



Sweet Adelines
INTERNATIONAL

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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Elevating women singers worldwide through education, performance, and competition
in barbershop harmony and a cappella music.

Greetings Music Educator,

Thank you for your interest in our organization. Sweet Adelines International is a highly respected worldwide organization of women singers committed to advancing the musical art form of barbershop harmony through education, competition and performance. As part of that commitment, we have created the Young Women in Harmony (YWIH) Program to assist music educators who want to introduce barbershop style a cappella music in their choral programs.

Barbershop music is a distinctly American art form. Singing in a barbershop chorus or quartet is a fun and valuable experience that teaches musical artistry by reinforcing skills such as tuning, synchronization, lyrical and visual interpretation of the music. Today's contemporary barbershop style has grown far beyond the stereotypes of "four old guys in straw hats!" Barbershop a cappella choruses and quartets perform everything from Broadway hits to pop, jazz, swing, gospel and light opera—all in the same unique style.

I highly recommend the materials and training provided by Sweet Adelines International's Education Department. There you will find a series of musical arrangements voiced specifically for young women. Many arrangements are available in SSAA as well as in the traditional barbershop format of tenor, lead, baritone, bass. There are two samples included; however, additional arrangements can be purchased through our online store at www.sweetadelines.com.

You will also find enclosed a barbershop history lesson plan designed for students in grades 6-12. The [Barbershop Harmony Lesson Plan](#) and interactive links are also available on our website.

Our staff is happy to assist you with opportunities for funding and complimentary educator materials. For more information, please visit www.youngwomeninharmony.com, contact the Sweet Adelines International Education Department at education@sweetadelines.com or call 1-800-992-7464.

In Harmony,

Joan Boutilier
International President
Sweet Adelines International

Sweet Adelines International

9110 S. Toledo, Tulsa, OK 74137

www.sweetadelines.com – www.youngwomeninharmony.com

Welcome and thank you for your interest!

We are excited that you want to know more about our Young Women In Harmony program. The program offers materials, training and performance opportunities to youth and music educators to foster appreciation for this truly American art form.

“Experience with barbershop music has some wonderful benefits for students – from building fabulous aural skills, great intonation, a sense of true harmonic structure to outstanding poise and expressive, engaged faces!” Dr. Lynne Gackle, Baylor University School of Music, ACDA National President-elect.

What is barbershop harmony?

In simple terms, barbershop harmony is an American art form featuring vocal harmony produced by four parts: tenor, lead, baritone and bass.

Tenor – harmony sung above the lead. Although tenor is the highest voice in barbershop harmony, it should not be confused with the soprano of traditional choral singing. Tenor voice should have a sweet, pure tone that will compliment but not overpower the lead voice.

Lead – often the melody, range is A below middle C, and C above middle C.

Baritone – harmony with similar range to the lead.

Bass – should have a rich, resonant sound and able to comfortably sing pitches as low as E flat below middle C.

Unless notated as SSAA, the baritone and bass lines are sung an octave above what is written.

What is Sweet Adelines International?

Sweet Adelines International is a worldwide organization of women singers committed to advancing the musical art form of barbershop harmony through education and performance. This independent, non-profit music education association is the world’s largest singing organization for women.

Sweet Adelines International offers education and certification in choral directing, music arranging, judging and teaching. Through the Young Women In Harmony program, Sweet Adeline members share the joy of singing and performing with choral educators and young women under the age of 26.

How does barbershop harmony benefit young singers?

“I’ve seen immediate growth in tuning, intonation throughout my entire program. The way that my women and particularly altos now sing with a little bit more moxie, more resonance and intonation in a sense of tuning fifths, thirds, all of that is permeating my program because of barbershop harmony. I highly recommend it for both boys and girls.” Darrin Drown, Choral Director, Grandview High School, Aurora, CO

“I love their ability to communicate and I really do attribute that to their singing barbershop.” Lori Lyford, Choral Director, Chandler High School, Chandler, AZ

What are some other youth opportunities available from Sweet Adelines Int’l?

The annual **Rising Star Quartet Contest** is held annually for female quartets aged 25 and younger.

The annual youth **Video Chorus Contest** is open to young women age 25 and under.

The **Young Singers Foundation** offers college scholarships for vocal music students.

