



# *Tools for School: Choral Music*



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## *6 Ways for Teachers to Stay Motivated this School Year*

*By Andy Beck*

**A**TTITUDE IS EVERYTHING! And as music educators, we strive to inspire and influence the attitudes of our students every day—sometimes forgetting to take time to nurture our own. Here are six tips to maintain your motivation in the coming year.

### **1. KEEP A TEACHING SUCCESS JOURNAL.**

Take time to record a special moment from each teaching day or week. Entries can be practical, such as “Altos finally got the E-flat,” or personal, like “Took some time to make Brittany smile today.” Celebrating your successes in this way will remind you of the many rewards teaching can bring.

### **2. VISIT WITH A MENTOR.**

Who inspired you to become a music educator? Who gave you the special attention that led you toward your dream? Who challenges you to be your very best every day? An online chat, a special thank you note, or a standing lunch date can go a long way in reminding you that you not only have support, but that you also provide support for your students each day.

### **3. REKINDLE YOUR INNER ARTIST.**

Remember when *you* were the performer? When *your* instrument took the stage? Stay connected to your love of music by practicing or performing just for fun. This can be done in the privacy of a practice room, with a local performing group, or a gathering of friends for an informal music recital party.

### **4. TAKE IN A CONCERT OR SHOW.**

Your attendance at a music event not only supports our art form, but also provides a chance to simply be entertained, and perhaps collect a few ideas. While in your concert seat, don't work too hard, just relax and enjoy. Afterwards, you can reflect on favorite moments, analyzing how they made you feel and how you might recreate them with your own students.

### **5. GO TO A READING SESSION OR CONFERENCE.**

Attend a clinic where you can meet and work with top-notch clinicians who will offer teaching strategies, review outstanding literature, and share inspiring anecdotes for education. While you are there, embrace the opportunity to chat with other music teachers—exchanging ideas, trading secrets, and making connections. You can find a list of upcoming Alfred Music events at [alfred.com/events](http://alfred.com/events).

### **6. CHOOSE REPERTOIRE THAT INSPIRES.**

When preparations begin for concerts, recitals, and performances, you and your students will be reviewing the same, relatively small collection of songs for many weeks. So select music and/or lyrics that will provide interest, challenge, success, and inspiration. As you choose repertoire, find pieces that touch the heart, tickle the funny bone, lift the spirit, and move the soul.



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## *Integrating Your Music Program into Daily School Life*

*By Anna Wentlent*

**A**S SCHOOL DISTRICTS CONTINUE TO FACE BUDGET CUTS, music programs and teacher positions continue to be in jeopardy. In addition to being a regular advocate for music to your administration and school board, one of the *most* important things you can do is integrate your program into daily school life. The arts should not be relegated to separate classes that students go to as part of the “specials” cycle; but rather, artistic involvement should be a consistent, permeating aspect of life at school.

### **SHARE STAFF MEMBERS’ MUSIC EXPERIENCES**

To begin with, remember that you are not alone! Even though you may be the only music teacher in your building, there are bound to be teachers and staff members (don’t forget secretaries, guidance counselors, principals, etc.) who have some musical background and appreciation for the arts in general. Make this fact known! I used to start the school year by putting together a giant paper tree on the wall outside my room. On it were hung individual paper apples for every teacher and staff member,

listing their name and musical experience, be it playing clarinet in fourth grade band, singing in collegiate ensembles, or spending time on the road as a sound technician for a rock band! (Yes, that last one is true.) Many musical conversations resulted from walking past that tree in the hallway.

### **EXPLORE DAILY PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES**

Look for performance opportunities during the regular school day. That doesn’t mean adding extra concerts, but creating small opportunities to make performing a natural, enjoyable experience for your students, as well as showcase your program as a vibrant, living part of the school. Bring your “experienced” fifth and sixth graders into third grade to demonstrate band instruments. Teach your classes a funky version of “Happy Birthday” to sing for other students, teachers, and staff on their birthday. Does your school hold a regular school-wide morning program? Use that as often as possible for performance opportunities.

### **CONNECT CURRICULUMS**

When designing large units, look for ways to connect your curriculum with that of classroom teachers. We often forget how interconnected our subject matter really is. When the second and third graders are heading outdoors to explore nature in the spring, teach them a few songs from *Creepy Creatures* (Alfred, 00-35853), *Weather the Weather!* (00-23413), or *It’s Easy Being Green!* (00-34706). Learn multicultural songs to coincide with the students’ geography units. When the fourth graders are studying a particular country, incorporate a song, dance, or instrument from that culture into music class at the same time. Explore collections with appropriately arranged music, including *Ready to Sing ... Folk Songs* (00-17175), *A Small Part of the World* (00-16948), *Children of the World* (00-31193), and *Celebrations Around the World!* (00-20151).

### **CREATE COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS**

Consider collaborating with a classroom teacher on an instrument design project. I did a yearly cartoon composition project

using regular classroom instruments, until a classroom teacher approached me with the idea of having his students design and build their own instruments as part of a physics unit in class. The level of student effort and interest in the entire project was astounding. The following year, this same classroom teacher had his students make their own silent films, which we then orchestrated in music class. This was truly organic music making!

