Reflections on the Choral Art: IT’S FESTIVAL SEASON!!

Did you know……..SCVA sponsors the MOST adjudicated choral festivals in the state of California? Last year over 15,000 student singers participated in 65 SCVA choral festivals, many of them putting their sight-reading skills to the test. Why should you – the director – take your students to a sight-reading festival? To validate all of their (and your) hard work, of course! You know the benefits of your students singing at sight, but what if this sight-reading at festivals is new to you and you’re afraid of unchartered waters? Here are some can’t- fail tips:

1) Study the sight-reading rubric on the SCVA website to see what musical skills are required at each level for the festival.
2) Determine where your students align in skill NOW. Determine a reasonable goal by your festival date. How many weeks do you have to prepare? Chose a festival level.
3) Map out a week by week sequential skill building plan – singing stepwise, skips on the tonic triad, quarter notes, eighth notes, etc.
4) Sight sing every day and give them lots of encouragement and praise for their efforts. With festival as a goal, you will see them engage in the process - and progress by leaps and bounds!

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” — Mahatma Gandhi

I am a member of a women’s group that meets monthly for the purpose of goal setting and personal growth. These are professional women, mothers, educators and entrepreneurs. Two seemingly contradictory themes come up time and time again in our presentations: how to find balance in our busy lives and how to live a life that makes a difference. While these thoughtful women strive to juggle family and work commitments, their deep-down desire is to find a way to make a meaningful impact in their communities - to use their education, skills and passions to make a lasting mark on the things that are most important to them.

As busy music educators, sometimes we can barely find time to both serve our students and spend time with our families. Yet we, too, long to make a mark on our larger choral art. Deep-down we have a need to give back to the community that nurtured our passion for music. Rodger Guerrero, SCVA Past President, wrote a wonderful article in this newsletter last month encouraging all SCVA members to consider running for an SCVA board position this year. What a simple, easy and wonderful way to make your mark - to volunteer with the vibrant community that supports the work you believe in. I invite you to find your greater purpose by serving the community that serves you. Please contact Rodger today and join our board. I guarantee you will find greater rewards than you thought possible.
SCVA at CASMEC
February 15-18th - San Jose Convention Center
Visit Booth 109

Reception for SCVA Membership
February 15th McCormick and Schmick’s
8:00-10:00 pm.

Come Join Us! www.scvachoral.org

Come by and visit our booth at the California All-State Music Educator’s Conference! Booth 109 and

Join us for wine and appetizers at McCormick and Schmick’s -170 South Market St., San Jose. 8:00-10:00 p.m.
SCVA Contemporary A Cappella & Vocal Jazz Festival
Friday March 9th, 2018

Featuring The Filharmonic

Evening performance with the amazing group "The Filharmonic"

Thank you for the enormous response to our 2018 SCVA Vocal Jazz and A Cappella Festival!

WE HAVE REACHED MAXIMUM CAPACITY WITH 6 SCHOOLS ON THE WAIT LIST!

We would love to invite you to come see our headliners “The Filharmonic” Concert on March 9, 2018

Valencia High School Performing Arts Theater, 7:30pm
27801 N. Dickason Dr.
Valencia, Ca. 91355

TO PURCHASE TICKETS FOR FILHARMONIC, VISIT
WWW.BROWNPAPERTICKETS.COM
Search: SCVA or Filharmonic

Want to see / hear more vocal jazz or a cappella groups? See below!

March 2nd and 3rd, 2018 Columbia Vocal Jazz Festival https://www.gocolumbia.edu/jazz/
March 9 SCVA A Cappella and Vocal Jazz Festival www.scvachoral.org
March 9-11 Monterey Jazz Festival www.montereyjazzfestival.org/NGJF
March 16-17 Santa Cruz Vocal Jazz Festival http://scjf.org/
April 12-14 Oceanside Jazz Festival https://www.oceansidejazzfestival.com/
April 14th, 2018 Harmony Sweepstakes A Cappella Festival www.harmony-sweepstakes.com
April 20 Fullerton Jazz Festival http://jazzfestival.fullcoll.edu/
April 28 ACSF A Cappella Competition verdugohillschorus.org
2018 – 2020 SCVA Executive Board Elections

Rodger Guerrero, SCVA Past President

Advocate (noun): from Latin advocatus, “one summoned [to give evidence];” derives from Latin advocāre, “to call or summon to;”
1. A person who argues for a cause; supporter or defender;
2. A person who pleads in another’s behalf; an intercessor.

We are all choral advocates summoned “to give evidence” in a multi-tiered manner. Every child deserves a chance to sing. We must continually communicate to all around us that choral music participation benefits are boundless and significant. When our voices seem individually insignificant, we must leap aboard the advocacy train of organizations that effectively plead on our behalf. As the only California choral organization dedicated to the advancement of vocal music at all grade levels in the schools of Southern California, SCVA is certainly an effectual advocacy organization.

