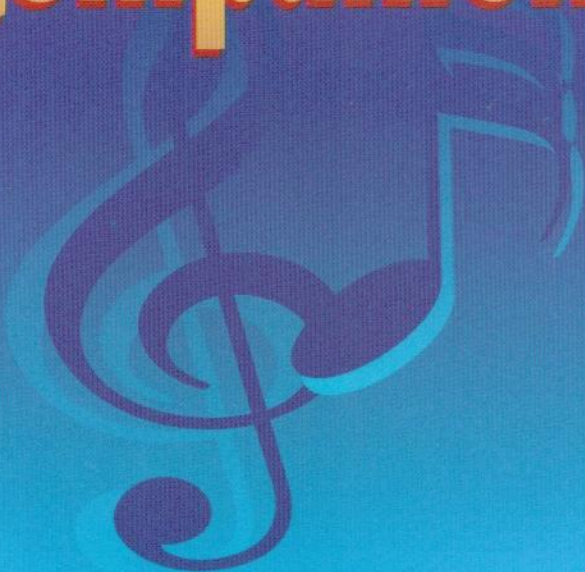


GINGER G. WYRICK

*The* **Choir  
Member's  
Companion**



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Abingdon Press  
Nashville

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# Introduction

## What Is Music Ministry?

The role of a church musician, whether paid or volunteer, is a multifaceted opportunity and responsibility. The majority of a congregation sees the musicians (director, organist, choir members) only at Sunday morning worship, so it is difficult for them to appreciate that there is much more involved than merely showing up for church. Unfortunately, they do not realize the countless hours spent in rehearsal during the week, the time at home needed to review your notes, the need to leave your Sunday school class early to practice again on Sunday morning—all to prepare for worship.

Your stewardship of time and talent far exceeds the worship hour. Church music is a gift from God, which is nurtured (in rehearsals, planning and preparation), multiplied (as individuals and ensembles), and returned (in worship and service). With each aspect of music, whether in rehearsal, at worship, or in your community, you offer praise and thanksgiving to Christ, proclaim the Word, and assist the congregation in their own worship experience. Music stirs the hearts and minds of both performer and hearer in ways that no other element of worship can—but you already know that. You have joined the choir!

There is an old Quaker proverb that says “Where many candles are brought together, there is more light.” Singing in a choir is much like this proverb: an individual pools his or her given musical resources with

the gifts of others to create something much larger or more beautiful than that which could be offered alone. This is one of the greatest benefits of singing in a church choir. You will experience music and a spiritual closeness unlike that in any other activity.

### **Choir membership:**

- Serves the other members of the ensemble as it
  - ◆ Displays stewardship of time and talent
  - ◆ Builds music skills
  - ◆ Provides experiences of scripture-based and other sacred texts set to music
  - ◆ Teaches worship leadership
  - ◆ Helps work on long-range group goals
  - ◆ Offers fellowship among members
  - ◆ Builds community within the church body
  
- Serves the congregation as it
  - ◆ Proclaims the Word in song
  - ◆ Enhances the worship atmosphere
  - ◆ Helps delineate the parts of worship
  - ◆ Encourages stronger congregational singing
  - ◆ Assists the pastoral staff in worship leadership
  
- Serves the community as it
  - ◆ Represents the church in community-wide events
  - ◆ Presents special programs
  - ◆ Witnesses to the gospel (music can often speak as nothing else can)

### **Biblical Roots**

Our biblical music ancestors span the scripture from Genesis to Revelation: Jubal, the instrument maker; Miriam, singing and dancing once the

Israelites were across the Red Sea; the Levites, including Heman, Asaph, and Ethan; the psalmists and the Israelites, who sang these texts; and the hosts of heaven, who sang at Jesus' birth and around the throne of God.

Singing seemed to be a natural part of Jewish life. The psalms provide a wealth of texts that show much about the writers' relationships with God—expressing praise, joy, thanksgiving, need, as well as great sorrow. The Levites, who were music leaders of Old Testament temple worship, offer us information regarding music, instruments, and worship life. You can read about them in 1 Chronicles 15 and following.

Certainly this music heritage passed on to first-century Christians, who brought with them a knowledge of temple worship. Ephesians and Colossians make mention of singing psalms and spiritual songs. You can also read Mary's words in the Gospel of Luke, which she offered following the Annunciation.

### **Benefits of Choir Membership**

What can you expect to receive out of this commitment? The choir becomes a family, a tightly knit subgroup of the congregation. Members look forward to working together, singing, laughing, and struggling to become better musicians and to actively lead and participate in worship.

The kindred spirit shared among singers unites a choir unlike any group in the church. They are aware of one another's needs, share prayer concerns, enjoy fellowship, and rejoice in the successes of the group. This "family" bond provides an internal support system for its members and builds camaraderie.

As members join their voices and hearts, preparing and performing weekly, they also grow spiritually. The music, with its sounds and colors and text filled with scripture and the human condition, is studied, understood, and shared collectively with others, spreading God's message in pitch, rhythm, and words.

## **Responsibilities of the Choir Member**

Here is a concise checklist to help you at choir:

✓ *Attend rehearsals and performances.*

Be present whenever the choir meets. You are important! Regular attendance is needed to build team spirit and an ensemble sound.

✓ *Inform your director when you will be absent.*

This may seem trite; however, if you are the fifth (and final bass) to be absent on Sunday, your director will appreciate knowing in advance.

✓ *Be on time (to rehearsals and worship).*

Latecomers are distracting and always miss important instructions.

✓ *Be a leader—know your music.*

Do not depend on someone else carrying the load because you were not prepared.

✓ *Watch the director.*

Hold your music high so you can see it and the director. Follow the instructions the director shows through conducting.