You don't have to give over your entire curriculum to this effort—just take the opportunity to make small connections when possible. Of course, once you get going, it's hard to stop. Consider working with the other “specials” teachers to designate a theme for a full semester or even the entire school year. Focus on a specific culture, genre, time period, or event. Use your combined resources to bring in special performers or an artist-in-residence. By organizing student learning on such a large-scale, you will give your students a unique opportunity to explore important topics from many different angles.

Use as many opportunities as possible to integrate your music program into daily school life. Don't just tell your administrators how important music is; rather, demonstrate that fact by making your program irreplaceable.



*Anna Wentlent is an educator, music editor, author, and piano accompanist. She attended the Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam (music education), York St. John College (community music), and Boston University (educational leadership and policy studies). She currently resides in Boston, Massachusetts, where she is the Choral Director/General Music Teacher at Coolidge Middle School in the Reading Public Schools.*

## The Benefits of Music Education

Studying music improves academic performance

MUSIC EDUCATION IMPROVES

- MATH
- READING
- EARLY COGNITIVE DEVELOPEMNT
- CRITICAL THINKING
- LEADERSHIP SKILLS

1<sup>st</sup>

GRADUATION RATES

90.9%

of students graduate at schools with music programs, compared to 72.69% at schools without music programs

SAT SCORES

100 POINTS

Students who took four years of arts and music classes in high school scored **100 points better** on their SATs than students who only took one-half year or less.

STUDENTS INVOLVED IN THE ARTS ARE

- 3x more likely to win an award for school attendance. more likely to be elected to class office.
- 4x more likely to participate in a math and science fair. more likely to be recognized for academic achievement.

CAREER SUCCESS

72% of business leaders say **creativity** is the #1 skill they seek when hiring.

97% of superintendents agree that music courses build **creativity** in future job prospects.

MORE SOCIALLY ADEPT

Music students can be more **empathetic** towards others, have a **higher self-esteem**, and are better at coping with anxiety.



## 5-Minute Warm-Ups: Warming Up the Voice and the Body

By Sally K. Albrecht

**A**S CHOIR DIRECTORS, we all know that rehearsal time is so precious! We must use every moment to its fullest, and warming up together is the ideal way to get everyone thinking and working together. Here are some tips on how to make this time most effective and efficient.

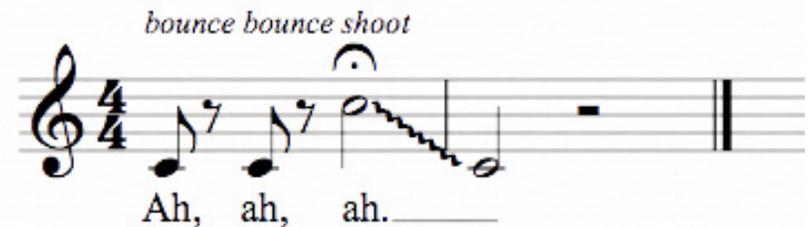
Generally, while warming up voices, we try to emphasize unifying vowels, expanding ranges, and energizing the sound of your choir. What about also including warm-ups for the body? This will help ensure students' breathing is deep and that their minds are fully engaged!

### 1. COME ALIVE: JAZZ HANDS + MOUTH + EYES

Start with closed hands in front of the shoulders, then explode open into jazz hands, fully open through the ends of the fingertips. Relax. Repeat 3x. Add a wide mouth. Relax. Repeat 3x. Repeat with hands and wide eyes. Relax. Repeat 3x. Then all three together: hands, mouth, and eyes. Relax. Repeat.

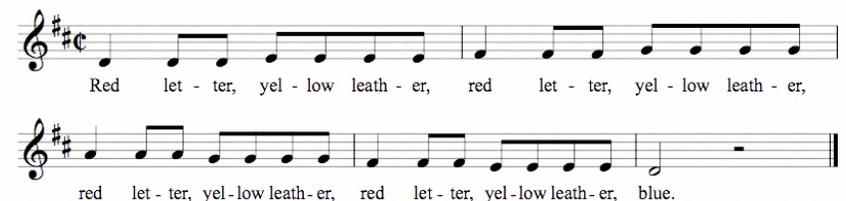
### 2. NOTHING BUT NET: BASKETBALL BOUNCES AND THROWS

Pretend to bounce a basketball twice in front of you, then “shoot” as you sing the octave skip. Let the index finger fall as you glissando down the octave. Work your way up and down by half steps as desired. Vary by shooting R and L, or even over your back! Choose a student to lead the fall/glissando. Try different vowels. Good for creating clear unison vowels in the upper octave and expanding ranges. [Adapted from *The Choral Warm-Up Collection*, exercise #16, Jean Perry.]



### 3. NOVELTY DICTION: GET THE MOUTH MOVING

Put the R palm out to the R (palm up) and say “Red letter.” Repeat with the L saying “Yellow leather.” Try this exercise, flipping your head and using the palms from side to side. On “Blue” simply clasp front. Start slowly, then get a bit faster each time, hitting a new major chord on beat 3 of the final measure. Don’t necessarily move by half steps. See if your students can quickly find the new “do” each time! [Adapted from *The Choral Warm-Up Collection*, exercise #58, Rick Weymuth.]



