



Tips for Programming a GALA Festival Set

Updated 3/9/2012

Programming Tips

- 30 minute set for choruses: includes entrance/exit time and all stage movement/transitions.
- Plan for about 23 minutes of music as a chorus, approximately 12 minutes for an ensemble; less is better than more.
- Applause at a GALA festival takes a measurable amount of time. Plan for it.
- Pick something familiar/comfortable to open your set to get the jitters out and help your singers relax.
- Choose programming that presents a distinctive identity for your chorus; something mission-related.
- Choose a piece that will be new to the GALA community—a commission or arrangement or newly discovered piece. However, be sure to try a new piece out at home first to make sure it “works” before bringing a new commission to Festival.
- Select the right amount of challenge – something that keeps singers on their toes but that they can ultimately perform beautifully.
- Something that reflects original and innovative work of your chorus in the last four years
- Something humorous or light.
- Select repertoire that works in the specific hall where you are performing!

Instrumentalists and Technical Details

- Keep instrumentation simple; better yet, sing a cappella or only with piano for concerts on the road.
- Prepare for significant and scary unknowns in amplification/sound reinforcement.

Concert Flow

- Make sure there is flow, balance, interest. Don't just sing a bunch of songs the chorus likes.
- Plan some programming segues without applause.
- Be attentive to the weight of the songs, text-related flow, similarities and contrasts, key colors, tempo.
- Keep the audience in mind: they are being deluged, their ears are overfull. Pace the set in a way that will allow them to stay tuned in. Imagine yourself as a member of the audience and design a satisfying and engaging flow.
- Consider collaborating with another chorus to join together for a combined number or two.

Additional Thoughts on Repertoire and Staging

- Minimize your talking from the stage; keep it concise and premeditated.
- Movement should enhance the music, not overshadow.
- Help the audience develop a distinct sense of who you are in your presentation/visuals as well as in the programming.

Copyrights and Permissions to Perform and Record – due May 1

Chorus performances at Festival will be audio recorded and available for purchase by delegates. As a part of the registration process your chorus will provide the information needed to secure mechanical licenses.

- Published music: you provide title, composer, publisher and length of each song.
- Unpublished compositions: in addition to the information above you must provide documentation from the copyright holder indicating your rights to perform and record the work July 7-11, 2012.
- Start working on your permissions well before the deadline. It can take months to get some of these copyright permissions. As long as you stick to published music you should not have problems.
- Copyright workshop session notes are on GALA website. Use them!

Festival Attitude

- Don't come with ego and competitiveness. It is unattractive. Everyone is doing interesting work. Prep your chorus to come with anticipation of being blown away, not of blowing everyone away.
- Help your singers prepare for the psychological issues of performing at Festival after listening to all the choirs ahead of you. Don't compare yourself to other choirs. Figure out what you can learn from choruses in terms of repertoire, programming and performance style.
- Be prepared to experience the love from the audience. Their applause and appreciation will be powerful.

Motivating and Preparing your Singers for Festival

- Incorporate weekly stories and “testimonials” about past Festival experiences into your rehearsal to get singers excited to attend. See the GALA website for video, power point and handouts you can share with your chorus.
- Festival is a tremendous external motivator; challenge singers to a high musical standard with emphasis on the basics: singing in tune and with strong vocal quality.
- Set up the entire year so your singers are exceptionally well-prepared yet not stale.
- Perform your entire set for an audience before arriving in Denver.
- Bring in a vocal coach or local director you respect for feedback.
- Plan ahead to create a way for you to communicate with your chorus at Festival (phone tree, voice mail to call to, text, daily email).
- DO require all singers to be present for tech and final rehearsal.
- Rehearsal room space will be available at Festival in two-hour blocks. Reserve this in advance.

More questions? Drop me a note or pick up the phone!

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Programming recommendations compiled by Jane Ramseyer Miller
with programming notes from Sue Coffee – September 2011