
from barbershop.org

Vocal Summit, part of the Portland, OR chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society, spread the good news of harmony by hosting a unique festival aimed at community choral organizations in the Northwest. Justin Miller, Musical Director of Vocal Summit, previously of multi-time International Champions Westminster Chorus, has been directing community choral organizations for over two decades, but it was his 15 years as a high school music educator that helped him see the opportunity to bring something new to his community. "In high school, and to a lesser extent in college, there exist a lot of opportunities for young singers to travel to festivals to perform, receive high-quality feedback, and hear what other groups are bringing to the stage," says Miller. "That ecosystem just doesn't exist for adult singers." The pitch: Bring together community choral arts organizations from around the Portland area to sing for each other, receive expert feedback, and build an energetic community to help support Portland choral arts for years to come!



Matt Erickson, President of Vocal Summit and lead organizer of the festival, launched the project with the primary goal of building relationships within the Portland choral community. Erickson is a longtime choral singer who also sings with Cantico Singers, a chamber chorale that participated in the event. "This festival truly embodied a spirit of collaboration" and "provided a unique opportunity for choirs to benefit from the insightful feedback and instruction of our amazing clinician, Jason Sabino." Jason is a respected professional clinician and Artistic Director of the Oregon Chorale, an 80-voice symphonic

(Continued on page 11)

BRINGING SINGERS TOGETHER
(continued)

choir and well-established force in the Portland, OR arts scene. "Overall, the festival has received a lot of positive feedback" and left "everyone inspired and eager to hear about future gatherings."



As a growing chorus and aspiring community arts organization, Vocal Summit is always looking for ways to be more involved in the local arts scene. Though this idea had been mentioned as a long-term project early in the chorus's history, work on the festival didn't begin in earnest until February of 2024. Looking at the performance calendar and knowing the seasonal cycles of many choral groups, May seemed like the perfect place to plant a flag. Vocal Summit needed a place to grow from and didn't want to wait a whole cycle to get started. The chorus immediately got to work finding a venue and crafting a letter to introduce themselves and this project to the community. The response was strong, and though not every group had enough planning time to be involved in the first year, there were enough participants to fill the space with song—and a growing number who hope to be involved next year.

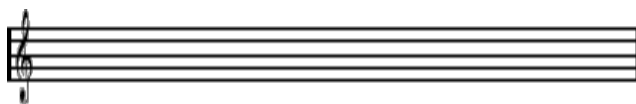


In the Barbershop world, we know the value of building relationships beyond the stage. We know that creating new ways to connect with our community is a critical step in bringing new voices into our traditions. To grow our society and preserve this truly American art form we must find methods of recruitment that stretch beyond nostalgia. Events like the Portland Community Choral Summit create opportunities to share our unique musical perspective while integrating with the powerful tradition of choral singing in America. If you speak with other barbershoppers, you'll hear countless variations of how folks found the hobby, and no two stories are exactly alike. If we want to hear new stories in years to come, we must create those opportunities today.

Our culture has entered what feels like an unprecedented period of retreat from community. Multiple studies show an increase in reports of loneliness. Many of the traditional places to share space and collaborate with others are either disappearing or have become politicized in a way that creates more division than connection. Choral singing has the power to reverse this trend. Singing with others has been shown to have a multitude of benefits for the individual, such as a reduction in stress hormones and an increase in the proteins and enzymes that keep us healthy. Being expressive and emoting as a group also promotes social cohesion and harmony at a time when group connections are scarce.

Those who participate in choral singing consistently show much higher levels of civic engagement, charitable giving/volunteering, and social connection at all ages. Choruses bring together folks from a wide variety of backgrounds, differing by age, income, and social affiliation to a degree that few other social groups or hobbies can match. One in six U.S. adults participate in some form of choral group, and finding new and innovative ways to connect with those 50+ million people, many of whom may not have heard of Barbershop beyond a local production of the *Music Man*, can only benefit us and strengthen our place within the musical history of America.

If anyone is interested in finding out how your chapter can host a similar event we would be happy to share any information that would be helpful. Feel free to contact Matt Erickson:
matthewerickson19@gmail.com



HOW TO KEEP MUSIC FEELING FRESH THROUGH REPEATED PERFORMANCES

by Dr Noa Kageyama
from bulletproofmusician.com

Earlier this year, I stumbled across a restaurant which served the best chicken tikka masala I'd ever had. It was so good, that one day, I ate it for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Of course, I quickly ruined things by eating it so frequently that its awesomeness started to fade. And it no longer seemed as delicious as I remembered.

I imagine we've all experienced something like this in our lives. Because whether it's a new car, your new buckwheat-filled wonder pillow, or a new concerto that you're working on, at some point, everything loses the fresh, shiny luster of newness, and starts becoming a little more blah.