✓ *Mark your music.*

See the chapter "How to Mark Your Music" for more details.

✓ *Keep up with your music.*

Keep your anthems, songs, and hymnal neat, in order, and in their proper place.

✓ *Keep a pencil in your folder.*

This refers back to “How to Mark your Music” and the upcoming chapter!

✓ *Be aware of your appearance in worship.*

When you sing: Do your eyes “smile” or “frown”? Are you glad you are a Christian? Do you enjoy being part of the choir? Our faces tell the congregation many things.

✓ *Hang your robe and stole neatly after each wearing.*

A wrinkled robe looks poor in worship. Also, robes are expensive and need to last a long time.

✓ *Wash your robe and stole.*

The choir will appreciate this.

✓ *Be attentive.*

Pay attention in rehearsal—you will learn more, and the director appreciates it. Pay attention in worship—you will learn more, and the congregation appreciates it.

✓ *Don't talk in rehearsal or in worship.*

Talking is distracting to others. Also see “Be Attentive.”

✓ *Don't chew gum.*

You cannot sing well (or safely) with gum in your mouth. It also looks bad.

✓ *Be a team player.*

Keep negative comments about fellow choir members, the director, the music, the congregation, or the church staff to yourself.

✓ *Know thyself.*

Be aware of your voice in relation to others in the choir. A soloist's sound is fine when alone but is discouraging to the choir and the director when offered during the choir rehearsal. Aim to blend with the choral “ensemble” sound of the group.

## **Purpose of Rehearsals**

Rehearsal time is valuable. The director and singers have many things to accomplish:

- Learning new music
- Polishing music for worship
- Preparing for the uniqueness of the week's worship service
- Developing an ensemble sound
- Improving the musicianship of each member
- Preparing for a major musical performance
- Developing a sense of community through fellowship

Since the choir is an ever-changing entity, this process never ceases. Some members may become better at parts of this list, but all can improve. Members come and go, some are at rehearsal and some are out of town, and the repertoire continually presents new challenges. So we all need to attend rehearsals, if not for our own needs, then for the sake of the choir itself (and the sanity of the director, who is trying to pull all this together). Everyone should strive to attend each rehearsal and presentation in worship. The role of the individual is critical to the success of the church choir. Each voice makes a difference, and you are sorely missed when you are absent.

# Basic Music Reading Skills

Music is a language consisting of symbols much like the alphabet. As a language student must learn the sounds of each letter (symbols), how to spell and speak words, and how to organize words into sentences in order to communicate, so too the musician must learn symbols and what each represents, and practice the “language” as written music to achieve musical communication. This basic “musical language” remains the same regardless of the final product.

The following symbols are fundamental to reading music. You should develop proficiency with these terms, symbols, and meanings. You will enjoy singing even more when you have a mastery of the components of music. (Additional terms are located in the “Glossary of Musical Terms and Symbols.”)

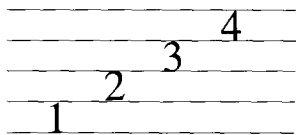
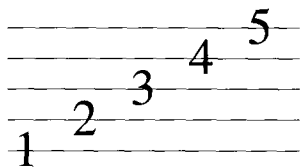
## The Staff



**Musical Staff (pl. staves):**

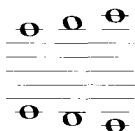
Used to identify pitch notation.

The musical staff has five lines and four spaces.



## The Choir Member's Companion

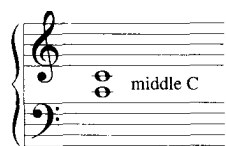
The staff may be extended up or down by using ledger lines.



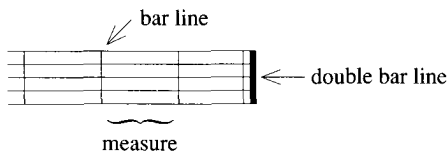
**Treble Clef (G clef):** Indicates pitch by identifying the G line (line 2). This clef is used by treble singers (soprano, alto, and children with unchanged voices), the upper register of the piano, and all high instruments (such as flute, oboe, and violin).

**Bass Clef (F clef):** Indicates pitches by identifying the F line (line 4). This clef is used by bass singers (tenor, baritone, bass), the lower register of the piano, and all low instruments (such as the tuba, trombone, and double bass).

**Treble Clef with subscript 8:** Indicates pitch similar to the regular treble clef but sounding one octave lower. This clef is used by tenors.



**Grand Staff:** Combines two staves, one treble and one bass, for musical notation. (Middle C lies between the two staves and can be attached to either.)

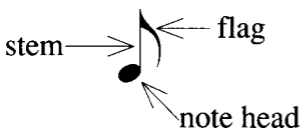


**Bar Line:** Organizes the beats (counts) of music. Located throughout the entire piece to indicate measures.

**Measure:** The contents between two bar lines.

**Double Bar Line:** Identifies the end of the music.

### Pitch Notation



**Note Anatomy:** Each note has a head. Most notes have a stem; some have a flag (or flags), which may appear as a beam to make reading easier.

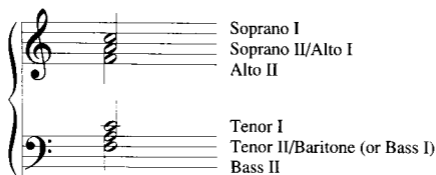
**A B C D E F G Musical Alphabet:** Music uses only seven letter names for pitch. The letter names repeat as you move up (sounding higher) and down (sounding lower) the scale/staff.

**Pitch Notation:** Each tone is indicated by placing a note on the musical staff. Notes may appear with a line dissecting the note head (line note) or between two lines (space note). The clef determines the pitch order on the staff. Notice that when you combine the line and space notes of one clef the pitches are in musical alphabet order.

