

**GALA CHORUSES LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM 2015
MONDAY 9:00 AM
AD OPEN SPACE TOPICS AND NOTES FROM ATTENDEES**

TOPIC: ANNIVERSARY FUNDRAISING

What are we going to say to patrons re: anniversary campaign and how that money will be used? (GMC Charlotte, 10 yrs).

- List what each item costs for production, each person costs \$x per year. Your donation will help in these specific areas.
- Award ceremony, honor people in the community who have made an impact; create a scholarship within your chorus in that person's name.
- Major works to celebrate the anniversary; require \$x to produce; give them a voice
- What about an endowment? Strategy for next 5 years with a theme?
- 30K in 30 days; Atlanta – keep the age of the chorus on the radar
- Do people think we just travel and have fun and that is what their money is going to? Communicate clearly re: what everything costs.
- D.C. 35th season; launching a youth chorus; beyond the beltway to rural areas; Kennedy Center, for example, for visibility; let your patrons know that's how you're growing because of their support.
- Turtle Creek just had 35th Anniversary Concert, separate from season: Made it a GALA event; \$100 for tickets. Alumni participation.



TOPIC: CLIQUES

Cliques are forming in my chorus and starting to create division. What can I do?

- Popular, younger guys tend to group; look to membership committee code of conduct.
- LA made cards with a name of someone who had passed away of AIDS. New(er) members were asked to choose a card bearing the name of a person they don't know. Their mission was to seek out from older members who this person was and what his contribution to the chorus had been. Post-exercise, they sang a familiar song to honor the former members.
- At the break; if you are a new member, find someone who's a founding member, or someone who is brand new. Find out something about them. Have "chorus buddies" introduce new members.
- Social events; forced interaction. Jane's approach: each person is assigned a nursery rhyme that they hum (pre-assigned) then walk around room to find their group (of 4)?
- Say: "We strive for a non-clique culture; friendships are going to happen; but there is a culture of safety, inclusion, and support that is at the core of this group." Speak from your heart about inclusion – tell your personal story.
- "Musical safety" – no eye-rolling for those who may be struggling with the music. Embrace and help them.
- Resources: Tim Lautzenheiser's book on band leadership training.
- "Tell them the best seats in the room are up front. After they group themselves for a couple of rehearsals, make everyone sit in a different for a while.

- Kagan Groups: put people in groups of 4 for the season, breaking up the cliques. Whenever you do team-building exercises, they always do them with this group.
- Is this ageist? A natural phenomenon?
- Shawn Cullen: look for article from HuffPost: "8 Things Gay Men Should Say to Each Other."
- Tough love. Pull the clique aside and talk with them about the perception.
- "Nut & Bolts" – find the nut that fits the bolt (use numbers, colors, etc. instead if you want) and they have to find the match and get to know that person.
- Some people are naturally shy. Friendships are going to form that are not necessarily cliques. What is the difference? Perception. (Room together at retreat, sit together in rehearsal, etc.)
- Approach clique members and ask how they want to be remembered. What will be their legacy? What example do they want to set?
- Do it with humor: Have two actors demonstrate what do to and what not to do.
- Encourage shy people to step forward and not to hold back, waiting on inclusion.

TOPIC: "SEXUAL HARASSMENT" ISSUES

Members have left because they've felt "hit on." What can we do?

- Address it with policy – maybe not with the term "sexual harassment" which has preconceptions; be vocal; approach people who are known for doing this.
- James Knapp agreed to share Denver's policy.
- Say, "You will be welcoming, but you will not touch."
- It's great to be expressive with each other, it's part of why we're here. We hug, we kiss. Pay attention to body language from new members and be sensitive.
- Work from the podium and make light of it: when new members are out of the room, say "touch in appropriate ways only" with a sense of humor.
- If applicable, say to returning members (privately) that previous members have left the chorus because they felt "hit on."
- Be sure to highlight for new members that they have a recourse other than to leave.
- Have everyone divide into 1's and 2's. Have a moment where they each turn to each other and ask them to please stop, using their own language.
- Put sections of handbook in newsletter; find various ways to highlight it.
- Turtle Creek's "Singers Bill of Rights" – create a safe environment. Sean Baugh will share.
- Value statement of how we treat each other.

TOPIC: GALA PROVIDING MORE AD SUPPORT FOR THEIR CRAFT

Can we have more professional development opportunities, rather than organizational techniques at GALA Symposium and Leadership events?

- Can we talk about the art and the music?
- Can we separate professional development from organizational?
- "I want to go back home feeling like a better musician."
- GALA used to bring in major clinicians and AD's often said "I know all of this." The feeling was that it was not supported. This was true in some cases. A pattern developed that it was not worth the cost.
- Is it about bringing in clinicians? Can directors present to each other? Start each session with a vocal warm-up? Share our own techniques?

- Best practices: each director shares 15 minutes of something they have to offer. Mini-topics: memorization, warmup, balance/blend, vocal color: “Here’s my torch.”
- Send Jane something you excel at and how you would present it.
- Action/demonstration for music and sending information that we can read.
- Mini-topics: memorization, warmup, balance/blend, vocal color: “Here’s my torch.”
- Sue: We need GALA TED Talks.
- Musical styles: jazz, a cappella, beat-boxing. (Can we have beat-boxing symposium for singers at Festival?)

