

Stepping Up The Game

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Getting Better at What We Do

We sing Barbershop because it’s fun. We love to ring chords in the company of good friends and family. Singing in four-part harmony is one America’s greatest pastimes, quickly growing in popularity and attracting people with many levels of experience and skill sets. In general, the result is this influx has a good impact and our singing is **getting better and better**.

Today, it is not uncommon to find members of Barbershop harmony groups who are also skilled and experienced musicians. Some members have many years of actual experience singing Barbershop music. Others are actors, dancers, singers and musicians with experience performing in a troupe, band, orchestra, choir or chorus. There are even some members who hold undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate and advanced degrees in music pedagogy, performance, directing, arranging, composition and other specialties. The benefits of sharing knowledge and experience within a chapter or chorus are many, often yielding synergistic results. That is because **most good singers want to become better singers**. But how? What can a chapter do? What can individual members do?

Here are some suggestions:

1. **Hold Placement auditions** - Placement auditions are a great tool to determine an individual’s tone character, voice timbre, vocal range, and their individual level of musical knowledge. The information gathered during a placement audition is useful to set a baseline of one’s abilities and for risers’ placement, repertoire selection and to set goals for coaching and individualized instruction.
2. **Share knowledge** - Knowledge is power that strengthens a team. *An important trait of highly successful teams is the way information flows:* from top to bottom, from the bottom up to the top, as well as from side to side. Chapter sponsored classes, coaching sessions, and individualized training, member mentoring groups offer opportunities for knowledge and information to flow in all directions.
3. **Encourage mentoring** - Let us remember the three E’s: **eliciting, enlisting and encouraging** the participation of members in a mentoring capacity. The Music Leadership Team have a weekly sign-up sheet to encourage different members each week to:
 - teach a tag
 - teach a few steps of choreography
 - talk about risers’ etiquette
 - work on stage presence.

Instruction and mentoring in other subjects such as music theory, singing techniques, directing, and others may be better done in a classroom environment.

4. **Make the best use of the time the chorus spends together** - The time we spend together as a chorus each week is extremely valuable. Our chorus rehearses on Tuesdays from 7 PM to 9:30 PM – that’s just 180 minutes each week. We perform like we rehearse, therefore, each one of use should do all we can to ensure that our rehearsals are conducted in the same way we want perform.

Here are a few things we can all do to ensure that our time together is used in the most effective way.

Before rehearsal:

- Take time to learn and review the lyrics, notes, dynamics, expression, choreography and other details of the music to be rehearsed.
- Listen carefully to the learning tracks while reading along with the sheet music. Listening to music alone and hoping that “it sticks” is not enough to learn a song. There are subtle nuances in the music that may not be clear when listening to a learning track.
- Be punctual - arrive a few minutes early at every rehearsal to and be prepared to begin on time.
- Review the rehearsal schedule plan prepared and posted by the director to selected and arrange any sheet music or notes that you may need during the rehearsal.

During rehearsal:

- Avoid unnecessary chat and talking in between songs.
- Write down questions you may have for discussion at the appointed time.
- Take notes when the director gives specific instructions.
- Committee reports should be brief and concise.
- Reports on chapter business items should be short and summarized.