#### 4. GETTING A-ROUND TO IT: BLEND AND BALANCE

Using a simple round as a warm-up can help with blend and balance. Sing unison to start, then count off 1-2-1-2 etc. and sing as a 2-part round. The next time, count off 1-2-3-1-2-3 etc. and sing as a 3-part round. Can students hold on to their own part? Finally, divide into 4 sections and sing several times through. I teach students how to conduct a 4-pattern on the first measure. On the following measure, I ask singers to draw a circle with their R palm up and over. Repeat with the L palm on measure 3. Then both palms circle in front on the final measure. Ask the students to suggest different syllables to sing, using different consonants and vowels. See if you can perform this warm-up in one breath! [Adapted from *The Choral Warm-Up Collection*, exercise #161, Doris Sjolund.]

Sweet-ly the swan sings loo lee-ah-loo, loo lee-ah-loo, loo lee-ah-loo.  
Sweet-ly the swan sings doh dee-ah-doh, doh dee-ah-doh, doh dee-ah-doh.

#### ADDITIONAL CHORAL WARM-UP RESOURCES

Make sure you have these well-loved Alfred Music publications in your library:

1. *The Choral Warm-Up Collection: A Sourcebook of 167 Choral Warm-Ups Contributed by 51 Choral Directors*, compiled and edited by Sally K. Albrecht (00-21676)
2. *The Complete Choral Warm-Up Book: A Sourcebook for Choral Directors*, by Russell Robinson and Jay Althouse (00-11653)
3. *Vocalize! 45 Accompanied Vocal Warm-Ups that Teach Technique*, by Andy Beck (00-40024)



Sally K. Albrecht is a popular choral composer, conductor, and clinician, especially known for her work with choral movement. An annual recipient of the ASCAP Special Music Award since 1987, Sally has hundreds of chorals, songbooks, musicals, and movement DVDs in print.

# 5-Minute Voice & Body Warm-Ups

### Jazz Hands & Mouth & Eyes

### Basketball Bounce & Throw

ah ah ah!

### Red Letter, Yellow Leather

red let-ter, yel-low leath-er, red let-ter, yel-low leath-er, red let-ter, yel-low leath-er,  
red let-ter, yel-low leath-er, blue.

### Sing a Simple Round

Sweet-ly the swan sings loo lee-ah-loo, loo lee-ah-loo, loo lee-ah-loo.



## *7 Tools Your Students Need in Their Music Fundamentals Toolbox*

*By Katie O'Connor-Ballantyne*

**O**NE OF THE GREAT JOYS of my work as a music educator is teaching freshman-level courses in theory and aural skills as an adjunct professor. I love watching students discover greater mastery of the fundamentals of music, which become the foundation of their teaching and learning as young music professionals.

I also watch many students struggle with the content of those courses, most especially when they arrive at music school without the benefit of having had access to either basic music theory courses or private instruction during their high school years. As parents increasingly struggle to find the funds for private music lessons and school budgets cut classes like music theory and small group music lessons from their budgets, what's a music educator to do?

One of the answers lies in making music literacy a part of every single class or ensemble you offer. This both levels the playing field for students who may not be able to afford or access outside music lessons, and has the benefit of making your ensemble rehearsals faster and more efficient over time as your young artists build their literacy skills. In an ensemble situation, having at least one piece of repertoire that is selected to match the group's sight-reading level ensures that the practical skills you build in warmups can be directly applied to music you are learning for performance.

Our music fundamentals course design at my school looks at seven key areas of music literacy, and demands competency in all seven before students move on to study music theory at the collegiate level. I like to think of these seven skills as "tools" in a music fundamentals toolbox. Each tool addresses a significant music literacy concept, and each can be incorporated into warmups and rehearsals to build skills. Over the course of a year, adequate time spent on each concept will yield students who decode notation with greater skill and aptitude. Over the course of 4 years of high school, a student will leave well-prepared to begin undergraduate music study.

Take a look at the following list. How many of these concepts are you already addressing in your ensemble rehearsals? Where could you make room for the rest of these concepts?

### **1. RHYTHM/METER**

- Note and rest values: musical math—how many eighth notes in a quarter note? In a quarter rest?
- Time signature: what note value equals the beat? How many beats in a measure?
- Meter classification: Is the meter simple (the beat divides into two parts) or compound (the beat divides into three parts)? Is the meter duple (two beats to a measure), triple (three beats), or quadruple (four beats)?

## 2. PITCH

- Pitch class/note names and clefs: treble and bass for basic literacy, include alto and tenor for advanced literacy
- Octave designations: C4 vs. C3
- Accidentals: how flats and sharps alter pitch, include double flats and double sharps for advanced literacy
- Enharmonic equivalents: respelling of note names with different accidentals

## 3. INTERVALS

- Visual identification of intervals by size (fifth, octave, etc.) and quality (perfect, major, minor, augmented, diminished)
- Aural identification of intervals by size and quality
- Spelling of intervals (e.g., a major third above C, a minor third below A-flat)
- Enharmonic respelling of intervals (augmented fourth = diminished fifth)
- Inversion of intervals (a minor third inverts to become a major sixth)

## 4. SCALES

- Scale types (major, natural minor, harmonic minor, melodic minor)
- Scale degree identification (tonic, dominant, leading tone, etc.)
- Solfège/Curwen hand signs (movable or fixed do, do-based or la-based minor)
- Scale spelling given a starting note (or any scale degree)
- Scale transformation (e.g., to change a natural minor scale into a harmonic minor scale, raise the seventh scale degree by a half step)
- Aural identification of scale types