SCVA sponsors a multitude of activities that benefit SoCal school choral directors and singers. These activities are planned and coordinated by volunteers who give so much time and energy to the choral music cause. My final act as SCVA Past President is to present a list of proposed officers for the 2018-2020 term. The list must be approved by the current Board at the end of April and voted upon by you – the SCVA membership – in early May. As choral music advocates, all of us should want to volunteer to become members of the SCVA Executive Board. All current SCVA members are, in fact, eligible. Those who are sincerely interested should contact me for more information. After fourteen years of service, I understand well what each office requires. The names, bios, and pictures of those who decide to run for an office will be placed on the May 2018 ballot.

Others must see us to believe us. We must all become strong choral music “activocates.” Choral music advocacy cannot succeed without a collective commitment to active and visible participation in the choral organizations that acutely benefit all of us. There is no finer choral music advocacy organization than SCVA, and there is no finer group of advocates than the SCVA Executive Board.

Junior High/Middle School/Ninth Grade Honor Choir

Marcelo Martínez, VP-JH/MS/9th Grade Honor Choir

By the time you read this, auditions will be over and the Honor Choir selection will have been made. Congratulations to all students selected and their teachers. Thank you to everyone who encouraged their students to audition and for teaching your students the important skills they need. Students will be receiving their music soon so they may begin preparing for the regional rehearsal in March.

Dr. Angel Vázquez-Ramos is excited to work with your students and has already chosen the repertoire for this year’s Honor Choir. As in other years, we will also feature a guest choir before the main event. Christopher Luthi, staff accompanist at Fullerton College, will again be the accompanist for the Honor Choir.

Regional Rehearsal will be Saturday, March 27, 2018 at Mesa Robles MS in Hacienda Heights from 9:00am-1:00pm. The Final Rehearsal and Concert will be Saturday, April 21, 2018 at Portola HS.
Second semester is upon us – festivals are coming – have you prepared your choirs for significant performance moments?

On the practical side (an area that many of us sometimes let slip- yours truly included!):
School calendar (including testing schedule) researched; festivals registered for; payment secured; BUSES ordered (attending entire festival is expectation) allowing plenty of time for travel, restroom use, warm-ups; accompanist nailed down; music for two adjudicators (original – not copies); recording device ready; administration aware of significance of festival; and choir members/parents notified.

On the creative side (lots more fun!):
LITERATURE – (most significant decisions we make!) – consider using one or more pieces you performed in the fall to aid in preparation; variety is essential – period, style, tempo, language, accompanied or not, text, sacred/secular. etc. (save pop/musical theatre for other occasions); sing in different venues – an exchange with another choir, local church, outside under cement overhang, etc.; rehearse in different set-ups and practice stage left/right/other entrance; discuss the joy of hearing different choirs/different levels/different approaches; rehearse pieces in the order you plan to perform them altering your tempi to prepare for new situations; use your brief warm-up time on stage by singing a bit of each piece in the new acoustic in preset standing arrangements (rather than singing “warm-ups”); open your own heart/mind towards other choirs/directors supporting them as well as your own. Happy singing!
STUDENT LEADERSHIP IN THE CHOIR CLASSROOM

Patty Breitag, VP – Show Choir

The Choral Educator wears many hats in the choir classroom. In addition to teaching our students to respect the art of choral music and to learn the correct techniques to achieve our individual concept of choral tone, to understanding balance of parts, tone color and vowel unification – through our guidance, we also help students acquire confidence, self-esteem, work ethic, team spirit and develop leadership qualities. We are the ultimate classroom!

Through our guidance, students can become mentors by taking on responsibilities that include holding and leading sectional rehearsals, sharing singing experiences, sitting and singing next to another student who may not have the same singing experience or is still learning the basic skills, or leading dance rehearsals with the guidance of a staff choreographer. Student leadership skills can be learned through our rehearsals.

These concepts apply to show choir as well. A successful show choir program will have student leaders with specific skills to step up to be a positive influence in rehearsals and during competitions. These student leaders are usually veteran choristers with at least two years of show choir experience. They can be elected by students or selected by educators as section leader, dance captain or costume assistant (to name a few). There are many leadership roles in which a student can contribute.

My choral program has always had a student led choir council that meets with me regularly to discuss fundraising ideas, program ideas, to find bonding activities and to promote a positive, inclusive singing classroom. One year we called the year, “The Year of Positivity”. Our student leaders would focus on treating all students with respect by taking the extra time to help with new singers, to hold sectional rehearsals, to listen to grievances and to work one-on-one with students who needed extra help. In the classroom, at extra rehearsals, on the bus, at dance rehearsals, at competitions and festivals, these student leaders helped students keep on task and brought attitudes and ideas that were centered around creating a positive attitude, which then created an environment of unity, support and team spirit. A group with strong student leadership that works together well creates that positive, safe environment and work ethic that will result in achieving excellence in performance. Encourage student leadership in your choir classroom and the result will be extraordinary!

