

Vocal Education Series

Part 13: Getting the Most From Rehearsals

12 affirmations to help you be mentally prepared for rehearsals

By René Torres

It is certainly no secret that to be good at anything you have to practice. It is also no secret that the more you practice, the better you should get. However, to get the most benefit from rehearsals, you need a plan. Yes, not just a director. While the director has a plan and a responsibility to steer the chorus towards predetermined objectives, the individual singer has a responsibility too. Just arriving at the rehearsal and striving to do what the director says is not enough. Sure, it will help you get better, but are you really getting the most out of the experience? Are you personally absorbing as much as you can from each session? Do you leave the rehearsal feeling that you are better than when you started? What does it take to glean the maximum benefit from each rehearsal?

While it is true that the best way to learn something and do it well is to practice, it is also true that “preparing” to practice is just as important. To those that are familiar with this series, you know the importance of a good and thorough warm-up “before” you arrive at the rehearsal site. Let’s say your rehearsals are three hours long once a week. That’s two percent of your life . . . little time indeed to spend on such a demanding hobby if you want to be your best. Your director already has plans for that 2%, and there simply isn’t enough rehearsal time available for long warm-ups. You have to be ready beforehand.

Remember also that preparing the voice box and related vocal apparatus is not enough. Mental preparation is just as important. You should come to rehearsal with the following 12 affirmations in mind as a minimum:

- “I will prepare myself to the best of my ability to make the most out of the rehearsal.”
- “I will be mentally and physically willing and able to give my all throughout the entire rehearsal.”
- “I will not let anyone in the chorus best me as to concentration, attention and demeanor.”
- “I will always keep in mind that a chorus is an entity unto its own, and I am prepared to subordinate myself to the common good.”
- “I will consider my spot on the risers as the most important contributor to the chorus over which I have control, therefore worthy of my undivided effort.”
- “I will not subordinate singing to the exercise of the proper moves, but neither will I subordinate the moves to the singing.”
- “I will believe that my face is the most important part of my body to convey the song to an audience, and it will be animated and appropriate *all* the time.”
- “I will strive to understand every instruction the director is conveying, and to execute it properly the first time and forever thereafter.”
- “I will be helpful to those others that are not learning as fast as I am, but only during the breaks.”
- “I will remain focused at all times, as only in that manner can I obtain the most out of the experience.”
- “I will recapitulate upon completion of the rehearsal what I have learned and consider it just a starting point from which to get better at the next rehearsal.”

- “I will recognize that two percent of my life is not enough to devote to this hobby if I really want to be the best, and will use every other opportunity to further my knowledge and focus.”

Overall, the emphasis needs to be on focus of the mind, body and spirit. Only when every member of the chorus commits to this philosophy will improvement come rapidly and successfully. Consider this. If you are going to devote some of your valuable free time to singing, there is really no excuse for not giving it your all, is there?