

must tap and pass along. The line with the most correct rhythms wins!

- **New music:** I stay away from music that is terribly serious, but the students will keep working if you choose good, quality music to keep them motivated. I never let students choose the music, but I do listen to their suggestions. This is a great time to find something they suggested that is appropriate for their ability level. It can be a pop song or music from a movie, etc.
- **The classic picnic:** Here is a great way to spend time with your students in a less structured environment. Keep costs low by having the kids bring food. See if the gym or schoolyard is available for games!

I hope I have offered a few ideas to end your school year on a high note and to save you hours of Googling at home.

Singing in a Chorus—Do’s and Don’ts for Church or Community Chorus Members

Stephanie A. Henry
Central Presbyterian Church
Kansas City, Missouri

(Used with permission of the author)

Here are suggestions for singers who wish to be successful in a church or community choir—or even in a school or college choir!

- Do not chat during rehearsals.
- Be punctual or, even better, be early. If you are late, be inconspicuous and quietly take a seat. Refrain from asking questions that may already have been answered.
- Vocal warm-ups are critical to a successful rehearsal. Do not arrive late to avoid them.
- Arrive at rehearsal ready to enjoy the redeeming, inspirational process of music-making.
- If you need to stand, do so. Don’t interrupt the rehearsal by asking permission.
- Be prepared. Maintain a current folder with a schedule.
- When the director is working with another section, follow along in your music. There will undoubtedly be comments that pertain to your section.
- Be responsible. If you have to miss a rehearsal, sign out for that date or let your section leader know in advance.
- Always have a pencil and eraser; always mark your music.
- Number the measures in every piece of music.
- Remain open to learning new ideas and new approaches to the music.
- When sight reading, you are allowed to omit the text and sing on a “doo” or a “dah” syllable, especially when working in a foreign language.
- Do your homework by practicing at home if possible. Take your folder home.
- Do not chat.
- Mutual respect must be practiced in rehearsals by all. You do have a voice, but there is a proper time to use it.
- Prior to rehearsal is not the time to engage the conductor in talk about leaving early or the need for missing a rehearsal. He/she is focused on the work at hand.
- Do not assume the director needs your help identifying or solving problems (unless she/he asks).
- If a director’s instructions don’t seem clear, raise your hand and wait to be recognized. If you are not called on, leave the issue for another time. It will be dealt with eventually.
- Be pro-active. Offer to help with setting up for rehearsals, breakdowns, and refreshments.
- Do not chat!

- Remember that rehearsing music is a process. Relax, stay focused, and let the music unfold.
- Smile often at others.
- Leave rehearsals in good spirits!

Changing the Expressionless Faces that Sing in Your Choirs

Micah Bland
Rowe High School
McAllen, Texas

(Used with permission of the author)

It was 2003, and the Vocal Majority Chorus was once again favored to win the International Barbershop Competition in Montreal, Canada. As an internationally renowned chorus with, at the time, nine gold medal championships to its record, word spread among the convention delegates as to where the chorus would be holding its first rehearsal.

As the choir assembled for its much-anticipated rehearsal, the ballroom quickly filled to standing room only. The impromptu audience, anticipating a preview of an award-winning performance, instead witnessed a much different type of rehearsal. For the first twenty minutes, the chorus director rehearsed the group without singing a single note. Instead the rehearsal was focused on perfecting facial expression and choreography. The lyrics were virtually inaudible to the spectators. What would prompt a director to use such valuable rehearsal time to rehearse visual expressiveness on the eve of an international singing competition?

From the early 1970s to mid-1980s, a fascination with choral body movement became a popular topic in music circles. Since then, particularly in the past three decades, the use of movement by choirs has become underutilized. The choral tradition continues to emphasize improvement of tone quality, often neglecting visual expressiveness.

Unquestionably, the quality of auditory elements is the most important feature in a musical performance; however, the significance of visual expression by a choir should not be underestimated.

Most choral directors recognize the importance of movement in vocal development and incorporate movement exercises into their rehearsals; however, these exercises are not transferred or intended to be included in performance. While show choirs, musical casts, and performances of popular music frequently contain extravagant displays of visual expression, choral directors too often resist allowing any form of visual expression in the formal concert setting. Students are frequently instructed to stand motionless, as if turned to stone by Medusa. Consequently, choral performances throughout America are greatly fulfilling to hear, but often uninspiring to watch.

Recent research has validated the importance of visual expressiveness in musical performance but has not been effectively assimilated into American musical culture. In 2008, Juchniewicz evaluated the effect of physical movement in solo piano performance. The results demonstrated that heightened levels of facial, head, and full body movement increased a listener's perception of musical quality. In addition, "as the pianist's physical movements increased, so did the participants' ratings of phrasing, dynamics, rubato and overall musical performance."¹

As a choral director and ensemble member who has performed both with no expression and with highly expressive movement, I wondered what effect, if any, visual expressiveness of singers would have on a listener's perception of musical quality. To test this question, an experiment was designed to determine how listeners' perceived musical quality at varying levels of visual expressiveness.

A university women's choir was video-taped lip-synching a pre-recorded audio track at three varying levels of visual expressiveness (no expression, moderate expression, and high expression). Although the audio was identical for each video, audience observers (N = 164) perceived the quality of music differently at each level of visual expressiveness. Table 1 depicts the average scores for all audience observers' evaluations of musical quality and visual expressiveness.

As the choir's level of visual expressiveness increased from no expression to high expression, the observers perceived a 20.12% improvement in the musical quality of the performance. Observer rating of musical quality increased from an average of 6.51 to 7.82, a difference of 1.31 on a ten-point scale. It cannot be determined by this research if visual expression is enhancing the audience's evaluation of musical quality or if a lack of visual expression is decreasing their evaluation score. Nevertheless, these results support the importance of visual expressiveness in enhancing the perception of musi-