Grants for Young Women In Harmony and community vocal music activities are awarded twice a year.

Applications and additional information for these programs are available at

www.sweetadelines.com/education.

What are students saying about the Young Women In Harmony program:

“Being in barbershop has helped me a lot with my musicianship skills like reading music and theory.”

Student, Gaither High School, Tampa, FL

“I want to be a leader in the soprano section and now it has improved my sight-reading.” Student,

Gaither High School, Tampa, FL

“The family unit you create, the energy onstage and the chords are so amazing. It’s a great environment to be singing in with amazing people and I never want to stop.” Student, Chandler High School, Chandler AZ,

“It’s something I can be doing for my entire life.” Student, Chandler High School, Chandler, AZ.

“The energy and enthusiasm.” Student, Union High School, Tulsa, OK

“When all four parts hit the right notes, you get a glorious overtone.” Student, Union High School, Tulsa, OK

Thank you for your interest in Sweet Adelines International’s Young Women In Harmony program! Our choruses and quartets are located around the globe and we are here to help you share this wonderful art form with your students.

For more information or assistance locating a chorus in your area, please contact us: Phone (800) 992- 7464, (918) 622-1444 or education@sweetadelines.com.



EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



YOUNG WOMEN **IN**
Harmony

EDUCATOR'S
GUIDE

BARBERSHOP - THEN AND NOW

The unique American folk art of barbershop harmony evolved much the same way as many of our other forms of vocal music. The growth of the barbershop tradition was probably aided by the types of songs popular during the period between the 1860s and the 1920s. These songs were characterized by sentimental lyrics and simple melodies that could be harmonized with a variety of four-part chords. The early years of American barbershop harmony probably included improvised harmonies.

When the printing press was adapted to print musical notation, there was further advancement of the barbershop idiom. Many early pieces of sheet music were printed with the standard vocal line and piano accompaniment and included an additional quartet arrangement on the final page of the sheet music.

In addition to the improvised barbershop harmony sung by amateur singers (almost always men) at parties and picnics, turn-of-the-century minstrel shows featured barbershop quartets. Quartets sang in front of the curtain as an "entr'acte" while the sets were changed and performers prepared for the next act of the show. It was easy to schedule a quartet for this purpose as no props or sets were required. The traditional barbershop song "Sweet Adeline" did not become well known until 15 years after it was written, when it was sung by a quartet on one of these minstrel shows.

Today barbershop harmony has evolved into a highly stylized art form requiring as much quality and control as is necessary for singing any other type of choral music. The four voice parts are called by their traditional names — tenor, lead, baritone and bass. One of the distinctive qualities of barbershop harmony is that the melody, sung by the lead voice, is below the tenor harmony. This follows the pattern of many early American hymns written for men and women, with the melody of the hymn in the male tenor voice and the women singing a descant or harmony above the melody.

One of the reasons for the popularity of barbershop harmony is that it is no longer restricted to the male voice. There are many women's quartets and both men's and women's choruses that now enjoy this unique four-part harmony. Choruses range in size from 15 to 150 members and singers have found this music to be a challenging and exciting musical experience.

NOTE: You may download a free one-hour lesson plan tailored to students ages 11-18 on the "History of Barbershop" from the Music Educator Resources page on Sweet Adelines International's website.

BARBERSHOP - A UNIQUE CHORAL STYLE

There are certain features characteristic to the barbershop style that separate it from other vocal styles. This section of the guide examines some of these differences.

HARMONY

Barbershop harmony is a style of unaccompanied vocal music characterized by consonant four-part chords that vertically support each melody note. Barbershop harmony makes frequent use of the major and minor triads and the barbershop (dominant) seventh and dominant ninth chords. Sixth, major seventh and ninth chords are used only when demanded by the melody. Chords containing the minor second interval are not used.

VOICINGS

The newcomer to barbershop harmony will immediately notice the difference in voicings of chords in the barbershop style. The major chord is often opened and spread to the tenth interval, using “do-sol-do-mi” rather than the closed voicing of “do-mi-sol-do.” Frequent use of the barbershop seventh chord is also readily apparent. It is the frequent use of the major triad and dominant seventh chords that characterizes barbershop harmony and gives it a unique beauty and richness.