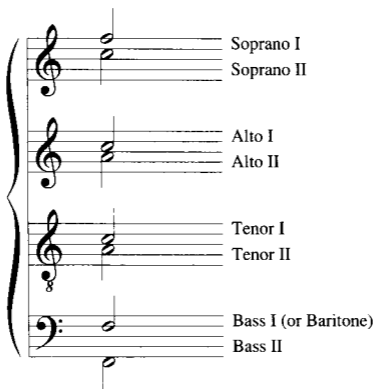


## The Choir Member's Companion

**Closed Score Notation:** Music written on the grand staff with each voice part identified by the direction of the note stem (e.g., bass clef stem up = tenor).



**Open Score Notation:** Music written on many staves. Each voice part has its own staff (e.g., top staff = soprano, and so on).

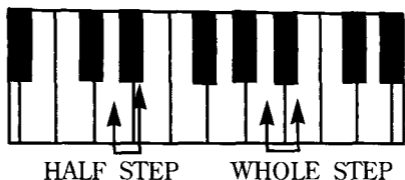


**Note:** To conserve space and printing costs, a composer/publisher may alternate between open and closed scoring in one piece. This often occurs when the accompaniment is alone or when a soloist is singing. It is easy to overlook these changes in an anthem, so look ahead!

## Basic Music Reading Skills

**Half Step:** The smallest distance between two pitches.

**Whole Step:** The distance of two half steps combined.



**Accidentals:** Symbols that alter the tone of a note by moving it by half steps.

**Sharp:** Raises the pitch a half step.

**Flat:** Lowers the pitch a half step.

**Natural:** Returns the pitch to its original tone.

### Pitch Movement:

When a pitch moves up on the staff the tone is raised:



When a pitch moves down on the staff the tone is lowered:

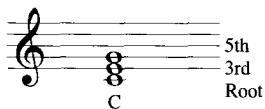
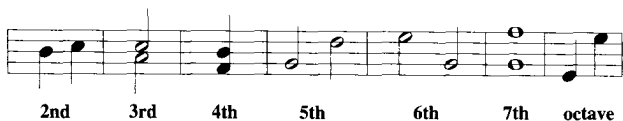


The pitch remains the same when notes are repeated:



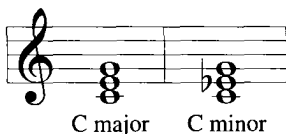
## The Choir Member's Companion

**Intervals:** The distance between two pitches. An interval may be measured on the musical staff or by its tone. To identify the interval, count the given pitches and all lines and spaces between them. Note: notes may sound together (stacked on top = harmonic interval) or individually (one note after the other = melodic interval):

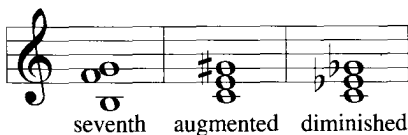


**Triad:** A chord made of three (“tri-”) tones. It is built on a root note (which names the chord), a 3rd above the root, and a 5th above the root.

**Chord:** Three or more notes that sound together. Chords may be consonant:

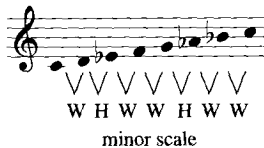
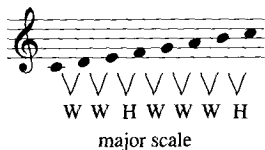


or dissonant:

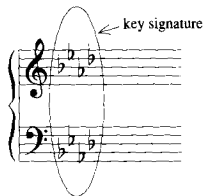


**Scales:** Almost every piece of music (or section of music) is based on a scale. Musicians learn to sing/play scales as a basis for all music. Two types of scales dominate Western music: major and minor. Each scale is based on a pattern of whole (W) and half (H) steps. Note: the minor scale has several forms; the illustration is one example called “natural” minor.

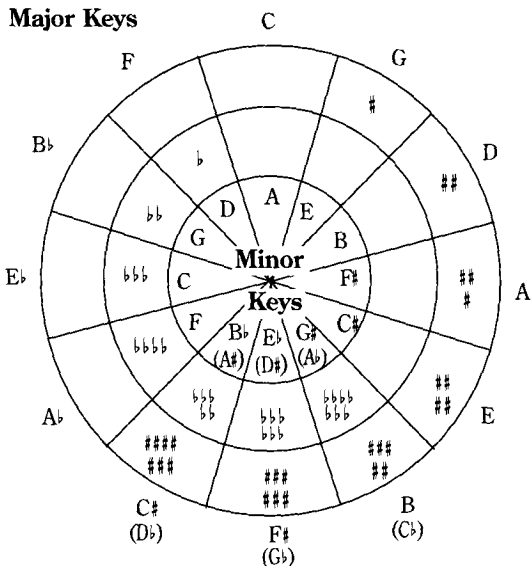
## Basic Music Reading Skills



**Key Signature:** Appears on the grand staff after the clef symbol. It may contain sharps, flats, or nothing at all. The key signature tells the musician on which scale the piece is based.



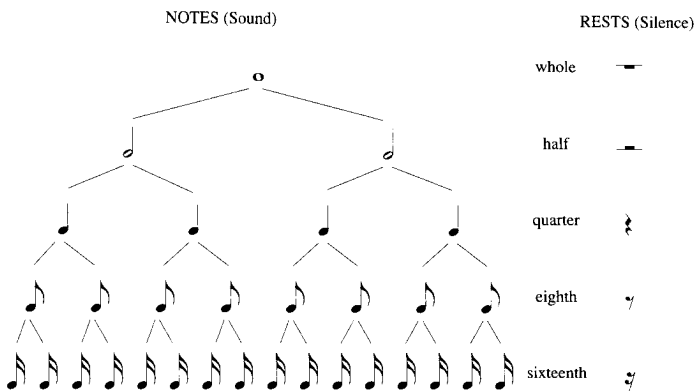
The **Circle of Fifths** is a quick-reference chart to determine a key signature. To find a minor key, locate the major key signature and lower it by three half steps. (For example, if the key signature contains one flat, the related major key is F, and the actual minor key is D.)



