

The Art of the Warm-Up

Learning to *plan*, *create*, and *make the most* of choral warm-ups

Choral Methods, MUS356
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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?

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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.

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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.

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Plan your Warm-Ups

A pattern for every warm-up

About improvisation

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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 singer to hear and understand their voice's place in the choir—also a good time to teach musicianship.

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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 different 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

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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
attributed

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 do 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

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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

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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!

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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

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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

Example Warm-ups

Part I: **Body**

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

Exercise 1: **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 1: **'Farinelli' Breaths**

Exercise 2: **Dynamic Gradients**

Exercise 3: **Imitation Game**

Example Warm-up

Part III: **Voice.**

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

Exercise I: **Glissandi/Trilling**

Glissandi/Trilling



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**

Twangy Descending 5



Example Warm-up

Part III: **Voice.**

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

Exercise 1: **Glissandi/Trilling**

Exercise 2: **Twangy Descending 5**

Exercise 3: **Vi ve va!**

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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 1: **Glissandi/Trilling**

Exercise 2: **Twangy Descending 5**

Exercise 3: **Vi ve va!**

Exercise 4: **Mia mia**

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Mia, mia



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Example Warm-up

Part IV: **Ensemble**

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

Exercise 1: **Tricky Intervallic Patterns**

Exercise 2: **Chromatic/Whole Tone Scale**

Exercise 3: **Chordal Exercise**

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Chordal Exercise

The image shows a musical score for a chordal exercise in 4/4 time, set in a key with one flat (B-flat major or F minor). The score consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The treble staff contains four measures of music. The first measure has a G4 quarter note, an A4 quarter note, and a B4 quarter note. The second measure has a G4 quarter note, an A4 quarter note, and a B4 quarter note. The third measure has a G4 quarter note, an A4 quarter note, and a B4 quarter note. The fourth measure has a G4 quarter note, an A4 quarter note, and a B4 quarter note. The bass staff contains four measures of music. The first measure has a G2 quarter note, an A2 quarter note, and a B2 quarter note. The second measure has a G2 quarter note, an A2 quarter note, and a B2 quarter note. The third measure has a G2 quarter note, an A2 quarter note, and a B2 quarter note. The fourth measure has a G2 quarter note, an A2 quarter note, and a B2 quarter note.

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Questions?

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