## 5. KEY SIGNATURES

- Order of flats (B, E, A, D, G, C, F) and sharps (F, C, G, D, A, E, B)
- Correct placement of flats and sharps on each clef
- Spelling of major and minor key signatures
- Relative, parallel, and enharmonic key relationships

## 6. TRIADS

- Triad visual identification (major, minor, augmented, diminished)
- Aural identification of triads played melodically and harmonically
- Triad spelling given any member of the chord (root, third, fifth)
- Triad transformation (e.g. to change a major triad into an augmented triad, raise the fifth by a half step)

## 7. MUSICAL TERMS AND SYMBOLS

- Dynamic markings and symbols (forte, piano, pianissimo, crescendo, etc.)
- Tempo terms (presto, largo, allegro, andante, accelerando, ritard, etc.)
- Articulation markings and symbols (staccato, tenuto, accent, etc.)
- Musical form terms and symbols (coda, dal segno al fine, repeat, etc.)

The above list might also serve as a handy checklist for students planning on pursuing music as a career path so they can track their own music literacy readiness.



*Katie O'Connor-Ballantyne is a composer, conductor, and music editor. An active clinician, adjudicator, and presenter, she previously taught choral music and theater at Johnson City High School in upstate New York. She holds degrees in Music Education and Vocal Performance from Ithaca College and the Irish World Music Centre.*



## *Peak Performance: Overcoming Musical Plateaus*

*By Krista Hart*

**EVERY DIRECTOR HAS EXPERIENCED IT**—your group is doing a lot of things “right” but doesn’t seem able to take things to the next level. How do you move your group from average to amazing? Whether it’s a particular piece that has your musicians stuck, or a general sense of stagnation, here are some suggestions for kickstarting the move toward peak performance:

### **1. FILM A PERFORMANCE OR REHEARSAL**

Record your ensemble and play it back for them, giving them a specific area to critique. Watching yourself perform can encourage self-awareness of how each member contributes to the whole.

### **2. PARTICIPATE IN A FESTIVAL OR COMPETITION**

A little healthy competition never hurt anyone! Knowing that you are going to perform for a rating or ranking can be a great motivator. Be sure your group is prepared well enough to have

a positive experience, and also ready to receive and accept constructive criticism.

### **3. GO BACK TO A PIECE THEY ALREADY PERFORM AT A HIGH LEVEL**

Is there a piece from earlier in the year (or even last year) that the ensemble connected with and performed very well? Bring it back out, let them experience the quality again, and find ways to relate it to the literature you are currently rehearsing.

### **4. MIX IT UP IN REHEARSAL**

Split the group in half and perform for each other. Have the listening half “mirror” the performing half to demonstrate how they emote, posture, etc. Find a unique way to rehearse that will take students out of the normal routine of your classroom. Try breaking into quartets and singing in a circle. Sing with eyes closed. Have students sing only when directed and audiate the rest.

### **5. CHANGE YOUR REHEARSAL SPACE**

Try a rehearsal in the auditorium, the lunchroom, or a stairway with great acoustics. If you can’t leave your room, try different standing or seating arrangements. Students will hear all kinds of previously unnoticed things in a new acoustic environment.

### **6. GUEST CLINICIAN**

Ask a colleague from another school in your district, a professor from the local university, a retired teacher, or any other respected director. A guest clinician can breathe new life into a rehearsal by bringing a new perspective and energy. And yes, they will say some of the same things you have been saying for weeks and your students will act as if they have never heard it.

### **7. STUDENT CONDUCTORS**

Try having students volunteer to lead part of a rehearsal. The experience of hearing the group from the other side may be eye-opening for them. They may also have a unique way to describe to their peers how to achieve a better performance.

## 8. DIVE DEEP INTO THE TEXT

If you haven't already, take some time to connect with the text of your piece. Have them speak the text as poetry, emphasizing word stress and inflection. Talk about what emotions the text evokes and how the group can express them with the audience.

## 9. FIND INSPIRATION

Watch videos or recordings of professional bands, choirs, orchestras, etc; ask students to write about what the music means to them and ask them to share with the group. Start each rehearsal with an inspirational or motivational statement that will anchor your time spent together.

## 10. PUT IT AWAY FOR AWHILE

This can be a scary suggestion, especially if you are getting close to a performance, but you can trust that all they have learned will not be erased in a matter of days. Sometimes getting away from a piece will bring about a renewed appreciation for it. If rehearsing the piece has been tense lately, a little break can help clear the air.

## 11. CELEBRATE THE PROGRESS THAT HAS BEEN MADE

Look at how far the ensemble has come! Think back to when the group was first introduced to a piece of music, or back to the first rehearsal of the year. How have they grown, even if it's not related to your current plateau situation? If you have a recording or video from earlier in the year share it with the group and point out how what they have achieved.

## 12. CHECK YOURSELF

What habits do you have that might actually be contributing to the stagnation? How often do you allow the group to sing or play through a section or entire piece without stopping them? Are you regularly finding students that are demonstrating good rehearsal or singing technique and pointing it out to the group? Are you providing a variety of methods of presenting what you are after? Do you find yourself saying the exact same phrases every rehearsal but not getting any improvement in the output? These self-reflections can be uncomfortable but so beneficial in the end.