# The Choir Member's Companion

## Rhythmic Notation

**Rhythmic Notation:** Indicates the duration of either sound (notes) or silence (rests). The following diagram illustrates the relationship of each value.



**Dotted Notes and Rests:** A dot may be added to a note to increase its value by one half.

$$\text{♩.} = \text{♩} (1) + \text{.} (1/2) = 1 \frac{1}{2}$$

Examples of dotted notes and their corresponding rests:

dotted whole note	dotted whole rest
dotted half note	dotted half rest
dotted quarter note	dotted quarter rest
dotted eighth note	dotted eighth rest

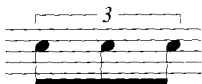
## Special Notations



**Tie:** Two identical pitches connected by an arched line. Sing the first pitch and hold it for the combined duration of both note values.

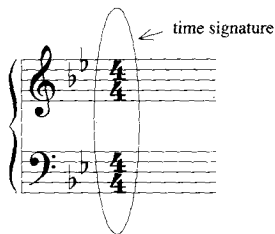


**Duplet:** Two notes sounding in place of three notes of equal value.



**Triplet:** Three notes sounding in place of two notes of equal value.

**Meter:** Indicates the organization of beats/pulses in a given piece of music. Meter may be grouped as sets of two (duple), sets of three (triple), sets of four (quadruple), or as a combination of these.



**Time Signature:** Appears on the grand staff following the key signature. Indicates the organization of beats/pulses within a measure.

The time signature contains two numbers, each having a unique role. The top number determines how many beats occur in one measure; the bottom number indicates which note receives one beat. For example:



$\frac{4}{4}$  - 4 beats per measure  
 $\frac{4}{4}$  - quarter note gets 1 beat


$\frac{2}{2}$  - 2 beats per measure  
 $\frac{2}{2}$  - half note gets 1 beat

$\frac{6}{8}$  - 6 beats per measure  
 $\frac{6}{8}$  - eighth note gets 1 beat

# Musical Road Maps

Composers use symbols, terms, and abbreviations to indicate to the performer where to go and what to do. Knowledge of these makes reading easier and enhances the ultimate performance. These symbols may be easily overlooked or difficult to see at first glance. Train your eye to look for the composer's instructions, and highlight anything difficult to remember.

**Repeat Sign:** Indicates to perform a section of music again. When the repeat sign appears alone, return to the beginning and sing as indicated. When the symbol appears with a mate repeat only the material contained between the  :  signs and then continue.

1.	2.	<b>First and Second Endings:</b> Sing to the first ending until you reach the repeat sign. Return to the corresponding repeat sign and continue singing as indicated. On the second time through, omit the first ending material, sing the second ending material, and complete the song.
	: 	

**Da capo (D.C.):** Sing until you reach this symbol, then return to the beginning of the music and continue as indicated.

## Musical Road Maps

**♯** *Dal segno (D.S.):* Sing until you reach this symbol, then return to the sign and continue as indicated.




*al fine:* This may appear attached as *D.C. al fine* or *D.S. al fine*. On the repeat, sing only to the Fine (pronounced FII-neh) sign, which indicates the end of the music.

**⊕** *al coda:* This may appear attached as *D.C. al coda* or *D. S. al coda*. On the repeat, sing only to the coda sign then jump to the coda section of the music and continue singing.

**Tempo Markings:** Composers indicate the speed of a piece with words (often in Italian) printed above the opening measure. Common tempos include: *adagio* (slow); *andante* (slow walking pace); *moderato* (moderately); *allegro* (fast); and *vivace* (lively).

**Dynamics:** Abbreviations and symbols that indicate degrees of loud and soft.

### Other Symbols

<i>pp</i>	<i>pianissimo</i>	very soft
<i>p</i>	<i>piano</i>	soft
<i>mp</i>	<i>mezzo piano</i>	moderately soft
<i>mf</i>	<i>mezzo forte</i>	moderately loud
<i>f</i>	<i>forte</i>	loud
<i>ff</i>	<i>fortissimo</i>	very loud
	<i>diminuendo</i>	gradually softer
	<i>crescendo</i>	gradually louder
	<i>accents</i>	stress a note singing it louder

*Ritardando (rit.)* and *Rallentando (rall.)*: Gradually slowing.



**Slur:** Arched line connecting two or more different pitches. Sing these notes *legato*.



**Fermata (slang: bird's eye):** Watch the director! This indicates to lengthen the note value at the discretion of the conductor.



**Caesura (slang: railroad tracks):** Grand pause dictated by the director.



**Breath Mark:** Take a breath as indicated within the score. If no marks are in the music, insert this symbol (when appropriate) during rehearsal as a reminder to breathe.



**No Breath:** Sing the musical phrase without a breath. If no marks are in the music, insert this mark (when appropriate) during rehearsal as a reminder not to breathe.

**Rehearsal Letters/Numbers:** Composers and editors use oversized letters or numbers to mark sections throughout a composition. Directors use these symbols to identify specific locations within the music. This allows the director to move quickly during a rehearsal. Be aware of this notation in each piece.

