

Tools and Techniques for Leading A Successful Choral Rehearsal

Led by Anne Watson Born and Donald Milton III

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

- Establishing proper vocal technique
- Tone, breath 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

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

Making the Choir a Ministry (conference workshop: "It's Not Just Learning the Notes")

- How to welcome the new congregational member and/or the less-experienced singer, using, among other things, bonding warmups.
- 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.
- How to keep everyone on board in rehearsal – with thoughtful time management, good rehearsal pace, and keeping the broader vision and work of the congregation front and center.

Pre-class Assignments – all due by June 1

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. Are there any specific questions/concerns which you would like addressed in this class?
3. List one or two books or other sources in which you have found helpful information about rehearsal techniques. Please explain in no more than a paragraph why you like each resource.
4. Make a video recording of yourself (on your phone or whatever is convenient) in rehearsal from the viewpoint of the choir. Include a warm up and conducting through a piece. We want to see your regular style so no need to “show off” or do anything out of the ordinary. Recordings should 15-30 minutes. We will set up a WeTransfer account to make this easier.

All pre-class assignments should be sent to Jan Gartner at jgartner@uua.org.

Please feel free to contact Anne (awborn@gmail.com) or Don (donald.milton@uuca.org) if you have any questions.

Post-class Assignments – all due January 31, 2015

1. During the class you’ll hear a lot about style and you’ll hear new techniques, tools and warm ups. We hope you will try many new things out when you get back into rehearsal. Write 2-3 pages about this. Reflect on what new things you tried: What worked? What didn’t work? Was it easy to incorporate new things into your personal style or did you find it tricky?
2. Make a video recording of a whole rehearsal (minimum 45 minutes) from the viewpoint of the choir. Please include a written annotation, describing how you structured the rehearsal, what your goals were in each section of the rehearsal, what you thought worked well, and what you thought worked less well.

3. Observe 2 other conductors in a rehearsal setting and write a brief summary of your observations about each conductor (2-3 paragraphs each). Include what you thought worked or didn't work and what you learned from this particular conductor.