### THERE IS NO FINISH LINE.

There is no finish line in music—only progress. The beautiful and possibly frustrating news is that we can always improve our performance. If your group has reached a plateau don't be frustrated or disappointed but get creative about how to keep striving toward your peak performance.



*Krista Hart is a former music educator with a passion for choral music. She attended Wichita State University and taught middle school music. Following her teaching years, she spent nearly a decade assisting directors in choosing literature, and curating selections for choral reading sessions at Senseney Music in Wichita, KS. Krista is currently the Senior Product Marketing Manager for Choral, Classroom, and Vocal publications at Alfred Music.*



## *Maintaining Your Vocal Health in the Classroom*

*By Karen Farnum Surmani*

**E**DUATORS ARE FACED WITH VOCAL CHALLENGES that most other professions are not. As part of the job, we tend to use our voices all day, in difficult circumstances that may include poor acoustics, little air circulation, and distracting ambient noise. Any of these can take a toll on precious vocal cords. It is no great surprise that the National Education Association (NEA) reports that a significant percentage of educators develop a voice disorder at some point during their career. Music teachers in particular tend to have even more vocal challenges than the average educator, since their job is to specialize in sound-producing activities.

Music educators tend to be fearless and talented teachers, cheerleaders, confidence builders, and horizon-expanders for their students—and that’s just what’s involved in an average teaching day. All of those rousing activities can become vocally taxing, especially when it’s cold season or you’re tired, or under stress to prepare for a concert or festival. The good news is that

most types of vocal distress can be avoided or minimized with some healthful fixes.

Let’s begin with your overall health. You already know that you should eat right and stay active. Let’s talk about sleep. It’s easy to overlook getting enough sleep, or to think you can just catch up another day. Sleep impacts your well-being in numerous ways. When your body is sleeping, it is also repairing and restoring the body to meet the next day’s challenges. Make it a goal to get enough rest each night. If you smoke, quit. It cannot be emphasized enough how much smoking impacts one’s vocal and general health. Also try to avoid undue stress if possible, as it will inevitably be taxing to your voice. (I know, you’re a music teacher....) Then try the following voice-saving strategies.

### **BEFORE TEACHING**

1. Warm up your voice. Some teachers swear by humming in their morning shower. A repeated half step pattern that progressively ascends can easily be done while half asleep, and the humidity is great for the voice! Warming up will give a vocal boost to your day.

### **IN THE CLASSROOM**

1. Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate! This is a cardinal rule. Drink water throughout your day and avoid drying beverages such as coffee, tea, or soda. The goal is to keep the vocal cords comfortably moist and flexible. If you must have a hot drink, try using any of the soothing “throat coat” teas available.
2. Watch your posture. Standing or sitting straight will help give your vocal instrument the optimal, stress-free vessel it needs to produce its best sound.
3. Breathe deeply and support the voice when you speak, not just when you sing. This is super important and so easy to forget to do, particularly when fatigued, but it will take a toll on delicate cords if you don’t. If you are having trouble

finding those lower supportive muscles, try panting briefly or take in your breath for a sigh. Either of these will allow you to feel those low abdominal muscles working to support your voice. Then make it a goal to continue to breathe this way while teaching.

4. Use your head voice as much as possible when speaking to your class. Many people, particularly women, tend to speak at an unnaturally low pitch that can cause strain. Think of a modified Julia Child voice, then direct the natural voice up into your forehead area. (Use a vocal descending glissando sigh from a high to low pitch to find the placement, if necessary.) Place the voice higher, and the lighter head voice will be easier to sustain over the course of a work day, week, and semester.

In order to keep these healthful tips in mind, sing the following words to the tune of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star,”

*Warm up, hydrate, posture, support,  
and head voice speech equals vocal resort!*

#### **CAUTION AHEAD!**

Now that you have the basic healthy ideas down, be wary of the following common vocal pitfalls.

1. No whispering (or shouting)! As much as possible, stay away from vocal extremes both in and outside the classroom, such as yelling at sports games or whispering, as these tire the voice quickly.
2. Never clear your throat. This is the equivalent of scraping your vocal cords together and can be very damaging. Go gently, swallow to clear them, or drink a soothing beverage.

3. Don't try to sing all day. When appropriate, find alternatives to vocal modeling for students such as whistling, using recordings, or student models. Pace yourself and try to fit mini-vocal vacations into your day. Talk less, rehearse more.
4. Never try to speak over music. Get the room quiet before launching into instructions or comments. You'll probably have to repeat them anyway, if you don't. Call on students to finish your sentences for you. This has the benefit of keeping them involved, helps with assessment, and provides you with a vocal break. Win, win, win!
5. If you still consistently find yourself with a tired voice, consider investing in a small amplification system. You will still need to support your voice, but a microphone can make all the difference, allowing students to hear you better and relieving you from vocal strain.

Finally, remember the joy you had making music as a student. If you can maintain a positive, healthful environment for yourself, your students will be inspired and want to experience music in the way that you hear it and are guiding them. When they can feel your passion for the subject, you won't have to talk so much to get them motivated and on the right track!