A good barbershop arrangement includes:

- All chord tones present in each four-note chord
- Voice parts do not include non-chord tones
- Frequent use of major triads and dominant seventh chords
- Bass part often voiced on the root or fifth of the chord

VOICE PARTS - NAMES AND FUNCTIONS

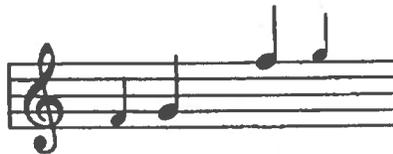
The voice parts in barbershop harmony for women have different names and functions than they do in other SSAA vocal styles. The tenor part is equivalent to Soprano I but functions as a harmony part above the melody. The lead part (Soprano II) has the melody line. The baritone part (Alto I) fills in above and below the melody, and the bass part (Alto II) supplies the harmonic foundation (root or fifth) of the chord. The tenor sings the highest note in a chord, the bass the lowest, the lead the melody, and the baritone sings the all important missing note.

Note: The ranges described below reflect the vocal capabilities of the junior high/high school singer. These ranges can be extended in either direction for the college student or adult.

TENOR

In barbershop music the tenor is the highest of the four voice parts and is a harmony part sung above the melody. For our Young Women in Harmony, the effective tenor range (with extended range in small notes) is shown below:

Tenor Range:



One of the primary characteristics of barbershop music is a cone-shaped sound (see page 5), so the tenor must sing with a lighter production than the lower voices, without sacrificing clarity or brilliance. Her quality must complement, but never overshadow, the lead. The tenor sings mostly in her upper register (head voice), but she must be able to use her heavier lower register (chest voice) for lower notes in her range. Lyric sopranos generally make good tenors. The coloratura, dramatic or mezzo soprano must be able to lighten the voice quality and remove excessive vibrato in order to fulfill the requirements of this voice part.

Arrangements sometimes require that the tenor sing below the lead. When this occurs the tenor must

broaden her quality, so that the chords will remain in balance.

LEAD

The lead is one of the two middle voice parts in barbershop music and usually sings the melody. For our Young Women in Harmony the effective lead range (with extended range in small notes) is shown below:

Lead Range:



Because she carries the melody the lead must sing with authority, clarity, and with a consistent quality throughout her range. It is essential that she possess an accurate sense of pitch. The lead sings with some vibrato in the voice to add color and warmth to the sound, which enhances the emotional impact of the music. However, it is essential that her vibrato that does not vary excessively in rate or pitch so as to disrupt the ensemble's sound. The lead sings the melody and is responsible for conveying the interpretation, emotion and inflections of the song. The other three parts literally "follow her lead" in the delivery of dynamics and tempo and support her inflection, artistry and finesse.

BARITONE

The baritone is the other of the two middle voice parts in barbershop music — a harmony part sung below or above the melody, depending upon where the melody is situated. Baritone differs from the alto part in traditional choral music because the baritone part frequently crosses over the melody (lead).

The baritone is written in the bass clef, an octave lower than it is sung. For our Young Women in Harmony, the effective baritone range (with extended range in small notes) is shown below:

Baritone Range:



AS WRITTEN



AS SUNG

Though the baritone and lead sing in the same basic range, the techniques for singing the two parts are different. The baritone must be constantly aware of her position in the chord and flexible enough to adjust her tone when needed.

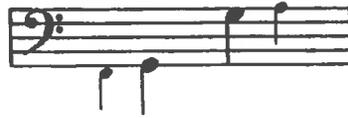
When she is singing below the lead, she uses a rich, full sound that helps to solidify the relationship between lead and bass. When she is above the lead she uses a lighter production, similar to that used by the tenor. The baritone sings a relatively straight, well-produced tone with a minimum of vibrato.

BASS

In barbershop music, the bass is the lowest of the four voice parts — a harmony part sung below the melody. The bass part, like the baritone part, is written in the bass clef, an octave lower than it is sung.

For our Young Women in Harmony, the effective bass range (with extended range in small notes) is shown below:

Bass Range:



AS WRITTEN



AS SUNG

Because one of the primary characteristics of barbershop music is its cone-shaped sound, the bass must sing with a heavier tone quality than that used by the upper voices. She will usually sing with more volume than the other three parts.

