Techniques for Conducting a Church Choir

with
Angela Westhoff-Johnson
Before we get started......

• Best viewing
  – Close other programs or applications
    • This will improve your viewing and sound quality

• Questions
  – Use the question section on your control panel
  – Questions can be typed in at any time
  – Answers will be given at the end
Presenter

Angela Westhoff-Johnson
What a Wonderful Gift!

Lord, how easy it is to take for granted the power of the gift of song. We have become very accustomed to our spiritual sound.... the crowded church.... the spirit in our midst. Yet every so often it is good to set ourselves apart and think about worship without music. Then we can see the grace and power of your gift.

What if there were only words for prayer, and never that fine sweet melody that transforms a quiet hope into a triumphant Alleluia?

What if asking for mercy could only be spoken?

What if we could never laugh and sing the Gloria?

Music is the only way your people can get beyond themselves and touch heaven.

Music is a divine vehicle and extraordinary grace that allows us to clap our hands together with you.

You lift us to the place where our spirits can dance, free of earth free of death, free of every bond.

Lord, keep us mindful that we are ministers of the finest grace.

Help us to remember that, without your spirit song which you sing through us, many would never feel your touch many would forget your words of love.

You honor us with a gift beyond measure. With your help, may we treasure it.
Techniques for conducting a church choir

- Proper body language and conducting gestures
- Ways to develop vocal technique among your choir members
- How to plan an efficient rehearsal to maximize time
- Conducting techniques specific to different choir types
How to Run a More Effective Choir Rehearsal

REHEARSALS

• Create a rehearsal lineup
• Prepare the room
• Create a seating arrangement
• Take attendance….this is more important than you may realize
• Start on time
REHEARSALS

• Start with vocal warmups
• Incorporate sight-singing
• Use time wisely
• Balance standing and sitting
10/12 Rehearsal Lineup

7:00 Communion Antiphon
MOVE TO THE CATHEDRAL LOFT
7:07 A Requiem of Peace (Andrew Wright) 11/5
MOVE TO THE APSE
7:45 The Eyes of All (Berger) 11/19
7:53 Sicut Cervus (Palestrina) 10/22
7:58 Ubi Caritas (Gjeilo) 10/15
8:07 *If Ye Love Me (Tallis) 10/29
8:07 In Remembrance (Ames) 11/12
8:15 Jubilate Deo (Lasso) Christ the King 11/26
8:20 *Exsultate Justi (Viadana) Christ the King 11/26
8:25 Alma Redemptoris Mater (arr. Benson) Advent
8:32 The Beatitudes (Stopford) 11/12
8:40 I Know that My Redeemer Lives (R. Farrell) 11/19
8:47 Jerusalem the Golden (Whitaker - women only) 10/29

Shepherds Pipe Carol
The Holly and the Ivy (Gjeilo)
A Spotless Rose (Howells)
Behold, How Good (Trotta)
Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus (Gawthrop)
Perfect Rose (Luke Mayernik)
KNOW YOUR MUSIC!

- Be positive and upbeat
- Set high standards
- End rehearsal on time
- Debrief for yourself soon after the rehearsal (begin planning the next rehearsal)
- Sunday morning rehearsal is important. Call should be 1 hour before Mass. Rehearse the psalm and anthems for that day and then move to their rehearsal folder
PEDAGOGY

- Warmups are important. Include warmups that focus on the following choral techniques:
  a) sustained singing
  b) staccato and detached
  c) crisp diction, arpeggios – beginning low and ascending & beginning high and descending
  d) chords that ascend in half-step intervals for tuning,
  e) solfege (do, re, mi) or chord tones (1, 2, 3)

- Sunday mornings warm up with chant

- Each week have one section come early – work on vocal production, note shedding, etc.
GESTURE

- Gesture *will* change the Choral Sound
- *tight conducting results in tight singing!*
- Posture
- Pleasant face
Conducting is a universal language.....if your gesture is something only your choir understands, this is a disservice

*Conducting Technique* (1966)  
by Brock McElheran  
*For Beginners and Professionals*  
(Oxford University Press)  
ISBN 0–19–386854–7
Choral technique– look for simple ways to explain not so simple things!

