

How To Introduce A Piece Of Music So Your Students Will Learn (And Love!) It

by

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*Introduce new music more effectively through
better preparation and rehearsal techniques*

From The Book

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You have the responsibility of selecting new repertoire for your group. If you wish to be successful in introducing this new selection you must study the piece, set attainable goals, give positive reinforcement, provide effective directions, correct mistakes and quickly solve problems. Students have the tendency to not like anything that is new or different. If they are initially turned-off to a new piece of music, it is very difficult to bring them back no matter how wonderful the selection may be.

Preparation

You must first study the piece before the students even attempt the first note. If you do not have an understanding of the piece, how can you expect your students to fully appreciate and accept this new selection. You must lay some groundwork by discussing the period, composer, song classification, mood, and text as you play a recording of the piece. An analysis of the musical form may help the group understand such musical elements as sequential melodies, counter melodies, overlapping fugue themes, and form structure. By discussing the direction of the piece, as a road map, you can help your group solve problems more quickly as they sing through the piece for the first time without stopping. This will give them an overview of the entire selection as well as enhancing their sight-reading abilities. Try to not sing the actual words during this first reading, but substitute the syllable *du* for the lyrics. By eliminating this one variable, success can be achieved more

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quickly. And finally, when possible, find a section in the new piece that can be brought to some stage of fruition in the first rehearsal, even if it is only a few bars.

Goals

Make your rehearsal goals clear to the group by setting realistic goals that are small enough to achieve. Arrange these goals in the most effective sequence. And finally, make a new set of achievable goals for every piece of music for each rehearsal.

Positive Reinforcement

When you stop the choir during the first few readings of this piece, find something positive to say about their negative performance; then challenge them to sing it better in a designated way. If you cannot honestly praise students during the rehearsal, you may be attempting to accomplish too much at one time.

Directions

Keep your directions simple. Do not offer a lot of directions at one time. Always explain the reason for your requests. Do not merely tell them to do it.

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Correcting Mistakes and Solving Problems

According to psychologists, the more times an error is repeated, the stronger will be the memory connection. The error will not be forgotten; it must be abandoned and replaced by a more desirable response.

Here is a list of procedures for problem solving:

- Diagnose the problem.
- Stop the music.
- Identify the problem and prescribe corrective measures.
- Give instructions and resume singing.
- Synthesize the problem area back into the music context.
- Use partial closure to analyze success.

Work on the big mistakes first, not on the details. Repetition with meaning will foster real learning. When it is necessary to repeat a passage, call attention to the reason for the repetition--don't just sing it again.

The keys to successfully introducing a new piece of music are fairly obvious, but frequently not done. Shortcuts are often taken using time constraints as the reason. Effective preparation and explanation are paramount to achieving success, and this is where the real time is saved.

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