# Basic Vocal Techniques

The body is your instrument. Just as a violinist protects and cares for his or her violin, so must you protect and care for your instrument. Learning to sing correctly is important to your sound and your vocal health. Caution! Incorrect singing may have harmful effects. Do you experience any of the following?

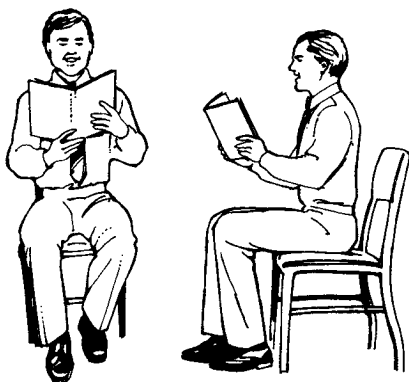
- hoarseness after rehearsal
- dizziness when singing
- tight or achy shoulders
- tight jaw
- pain when singing

If so, you are doing something wrong. Be aware of your singing habits—good and bad. Work to eliminate the poor habits and maximize the good ones. This chapter is designed to introduce you to good singing habits.

Singing requires physical and mental activity. The passive singer looks disinterested, appears lost in the music, and ultimately creates weak, poor sounds. To produce the best tones the singer must constantly be aware of posture, breathing, and diction.

## Posture

Whether sitting or standing, the body should always be alert and ready to sing. Notice the similarities between these two postures.



### **Sitting:**

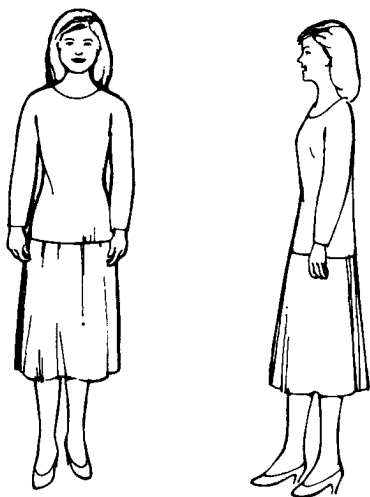
- Feet slightly apart with the weight of the body forward (feel as if you are about to stand)
- Body tall with hips, spine, and head directly in line with one another (feel as if you are standing from the hips up)
- Chest naturally elevated to enhance breathing
- Shoulders back and relaxed
- Arms held naturally by the side of the body
- Head square on the shoulders as if being lifted by the crown of your head

### **Standing:**

- Feet shoulder-width apart with the weight of the body slightly forward
- Knees slightly relaxed (locking the knees creates tension throughout the body and may cause one to faint)
- Body tall with the hips, spine, and head directly in line with one another
- Chest naturally elevated to enhance breathing

## Basic Vocal Techniques

- Shoulders back and relaxed
- Arms held naturally by the side of the body
- Head square on the shoulders as if being lifted by the crown of your head



### **Breathing**

We breathe to sing. One does not happen without the other. As adults we have skillfully trained ourselves to breathe incorrectly. Watch a baby sleeping or observe a dog panting. The inhalation and exhalation are very different from adults; however, they are doing it correctly. Just as a balloon expands when filled with air, our bodies should expand when we inhale. As adults, we tend to draw in our stomachs and raise our shoulders to demonstrate that something is occurring. That “something” is improper breathing.

Although breathing seems natural since we do it

continually without effort, breathing to sing carries additional benefits. As you learn to breathe correctly you will soon discover:

- you have more air to use when singing
- singing technique becomes easier
- you concentrate more on musical elements
- you stand taller

### **Basic Breathing Techniques**

- Maintain correct singing posture. Review the section on posture.
- Relax the face (jaw) and throat muscles. Tight muscles get in the way of breathing and singing. Relaxing creates extra space your body uses to inhale quickly and efficiently as well as to make beautiful tones.
- Inhale silently through the nose (and mouth). Breathing should create no sound. Gasping for air is inefficient to the singer and distracting to the audience. Breathing through the nose filters and warms the incoming air.
- Entire torso should feel expanded (including your ribs and across the back). Inhalation fills the body (not your shoulders) with air. To maximize your breath capacity, keep the body expanded as you sing.
- Upper body (including shoulders) remains relaxed and naturally elevated. Check your posture! Lifting your shoulders or chest when inhaling restricts your breath capacity as will collapsing the shoulders, chest, or spine when exhaling. Allow breathing to occur low in the body.
- Set the mouth in the position of the first vowel sound. Anticipate the first vowel sound (even if it appears after a consonant). Sing the consonant through the vowel shape.

### **Breath Support**

Now that you have all of this newfound air, what are you to do with it? Don't hold it—use it! Controlled exhalation provides the singer with enough air to make beautiful sounds and complete the musical phrase. This is best discovered by practice—learning what it feels like to do it right and aiming for that physical response with each breath.

Begin by discovering your diaphragm. You cannot see it, you cannot touch it, but you can know when it is working! (Cough to feel your diaphragm at work.) The diaphragm is a muscle below the lungs (ribs) that assists your body in breathing: it gets out of the way when you inhale and helps push air out when you exhale. Your goal is to fill the lungs with air and control its use. Aim for a steady stream of air as you sing—not too much and not too little.

When exhaling, imagine yourself as a tube of toothpaste. If you squeeze at the neck of the tube only a small amount of paste is released (and the tube is crimped). However, if you roll the tube from the bottom you are able to extract all the paste neatly. That is our goal as singers. A slight “tucking” sensation occurs around the hips to begin exhalation. The air is used from the lowest point in the lungs first and slowly works its way up until it is fully expelled. The shoulders, chest, neck, and jaw are not involved in exhalation and should remain relaxed (and out of the way). When you tighten the jaw and neck, or allow the shoulders and chest to collapse near the end of the breath, you are “crimping” the tube and making your job very difficult.