*Karen Farnum Surmani is an adjunct professor of music education at California State University, Northridge, as well as a professional vocalist, voice teacher, and editor. She is the author and co-author of several books including Teach Yourself to Sing, Singing 101, Rock Singing Techniques, Sing at First Sight, and Alfred's Essentials of Music Theory.*



## ***Presentation Is Key: Ideas to Make Your Choral Performances More Memorable***

*By Sally K. Albrecht*

**MUSICIANS ARE, BY NATURE, CREATIVE PEOPLE.** Don't you enjoy attending concerts where something completely surprising or different happens? I'm always looking for new ideas, fresh tricks, inventive ways to present a song and create a magical, memorable moment. Here are a few ideas.

- Have your singers process in while singing, forming a circle around your audience, or singing in the aisles.
- Plan a “pre-show” feature with small groups singing in the lobby or in the aisles—great for a cappella training! (Cirque du Soleil does this all the time, creating audience rapport or a special mood before each of their shows.)
- Select a choral that features a special instrumental obbligato or small instrumental group.
- Plan a teacher/student selection or a parent/student selection that requires minimum rehearsal time.

- Program an audience sing-along, clap-along, or play-along. Teach the audience a rhythm if necessary before performing the song, then assign a student to be the audience “leader” and show the audience when it's their time to participate. I've been known to pre-set small rhythm instruments at different seats. I've also invited the audience to find keys, tic-tac containers, or two writing utensils from their pockets or purses! Pens that click open even make a neat sound!
- Assign or select individual students to prepare short, concise spoken introductions, especially if the song is in a foreign language, from another country, or features a text written by a famous person/poet. Tell your audience if there's something special they should listen for during the performance of that song.
- If several groups are performing, connect your concert with featured performers, soloists, or small groups (audition and work with them beforehand).
- Invite a sign-language specialist to your concert to sign an inspirational song.
- Consider hosting a “pyramid concert” with your feeder schools, with each level performing individual selections. Then plan a big group finale with all the participants singing from their seats or on stage. Make sure that siblings sing side by side for an extra touch!
- While performing a special “music” or “friendship” song, project a powerpoint featuring photos of your singers during rehearsals or on a recent trip or music tour.



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*Sally K. Albrecht is a popular choral composer, conductor, and clinician, especially known for her work with choral movement. An annual recipient of the ASCAP Special Music Award since 1987, Sally has hundreds of chorals, songbooks, musicals, and movement DVDs in print.*



## *Mindful Meditation for Musicians*

*By Toni Hosman*

**I T IS WIDELY ACCEPTED** that performance anxiety affects everyone. Even seasoned musicians can be struck by that most unsettling feeling. So, the question becomes, how do performers get past this? “The show must go on” isn’t enough to break down this barrier. Ultimately, it comes down to the individual and how they handle stress and anxiety.

One of the most helpful secrets a director shared with me was simply to breathe. Oddly enough, she was right. It’s funny how much of the body can be affected by something so simple. After she said that, I realized what little breath I was using. I was just standing in a line waiting to be called into the audition room! There was only one reason I could think of as to why I had sweaty palms, a racing heartbeat, and lack of breath: my anxiety. From that moment on, I took every chance to inhale as deeply as I could. Within minutes, my demeanor changed, and I could focus with more clarity on the task ahead.

That one experience sent me on a journey to uncover even more ways to handle my performance anxiety. Years later, it still isn’t

completely gone but it is much more manageable. (One thing to consider, no person is chemically and biologically the same as anyone else. Sometimes stress-management requires more than mental discipline.) One of the most effective ways I found to help manage performance anxiety is mindful meditation.

Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we’re doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what’s going on around us. In performance, the ability to be fully present is paramount. If performers zone out or revert into auto-pilot mode, they become susceptible to glitches or breakdown. Or if something unexpected occurs, which is not so unlikely when performing live, a performer may not be as quick to react and adjust. Being mindful in performance is key.

Meditation is the act of engaging in contemplation or reflection. In essence, mindful meditation is the act of engaging the basic human ability to be fully present and aware. The most opportune time to do this as a performer is before every practice and again before the performance itself. Starting rehearsals by practicing 2–3 minutes of mindful meditation will help your ensemble focus with the long-term goal of overcoming performance anxiety on the big day. Here are some simple steps to help guide this process for students:

1. Find a spot—chair, cushion, bench—and sit comfortably.
2. Take several moments to feel what your body is doing. In any position you choose to meditate, every part of your body should be comfortable and at ease. Do not stiffen or tighten muscles.
3. Drop your chin and inhale as deeply as you can.
4. Relax here for a few minutes. Bring your attention to your breath and what your body is feeling. Focus on different parts of your body—especially your breathing and take

a few moments to register the physical sensation of breathing. (Music educators: this is a good opportunity to practice various breathing exercises!)

- From this point on, your mind will wander. That's okay. As time goes on, you will learn how to redirect your thoughts and keep focused. But until then, when you do realize your thoughts have wandered, gently return your attention to breathing.
- After 2–3 minutes and with intention, gently lift your gaze and notice any sounds in your environment. Notice how your body feels, your thoughts, your emotions, then decide how to engage in the rehearsal or performance with your fellow musicians.

The hardest part of mindful meditation is consistency. Daily practice is obviously ideal, but even if it's only before rehearsals or once a week, get your students into the habit. One day they may overcome performance anxiety entirely, but only if you work at it. As the performance approaches and you find students swirling in a thought-vortex of forgotten words or worried about being on stage in front of an audience, remind them to tap into their mindful meditation. Help them let go of those anxieties and just breathe until their mind is clear. And finally, take the stage and perform without fear.



