The Art of the Warm-Up Learning to plan, create, and make the most of choral warm-ups

Choral Methods, MUS356 Fall 2015

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Our Topic

The Warm-Up

Purpose

Types

How to *plan*

How to create

How to *invigorate*

Some notes...

Sample Warm-Up

Your questions

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Warm-Ups

What are they?
Why do we do them?

Warm-Ups: Definition

Warm-ups are exercises that...

prepare the individual to sing and
prepare the ensemble to sing together.

Warm-ups should never be forgotten and can help make the most of your rehearsals.

Warm-Ups: Reason

Focus the Group

A time to bring your singers in from their busy lives and center them in the choral rehearsal.

Build the Voice

Teach choristers how to sing. Build group vocal technique.

Build the Ensemble

Teach aural awareness and choral strategies. How do we work as an ensemble?

Teach Musicianship

This may be their only music lesson; use the time to teach musical literacy.

Plan your Warm-Ups

A pattern for every warm-up About improvisation

Plan: A Pattern

A general pattern for warm-ups can offer some sense of regularity and give you a structure in which to create, invent, and try new exercises.

Part I: Body

Prepare the body for the activities ahead. Stretch and help place the body in an active alignment.

Part II: Breath

Activate the lungs for the needs of healthy singing

Part III: Voice.

Engage the voice healthfully helping singers find balance, range, and resonance.

Part IV: Ensemble

Create the opportunities for each sing to hear and understand their voice's place in the choir—also a good time to teach musicianship.

Plan: How to Improvise

With a clear, 4-part plan in place, singers know what to expect and will find comfort and familiarity in the routine.

That said, routines demand variety!

Keep the four stages but try difference warm-ups

Evaluate if a warm-up is successful

Invent your own exercises

Invite a voice teacher to lead an exercise

Ask singers to offer a warm-up exercise

Assign different singers to each of the four parts

Plan: A Pattern

Notes

The lines between the four sections can be blurred. Insist on quality ensemble musicianship at all times.

Be sensitive to **timing**—different times have different needs Morning — consider extra emphasis on awakening the body Afternoon — consider extra emphasis on physical activity Night — consider extra emphasis on alignment, breathing Pre-Performance — be consistent, calming, assuring

Create New Warm-Ups

Build on the fundamental elements you know Alter the vowels & consonants Change Rhythms Mix elements from different exercises

Then slowly **expand** their abilities
Vowel patterns/challenges
Scalar, arpeggiated patterns
Rhythmic patterns/challenges
Intervals of familiarity/challenge
Harmonies of familiarity/challenge

Create New Warm-Ups

Avoid unnecessary challenges or excessive difficulty Focus on central topic—leave out other challenges Are you creating tensions/problems in other areas? **Don't push** too hard, too fast

Consider breaking apart an exercise over a few rehearsals Be sensitive to **age**

Different ages are challenged by different things Young choirs have a wide range of ability Changing voices have limited/shifting ranges Older voices have more habits, less agility

Create New Warm-Ups

"Lesser artists borrow, great artists steal."

—Igor Stravinsky

Invigorate Your Warm-Ups

Plan exercises to be concise & to flow quickly to the next Try to achieve a complete warm-up in under 10'

Overlap of techniques

You can use exercises that address more than one broad goal You can two multiple exercises simultaneously

Pattern vs. Improv

Stick with the broad pattern—it offers structure and routine

Don't feel stuck on the same exercises—experiment

Even one new idea in a warm-up can refresh the singers

Notes

To Play or Not to Play Where to begin, where to go, and how fast to go!? Only at the beginning? And then what? Concert Time

To Play or Not to Play

Unaccompanied as much as possible Piano tuning is a compromise If using between iterations, definitely don't accompany the exercise itself!

Where to begin...?

Think carefully about the key... for all parts
Think also about which direction you will go (up or down)
Allow singers to 'customize' (Octaves)
Mix up the intervals

Only at the Beginning?

Start *very* promptly with body work
Try to limit to 10"
Considering exercises mid-rehearsal
Or, at least refer to them as a reminder of a technique or positive singing sensation

Concert Time

Don't break routine
Emphasize body/breath
Avoid talking about tension/fainting
Focus on what will go well
Visualization

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Example Warm-ups

Part I: **Body**

Prepare the body for the activities ahead. Stretch and help place the body in an active alignment.

Exercise I: Climb the Ladder

Exercise 2: Deliberate Shoulder Shrugs

Exercise 3: Seated Posture Check

Example Warm-up

Part II: Breath

Activate the lungs for the needs of healthy singing.

Exercise I: 'Farinelli' Breaths

Exercise 2: Dynamic Gradients

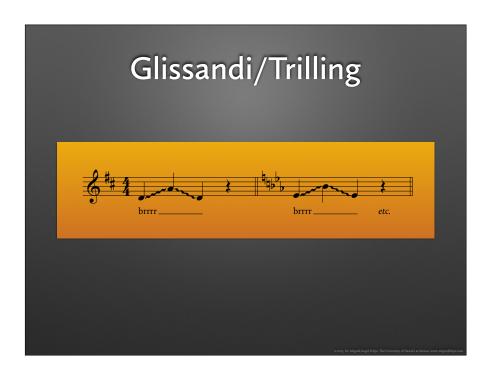
Exercise 3: **Imitation Game**

Part III: Voice.

Engage the voice healthfully helping singers find balance, range, and resonance.

Exercise I: Glissandi/Trilling

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Example Warm-up

Part III: Voice.

Engage the voice healthfully helping singers find balance, range, and resonance.

Exercise I: Glissandi/Trilling

Exercise 2: Twangy Descending 5



Part III: Voice.

Engage the voice healthfully helping singers find balance, range, and resonance.

Exercise I: Glissandi/Trilling

Exercise 2: Twangy Descending 5

Exercise 3: Vi ve va!

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Example Warm-up

Part III: Voice.

Engage the voice healthfully helping singers find balance, range, and resonance.

Exercise I: Glissandi/Trilling

Exercise 2: Twangy Descending 5

Exercise 3: Vi ve va!

Exercise 4: Mia mia

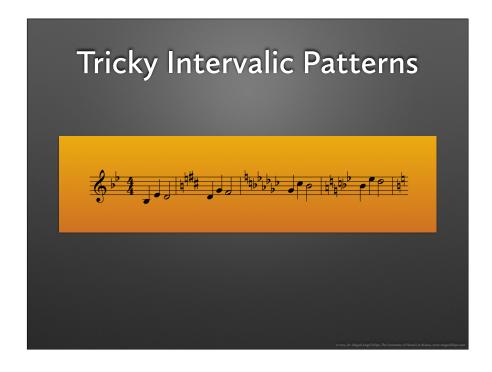


Part IV: **Ensemble**

Create the opportunities for each sing to hear and understand their voice's place in the choir—also a good time to teach musicianship.

Exercise I: Tricky Intervalic Patterns

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Example Warm-up

Part IV: Ensemble

Create the opportunities for each sing to hear and understand their voice's place in the choir—also a good time to teach musicianship.

Exercise I: Tricky Intervalic Patterns

Exercise 2: Chromatic/Whole Tone Scale

Chromatic/Whole Tone Scale

Part IV: Ensemble

Create the opportunities for each sing to hear and understand their voice's place in the choir—also a good time to teach musicianship.

Exercise I: Tricky Intervalic Patterns

Exercise 2: Chromatic/Whole Tone Scale

Exercise 3: Chordal Exercise

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