### **Stagger Breathing**

You will hear this term often as you work through music. It is sometimes referred to as a “catch

breath.” This technique is used to make the musical line appear seamless. When you feel yourself running out of air, quickly inhale as your neighbor continues to sing. When everyone “takes turns” breathing, the phrase is never broken to the listener’s ear. Do not complete the syllable or word to breathe—simply inhale and resume singing on the vowel. It is important to breathe while others are singing a vowel. You may have to omit the following consonant or pitch, but no one will ever know. Avoid breathing at bar lines.

### **Creating a Tone**

A unique characteristic of singing is that each instrument sounds different. Different body sizes and shapes combined with human elements (emotions, health, energy level) affect how we sound. There are some basic principles that all singers employ to enhance their sound. If you seriously want to improve your sound, ask your director to offer private lessons or seek out a teacher. Here are a few ideas to help you get started:

- Review posture and breathing.
- Keep the tongue forward in the mouth, gently laid behind the lower front teeth.
- Open your mouth; relax the jaw and throat.
- Use your air to support the tone.
- Sing into the “mask” (keep the sound projecting forward as if it were coming out of your eyes).
- Raise your eyebrows (this really helps lift the tone).
- Sing on a yawnlike feeling (keep the soft palate—the upper back part of the inside of your mouth—raised, creating a resonating space).
- Aim for rich, warm sounds.

## Diction

Choral singing is fundamentally different from any other music because it has text. The music has thoughts, expressed as words, which we must communicate. Diction is the enunciation of the text. It is critical in ensemble singing that everyone agree on how and when each element of a word is to be pronounced. If just one person errs on the placement of a consonant the musical line is broken; if just one person errs on the formation of a vowel the choir sounds out of tune. Tone, rhythm, blend, intonation, musical expression, and text clarity are all dependent on good diction.

Sung English (or any language) is greatly different from the spoken language. Regionalism is removed, sound is purer, and everything must be exaggerated (sometimes more and sometimes less). English is inherently difficult because of the myriad of sounds that are available. Singers use the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to identify the correct sounds in words (you will also find this in your dictionary beside each word entry). You may wish to learn IPA or develop a shorthand system of your own. Either way, it is helpful to mark your music with diction reminders as you learn a new anthem. For further reading, see *Choral Therapy* by Lloyd Pfautsch (Abingdon Press, 1994), and *The Singer's Manual of English Diction* by Madeleine Marshall (Schirmer Books, 1953).

### Five Pure Vowels

There are five pure vowel sounds. These are often used in warm-ups to refine their formation in each individual singer and for the ensemble.

## The Choir Member's Companion

IPA	SOUNDS LIKE	EXAMPLES
[a]	ah	father, heart, garden
[ɛ]	eh	net, instead, many
[i]	ee	seed, gleam, receive
[ɔ]	aw (or oh)	law, daughter, all
[u]	oo	zoo, whom, to

### Other English Vowel Sounds

IPA	SOUNDS LIKE	EXAMPLES
[ɪ]	ih	sin, it, lint
[æ]	ae	cat, had, mad
[ʊ]	u	foot, could, put
[o]	o	omnipotent, provide, obey
[ɜ]	ue	journey, myrrh, turn
[ʌ]	uh	up, mother, does
[ə]	(always unstressed-uh)	angel, heaven, enemy

### Diphthongs

A diphthong (pronounced DIF-thong) is two consecutive vowel sounds that occur in one syllable. The key to success with diphthongs is to stress (elongate) the first sound and minimize the second. When singing, concentrate only on the first sound of the vowel; the second vowel sound will happen naturally as you continue the word. Notice the colon (:) in the shorthand examples. I include this as a reminder to hold the first sound longer.

IPA	SOUNDS LIKE	EXAMPLES
[aɪ]	ah:ih	mighty, eye, thine
[ɛɪ]	eh:ih	pray, reign, great

## Basic Vocal Techniques

IPA	SOUNDS LIKE	EXAMPLES
[ɔɪ]	oh:ih	joy, rejoice, noise
[aʊ]	ah:oo	thou, cow, found
[oʊ]	oh:oo	devotion, no, oh
[ɛə]	eh:uh	prayer, share, care
[iə]	ih:uh	dear, sincere, appear
[ɔə]	oh:uh	floor, your, soar
[ʊə]	u:uh	cure, tour, poor

### **Triphthongs**

The English language can also load us with three consecutive vowel sounds within one syllable—the triphthong (pronounced TRIF-thong). These are performed much in the same manner as diphthongs: elongate the first vowel sound concentrating solely on its purity. Minimize or negate, the remaining sounds. They will happen naturally and should not be stressed.

IPA	SOUNDS LIKE	EXAMPLES
[aɪə]	ah:ihuh	fire, inspire, choir
[aʊə]	ah:uuh	our, power, tower

### **Consonants**

Consonants are much easier than vowels in their pronunciation but require more energy. In fact, you probably have no trouble understanding how consonants sound. The difficulty arises in their placement within a word or phrase and in providing enough emphasis so they are heard. Here are a few general rules to help (remember that exceptions do exist):

## The Choir Member's Companion

- Consonants usually sound with the following syllable, except when they change the meaning of the following word (e.g., Amazing grace = a-ma-zingra-ce).
- Consonants occur before the beat (the vowel is on the beat).
- Voiced consonants (pitched) must be sung on the same note as the corresponding vowel (many rules apply here, so ask your director).
- The letter “r” should never become “er.”
- An “r” at the end of a word becomes [ɹə].
- “The” before a word beginning with a vowel is pronounced “thee.”
- “The” before a word beginning with a consonant is pronounced “thuh.”
- Consonants take more energy to clearly project out of the text.
- Final consonants often occur on the following rest or on the last eighth of the pitch.
- Consonants are produced quickly without hesitation or lingering.