Choral singing is different than solo singing....no one person is more important than the next! Unified vowels, consistent cut offs, look up.
CONDUCTING GESTURES

1. Posture
2. Beat Patterns
   4/4 (12/8)
   3/4 (9/8)
   2/4 (6/8)
   3/8 (in 1)
3. Dynamics
   Basic levels
   Crescendo
   Diminuendo
4. Cueing
5. Articulation
   Legato
   Marcato
   Staccato
STARTING A PIECE

• Gesture is very important.
• Preparation (prep beat) must be in the tempo of the piece.
• Some say only one prep; if giving more than one, the final beat must be the strongest. Let’s practice!
PULSE

• Metric beat (time signature) versus underlying pulse.
• There are sixteen sixteenths (or pulses) in each measure (in 4/4)
• What can pulse do?
MUSICAL PHRASES—
beginning, climax, ending

• There is tension under the pull of the climax…..once the climax of the phrase is reached, there is some relaxation to the end of the phrase. These two sides must have balance.

• Sing with the pulse while phrasing
DICTION

- International Phonetic Alphabet – an alphabetic system of phonetic notation based primarily on the Latin alphabet.
- An Introduction to IPA
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[i]</td>
<td>forward vowel</td>
<td>as in <em>beet</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ɪ]</td>
<td>forward vowel</td>
<td>as in <em>bit</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[e]</td>
<td>forward vowel</td>
<td>as in <em>chaotic</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ɛ]</td>
<td>diphthong</td>
<td>as in <em>bait</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[æ]</td>
<td>forward vowel</td>
<td>as in <em>bet</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[a]</td>
<td>diphthong</td>
<td>as in <em>bat</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[aɪ]</td>
<td>forward vowel</td>
<td>as in <em>Boston</em> (as spoken by New Englanders)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[aʊ]</td>
<td>diphthong</td>
<td>as in <em>by</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[u]</td>
<td>diphthong</td>
<td>as in <em>house</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[u]</td>
<td>back vowel</td>
<td>as in <em>boot</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ju]</td>
<td>diphthong</td>
<td>as in <em>abuse</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ʊ]</td>
<td>back vowel</td>
<td>as in <em>book</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vowel</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[o]</td>
<td>back vowel</td>
<td>as in pillow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ou]</td>
<td>diphthong</td>
<td>as in boat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ɔ]</td>
<td>back vowel</td>
<td>as in awe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ɔi]</td>
<td>diphthong</td>
<td>as in boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ɑ]</td>
<td>back vowel</td>
<td>as in father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ʌ]</td>
<td>central vowel, stressed</td>
<td>as in bud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ə]</td>
<td>central vowel, unstressed (schwa)</td>
<td>as in appeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ɛ]</td>
<td>central vowel with r, stressed</td>
<td>as in burr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ə]</td>
<td>central vowel with r, unstressed (hooked schwa)</td>
<td>as in butter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ɜ]</td>
<td>central vowel, r-less</td>
<td>as in bird</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Techniques for conducting a church choir
Techniques for conducting a church choir

Restless Is the Heart

Psalm 90

Bernadette Farrell

Refrain (mm. 1-4)

Soprano
Alto

Verse 1

Tenor
Bass

Verse 2

Tenor
Bass

1. Lord, you have been our refuge through all time,
from one generation to another.

2. Watch in the night. You sweep us away like a dream,
like the

3. A section so near, before the mountains were born,
or the

4. Earth brought forth, you are God, without beginning or end.

© 1989, Bernadette Farrell. Published by OCP Publications. All rights reserved.
2. Grass that springs green in the morning, but fades by night.

VERSE 3

3. Make us know our life's shortness, make us know our life's shortness that

3. We may gain true wisdom of heart. In the morning, the morning

3. Fill us with your love.
Techniques for conducting a church choir

May Christ Support Us
(A Prayer of Cardinal Newman)


Very slow, robusta (≈ ca. 75)

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

May Christ sup - port us all the day

long, till the shad - ows length - en, and the eve -

ning

comes, and the bus - y world is hushed.

and the fe - ver of life is o - ver, and our

© 2013. Michael Jocca. Published by TBN: 5536 NE Hassalo Portland, OR 97213. All rights reserved.

This piece may be sung a whole step higher.
For smaller choirs, omit the cue-sized notes. See Composer Notes on page 4.

Edition 101/20067

May Christ Support Us
Techniques for conducting a church choir

Gaudete

English verses by Bob Hurd

Piae Cantiones, 1582

Arranged by Craig S. Kingsbury

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

REFRAIN

Gaudete, gaudete, Christus est natus ex Maria

vir-gi-ne. Gaudete. Gaudete, gaudete, Christus est natus ex Maria

na-tus ex Maria vir-gi-ne. Gaudete.

