

Tides coaching notes – Kevin Keller 2/27/2006

General

These principles should be applied to each and every song in the repertoire

The Basses are the leads, must sing like they have the melody, it is important we embrace our instrument, sing in harmony with it. Basses are the most important part, if they are not doing their job, no one else can. A cello player plays his instrument enwrapped in his body. He becomes one with the instrument and with the music. Basses should sing as a cellist plays his instrument. Feel the music throughout their bodies.

The Leads are the Stars! They must add character, they must sing with character. The leads can only do their job, if the basses are doing theirs. With the basses doing their job, the role of the leads is easier. They do not strain, but sing more freely. This increases pitch accuracy as well as artistry.

The Bari's role is to be the mortar that holds the bricks (leads and stars) together
The old way of thinking, sing softer above the leads and louder below the leads does not apply if the basses are doing their jobs! Our Baris now have shaken their etch-a-sketch boards to erase that old rule!

The Tenors are the Barbershop sound. We've heard of the pyramid of sound, we need to imagine it with the top open rather than being closed. This indicates we need/have a more open, more round sound. If the tenors hold back and just mail in their part, we have the equivalent of a quartet with only 3.5 singers. The tenors have to do more than ride the harmonics generated by the other parts. By singing their part, they reinforce those harmonics and create greater overtones.

LOUD versus soft, Gas House Gang talks about how they never sang soft, just varying degrees of loud. Soft is just a lower level of loud. It is much easier to sing loud than to sing soft. Singing loud provides natural support and resonance; it makes us use our bodies properly to create sound.

Singing loud does not imply oversinging, but using the production mechanism for quality loud singing throughout the dynamic range. Singing loud "quietly" means using the same loud-singing posture and internal mechanisms, but with less volume.

4 rules of what it means to be "musical"

- Breath -The breath is the most important part of every phrase, it concludes the phrase
 - Treating the breath as the most important part will fix many issues such as: sych; it will connect the phrases; it will energize the ends of phrases, give musical and visual continuity between phrases.
- Embellishments- include echos, pick ups, swipes, trio's, any time there is a non-4 part chord. This does mean that all 4 parts are singing, just not moving together.

- Mastering the milepost, mileposts are transitions from versus to chorus, chorus to tag.
 - If each milepost is not mastered, the audience turns off. Mastering the mileposts means ensuring a meaningful emotional transition from one section to the next.

Energize the ends of phrases, accomplished through emphasis on the quality of the breath. We should make the breath **MORE** musically interesting than any note we sing!

We also can not abandon our overall dynamic plan.

Kevin recommended we circle each and every embellishment on every chart. The music judge cares what we do with **non-four part chords**. Until choruses score above about 90, the music judges don't care about what happens on the four part chords!

3 aspects to embellishments

- The first chord is not nearly as important as the second chord, the second chord is not nearly as important as the third, the third chord is not nearly as important as the fourth, and so on.
Each successive embellishment takes on more and more importance
- Purpose of an embellishment
 - Rhythmic propellants
 - Lyrical reinforcement
Contrary motion scissors, 1 part of not as important as the second part
Downward swipe implies lyrical resolution, is generally more important and needs more energy (could be louder)
Some embellishments are intended to make the lyric more intimate, rather than increasing volume or excitement.
- What if my part does not have the embellishment? The moving parts are really easy...
 - If you are singing straight across, react to what you hear, this leads to artistry. Do not anticipate and crescendo along with the embellishment. That produces a fake, technical sound rather than artistry. Instead react after the embellishment has started.

Larry Ajer said Barbershop is 50% vocal, 50% visual

Every breath is an opportunity to react

Trio breaths are more important than the other part's pick up

Key changes add excitement, we need to add additional energy

The Way You Look Tonight

The most important moment in the song is the breath that ends the phrase “wrinkles your nose”. It precedes “touches my foolish heart.” where vulnerability must be shown. Make this an “open Kimono moment”, this is the point in every song where a man must open up.

Ain't Misbehavin'

Treat “Like Jack Horner” as one long embellishment

Mileposts are transitions between sections of a song. Those are the places where we can lose our audience (and judges' scores) unless we make the transitions pull the audience into the following section. So embellishments and the breath at the end of a section are doubly important.

Major mileposts in Ain't Misbehavin' are the verse, chorus and tag. The end of the verse to the chorus transition is a milepost:

“and only you”, now there is a need to hear the next character.

The chorus of Ain't Misbehavin' is an A A B A sequence, and there are mileposts between each part of that sequence. Repeating A A will put the audience to sleep, unless there is a different character to the second part of that sequence.

A note on singing the vowel oo in “you”: in order to properly sustain the “oo” drop the tongue below the gum line.

Barbershop tension release is the barbershop 7th chord, they are inherently built into Barbershop. Second to last chord of Ain't Misbehavin' “I” is the tension chord. Don't be so quick to let it go, if you do, you cheat the audience.

As we did on Monday, we must put emphasis on that penultimate chord and swell it to develop the tension before going to the final chord of the song.

It is all about choices.