# Sight-Reading a New Anthem

*S*ight-reading is performing a piece of music for the very first time. You sight-read music only once—from then on you are practicing. Make every effort to be most attentive to the music as you sight-read. It is a wonderful time to try out your music reading skills. Before you begin, take a moment to look at a few key points to help you sing with greater accuracy:

- Look for road hazards. Glance through the entire piece searching for repeat signs, first and second endings, a coda, or unique instructions.
- Notice the key and time signatures.
- Locate your voice part. Which line do you follow?
- Look for dynamic marks.
- Look for melodic challenges. Locate accidentals, key changes, or unusual patterns in the melody.
- Look for similarities. Search for sections that may sound very similar, such as a refrain. This will help you sing more accurately the second time the material appears.
- Look for changes in rhythm or articulation. Locate special notations such as tempo change, key change, slur, staccato, fermata.
- Scan the text.
- Keep up. Always read ahead in your music. Know what is coming next. Anticipate page turns. If you get lost, find where the choir is singing and jump back in.
- Sing. Do not give up or get frustrated—keep trying. When unsure, listen louder than you sing.





# Preparation for Worship

Serving as worship leaders and providing service music are two of the primary tasks of the adult choir. The time used in preparing for the service is crucial to your attitude, appearance, and performance each week. Cherish the few minutes the choir has prior to worship to center yourself on your responsibilities.

Many choirs have a brief rehearsal prior to entering worship. This is helpful as a review for the specifics of that service, to sing through the anthem and service music, and to bring the choir together as an ensemble. You are asked to step out of your mode as one who is being fed (Sunday school member) to take on the role of servant (worship leader). It takes time to focus your thoughts and to separate from the world.

This list suggests how you can prepare for worship:

- Read the scripture for the day.
- Look for similarities between the scripture and service music.
- Arrive on time.
- Get your robe and music.
- Put on your robe. Check the stole color if you change with the seasons.
- Greet other choir members but do not loiter in the robe room.
- Organize your folder for the service:
  - ◆ Place the service music in order.

## Preparation for Worship

- ◆ Mark your bulletin noting each time you sing.
- ◆ Mark your hymnal.
- Mentally review all service music:
  - ◆ Look through for any marks you have added.
  - ◆ Review difficult passages.
- Listen carefully for instructions from the director. The service may contain some changes.
- Sing in the rehearsal with the same energy as you will in worship.
- Take a moment to pray before entering the service.
- Move quickly and with purpose as you leave the choir room. If you process, get in line and watch for your entrance.

# Preparation for a Major Performance

Church music departments are increasingly offering major performances throughout the year. This may be the annual Christmas pageant, service of lessons and carols, Easter cantata, evensong, musical, or concert performance. It can be a wonderful experience for the performers, congregation and community and can also create tremendous stress. Proper preparation is the key to success. Knowing what your responsibilities are and knowing how you will accomplish them calms the spirit and lends itself to an excellent final product.

Begin your preparation by attending all rehearsals and learning your part thoroughly. If you have a solo role, whether sung or spoken, know your part prior to rehearsal. This way the director can use the group's time efficiently rather than teaching you while others stand and wait.

Investigate the whole picture. Read through your production materials to develop a sense of what the final product is to be. Learn the basis of the story the music is telling. Is the text scripture, original material, or a combination of familiar and new songs? What is your responsibility: choir member, props manager, publicity, main character? What is the purpose of this event in the life of your music department and church? Know why you are doing this performance and become excited about the process.

## Dress Rehearsal

A dress rehearsal is the most important rehearsal you will encounter prior to the performance. It usually occurs the day (or week) before the concert date. It is the time when all production pieces are put together: choirs, instrumentalists, soloists, readers, costumes, sets, props, and movement. Appropriate attire depends on the nature of the performance. For concert performances, wear comfortable street clothes to the dress rehearsal. For dramas, the dress rehearsal is literally just that—time for makeup, costumes, hair, props, sets, and all musicians.

Give your all at this rehearsal. This should be identical to the final performance minus the audience. The director hopes that each element runs smoothly and as prepared. This is no time for disruptive activity or poor attitudes. Strive to offer your best efforts.

### Quick Hints

- Attend all rehearsals—especially dress rehearsal(s).
- Purchase a recording, if available, and listen to it often as a part of your preparation.
- Get plenty of rest the night before.
- Before major rehearsals and performances, avoid
  - ◆ a large meal,
  - ◆ dairy products (clogs the throat),
  - ◆ alcohol and caffeine (dries the throat).
- Have your robe, performance attire, or costume organized, cleaned, ironed, and ready to wear.
- Review:
  - ◆ look through the music,
  - ◆ speak over your lines,
  - ◆ walk through any movements/staging.



# The Performance

Regardless of where you are performing—in worship, in concert, or at a community event—bring your best. This is what you have worked so hard to achieve. Always remember that our music is first a gift from God, and the performance is but an offering of the gift back to God.

The following suggestions will help you maximize the final performance:

- Know when and where you are to be:
  - ◆ choir room
  - ◆ sanctuary
  - ◆ dressing room
- Arrive early. Have your gear (music, robe, props) in hand and ready to go at the given time.
- Be dressed and well groomed. For some, this may mean arriving very early!
- Avoid wearing anything with a fragrance (perfume, cologne). Many people have allergies that may be affected by strong scents.
- Paper clip your music to avoid following soloists or long interludes.
- Pay attention to instructions.
- Warm up vocally and mentally.
- Focus on your responsibilities before entering.
- Carry your folder in the hand away from the audience.
- Watch the director!
  - ◆ Pay attention throughout the performance for reminders (entrances, cutoffs, dynamics).

