

Choral Director and Voice Teacher: Working Together



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**“whatever you do,
do it all for the glory of God.”**

I Corinthians 10:31

“Our Calling”



- It is God who is at work through us as we use the gifts Christ gives each one of us. Spiritual gifts are not given for the benefit (or pride) of the one who possesses the gift but for the benefit of others.
- God rightly gets the praise for our service since the gifts and the strength and the opportunity to use them come from Him.
- The goal of using our gifts is not focused on us, but on our fellow Christians (and those yet to be brought to faith).

“Our Calling”



- We are seeking to be Christ’s tools to build others up.
- This is not a competition to get noticed by others or earn some “merit” with God.
- We have nothing to earn from Him or to prove to Him since He has given us everything in Christ and we are already His fully loved children and heirs.

“Our Calling”



- Our fellow Christians can be blessed through our service and built up in Christ. That is the goal.
- To best achieve that goal, it is crucial that every part of the body be functioning just as Christ designed him/her to function.
- God, who has given all these gifts to each of us, has the right to define how such gifts are to be used.

“God’s Guidance”



“Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others....”

“God’s Guidance”



...In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

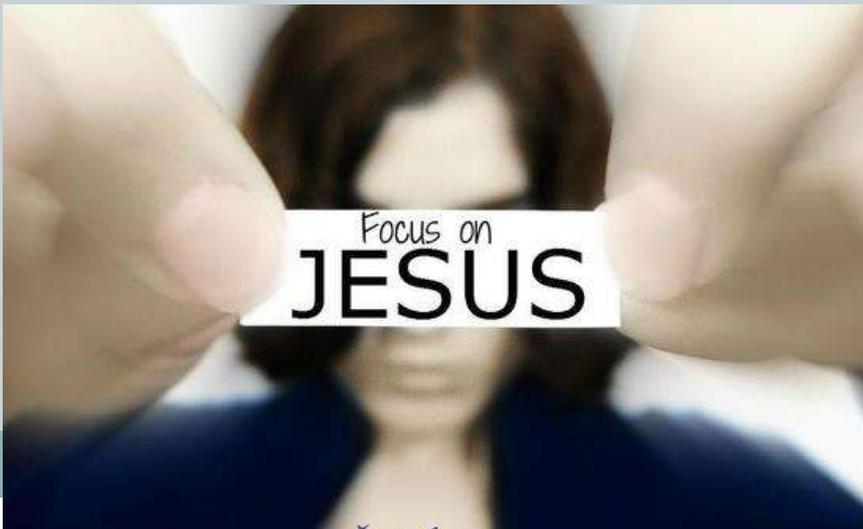
Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross!

“God’s Guidance”



Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

-Philippians 2:1-13



WHAT VOICE TEACHERS AND CHORAL DIRECTORS HAVE IN COMMON



- All singers, voice teachers, and choral conductors treasure and strive to attain BEAUTY * FREEDOM* STRENGTH* HEALTH as aspects of beautiful and skillful singing.
- As we deal with our voice students and choir members who are less-than-perfect singers, we admire and yearn for beauty in our own voices and in the voices we train.
- We prize a tonal quality that is freely produced, with well-controlled dynamics; we value an evenness throughout the range, and a resonance that is well projected, and we esteem voices that are strong and healthy.

TAKING IT ONE STEP FURTHER



Most importantly, we guide our students through God and His Word as to the *PURPOSE* of why we are using our God-given musical gifts as He has called us to serve Him.

EXAMPLES:

- 1) Sharing devotions/text study with students regarding music they are currently studying
- 2) Pray with students before performances; sometimes even after (example solo/ensemble; or competitions)
- 3) Reinforce “living God-given faith” as He has called us to be his instruments (Christ’s ambassadors in all musical opportunities)

God



*"Gives His Gift
To Me"*



Me

*"Give My Best
For Him"*



*Person who
God wants to
reach through
music*

God



*"Thankfulness
and Glory
Goes To God"*

Me

*"Thankfulness
for service"* *Person touched
by God's work
through us*

The Functions of a Voice Teacher and Choral Director



Voice Teacher

- Voice Technician
- Helps student to develop the most “natural” sound and free the voice
- Focuses on solo training, which emphasizes individuality and projection.
- Employs the Spiral of Singing and all of it’s aspects with each student

Choral Director

- Leads and conducts group of singers to work together
- Prizes uniformity and the ability to blend
- Uses gestures for conducting to communicate proper singing technique and musicianship

The key to cooperation is communication. The better we understand the concerns, ideas, and vocal expectations of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle, the more our students will benefit.