TOPIC: CHORUS BALANCE

What is the approach to achieving balance across the sections where reasonable consistency in skill is present?

- The inverted pyramid (lower voices dominating) was questioned in a vocal workshop this weekend.
- If there are 120 in each section, what do you do?
- Even numbers may be desired, but aren’t necessary.
- Don’t limit by numbers.
- Resources: “Choral Singing in Pre-Revolutionary Russia,” and “The Russian Choir and How to Blend it (Chesnokov).” (Robert, St. Louis) Both are available from Music Russica.
- Look at “border voices” (those that fall between first and second soprano, for example) and seat them together so they can move in either direction when needed.
- Consensus: Traditional pyramid of higher numbers in the lower voices is not questioned.

TOPIC: MUSIC ADVISORY GROUPS

Should I have a MAC (or something similar) that helps with artistic programming? What are the challenges and what are some solutions?

- Why do they exist? Our difference from other choruses, need for consensus.
- MAC in GMCLA helped with a long period of interim conductors, giving them a certain power over programming that had to be reigned in.
- What knowledge of repertoire do they have? Is this required?
- Are they more “idea-based” than “content-based”?
- Does knowledge of pop music (or other rep conductors are not familiar with) lead you to a more arrangement-driven concert than composition-driven?
- Important to make it clear that you have the final decision after their input.
- Important for the AD to make sure that there is balance between difficulty, style, etc.
- Pitch sessions – throw out ideas.
- Who is allowed on the committee? Is there a process?
- Music leaders (or section managers) automatically sit on Atlanta’s MAC, along with an elected member of each section. Option for AD to add others with particular expertise.
- Atlanta is using the term “Creative Team” in external references while phasing out MAC.
- There is a certain job security in consensus.
- If a member of the board questions whether you’re doing your job or letting the MAC do it for you, invite them to a MAC meeting and have them see the process.
- People need to see you as someone who’s inclusive of their ideas.
- Another approach is to just be open and organic; concert talk list. (Sue)
- Collaborative process of some kind is needed. Do what works best for your chorus.

- If there is a creative team, then they must show enthusiasm to other members about the music, be able to talk about why a piece was chosen, and not to say that individually they didn't like a particular choice.

TOPIC: AD INTERACTION WITH THE BOARD

Situation: Micro-management, conflict, lack of energy.

- Are there staff job descriptions?
- Are there board member job descriptions?
- There's a problem if you have co-presidents deferring to each other. There should only be one president.
- Have a tough conversation.
- What to do in the first month of your job the board is over-reaching?
- Learn to play the game of leadership – take them forward with baby steps, even though you see the end product very clearly.
- Start with a generous view of where any opposition is coming from.
- Perhaps the board needed to control the person in the position before you. Assure them that you've got this.
- If you come from academia, remember that your singers are not there to learn, per se, but to sing. They want to be inspired.

TOPIC: MANAGING MUSIC LIBRARIES

The music is all in the file drawers, it keeps building. How do I manage its continued growth? It's all in the database, but it's borderline overwhelming.

- Clean house. Toss the photocopies that were illegal or will be expiring soon.
- Collect legal photocopies and have the librarian destroy those that are expiring or shelve the permanent legal ones.
- Get rid of what is not going to be used again, even if it's published octavos.
- Consider donating to other choruses (academic ones?) If it's standard rep that you don't want, give it to a school.
- It's okay to throw music away.
- Keep a copy of each original for a record of your history.
- GALA Chorus Best Practices involved adhering to copyright law.

TOPIC: SEATING ARRANGEMENTS

Is it the same all the time, do you mix it up, how do you arrange your singers?

- Grouped by section.
- LA/ATL GMC sit with low and high voices in the middle for tuning and so everyone can hear the B2's (similar suggestion for SSAA?)
- Mixed formation. Quartets? Not necessarily. 3-8 together from each section.
- Smaller ensembles can quickly reposition in performance on a per piece basis. Larger choruses are more complicated.
- How quickly is the seating chart implemented? Final month or so of rehearsals.
- Thea (DCGMC) will share her bric-a-brac seating chart of 8 people grouped.
- Seating charts are in the Music Russica books referenced above. (Chesnokov).

TOPIC: ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Do you have one, what is it, and how do you implement it?

- Most choruses have one.
- It averages 3 absences per cycle and you're out.
- Some use percentages and say what the actual allowance is at the beginning of each cycle.
- CPR: Concert Preparedness Review for those who are over the limit. Conductor sits with music leader and singer to spot check their preparedness.
- Offer make-up rehearsals (sectionals).
- Leave it to the membership committee.
- Determine if there are a number of cycles that you have to sing before taking a leave of absence.

PROGRAMING TIMELINE

How far do you program in advance, especially when pressured by your marketing demands?

- Joe (LA) was asked for a five year plan that gradually becomes less specific and more general. This was very helpful in order to be able to get grant money. Funders want to know what your vision is.
- As you start this season, it's important to have some idea of what is going to happen in the next season at the very least. More general for seasons that follow.
- Search for upcoming anniversaries of LGBT historical events or LGBT pop culture. 25, 50, 75th, and use those to guide you toward celebratory programs.