It's a phenomenon known as "habituation." And this can be a tricky issue to overcome when you have to work on the same music for a long period of time or perform the same repertoire over and over again.

So is there anything we can do to prevent habituation? Any strategies to keep things feeling fresh even if you're practicing or performing music that you've been playing for months, years, or even decades?

A 2009 study provides some clues on a strategy that could help increase your level of engagement with the music you're playing, whether in the practice room or on stage.

A mindfulness study

A trio of researchers (including Harvard mindfulness researcher Ellen Langer and conductor/educator/tennis-executive Timothy Russell) ran a study to test out a mindfulness-based approach to performing music (Langer et al., 2009).

They were curious to see what effect this might have on the musicians' experience of the performance. And they were also curious to see how this might affect the audience's experience as well.

A typical approach

To find out, they recruited 60 members of a college orchestra to perform the finale from Brahms's Symphony No. 1 two times.

The first time, the conductor gave the orchestra the following instructions:

"Think about the finest performance of this piece that you can remember, and play it that way."

This was the control condition. The idea was to give the musicians an aspirational and presumably motivational goal – but one that was comparatively passive. Geared more towards *recreating* a performance than creating it anew in the moment.

And a more mindful approach

Before the second performance (the experimental condition), the musicians were given a different set of instructions. This time they were asked to:

"Play this piece in the finest manner you can, offering subtle new nuances to your performance."

The idea with these instructions was to get the musicians to be more present and mindful. To think more creatively and spontaneously in the moment, and be more improvisational in their performance.

The musicians' experience

To see what sort of impact these two sets of instructions might have on the performers' level of engagement, the musicians were asked to rate their enjoyment of the performance after each run-through.

And was there any difference?

Indeed there was! Musicians rated the more mindful, improvisational performance as being more enjoyable. Which suggests that being more actively involved in creating something new is more engaging than striving to recreate something from the past.

And what about the audience's experience of these two performances?

The audience's experience

To see if there was a meaningful and discernible difference between the two versions of the finale from the listeners' perspective, the researchers played back the two recordings for an audience of 143 community choir members.

And as you can probably guess, a significant majority of the audience members – 88% – did express a preference between the two recordings. Which suggests that there was some discernible difference between the two performances.

(Continued on page 13)

HOW TO KEEP MUSIC FEELING FRESH
(continued)

(Continued from page 12)

But which performance would they prefer? The “regular” approach to performing? Or the more mindfulness-based approach?

Well, some listeners did prefer the regular version, but 83% preferred the more dynamic, improvisational, mindfulness-based performance!

Wait a minute...

Of course, performances are often better the second time, so could this have anything to do with the audience's preference?

To make sure these results weren't due to the “it's-always-better-the-second-time” phenomenon, the researchers conducted a follow-up study with a few design tweaks to make sure this wasn't the reason why the audience preferred take #2.

And for the most part, the results were the same. As in the first study, the musicians enjoyed the mindful, improvisatory approach more. And once again, the majority of the audience members preferred the mindful version too.

So what can we take away from all of this?

Takeaways

Well, whether you're in the practice room, in a rehearsal, or in the middle of your thousandth Nutcracker, try experimenting with more “subtle new nuances” in your playing.

See what happens when instead of trying to replicate a perfect performance, you shift your focus to creating cool moments and highlighting new nuances as you play.

As we saw from today's study, not only is this mindset likely to make practicing and performing that music more fun for you, but it could very well enhance the listener's experience as well! And though it wasn't the focus of this particular study, utilizing this mindfulness strategy could potentially help keep you more engaged and stave off habituation in your practice and performance of whatever is on your stand. Whether it's familiar music that you've played for years, or relatively new music that you're still getting to know.

WHEN IS MUSIC READY TO PERFORM?

by Liz Garnett
from helpingyouharmonise.com

Another one here that emerges from a series of conversations with people in different parts of my musical life. ‘Performance-readiness’ sounds like it should be a relatively easy thing to define, but my observation is that there are wildly different views on what people take it mean in practice.

So at one extreme there is the position that a piece needs to be highly polished before it is fit to be shared with others. And, while in many ways I like the commitment to high standards this view implies, in practice it often serves as a procrastination tactic. ‘I'm not ready yet, I need to practice more,’ is a way of avoiding the risks inherent in a performing situation by hiding behind an activity that you're never going to be judged harshly for wanting to undertake. Doing more practice is always a Good Thing, and so can usefully be deployed to deflect criticism for holding back from performance.