The 2018 SCVA Show Choir Spectacular is May 5, 2018 at Diamond Bar High School. The Diamond Bar High School Women's Show Choir, “Solitaire” is looking forward to hosting your school at this annual competition. You can apply on the SCVA Website and pay through PayPal or send a school check to register.
French - It’s not as hard as it seems! or French Diction for Dummies
Matthew Netto – VP High School Honor Choirs

Often choral directors are wary of approaching French choral literature solely due to the linguistic problems associated with pronouncing the French language. This won’t solve all the complexities and exceptions of the language but it can be a reasonable starting point. Additionally, I will recommend a few SATB pieces you might try with a high school choir so you can “test-drive” your new found skills.

Though French vowels can be approached similarly to Latin or Italian, the French language contains mixed and nasal vowels. The “mix” is of the tongue (inside the mouth) and the lip (outside the mouth) positions. These vowels are difficult to produce because they feel mismatched. The letters “n” and “m” trigger the nasal vowels. The chart below provides some practical instructions for you to give to your students in rehearsal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Example Word(s)</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>[o]</td>
<td>La, voilà</td>
<td>Like the vowel in the word bought</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>[a] (bright a)</td>
<td>Ami, âme</td>
<td>Say the vowel in “at” with a British accent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ai or é</td>
<td>[e]</td>
<td>J’ai, était, dirai</td>
<td>Closed e sound like saying bay but stopping halfway through before the glide [j]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>au, eau</td>
<td>[o]</td>
<td>Beau, l’eau</td>
<td>Like the o in low</td>
<td>Nasal vowel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en, em, an, am</td>
<td>[œ]</td>
<td>Jean</td>
<td>Say oh, but do it through the nose</td>
<td>Nasal vowel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>[e]</td>
<td>tète</td>
<td>When it is one syllable, say [tet], if two syllables say [tetet]. See notes on the French schwa</td>
<td>Exception: femme is [famœ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-e</td>
<td>[œ]</td>
<td>French schwa</td>
<td>De, me, te, le, se</td>
<td>French schwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(unaccented mixed vowel)</td>
<td>Diction books use [a]</td>
<td>Say [o] with the lips and say [e] inside the mouth. Ask your students to say the [e] vowel and freeze the inside of the mouth, then while frozen, move their lips to [o] and say [e] again.</td>
<td>The word femme could be pronounced [fam] or [famœ] depending on the number of notes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eu</td>
<td>[œ]</td>
<td>Bleu, professeur</td>
<td>Say [œ] with the lips and say [e] inside the mouth. See the instructions above using the new vowels.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in, im</td>
<td>[i]</td>
<td>imprinter</td>
<td>Say ahh, like at the doctor, but through the nose</td>
<td>Nasal vowel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>[i]</td>
<td>fille</td>
<td>Like the vowel in the word bee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oi</td>
<td>[o]</td>
<td>Roi, toi, bois, vois</td>
<td>Like the Wa in Washington</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>[o] or [ɔ]</td>
<td>Rose, morte</td>
<td>Just like Italian vowels</td>
<td>When in doubt use [ɔ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on, om</td>
<td>[ɔ]</td>
<td>Comblé, ombre</td>
<td>Lips make an [u] while saying [o] nasally</td>
<td>Nasal Vowel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ou</td>
<td>[u]</td>
<td>Trou, coup, vous</td>
<td>Like the English vowel in the word who</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>[y]</td>
<td>Tu, ennui,</td>
<td>Say [u] with the lips and say [i] inside the mouth. See the procedure under schwa</td>
<td>This is a very closed vowel. Trumet the lips to produce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un, um</td>
<td>[œ]</td>
<td>Un, parfum</td>
<td>Say “an” nasally without closing to the n</td>
<td>Nasal Vowel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consonants (these are general guidelines and there are exceptions)
3. When singing, make the r flipped instead of in the throat. It’s easier and native French singers do this too.
5. Do not pronounce the “n” or “m” after nasal vowels. Example: 1. entrer = [ɛtʁe] not [œntre] 2. Sont = [sɔ̃]
6. Pronounce the “n” or “m” when the nasal has a double consonant. Example: recommande = [ʁəkɔmɑ̃ðe]
6. The final e hardens final consonants. Ex. 1. petit = [pɔtɥi] vs. petite = [pɔtɥit]

Resources And Repertoire
2. “Mon Coeur se recommande a vous” by Orlando Di Lasso on CPDL
3. “Je ne l’ose dire” by Pierre Cerbon on CPDL
4. Matt Netto matthew_netto@jusd.k12.ca.us feel free to ask me anything about French Diction.
**IMPORTANT DATES & DEADLINES**

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<td>Vocal Solo/Small Ensemble Auditions</td>
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<td>Vocal Solo/Small Ensemble Auditions</td>
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<td>Festival Application Deadline</td>
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<td>CMEA State Choral Festival</td>
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<td>Vocal Jazz &amp; A Cappella Festival/Clinic</td>
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<td>Show Choir Spectacular</td>
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