

BUILDING BRIDGES: Creating Warm-Up Vocalises That Launch the Choir into Repertoire

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INTRO: Have you had the experience of hearing an emerging tone from your choir that is lovely, free, and resonant in the vocal warm up phase of your rehearsal and then a completely different sound once you move into repertoire practice? I have been strategizing how to incorporate the NEWLY DEVELOPING TONE into the repertoire rehearsal—BUILDING A BRIDGE the singers can cross consciously and confidently into a piece of music.

BUILDING THE BRIDGE

1. Bring the piece into the warm-up:
 - Use the text in a vocalise
 - Use musical material from the piece to generate a vocalize
 - A snippet (or short musical motive)
 - A difficult interval or set of intervals
 - A difficult chord to tune and/or balance
 - Isolate a difficult rhythm to give it extra practice
2. Bring concepts/materials from the warm-up into the piece:
 - Use a single vowel or syllable (AH, EE, OO/dah, loh, doo) to simplify while learning or unifying a section of music
 - Establish a vocal concept tool and then apply that sound to the piece, for example:
 - Start with a “breath connection” consonant (lip trill, ZZZZ, ZHZHZH, VVVV)
 - I like the combination—lip trill---MMM---AH---
 - Swap this consonant in place of the first consonant of a word or before a single vowel (above)
 - Establish the “head voice” tools then apply them to a spot in the music
 - Establish the “resonance” tool then apply it to a portion of the piece either using the text of the piece or a single vowel
 - Learn piece in solfeggio
3. Examples from BYU Women’s Chorus fall repertoire
 - Bring the piece into the warm-up:
 - “And I heard it from heav’n today” (focusing on shaping every vowel; seeing them in your phone reflection or camera)
 - Isolate the rhythm and teach it by rote: Hurry my soul, oh my weary soul

- Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee (on a single pitch to wholly focus on vowel shaping and unity)
 - Tune a musical motive, How Great Thou Art (SSSM SSSLLF L)
 - Once the above solfegge is in tune layer in the text to see if it is still in tune
 - Then add anacrusis/crusis motion to above; gather then descend gesture
 - Tune a music motive, Shenandoah (D' T L---S L S M S) then on a single vowel like AH, then add text
 - Tune a music motive, Come Christians Join to Sing (D T, D L, D S,)
 - Wrong note issues: isolate a part, repeat, then stack the other parts above and below it
 - Diphthong practice: HAHoo great THAHoo ART, THAHoo ART (on board)
 - Diphthong practice: Give Me Jesus: He's MY LIGHT MY hope MY song
 - Alleluia from dotted eighth-sixteenth to 4 sixteenths to build tempo
 - Alleluia (DDRM MFS M D) starting with vowels AH—EH—OO—AH, then AH—LEH—LOO—YAH
 - Alleluia sing the first of each series of sixteenths to hear the simple sequence
- Bring warm-up concepts/material into the piece:
 - Trill—mm—ah (or using only trill, only mm, or only AH)
 - Hum, mm-AH, hooty OO to access the full head voice
 - Root drones: I Heard...into solo (to tune up the solo)
 - Open throat (resonant) AH, ZAH, or ZHAH for low range resonance (Give Me Jesus)
 - Modulate entire section up or down one half step to check vocal ease in each key (can simply sharp or flat the existing key signature)
 - Nasal EE—regular EE—AH (Give Me Jesus) to find resonant fortissimo especially for altos

4. Pair/Share: generate one vocalise that would apply a vocal concept for your piece or use the text or music from your piece

CONCLUSION: Tackling a tough musical or vocal issue right in the warm-up primes the mind and the voice for a successful rehearsal in addition to helping students consciously USE the tools you are giving them in the warm-up to apply to the repertoire.