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CHORAL VOICING PROCESS

1. Seat singers in default formation. Preferred:

Baritones	Tenor 2s
Basses	Tenor 1s
Soprano 1s	Alto 2s
Soprano 2s	Alto 1s
Conductor	

2. Explain what the process is about, emphasizing that it is *not* about “good” singers and “bad” singers but rather about finding a place in the choir that allows every singer to sound their best.
3. Review “My Country 'Tis of Thee” together in unison. Use this song instead of a vocalise because it requires rhythmic and diction unity in addition to demonstrating range and negotiation of *passaggio*. (It's helpful to project the music for students who may be unfamiliar.)

1. My coun - try, 'tis of thee, sweet land of li - ber - ty,
 2. My na - tive coun - try, thee, land of the no - ble free,

5
 Of thee I sing. Land where my fa - thers died, Land of the
 Thy name I love. I love thy rocks and rills, Thy woods and

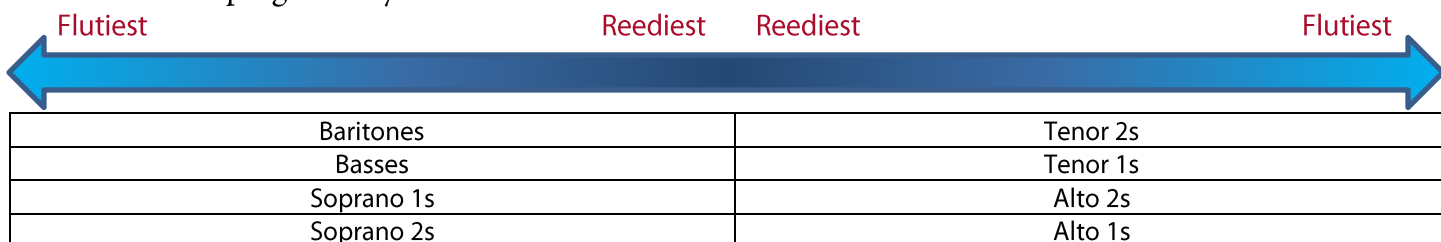
10
 pil - grim's pride, From ev - ry moun - tain - side, Let free - dom ring!
 tem - pled hills; My heart with rap - ture fills Like that a - bove!

4. Voice (see “procedure within each section” on next page) sections. Recommended order:

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. B2 b. B1 c. All basses d. S1 e. S2 f. All sopranos 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> g. Lefthand side (basses & sopranos) h. T1 i. T2 j. All tenors k. Row 4 (B1 & T2) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> l. Row 3 (B2 & T1) m. All tenors & basses n. A2 o. A1 p. All altos 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> q. Righthand side (tenors & altos) r. Row 2 (S1 & A2) s. Row 1 (S2 & A1) t. All sopranos & altos u. Whole choir
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5. Adapt this formation to other formations or your preferred formation by *beginning with the centermost singer in each section.*

PROCEDURE WITHIN EACH SECTION

1. Hear the whole section sing “My Country ’Tis of Thee” in unison. Recommended keys:
 - B2: Ab (advanced) – Bb (developing)
 - B1: C (advanced) – Db (developing)
 - S1: Ab (developing) – Db (advanced)
 - S2: Gb (developing) – Bb (advanced)
 - T1: G (developing) – Bb (advanced)
 - T2: Gb (developing) – A (advanced)
 - A2: Bb (developing) – Eb (advanced)
 - A1: Db (developing) – G (advanced)
2. Hear each singer individually perform a phrase (“My country, ’tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, / Of thee I sing” **or** “Land where my fathers died, / Land of the pilgrims’ pride, / From ev’ry mountainside, / Let freedom ring”).
3. Identify the “reediest” voice in the section and put them in the center, lining the rest of the section up so each voice is progressively “flutier.”



4. Hear duets and trios of voices sing phrases, gradually adding more voices.
5. Whenever two voices do not work well next to each other, insert a “buffer” singer from the flutier voices.

GUIDELINES FOR SINGERS

- Sing *mf*+
- Use a supported, free, vibrant, free sound—your “studio voice”
- *Listen*, but do NOT attempt to “blend”

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTORS

- Keep in mind that the voices most in danger of sticking out are those on the edges. Therefore, form a “core” in the middle of the choir with flutier voices on the sides.
- Have a student secretary or volunteer record the formations so your focus can be entirely on listening.
- Beware the “friend factor” of a singer changing their sound in hope of standing next to a friend.
- Before making a *final* decision, consider whether two musically weak or two undisciplined singers are next to one another and consider inserting a voice between them.
- Sightlines are important, so you may sometimes need to adapt based on singers’ height. *However*, remember that what your choir *sounds* like is more important than what they *look* like, so don’t fear putting taller singers in front of shorter ones as long as shorter singers can see you when they’re on a riser and you’re on a podium.
- Be flexible! The procedure above is only a *guideline* and you will occasionally achieve better results by breaking them—trust your ears!

RESOURCES

- Jordan, J. (2008). The Choral Rehearsal: Planning, Evaluating, Sight-Reading and Singer Placement. In *The School Choral Program: Philosophy, Planning, Organizing, and Teaching* (pp. 160–172). Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc.
- Noble, W. H. (2005). Auditions and Voice Placement. In *Creating the Special World: A Collection of Lectures* (pp. 43–48). Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc.

This presentation and all materials referenced are available at www.adampottermusic.com/nyssma-2019.