*Toni Hosman is the School & Solo Performance Marketing Manager at Alfred Music and a private piano and vocal coach. She attended Westmont College and received her B.A. in Music Performance. She has performed in shows and operas such as La Cenerentola, The Pirates of Penzance, High School Musical, The Sound of Music, and others. She is currently a member of the Santa Clarita Master Chorale.*

# How to Overcome Stage Fright with Mindful Meditation





## *Tips for Achieving Quality Recordings of Your Students' Live Performances*

*By Robert Hirsh*

**J**UST AS ATHLETES will document, review, and study their own performances after a game, musicians can also benefit from watching and listening to their own performances after-the-fact, when their mind is not focused on operating their instrument(s). Here are some tips from Alfred Music's Senior Director of Video and Media, Robert Hirsh, on how you can easily improve the quality of your live recordings, even with limited resources and knowledge.

### **WHAT EQUIPMENT IS NECESSARY TO GET A QUALITY RECORDING?**

When recording a live concert yourself, you'll likely find that the bigger obstacle to getting a great result is capturing nice sounding audio rather than great looking images, since cameras are more forgiving at a distance than are microphones. We recommend recording video and audio on two separate devices and syncing them together afterward using non-linear-editing (NLE) software. For those unfamiliar with that process, it's not as

difficult as it sounds, and there are numerous beginning tutorials online to help you. If using two or more cameras, you'll even be able to do basic cuts between cameras using the NLE.

### **AUDIO GEAR OPTIONS**

The audio gear can range from a professional field recorder with a separate microphone, to one with built in stereo microphones, to even just a smartphone. Field recorders will be the most important thing if you want the best audio possible, most will come with a microphone attachment. If someone is recording audio through a soundboard you can even hook into the board using an XLR cable. (This would require syncing the audio and video in an editing software.)

### **VIDEO GEAR OPTIONS**

Similarly, video gear can range from DSLRs with interchangeable lenses that perform great in low lighting, to a smartphone. Just remember, if your camera records to SD cards, make sure you have the right kind, and that you can record continuously for the length of the performance (some have a limit of around 30 minutes). GoPros can be very good, if done correctly. They're not great in low light so make sure the area is well lit, and make sure it is close enough to the performer since it has such a wide angle. Try to shoot in 4k and if you want less distortion on the edges, change it to a medium aspect ratio.

**Pro Tip:** It's important when recording audio and video separately that the sample rate of the devices match exactly. This is how the two elements will sync together over the duration of the performance without drifting apart.

### **RECOMMENDED SETUP**

For audio capture, the basic idea is to place the microphone as near to the sound source as you can, maximizing gain and minimizing background or room noise. The necessity of this rule falls along a spectrum, of course, as it's hugely dependent on the type of concert being captured, i.e. more relevant for a solo

acoustic instrument like a flute or classical guitar than for a full concert band.

For video, ideally you'd want at least two cameras mounted on tripods. One capturing a wide shot showing all the performers on stage, and a secondary camera showing close-ups or details of the performer(s). The wide shot should be locked down and at a high enough angle to minimize showing the audience. The second camera affords you a great opportunity to capture a variety of shots that tell the "story" of the performance. You'll want this camera to differ from the angle and shot size of the wide shot as much as possible so you don't duplicate shots.

#### **WHAT IF I ONLY HAVE A SMARTPHONE FOR AUDIO AND VIDEO?**

Even if using only a smartphone for video and audio, the proximity rule still applies. Either make sure to get it as close to the player as possible so that the mic can capture the sound cleanly, or use a second smartphone for the audio. And, again, you can sync these up later. If you can find a way to mount the phone to a tripod or on a table, do so. Most smartphones will record cleanly without any extra apps required. Newer Apple iPhones can record audio from an external source if plugged into the audio jack/lightning port even while recording regular video. This will give you the option of mounting a microphone on it or a wireless system if you have one. Using the app MoviePro or Filmic Pro lets you choose even more in depth settings for phone recordings (this app also allows audio monitoring). If you want to edit on the phone there are a few free apps that work great, iMovie or Filmmaker Pro for iPhone or Adobe Premiere Clip for Android.

#### **WHAT ABOUT LIGHTING CONSIDERATIONS?**

If your concert take place in an auditorium with stage lighting, there's little you can do except expose your camera correctly. Most cameras do a good job of auto exposing, and auto focusing, but if you notice something isn't quite right and you still want to keep everything on auto, try framing the subject in the center of the frame and see if the camera responds favorably.

#### **LIGHTING TIPS FOR SHOOTING IN A MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM**

Some locations may not have stage lighting at all, such as multi- or general-purpose rooms in a school, community center, or house of worship. Often, rooms like these will have windows and overhead fixtures, typically with fluorescent or, increasingly, LED lights. The main consideration in this scenario is to avoid mixing different sources of lighting, such as daylight and artificial lighting since they have a different color temperature. This will manifest in weird color hues showing up in your image.

You can avoid this by:

1. For a daytime concert, turn off the overhead lights and try to position the performer(s) either facing the windows, or beside them, but not too oblique an angle that they are lit from behind. You can supplement this natural light by filling in from the opposite side of the window using a daylight balanced lighting kit (ideally with a soft box), or daylight photoflood bulbs bounced into a large piece of white cardboard or foam core. The larger the ensemble, the bigger a fill source, or sources, you'll need, so that it is out of your main shot, but still effective.
2. For a nighttime concert, the windows are not usually a factor so you can leave the artificial light on, and supplement that with an inexpensive lighting kit, or set of photofloods (bounced like in the daytime example) that are balanced the same as the overhead light.