TEAMWORK

- We tend to see students on a serial basis; they come from someone else, stay with us for a while, and ultimately move on to yet another teacher. This is good. Think for a moment of your own training. One teacher might have had a greater impact on your development than others, but in the end, you are the product of everyone with whom you have studied.
- In most cases, a whole cast of teachers stands alongside every successful singer, each playing a different role.



**WHERE
CAN
CONFLICTS
OCCUR?**

As God has placed me with years of experience serving as a voice teacher and an area Lutheran high school Choir Director, I understand this statement well from personal experience.....

“conflicts were internal between my aspirations for my applied students as soloists versus the vocal demands I placed on them in choir..”

-Scott McCoy



**CAN THIS
CONFLICT
OFFER
SOLUTIONS
THAT WILL
BENEFIT THE
STUDENT?**

“This conflict easily is exacerbated by the fact that developing singers usually spend far more time working with their conductors than their applied teachers, often by a ratio of five (or more) to one. My colleagues and I often lament the challenge of getting “the choir” out of a student’s voice before serious solo work can begin in any given lesson. As I ponder this issue, however, I’m struck by the need to be proactive in teaching our students the techniques required to be productive choristers *in addition* to the work they do to become soloists.”

-Scott McCoy

Voice teachers may offer adaptation of vocal technique to the challenge of singing in multiple styles as a learned activity.



A SOLUTION THAT CAN HELP

A word must be added here concerning experienced, trained singers within any choral ensemble. Vowels employed in the studio and on stage that are beautiful in those situations are probably too “open” for a choral situation. I have heard so many beautiful voices compromised in choral rehearsals because the conductor keeps “shooshing” the voice or telling the singer to sing “quieter.”

However, that is not the issue. It is a question of vowel! That singer’s beautiful color is needed in the ensemble, so that singer should never compromise vocal technique to “blend.” The singer should instead simply close vowel sounds more than he/she does in the studio or on stage. Singers who share both the choral experience and the stage experience must use the vowel as their primary tool in adapting to the specific performance needs of both.

***WHEN DEMONSTRATING VOWEL PLACEMENT:
I ACTUALLY DESIGNATE “CHORAL VOICE”
AND “SOLO VOICE.”***



**WHAT CHORAL
DIRECTORS
CAN OFFER TO
HELP VOICE
TEACHERS**

***Offer consistency in the major
components of the skill-based activity of
beautiful singing:***

- Stretching/Releasing muscle tension in every rehearsal
- Teaching/Demonstrating/Enforcing proper alignment in every rehearsal
- Incorporating good breathing techniques (including well-coordinated onsets/releases) at every rehearsal
- Educating the entire choir on opening the vocal tract
- Optimizing the tone of the choir through well-thought out warm-ups at each rehearsal. They should direct the voice to proper resonance, blend registers, focus the tone, good articulation and musical expression.
- Encouraging healthy singing by reinforcing overall vocal health when rehearsing and performing.

Rehearsal Objectives



Vowel Shapes

- Practice consistency on well-coordinated onsets/releases to achieve unified vowels.
- Consider “inside smile” when choosing vowel shapes/colors for the use of a choir
- Lip pads should be lifted no matter the vowel shape or color
- The jaw should be released from the TM joint always, in private lessons or in choir. By releasing the front of the jaw, there is tension that will develop in a student’s swallowing muscles and undue pressure placed on the larynx.

Very Important

- Chosen wisely, repertoire encourages healthy vocal development.
- Inappropriate repertoire will inhibit development and easily can become injurious.
- Understand that the “prime” of your voice is around the age of 40; which means that your voice is constantly developing and changing up to that point.



The Larynx (Voice box)

Young voices are easily damaged because the larynx is not fully developed until approximately ages 16-20.

Many muscles surround the larynx, some of which control the vocal folds. We need to let them do their jobs, especially young voices.



Muscles are muscles.

You'd never ask a 16 year old to bench press the same amount as a 22 year old.

Don't expect that from singers.

Parting thoughts



We all have our students' best interests at heart, and we all have the ultimate goal of making beautiful music.

- 1) Continue to communicate on behalf of the “good of the ministry” when working together as fellow voice and choral teachers.
- 2) Do not put the student in the middle. Always work things out between the adults so students benefit.
- 3) Work with the individual's pastor and/or worship coordinator to give students the opportunity to sing in worship at their local congregation.
- 4) Continually keep in front of yourself and others the blessing of making music to the glory of God!

Suggested Reading



- Rundus, Katharin. *Cantabile. A Manual about Beautiful Singing, Teachers of Singing and Choral Conductors. Voices.* Pavane Publishing, 2009. Print.