## The Performance

- ◆ Be prepared in case something goes wrong—the director can “fix” it if you are watching.
- Keep your head and face looking up and out. It is much more interesting to see your face as you sing and you will sound better.
- Keep your knees relaxed. You can faint by locking your knees for an extended time.
- Do not chew gum.
- Do not rustle candy/cough drop wrappers.
- Do not talk.
- Stay in character. Anytime you are visible (worship, concert, drama) to your audience remember what you represent. It may be a choir member, a worship leader, or a character. Be aware of how others perceive you. Direct your attention to whomever is speaking, hold your music up until the last note of the anthem is played by the accompanist, stand and sit with the choir. This will assist your audience in their worship and enjoyment.
- Enjoy yourself!

## Afterward

Once it is all finished, congratulate yourself and others for a job well done. Take time to thank your director and all who were involved in the production. A note of gratitude is always appreciated. And now, go home and rest!

# Glossary of Musical Terms and Symbols

***a cappella*** (It.). Singing without instrumental accompaniment (literally: in the style of the church).

***accelerando* (*accel.*)** (It.). Gradually getting faster.

**accent.** Emphasis on a note.

**accidentals.** Symbols that alter a pitch by half steps (e.g., sharp, flat).

**accompaniment.** Musical background to the primary part.

***adagio*** (It., at ease). Slow tempo (slower than *andante* but faster than *largo*).

***allargando*** (It.). Slowing.

***allegretto*** (It.). Moderately fast; slightly slower than *allegro*.

***allegro*** (It.). Fast tempo.

**alleluia.** From "hallelujah," expressing praise to God.

**alto.** Lowest female voice.

**amen.** Hebrew for "so be it."

***andante*** (It., going). Moderate walking tempo.

***animato*** (It.). Animated, lively.

**aria.** Vocal solo (usually designated in major works such as oratorio, Mass, cantata, and so on).

***a tempo*** (It., in time). Return to the original tempo.

**baritone.** Middle male voice (between tenor and bass).

**bass.** Lowest male voice.

**canon.** A melody stated by one part is imitated by others in succession.

## Glossary

***cantabile*** (It., singable). In a singing style.

**canticle.** Scripture text other than the psalms.

**cantor.** In Protestant worship, the music director; in Roman Catholic worship, the one who sings the solos in the chant; in Jewish worship, the soloist.

**chorale.** Hymn tune (first used in the German Protestant church).

***con*** (It.). With.

**console.** The case that holds the organ keyboard and stops.

***crescendo (cresc.)*** (It.). Gradually getting louder.

***decrescendo (decresc.)*** (It.). Gradually getting softer.

***diminuendo (dim.)*** (It.). Gradually getting softer.

***dolce*** (It.). Sweetly.

**enharmonic.** Different spellings for the same tone (e.g., C# and D♭).

**falsetto** (It., false voice). Technique used by men to sing above the normal singing range.

**fermata** (It., pause). To hold a note longer than the printed value.

***fine*** (It., end). A term indicating the end of a composition or movement, especially after a partial repeat.

***forte*** (It.). Loud.

***fuoco*** (It., fire). *Con fuoco*, with fire, with passion.

***giocoso*** (It.). Humorous.

***gioioso*** (It.). Joyful.

***grandioso*** (It.). In a grand manner.

***grazioso*** (It.). Gracefully.

## Glossary

**interval.** The distance between two pitches.

**intonation.** Singing/playing in tune.

***largo*** (It.). Very slow tempo; slower than *lento*, faster than *grave*.

***legato*** (It., tied). Smooth and connected.

***lento*** (It.). Slow tempo.

***maestoso*** (It.). Majestic.

***marcato*** (It., to mark). Emphatic, accented.

**melody.** The tune, or musical shape, of a composition.

***meno*** (It.). Less.

***mezzo*** (It., half). Medium or moderate (e.g., *mezzo forte*, *mezzo-soprano*).

***moderato*** (It.). Moderate tempo.

***morendo*** (It., dying away). Becoming gradually softer and slower, fading.

***mosso*** (It., agitated). Rapid, animated (e.g., *più mosso* [faster], *meno mosso* [slower]).

***moto*** (It.). Motion, movement.

***obbligato, ostinato*** (It.). Recurring melodic and/or rhythmic patterns used as accompaniment.

**octave.** The interval of eight tones.

**phrase.** A musical idea or thought.

***piano*** (It.). Soft.

***più*** (It.). More.

***poco*** (It.). Little.

***presto*** (It., ready). Very fast tempo (faster than *allegro*).

***quasi*** (It., almost). In a manner.

## Glossary

- rallentando (rall.)*** (It.). Gradually slowing.
- ritardando (rit., ritard)*** (It.). Gradually slowing.
- rubato*** (It., stolen time). Flexible tempo.
- sempre*** (It.). Always.
- senza*** (It.). Without.
- sforzando (sfz)*** (It., to force). Sudden loud accent.
- soprano.** The highest female voice.
- sostenuto*** (It.). Sustaining the pitch slightly beyond its value.
- spiritoso*** (It.). Spirited, lively.
- staccato*** (It.). Detached.
- subito*** (It.). Suddenly.
- syncopation.** Musical accent on a weak beat.
- tacet*** (Lat., he is silent). Without sound (silence).
- tenuto*** (It., to hold). Of a note, held or sustained (for its full value).
- tenor.** The highest adult male voice.
- tutti*** (It., all). The full ensemble or section, as opposed to a solo.
- unison.** Performing the same notes together.
- vivace*** (It., vivacious). Quick, lively tempo.