*Robert Hirsh is an accomplished media professional, team leader, and musician. Originally from Northern California, Robert began his career in the entertainment industry working for prominent producers at several major studios. The opportunity to combine storytelling with music education eventually brought him to Alfred Music, where he leads the media production team.*



## *The Importance of Copyright Law: Dos and Don'ts for Music Educators*

*By Pam Phillips*

**T**HE WORLD OF COPYRIGHT can be intriguing, interesting, frustrating, complicated, and confusing, all at the same time. It also is something that impacts music teachers and directors every day. Following proper copyright usage assists the composers and arrangers in making a living from their craft. Those of us in the arts and responsible for educating future artists need to support our fellow creatives. My hope is that there will always be ways to make a living in music. We can be part of that circle and teach the students that art has value.

“Compositions, books, websites, and other artistic works of all kinds exist because people expressed their individual creativity and their thought processes to create these works. That is why it is called intellectual property. This is the ‘work’ of creators, including composers, and they all deserve to be paid for their work.”

—*Copyright Handbook for Music Educators and Directors*

### **WHAT DOES A COPYRIGHT OWNER CONTROL?**

- The right to **reproduce** the copyrighted work in copies or sound recordings.
- The right to prepare **derivative** works based on the copyrighted work.
- The right to **distribute** copies or sound recordings of the copyrighted work to the public.
- The right to **perform** the copyrighted work publicly.
- The right to **display** the copyrighted work publicly.
- [For sound recordings] The right to **perform** the copyrighted work publicly by means of a digital audio transmission.

The permission to use or reproduce a work is granted in different ways depending on its use. Each right controlled by the copyright owner must be considered when planning a new project. Music educators and directors are most commonly concerned with these situations:

- Using printed music
- Creating and using audio and video recordings
- Performing in public
- Uploading to the Internet
- Downloading from the Internet
- Arranging music

### **WHAT IS PUBLIC DOMAIN?**

In the U.S., a general rule of thumb is that if the piece was written or published from 1923 and on, it will still be under copyright. There are exceptions to this because copyright law continues to evolve. This applies to newly composed works, arrangements, and new editions of classics. For example, an *edition* of a Beethoven symphony that was published 20 years ago is protected just the same as a piece that was written two years ago.

Music written or published before 1923 is *most likely* now considered public domain. Public domain means that anyone can freely use that music—perform it, create derivative works (arrangements), include it in other collections, and so on. In order

to do so, be sure your source material is public domain and that it's not recent arrangement or edition of an older work.

### HOW CAN I RESEARCH THE COPYRIGHT STATUS OF A PIECE?

- Look for a copyright notice. If you find the name of a publisher, contact them with any inquiries.
- Research online databases—allmusic.com, ASCAP, BMI, SESAC, copyright.gov, the Harry Fox Agency, and the Library of Congress.
- Check the website of print music publishers and music retailers for copyright notices.
- Review the dates of the composer's life and composition itself.

### ADDITIONAL ADVICE:

- Don't trust the grapevine's knowledge. There are great resources online and in print.
- Laws vary between countries. The copyright laws in the country you live in will apply to you. Treaties establish international copyright law.
- If what you are doing causes someone else to lose income, then it is most likely a copyright infringement.
- Be wary of "free" music on the Internet. It may have been illegally scanned and posted.
- Not everything on "public domain sheet music" sites, such as IMSLP, is public domain.
- If you have any doubts, consult an intellectual property attorney. This article is not intended to provide legal advice; it is a guideline and intended to provide you with resources.

The content of this article is excerpted from *Copyright Handbook for Music Educators and Directors* (Alfred Music, 00-45961) by Pam Phillips and Andrew Surmani. For the definitive law, visit [copyright.gov](http://copyright.gov) and/or consult with an intellectual property attorney.



*Pam Phillips has a broad background in arts management and production, including producing concerts, camps, and workshops. In her role as an editor she has worked on production of DVDs, CDs, orchestra pieces, and books.*

# Copyright Do's & Don'ts

## DO

Do view **SCORE&SOUND** on YouTube or sample pages online to review and select music.

Do arrange songs in the public domain (most folks songs, carols, hymns, and spirituals) for your ensemble.

Do make emergency copies if a performance is imminent, provided a replacement is purchased within a reasonable time.

Do make copies from classroom resources that are clearly labeled as reproducible.

Do copy short musical excerpts (no more than 10% of an entire work) to use for academic purposes.

Do the right thing—support the arts by legally purchasing music.

## DON'T

Don't download and copy sample pages to avoid purchasing music.

Don't create your own arrangements of copyrighted material without prior written permission from the copyright holder.

Don't make "practice" copies for students, thus allowing the original to remain in your library.

Don't share reproducible materials from school to school—one is required per building/organization.

Don't post copyrighted materials or recordings online. Remember a digital copy is still a copy.

Don't set a bad example by using illegal copies or copyrighted material from the Internet.

Copyright infringement can result in both civil and criminal action. The information on this flyer is not intended as legal advice.