VERSE 1: Solo (Baritone or Alto)

1. Tempus ad est gratiae, hoc quod op-ta-bimus.

No-ture mar-vels at the sight, an-gels sing the glo-ry.

1. cur-mi-nal be-ti-ti-ae de-vo-te re-cias-
s

God be-comes a lit-tle child, shep-herds tell the sto-ry.

English verses © 1996. Bob Hurd. This arrangement © 1996, Craig S. Kingsbury. Published by OCP. All rights reserved.
Techniques for conducting a church choir
Techniques for conducting a church choir
Techniques for conducting a church choir

Tend the Ground
(Guitar/Choral)

Inspired by Pope Francis’s encyclical Laudato Si’

Curtis Stephan

INTRO (Cmaj7)
Em   Dm   Fm   C   G   D   Em

REFRAIN
(Soprano)
G   C   Fm   D   Am   (Em)
We till the earth, we tend the ground—sowing hope and peace where none is

Alto
G   C   Fm   D   Am   (Em)
We till the earth, we tend the ground—sowing hope and peace where none is

Tenor
G   C   Fm   D   Am   (Em)
We till the earth, we tend the ground—sowing hope and peace where none is

Bass
G   C   Fm   D   Am   (Em)
We till the earth, we tend the ground—sowing hope and peace where none is

VERSES

(Am) Bbm

Harmony
1. As God provides one common need, one loving life for clear the
   God provides one common need, one loving life for clear the
   2. All his gifts of love and make us sing of love and make us sing
   3. All love and make us sing of love and make us sing
   4. On the earth where none is none is
   5. On the earth where none is none is
   6. Let the earth where none is none is
   7. Let the earth where none is none is

(D/F♯) Bbm

Verse
1. As God provides one common need, one loving life for clear the
   God provides one common need, one loving life for clear the
   2. All his gifts of love and make us sing of love and make us sing
   3. All love and make us sing of love and make us sing
   4. On the earth where none is none is
   5. On the earth where none is none is
   6. Let the earth where none is none is
   7. Let the earth where none is none is

(Em) Bbm (to Verses)

Optional Interlude
(C) Dm   G   (to Verses)

Earth, we tend the ground.

(Em) Bbm (to Verses)

Earth, we tend the ground.

© 2016, Curtis Stephan. Published by Spirit & Song, a division of CCP, 5536 NE Hassalo, Portland, OR 97213. All rights reserved.
The King Shall Come
Assembly, SATB Choir, Keyboard, and Guitar

Greek; tr. by John Brownle, 1859–1925, alt.

Trevor Thomson
Keyboard acc. by Scott Soper

Parts for Solo Instrument in C (30127337), Solo Instrument in Bb (30127338), and Solo Instrument in Eb (30127339) are available online. Visit ocp.org.

Music © 2013, Trevor Thomson. Published by OCP, 5556 NE Hassalo, Portland, OR 97213. All rights reserved.
The King Shall Come
(Guitar/Choral)

INTRO With gentle longing (4/4 = 64)

C Fadd9

VERSES

Supran C Fadd9

1. The King shall come
   (2. O) bright-er than
   when morn-ing daws
   And light, tri-um-
   phant breaks,

Tenor C Fadd9

1. When beau-
   ty gilds
   the east-ern hills,
   And life to joy
   a-
   wakes.

Bass C Fadd9

1. Not, as of old,
   a lit-tle child
   To bear
   and fight
   and die——

1. lights the morn-
   ing sky
   lights the morn-
   ing sky
   lights the morn-

2. O we his face shall see
   3. The

Final
C/G G Am Dm7 G C

1. O bright-er than
   that glo-rious mor-
   and light
   and beau-
   ty bring——

2. O bright-er than
   that glo-rious mor-
   and light
   and beau-
   ty bring——

3. quick- ly, King of kings

Music © 2013, Trevor Thomson. Published by OCP, 555 NE Hassalo Portland, OR 97232. All rights reserved.

A simplified 2-part Guitar-Vocal version (30127336) is available online. Visit ocp.org.
Questions & Answers
Information

Contact us for more information!

1–888–260–7206
productspecialist@ocp.org

Webinar Slides & Video
www.ocp.org/webinars

Survey
(Fill out the survey at the end of this event, to receive a special offer)