

50 AWESOME CHOIR WARM-UPS

THAT WILL FOCUS AND ENGAGE YOUR SINGERS!

MATT WALKER

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Matt grew up in small-town Iowa, and somehow found his way to Luther College. Singing with Weston Noble, he was inspired to make music and teaching his career.

After a Master's degree in Vocal Performance at the University of Iowa, and spending several years as a

freelance classical singer and voice teacher, Matt returned to the choir world, first as the 6-12 vocal music director at North-Linn Community Schools, followed by teaching 9-12 vocal music at Xavier H.S. in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He now teaches 9-12 vocal music at City High School in Iowa City, Iowa.

Matt has been fortunate to have so many wonderful choral experiences in his life, and he hopes to now give back by sharing those experiences with other directors.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When you are a teacher, you learn to beg, borrow and steal for anything and everything, if you think it will help you and your students get to your end goal.

Throughout my career I've come up with a lot of techniques and strategies that I've used with my singers. But I've also spent countless hours (and dollars) in clinics, workshops and rehearsals, trying to soak up as much as I could from all of the amazing choir directors in our world.

The same holds true for this book: there are many warm-ups that I have come up with myself, but there are many others that I have picked up from fellow choir directors along the way. To those amazing friends, mentors and colleagues, I thank you!

I have been blessed with so many wonderful choral experiences. As others have shared with me, I hope

that I can, in some small way, give back to my fellow colleagues and future choir directors. It is truly an honor to serve you as you move forward on this crazy, wonderful, amazing journey of being a choir director.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

In addition to this book, I have created a number of other resources for choir directors. Because you have purchased this book (thank you!), the following are FREE resources that are available to you:

PDF Rehearsal Planner: This rehearsal planner has a monthly calendar, but it also includes weekly and daily spaces where you can plan out your choir rehearsals!

Link: choirdirectorcorner.com/rehearsalplanner

Rehearsal Tips: I got the idea of asking some of the most well-respected directors in the choir world this question: "What are one or two rehearsal concepts or techniques that you have found to be

invaluable in your teaching?" And in this FREE PDF, I share with you their responses!

Link: choirdirectorcorner.com/rehearsaltips

Would you like the opportunity to dive deeper into choral rehearsal strategies and techniques, develop processes and systems that will save you time *and* frustration, *and* gain access to an incredible community of like-minded choir directors?

Then you should become a member of the
**Choir Director Corner Community
Membership!**

You can find out more details and sign up at:
choirdirectorcorner.com/membership

THIS BOOK IS FOR YOU IF:

- You're a new teacher, and looking to create a toolbox of choir warm-ups to work from
- You're a veteran teacher that's tired of using the same old warm-ups and is looking for new ideas
- You're new to conducting a choir and not quite sure about what warm-ups to use or how to use them
- You feel good about your warm-up process, but are looking to supplement what you already do

THE WARM-UP PROCESS

So much of your success depends on your ***Warm-Up Process***. When I first started teaching, I was primarily using warm-ups that I learned in my high school and college choirs (not always productive or appropriate).

My warm-up process tended to be pretty random—just whatever I was in the mood for that particular rehearsal, or what I thought the singers would enjoy.

Through lots of trial-and-error and research, my warm-ups have become more organized and now serve a **specific purpose**.

Here are some guidelines to follow as you plan and utilize warm-ups for your choir:

- The warm-ups will be divided up into categories. Try to do one warm-up from each category.
- The warm-ups you use should change depending on your point of emphasis for that particular rehearsal.
- Your choice of warm-ups should fulfill a specific purpose.
- The warm-up period at the beginning of a rehearsal can be your best opportunity for instructional time regarding vocal technique.
- Your choice of warm-ups also can be (and should be) influenced by your current choral repertoire.
- You should have a primary learning objective with each warm-up, but don't ignore secondary learning objectives.

For the purposes of this book, we will divide the choir warm-ups into

Five Main Warm-Up Categories:

- Breath
- Tone/Vocal Production

- Listening/Intonation
- Vocal Agility/Range Extension
- Physical/Full-Body Warm-Ups

There are certainly other aspects of singing that you can choose to emphasize through your warm-ups, including:

- Vowel Formation
- Blend
- Musicality and Phrasing
- Posture
- Resonance
- FUN!