The harmonic structure of barbershop music assists the bass in providing a firm foundation for the sound. Usually she sings the root or fifth of each chord. Other chord tones may be sung by the bass in passing or for special effects.

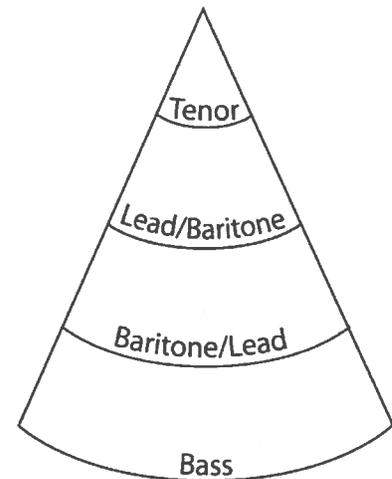
The lead sings the melody and the bass provides the harmonic foundation. Ideally, the bass and lead work as a team, establishing a strong and accurate relationship.

The bass sings a relatively straight, well-produced tone with a minimum of vibrato. The range of the bass part is comparable to that of a contralto in traditional choral music.

Occasionally, an arrangement will give the melody to the bass for a few isolated notes, for a phrase or for an entire passage. When this occurs, the bass adds sufficient color (vibrato) to her voice to make the melody easily identifiable. In this instance, the lead sings more like a baritone.

BALANCE OF SOUND

Church or glee club music (SATB) is balanced cylindrically, all voices singing with equal weight and intensity. Progressive jazz (when sung in harmony) and modern harmony are sung with inverted-cone balance, i.e., the top voice sings with more weight and intensity, and the lower voices sing with less weight and intensity. Proper barbershop balance is just the opposite and can be illustrated by the cone shown here.



BALANCE OF VOICES

An ideal balance of singers in a barbershop chorus is shown in this 4-3-2-1 formula:

4 – basses 3 – leads 2 – baritones 1 – tenor

This ratio can be projected to show the ideal number in each section for any size group:

Basses	Leads	Baritones	Tenors	Total Singers
8	6	4	2	20
12	9	6	3	30
16	12	8	4	40
40	30	20	10	100

This ideal is not always possible, especially with young singers. Balancing will ultimately depend on the relative number and strength of singers in each section of the chorus.

INTERPRETATION

Barbershop songs usually fall into one of three general categories:

1. Strong rhythmic arrangements are often called uptunes. An example of such an uptune would be *Seventy-Six Trombones* from "The Music Man" written by Meredith Willson.
2. Swing tempo songs such as *I Don't Want To Walk Without You* by Frank Loesser and Jule Styne.
3. Ballads sung in ad-lib style such as *If I Loved You* from "Carousel" by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein.

In rhythmic uptunes and swing tempo songs it is important to maintain a steady rhythmic pulse even though the singers are singing a cappella.

A ballad demands a different approach.

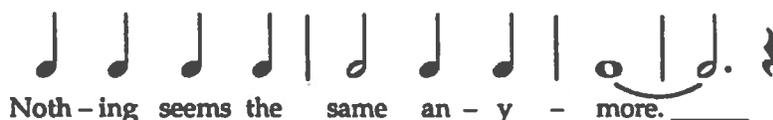
BALLAD FLOW

Throughout formal music training a concerted effort is made to adhere to rhythmic values as notated by the composer or arranger. Whether the music is a rousing march or a tender ballad, it is performed “as written” in both vocal and instrumental music. The barbershop ballad is characterized by an ad-lib presentation. This ad-lib delivery is a characteristic that separates performances in the barbershop style from those in other choral styles.

Barbershop interpretive style permits relatively wide liberties in the treatment of note values. Words of importance or chords of exceptional beauty can be held, pauses can be added to create new meaning and word flow can be adjusted to help the text come alive. Effective changes in tempo and dynamics can also enhance the performance. Most ballads are treated in a free, rubato style, interpreted and crafted by the conductor's own musicality. It is this freedom of interpretation that gives a barbershop ballad its uniqueness and beauty.

Consider the following lyrical line: “Nothing seems the same anymore.”