The problem with this extreme is that it imagines perfection, or even merely excellence, as a static state that one will eventually attain. The thing is, though, that every time you get better at music, your capacity to perceive other things improve at also increases, so your concept of ‘ready’ always dangles out ahead of you in the future like a mirage that disappears as you arrive at where you thought it was, only to reappear just ahead of you again.

And you learn different things in performance from in rehearsal, so in fact you'll never actually reach excellence without taking a piece through the process of performance, usually several times, on its route into the state of ‘established repertoire’. The first couple of times will never be as good as the third and subsequent, so the question shifts to that of: at what stage of near-readiness is it good enough to share with others?

The other extreme of the notion of ‘performance readiness’ comes when people share a piece as ‘work in progress’. This is a practice that embraces an awareness of what you learn through sharing music before you feel you have ‘finished’ learning it, and usually takes place in relatively informal

(Continued on page 14)

WHEN IS MUSIC READY TO PERFORM?
(continued)*(Continued from page 13)*

performance occasions where a degree of forgiveness is part of the social norms. I enjoy these occasions a good deal – as I enjoyed the new acts/new material nights in stand-up comedy – for the insights they give into people's process as well as the shared sense of vulnerability and mutual support in the room.

Though I do sometimes find myself thinking; this wasn't ready to perform yet. It's not that I want to be judgy about the performances, but I do find my heart sinking during them, and I want to interrogate this response. It's partly a human response: a frustrating combination of empathy (one knows exactly how it feels to be labouring through something with difficulty) and irritation (there was no need for the performer(s) to put either themselves or their audience through that struggle).

There's also a musical dimension to the response. A piece of any substance can feel awfully long when performed significantly under tempo, for example. It's not just the time taken, though, it's that if the basic motor actions to get round the music aren't under control, stringing the music together into a narrative rather than just a series of atomised moments becomes much harder work for the listener.

And if the listener is struggling to get the musical narrative to cohere in their heads, it's likely that the performer(s) are likewise just living moment-to-moment with little cognitive capacity spare to experience musical flow. I think this is key: a performance in which the execution is not fully under control but still carries a sense of intent and communication can still succeed in creating a shared musical experience, whereas one that stumbles along without finding a through-line leaves the listener stranded outside of the music.

Part of this is also, I suspect, about the extent to which the performer(s) actually get the benefit of workshopping a piece. If their entire attention is absorbed by the sheer act of getting through it, there isn't much brain space to experience growth through the act of performance. But you sometimes hear a performance that is inaccurate or inadequately controlled, but you can hear that the performer(s) are growing as musicians through the process. To witness someone in the act of learning brings a sense of occasion and creativity that is largely independent of technical prowess. I

am reminded of Daniel Coyle's distinction between the Thrash Zone, in which you are floundering about without enough traction to get better at your thing, and the Goldilocks Zone, where you are actively learning from your mistakes.

C.P.E. Bach wrote that you shouldn't play pieces that sometimes go well, but not always, in public. I find it cheering to think that one of the best keyboardists of his generation had pieces that didn't always go right, there's hope for the rest of us. And I think in the context of higher-stakes performances, such as where one has a professional obligation to a paying audience, this is sound advice.

But in less formal, lower-stakes contexts I think there is a value in workshopping music that is as yet not fully reliable, as sometimes you discover thereby what it is that is getting in the way of reliability. The obstacle is sometimes a technical issue (in which case it is more likely to reveal itself in practice) but it can also often arise from your relationship with yourself as a musician, and it might need the presence of listeners to teach you what you need to learn about yourself to sort it out.

Still, I'm with C.P.E. Bach on the point that unless it sometimes goes well in practice you're probably not ready to share. I often used to reassure students in my Conservatoire teaching days that an audience can tell the difference between a well-prepared performance that didn't go to plan and a performance that wasn't well-prepared in the first place. The point was to help them trust their preparation, but implicit in that is that you have to have done sufficient preparation in order to have something to trust.



FREE YOUR VOICE

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

(continued from last month)

Voice Placement & Weight (cont)
The 'Let It Out Approach' (cont)

By the way, do not confuse nasal resonance with singing through your nose. Front, nasal resonance is natural and unlearned. We humans use it as infants. The cry we use from birth is reflexive and requires almost no conscious thought. It has bright high frequency and it carries a considerable distance. An infant can do it for hours without becoming hoarse. Yet an infant has no conscious control or ability to shape vowels or consonants and has no concept of vocalizing words. Everything to do with speech in a person's life is learned through observing and copying. Some people develop a speaking voice that is filled with front resonance - sometimes more than is pleasant - while others develop one with more guttural tones. There are so many factors - family speech patterns, accent, environment, socialization, language spoken, illness, injury, and so on.

Back resonance is learned rather than innate. Done well, it can enhance and enrich the voice. Done unsuitably, it can suppress the natural front resonance.

