

Leading a Choral Rehearsal: Tools and Techniques for Success

Arlington, VA July 2017

Instructors: Allison King and Dallas Bergen

Course Description

This class will focus on elements of leading a choral rehearsal including warm ups, teaching and introducing new music to singers, working with a variety of singers, score preparation, troubleshooting and polishing music, timing and pacing your rehearsal for success, and creating a positive atmosphere in rehearsals.

Course Syllabus

Warm-ups

- Mental and emotional preparation for rehearsal
- Establishing proper vocal technique
- Tone, breath control/management, blend
- Teaching musical concepts through warm-ups
- Creating community

Introducing a piece of music

- Score Preparation
- How to teach the notes and rhythms
- Giving context. Why are we singing this song?
- Sight singing

Polishing a piece of music

- Rehearsing efficiently
- Musicality
- Deepening our emotional connection
- Gesture vs. Words

Making the Choir a Ministry

- How to welcome the new congregational member and/or the less-experienced singer,
- Choir covenants and the congregation's mission
- How to be positive in our language
- How to encourage everyone regardless of their ability by using a variety of repertoire.
- Showing appreciation for the choir members' presence and commitment
- How to keep everyone on board in rehearsal—and keeping the broader vision and work of the congregation front and center

Submit pre and post- course assignments via email to the instructors (dallas@firstunitarianontario.org) and allisonjking79@gmail.com) and cc the Professional Development Programs Manager (pkahn@uua.org)

Pre-course Assignments – due to instructors by June 1, 2017

Written Submission (double spaced, Time New Roman, 12 point)

1. Write a brief description of your music program and the ensemble(s) which you lead. Include whether they are vocal/instrumental, ages involved, style(s) of music, etc. This can be done as an outline or in paragraph form.
2. Write a short essay:
 - a. Describe rehearsals that you've been a part of that haven't worked, or have worked extremely well, or both.
 - b. What are your identified strengths and weaknesses?
 - c. What aspects of your conducting and leadership do you hope to improve upon through your participation in the MLCP?
3. Are there any specific questions/concerns which you would like addressed in the class?

Video Submission (10-15 minutes)

Submit a video recording of yourself leading rehearsal from the viewpoint of the choir. Include leading a warm up and conducting a prepared piece. This submission is largely to give your instructors a sense of who you are and the ensemble you work with.

Instructions for using WeTransfer to send videos to instructors (and cc pkahn@uua.org):

1. Go to <https://uua.wetransfer.com>
2. Enter the info asked for in the form - the file(s) to be sent, the sender's and recipient's email addresses, and an optional message..)
3. Click "Transfer".
4. Shortly after the transfer completes, your chosen recipients will receive an email with a link to the downloadable file, and you (the sender) will get an email confirming that the files were sent.

Post-course Assignments – due to instructors by January 31, 2018

Written Reflection (up to 1500 words, double spaced, Times New Roman, 12 point)

You will have hopefully returned from this course with new ideas, tools and techniques for your rehearsals. After a month or two of rehearsing in the fall, reflect on what new things you will have tried: What has been successful? What hasn't? Was it easy to incorporate new things into your personal style or did you find it challenging? How have you grown as a leader and conductor?

Rehearsal Observations

Observe two other conductors in a rehearsal setting and write a brief summary of your observations about each conductor. Include what you thought worked or didn't work and what you learned from each rehearsal observation.

Video Submissions (approx 20 minutes in total)

- videos should be taken from the viewpoint of the choir for excerpts 1-3.
- use the same musical piece for excerpts 2-4. It is suggested you spread these three videos over two or three different rehearsals to show the development of the piece of music

Excerpt 1: Warm-up

Demonstrate leading warm-up with your choir using a variety of exercises to most effectively prepare your choir for rehearsal. Include written annotation of the structure of the warm-up and your thought process

Excerpt 2: Introducing a new piece

Show us how you introduce and approach teaching and leading a new piece. Provide your verbal introduction and the how you approach having your ensemble singing a piece for the first time and how you respond to the first result (you are not being evaluated on the sight-reading ability of your choristers!)

Excerpt 3: Troubleshooting/Polishing

This excerpt has you working on a *specific* element or moment in the piece that is in the middle stages of preparation. This could be related to style, tuning, vocal production, balance, expression, dynamics, etc.

Excerpt 4: Final product

Provide a video of you conducting the entire piece (or excerpt if from a larger work). This video could be from prior to performance or the performance itself

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Assessment

Successful completion of the course will require the following:

- completion and submission of all assigned tasks by the given due dates
- attendance at the class course
- demonstration of thoughtful reflection and intentionality in the post-course assignments. Some re-writing for clarity or depth may be asked for by the instructors.
- instructors will provide feedback (needs improvement/good/excellent) on rehearsal technique, conducting gesture, and leadership based on videos submitted

Instructors will submit course evaluation forms to each participant (cc pkahn@uua.org) by March 1, 2018.