If one were to speak this line, the word “same” would likely receive added emphasis. The rhythmic notation for that line is:



When it is sung in strict rhythm, the line can become rather stilted. In order to give greater lyrical flow, we may need to rethink the rhythmic notation. If we would like the line to flow to the word “same,” we may wish to mentally feel the following notations:



Developing lyric flow in a barbershop ballad, outside the written rhythmic notation, can be a challenge for the choral conductor.

MANUSCRIPT

A barbershop arrangement has the appearance of SATB music. But it is important to remember that while the notes for the baritone and bass parts are written in the bass clef, they are sung one octave higher than written. By using both clef signs, the need for many ledger lines is eliminated. The music is easily read and singers adapt to this method of notation with ease.

A line of the song *Nothing Seems the Same Anymore* arranged in barbershop harmony but notated as SSAA manuscript would appear as follows:

The image shows a musical manuscript for SSAA (Soprano, Soprano, Alto, Alto) voices. It consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music is in 4/4 time and the key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The lyrics are: "Noth - ing seems the same an - y - more." The notes are written in a way that suggests they are to be sung one octave higher than written. There are two instances of the phrase "(an - y - more)" written above the notes, one above the final note of the first phrase and one above the final note of the second phrase.

From *Nothing Seems the Same Anymore* by Len Linnehan. Copyright © 1964 by Len Linnehan. Used by permission

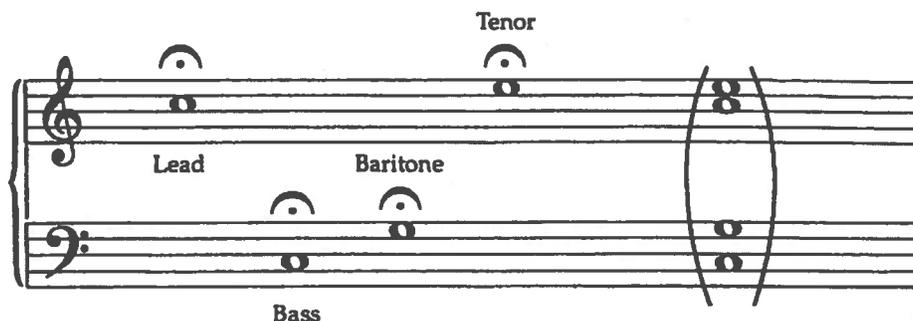
The same line of music in the above example notated in women's barbershop style would appear as follows:

The image shows a musical manuscript for women's barbershop style. It consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music is in 4/4 time and the key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The lyrics are: "Noth - ing seems the same an - y - more." The notes are written in a way that suggests they are to be sung one octave higher than written. There are two instances of the phrase "(an - y - more)" written above the notes, one above the final note of the first phrase and one above the final note of the second phrase.

From *Nothing Seems the Same Anymore* by Len Linnehan. Copyright © 1964 by Len Linnehan. Used by permission

USE OF THE PITCH PIPE

To establish pitch (tonality), the key note (tonic note) is normally sounded by the pitch pipe. Then each section sings a prescribed note of the tonic chord: basses and leads sing “do” an octave apart, baritones sing “sol” below the lead and tenors sing “mi” above the lead. A vowel such as “ah” or “ooh” is used.



This method of pitch-taking establishes a sense of tonality with the singers. Many choral conductors then have the singers move to the first chord of the song.

BARBERSHOP - TEACHING AND REHEARSING

TEACHING

Teaching a barbershop arrangement is similar to teaching other choral music. Barbershop style music is memorized and unaccompanied, so it is important for the students to learn their parts thoroughly in order to experience success in the barbershop ensemble. Learning media can be helpful in the teaching/learning process.

Learning Media Method

Learning media is available through Sweet Adelines International's sales department for many Young Women in Harmony arrangements. This is a most efficient method of teaching. The recorded songs are distributed to the students along with the sheet music and they can practice using the learning media outside of their regular rehearsal.

The learning media is typically available with all four parts balanced as well as with examples that are recorded with the voice part predominant and with the voice part missing. The student has the opportunity to follow along with the music while listening, then can practice singing along with the part alone until she is confident. When she feels ready, she can practice fitting her part into the recording of the other three parts.

After listening to, and practicing with, the learning media individually, the first rehearsals together should include practice of the song fairly methodically to check for note accuracy. The director should never accept inaccuracy. If necessary, individual sections should have repetition work on difficult passages. Some voice parts are easier to learn than others.