I recommend you use your natural front resonance as the foundation of your singing and master that before making adjustments. Many singers over-achieve when trying for back resonance. Additionally, I have seen singers taught in a fashion that is detrimental and will cause them years of struggle. In most styles of singing, the forward placement and sensation is paramount to understanding how to stabilize intonation. If back resonance is brought in before forward is understood and habitual, resonant power and 'ring' will be reduced.

Many singers come to lessons and are immediately taught about raising the soft palate and making as large a space as possible. This is a noble endeavor and a skill that a singer should learn. But bear in mind, it is not terribly comfortable and can potentially cause unwanted tension, especially in a novice. A good coach of a novice will start with a natural speech and vocal patterns, teach the singer to free those processes and do them as effortlessly as possible, then extend them into singing, and only then begin to add other techniques for enhancing resonance.

(to be continued next month)

FREE SINGING TIPS

by Yvonne DeBandi
from a2z-singing-tips.com

A = Airflow. Never hold your breath while singing. The airflow is what creates and carries your vocal tone, so keep it flowing. Avoid Clavicular Breathing and Belly Breathing -- instead, learn the proper way to breathe for singing, called diaphragmatic breathing. Fill the lower portion of your lungs as if you had an inner tube around your waist that you were **evenly** filling.

FREE SINGING TIPS

by Nicole LeGault
from a2z-singing-tips.com

A is for Attitude. How many singers does it take to change a light bulb? Only one, but the world has to revolve around them, ha ha. All kidding aside, being a vocalist is a very courageous and naked way of expressing yourself. If you aren't open and unashamed, your audience will not be able to develop an empathetic rapport.

FREE SINGING TIPS

by Mick Walsh
from a2z-singing-tips.com

A. Air. Learn to control your airflow. Make sure you breathe from the diaphragm and not from the upper chest area (also known as Clavicular Breathing.). Try to imagine your lungs filling up from the bottom to the top.....OK, who's that student at the back standing on their head? That's not what I meant

FREE SINGING TIPS

by Teri Danz
from a2z-singing-tips.com

A = Athlete-- Singers need to train their body like an athlete. Your body is your instrument. Put a priority on: 1) taking care of your body -- rest, food and warming up to sing, and 2) building and maintaining your instrument.



QUARTET CORNER

We have a new quartet that just formed. We need more.

What is YOUR quartet doing? Don't have one? Find three other people 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

Taylor Gaspar tenor
Daniel Pesante lead
Timothy Keatley bari
Alexander Burney bass

Four More Guys

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

Giocoso

Dale Martin tenor
Bob Ice lead
Mark Roblez bari
John Humble 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	03 Oct	Shepherd of the Woods
Thu	10 Oct	Shepherd of the Woods
Sat	12 Oct	Shepherd of the Woods
Thu	17 Oct	World Golf Village
Thu	24 Oct	Shepherd of the Woods
Thu	31 Oct	Halloween
Thu	07 Nov	Shepherd of the Woods
Thu	14 Nov	Shepherd of the Woods
Thu	21 Nov	Shepherd of the Woods
Thu	28 Nov	Thanksgiving Day

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

F/S/S	18-20 Oct	Sunshine Fall Convention
Sat	07 Dec	Christmas Show
Fri	13 Dec	Christmas Show
Sat	14 Dec	Christmas Show
Sat	21 Dec	Christmas Party
Fri	10 Jan	Ice men (SSB)
Sat	01 Mar	Ice men (AAFM)
...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.

BIRTHDAYS

Ron Blewett	21 Oct
Cyrus Dillinger	25 Oct
Bob Crino	29 Oct

RECENT GUESTS

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
Jerome Santuccio	John Hall
Miriam Hall	Emily Batt
Kurt Butler	Bob Mandzi
Carl Kircher	Anthony Mortimer
Art Billingslea	Bill Garlen
John Garlen	Ian Bula
Bob Sanders	Bill Mumford
Jasmine Perez	

WELCOME

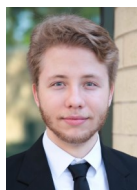
NEWEST MEMBERS

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
Bob Mandzi	August

2024 DIRECTING TEAM



Daniel Pesante
Front Line
Director



Timothy Keatley
Assistant
Director

2024 OTHER CHAPTER LEADERS



David Walker
Uniform
Manager



Ken Moyer
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 October is 24 September.
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
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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Sec Ldr



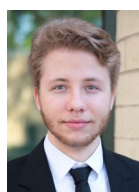
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**IMAGINE 80 SINGERS ON THE RISERS
BE A SINGER-BRINGER**



John Alexander, Editor
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Orange Park FL 32003



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