



1990, 1993 & 1996 International Chorus Champion

Fundamentals of Singing on the Risers

1. **Decorum.** Because of the number of men in the chorus, it is obviously not possible to permit people to talk whenever they might wish. Even whispers to a neighbor cause distractions to those in the immediate area and break the concentration and focus on the director. As a result, the **Masters of Harmony** have a “no- talking-on-the-risers” policy.
2. **Attentive Stance.** When singing, your feet should be in line with your shoulders, with your outside foot slightly forward and the weight up onto the balls of your feet. The feet should not be exactly parallel and the toes should be slightly spread. Your eyes should always be focused on the director, unless the choreography requires otherwise. If you are using music, keep it up at eye level so that you can see the director. If you are not holding music, your hands should hang naturally at the side; they should never be in your pockets. Have your carriage and posture in an “up” position, not slouched, and “reset” yourself at the end of stage presence moves.
3. **Active Face.** Singing is more than just a passive experience. It must involve the whole body. While extraneous movement of the hands and feet can cause distraction, movements and changes of expression in the face—and, to a lesser extent, slight movement of the head and upper body—not only enhance the sound, but look impressive to the audience as well. When singing, have your entire face always doing something, ideally to reflect the particular emotion conveyed by the lyrics.
4. **Uniform Vowels.** Critical to our form of music is that each word sound must blend with the other voices. This is done by stressing uniform mouth shapes for each of the different vowels. What makes this a little easier is that each vowel looks like its respective sound. Thus, an “Oh” (as in *boat* or *grow*) should look like an “O” by having the lips completely rounded. You should be conscious of what your lips are doing whenever you form a word. When singing, the facial muscles must overexaggerate the vowel shape that would normally be used when talking; the lips must also protrude slightly and act like the bell of a trumpet. Vowels need to be formed in a “vertical” manner, with the sound then projected out in front of you; vowels should never be made in a “horizontal” fashion, with the sound going out to the sides.
5. **Volume Relationships.** The higher you sing, the softer it should be, relatively (i.e., at any given overall chorus volume level). This is particularly true for baritones when their notes are above the lead. On high notes, take the pressure off and just let the sound “float” out—contrary to the human tendency to try and “muscle it.” Conversely, the lower you sing (in whichever part), the greater your relative volume should be.
6. **Smoothness.** Everything we sing is done in a smooth, connected way—not choppy. Indeed, the faster we sing, the smoother it must be (again, just the opposite of the normal tendency!).

(Adopted 7/91; Rev. 5/94, 8/97)