The chorus needs to learn to identify the sound of barbershop harmony and to recognize the sound of a well-tuned chord. To this end, it is often helpful to sing a passage chord-by-chord until each chord is accurate. The best barbershop harmony is sung with listening skills as well as vocal skills and the learning

process is the best time to emphasize this. Repetition is the key to retention. This method of learning music enables the director to focus on interpretation, balance and performance skills, since the note learning is accomplished mostly outside of the rehearsal.

REHEARSING

Vocal Skills

Vocal skills are an integral part of all aspects of the barbershop style. The basic elements of posture, breathing, phonation, resonance and articulation each play an important role in the vocal presentation of barbershop music.

Posture

Correct singing posture is an upright, slightly forward stance with the body weight primarily on the balls of the feet. A careless body stance will inhibit the actions of the breathing and vocal mechanisms. The rib cage must be erect, with the shoulders back but relaxed and the head aligned over the spinal column so that the column of air in the pharynx — the primary resonating chamber — is upright.

Breathing

Proper inspiration for singing begins with a relaxed jaw, a relaxed, open throat and an erect, expanded rib cage. The abdominal muscles are then allowed to relax downward. This action allows a maximum amount of air into the lungs quickly and efficiently. If the rib cage is not erect and expanded, the potential for breath will be reduced or the intake of air will cause the chest to heave upward. If there is tension in the jaw or throat area, inhalation will be noisy, because the throat will be constricted and the vocal folds partially closed, making it impossible to quickly get a sufficient quantity of air into the lungs.

Proper expiration for singing begins with a relaxed jaw, a relaxed, open throat, an erect expanded rib cage and a lowered diaphragm. While the rib cage is in its erect, expanded position, the abdominal muscles lift, slowly releasing air from the lungs upward through the vocal folds.

Phonation

Phonation is the action of the vocal folds in speaking and singing. Proper control through the use of the abdominal and intercostal muscles rather than the swallowing or bearing down muscles, will allow optimum management of air for the singer. A completely relaxed throat is required for the vocal folds to produce clear, beautiful tones.

Resonation

Resonation is the amplification and enrichment of the tones produced. The pharynx is one of the primary resonators for the vocal instrument. The use of the pharynx is enhanced by singing with a relaxed jaw, an open throat and an elevated soft palate. When the breathing mechanism is functioning properly, the singer is able to use the pharynx for proper resonance of vocal sounds.

Articulation

Articulation is the process by which sounds are shaped. In singing, vowels are sustained and consonants provide only split-second interruption. An effective barbershop ensemble does not rely on highly articulated lyrics but, instead, focuses on the target vowel sounds, especially in the harmony parts.

VOCAL REGISTERS AND BARBERSHOP SINGING

In general, all tones below middle C sung by any voice part are produced by using the vocal cord adjustment for the lower register. For pitches within the octave between middle C and the C above, the upper register is gradually mixed with the lower, lightening the quality and allowing tones to remain free and musical. Tones above the C above middle C are produced by using the vocal cord adjustment for the upper register. These generalizations apply to tones of moderate volume, properly produced. An increase in volume generally requires more assistance from the lower mechanism; a decrease in volume generally requires less assistance from the lower and more from the upper.

The singer should understand the vocal skills discussed in the previous pages because a smooth transition between the two vocal registers cannot otherwise be achieved. The singer who is unable to make this smooth transition because of faulty production or lack of vocal development generally forces the lower register up to a point where the pharyngeal muscles constrict the throat in an attempt to form a resonating cavity for the desired tone. When muscles are fully constricted, the voice “breaks” and a weakened upper register takes over.

A significant difference between female barbershop music and other types of female choral music is the manner in which the lower, or chest, register is used in singing the three lower voice parts. Even the tenor may occasionally need to use the chest register for lower tones or to achieve higher volume levels.

In working with the young voice, it is important to accept certain vocal limitations. The immature instrument is fragile and should not be encouraged to overextend itself. Gradual and healthy progress in mastering the intricacies of good vocal production can be expected if both teacher and student are patient and committed.

