

VP Music Report May 2018

- The Music Team discussed the results from Division Contest and came to the following conclusion: The single most impactful adjustment that should be made for the chorus to consistently score in the 70s (and higher) is for every man to know the words and music down cold. Director indicated that it was clear to him that more than one man did not have the two contest songs fully memorized at Division Contest in Brentwood.

The Music Team identified four actions we believe will help to rapidly empower each man (and thus the chorus as a whole) to attain the desired result for ALL repertoire songs. They are:

1. For new music being introduced, publish specific dates by which the songs should be fully memorized. Anyone who has not achieved the objective may continue to have the music in front of them but will be asked to sing from the side and not stand on the risers. This will have two impacts:
 1. It will enable the director to assess the sound of the performing chorus; and
 2. It will (ideally) act as an incentive for the men off the risers to achieve the objective.
 2. Spend more time in sectionals working on unit sound
 3. Sing in other venues (like outside). The live sound of our rehearsal hall is unique. Men need to have more experience in singing in a dead hall so that their confidence grows.
 4. Incorporate into regular rehearsals the “4 lines” concept. This would eventually be done for all repertoire songs. The idea is that the singer will be able to self-assess regarding certainty on words and notes. They could also review the video recording.
- The other item that was discussed regarding contest was the placement of voice parts. We determined that, as a chorus, we perform better in sections that we do in shotgun formation. (We reviewed the scores and riser configuration of past contests.) We also discussed that some of the most successful, large choruses only perform in sections and that the overall sound of a chorus does not seem to be impacted by the placement of voice

parts. The most significant things are knowing the material and unit sound in the sections.

- We discussed standards for chapter quartets in order to perform on chapter shows. Director commented that every one of our quartets has demonstrated the capability to perform well as a quartet. However, their selection of music to perform in a show has frequently been suspect. The tendency is to select songs that are at the outer edge of their current ability. To remedy that, the Music Team has two suggestions:
 1. Once a theme has been selected for a given show, Director and VP Music will identify 2 or 3 songs for each quartet that easily fall within their current level of ability and fit the theme. The quartet will be asked to select from those songs; and/or
 2. Have the quartet indicate the songs in their repertoire they would like to sing that they believe fit the theme. The arrangement would be reviewed for fit and level of difficulty (relative to their current level of ability). The quartet would perform for the Chapter and be assessed by the Music VP and Director.

One of the other points that was made regarding chapter quartets was that the Quartet Coaching Saturday we held last September was very well received and significantly helped the quartets. It was decided to do this again, but no date was selected.

- We confirmed that we will sing Wonderful Day Like Today and Little Pal at the 2018 District Convention in Fresno. We agreed that the Contest songs for 2019 would be Blue Velvet and A Wink and A Smile. We have learning tracks for both songs as part of the Sean Gavin Thomas collection.
- We reviewed the overall chorus repertoire and have decided that the following songs will be retired:
 - Barbara Ann
 - Down on the Corner (retired after May 4 performance)
 - Hey Good Lookin'
 - Our Town
 - Sweet Adeline

We decided to keep Shut Up and Dance. It was very well received at the Spring show.

We will add the following songs to the repertoire. We have learning tracks for all of them:

- Blue Velvet
 - A Wink and A Smile
 - Country Roads
 - Hello My Baby
 - Are You Lonesome Tonight
- We discussed the fact that we need to better plan the use of singing and performance coaches. The concern was expressed that having a coach visit close to a competitive event (less than 4 weeks) can be counter-productive. A substantive shift in the messaging of the song or placement of the voices (sections vs shotgun) less than 4 weeks to contest does not allow the men sufficient time to internalize the changes. We will bring in coaches earlier in the process. Any coach we bring in closer to contest will be informed that the we are looking for refinements. The current plan is the plan and we will not accept attempts to change it.
- We discussed the question of how to let individuals know when they are not performing up to par. Director generally has a light touch and does not single out individuals. Some of us indicated that we would not mind being called out – but we realized that there are men for whom such direct action would be a problem. Sean explained his approach of using the “Raise your hand if” method of having men self-assess. He indicated that it seems to be working. We concluded that this would be a sufficient course of action at this time.
- Since there is an actual barbershop arrangement of “Happy Birthday,” we’ve decided that the chorus should learn it.