A more extensive explanation of vocal production and vocal problem solving may be found in the Judging Category Description Book available from Sweet Adelines International headquarters in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

REHEARSAL STRATEGIES

All of the techniques the teacher uses in rehearsing any choral music will be effective in rehearsing the barbershop ensemble. In addition, there are approaches that seem to work especially well in barbershop choruses. Here are some ideas that may be helpful in planning rehearsals.

Humming

One section sings the words while the other three sections hum their own notes. This is effective in helping all four sections become familiar with their own parts while keeping them involved during the learning process.

Silent Song

After the notes and words have been learned, instruct the chorus to take the pitch of the song. As you are directing the song, the sections *think* their parts. At a signal, they continue the music audibly. Repeat “silent” and “sing” a few times throughout the song. This is a good method to determine if the chorus is losing tonality or straying from the pitch. This activity also encourages the singer to be aware of her part and its relationship to the other parts.

The Singing Circle

The chorus forms a circle, facing inward (double or triple deep if the chorus is large) with the director in the center. The purpose is to add variety to the rehearsal and to enable the members to hear one another from a different perspective.

In addition to rotating within the circle to face different sections, the director may choose to walk slowly around the circle listening to each voice. This allows for monitoring individual parts and voices without adding pressure or creating embarrassment for the singer.

Sound-off

Each section counts off "one," "two," "three," "four," until every member has a number and the chorus has been divided into four smaller choruses. The entire chorus begins a designated song. On cue, all stop singing except the group whose number is called, such as "only ones" or "only fours." Combine numbers for variety.

Sectional Rehearsal

Occasionally it is beneficial for a section to work alone on trouble spots or difficult passages. Section rehearsals can include interpretation, matching tone quality, matching vowels and synchronization.

Section rehearsals of the tenors, baritones and basses can benefit by the addition of a few leads. This allows the relationship of the melody and the harmony to be reinforced.

Tags

Tags are an integral part of the barbershop idiom and will enhance your rehearsals. Singers of barbershop style music like to sing tags because they are short, easy to learn, quickly taught and easily recalled. They allow the singer to practice the blend of voices, the balance of chords and accurate tuning. Tags are sung free-style, permitting the singers to hold each chord until it meets the ear's satisfaction and even a bit more, just for fun. The *Student Songbook 1* includes appropriate tags for young women.

BARBERSHOP - THE VISUAL PERFORMANCE

The total barbershop performance incorporates the intangible art of showmanship with continuing musical excellence, relying heavily on the visual impact of the ensemble. Care is taken in planning all facets of the presentation so that the group appears to be a unit, not a collection of individuals.

Because of riser positioning, it is not always possible for all members of a chorus to make all movements or gestures of planned choreography. Front lines, back row, a section or even a single individual can do appropriate moves in lieu of full chorus participation. However, choreography that draws any significant amount of attention away from the overall unit appearance is seldom effective.

Many junior and senior high students have experienced participation in show choirs and have enjoyed considerable choreography and staging with this type of performance. Barbershop style performances may require some modification of the way the group moves, as sound is never sacrificed for the sake of movement and there is no musical accompaniment to cover the lack of breath support. Effective choreography in the barbershop style enhances the musical product without distracting either the singer or the audience from the music.

The most effective visual tool for the barbershop performer is facial expression. The face can convey a wide variety of moods including joy, sorrow, grief, anger, excitement, pain, nostalgia, reflection, apprehension and fear. Appropriate facial expression will reflect the message of the song; inappropriate facial expression will confuse or distract the listener. Adequate stage makeup can be helpful in highlighting effective facial expression.

In performance, the entrance of the ensemble on stage should be snappy and quick, executed with confidence and planned in advance. Rehearsals should also include timing for the pitch and the blowing of the pipe as well as any breaks, bows and exits.

Costuming is important to the barbershop performance and may denote a theme, illustrate a song or reflect the personality of the performer. Appropriate costumes add to the visual impact of any performance and, for Young Women in Harmony, can increase the performer's sense of self-confidence.

Energy is the force that propels all aspects of the visual presentation of the barbershop performance. It adds that magical aura that transforms an otherwise routine performance into an exciting experience for both audience and performer. When the barbershop chorus can display both musical proficiency and an energized visual performance, the end result is an entertainment package that thrills everyone involved.