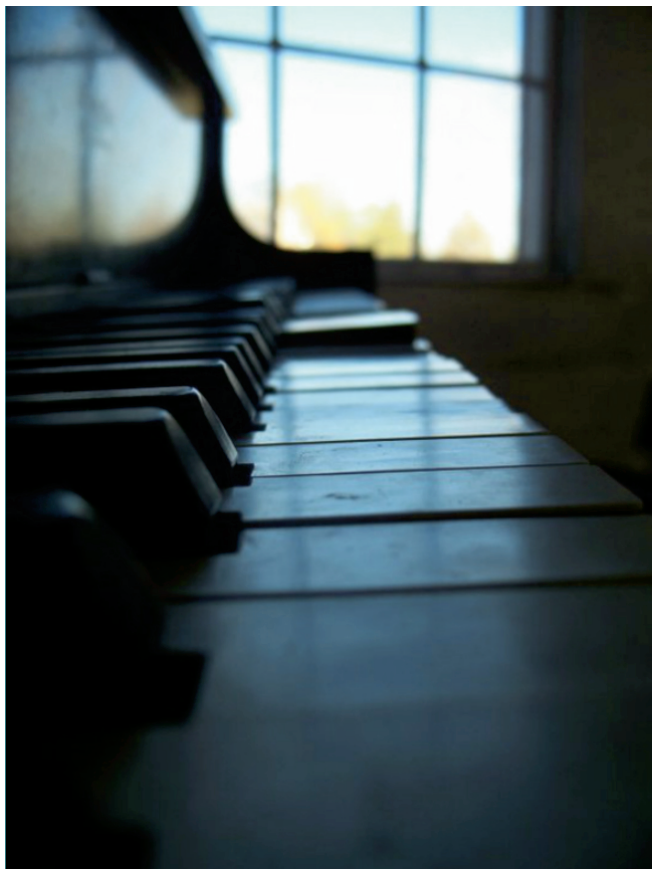
Now that we've discussed the warm-up process, it's time to discuss the warm-ups themselves. Let's dive in!

CHAPTER 1

BREATH WARM-UPS

Objectives:

- Breathing for singing (rather than everyday life)
- Idea of Breath “Support”: the continuation of the inspiration phase while singing
- Encourage a consistent flow of air, free from tension



I-LIP TRILLS

THESE CAN BE DONE IN LOTS OF DIFFERENT configurations. Great for getting the breath moving!

I START WITH TWO TURNS OF A SIMPLE DO-RE-Mi-Fa-So-Fa-Mi-Re-Do pattern, and then go up a

half step. Every few steps I add another turn onto the end of the exercise.



2-BREATHE AND HISS

THIS EXERCISE IS ALSO A GREAT WAY TO GET A choir quieted down at the beginning of a rehearsal.

THE SINGERS BREATHE FOR 4 COUNTS, AND then exhale on a hiss for 16 counts. I emphasize to the singers, the idea is that they feel like the inspiration phase continues as they hiss, and that the jaw and tongue should stay relaxed.

ON THE LAST TWO COUNTS OF HISSING, I TELL the singers how many counts to breathe in; as soon as they are done hissing, they breathe in for the next round. We do a number of repetitions: 4/16, 4/20,

4/24, 6/30, 8/36, and 4/40. I sometimes stretch the last one, just for fun!

3-KOY-YAH

THE BEGINNING “K” IS GREAT FOR GETTING connected to the breath. This is also a good beginning warm-up, as it gets the singers vocalizing in their upper register.

Voice

Koy - yah Koy - yah Koy - yah - -ah Koy - yah Koy - yah Koy - yah -

10
Pt. -ah

4-CONSONANT CRAZINESS

THIS ONE ALSO USES CONSONANTS TO HELP singers connect to their breath. Use a combination of unvoiced consonants: P, K, Ch, T, TS, F, S, Sh. Careful of your combinations! ;)

. . .

DIVIDE YOUR CHOIR UP INTO AS MANY GROUPS as you like, and give each section one of the consonants.

HAVE THEM CHANT THEIR CONSONANT IN TIME, but have each group use a different rhythm—half notes, quarter notes, eighth notes, etc. You can then have them change up their rhythm. Great for building rhythmical independence!

5-LEGATO SOLFEGGIO

THIS EXERCISE IS ALL ABOUT SUSTAINING YOUR air through the phrase. You could really use just about any pattern, but this is one that works well.

THE EXERCISE IS INTENDED TO BE ALL ON ONE breath. Then it starts at the top and goes back down. You can also add harmony up a third for tenors and sopranos on the way down.

7-ABC's

MY SINGERS REALLY HAVE FUN WITH THIS ONE. They initially think, “oh, this is easy”—until you tell them they have to do it all on one breath!

Take the ABC's song at a fast enough tempo where they can make it, but with each repetition, slow the tempo down a bit to really make them work!



8-DROP IT DOWN

STUDENTS START WITH ONE HAND ACROSS THEIR sternum; when they breathe in, their hand goes down slowly to their waist, mimicking the depth of their air supply. The sensation is that the air almost “drops down” into the open space that they’ve created by the expansion of their rib cage and core.

Once their hands are all the way down, the singers then exhale on a hiss. Their hands then slowly come up as they exhale. The idea is that they are continuing the feeling of suspension while they hiss.

9-REACH FOR THE SKY

SINGERS START WITH THEIR ARMS STRAIGHT UP, like when Woody in Toy Story says, “Reach for the sky!” This gets their rib cage in a “regal” position, ready for expansion!

Have your singers inhale in this position, and then exhale with a hiss. As they hiss, their arms come down to their sides. The goal is to keep the rib cage in this expanded, lifted position, and not let it collapse. We want our singers to do the same thing when they sing a phrase!

. . .

10-SUSPENSION ZONE

SINGERS BEGIN WITH THEIR ARMS IN THE position of holding a beach ball, hands meeting at their waist. They start by inhaling for one count, taking in as much air as possible. As they inhale, their arms move down and out, as they “fill up the beach ball”.

They continue that expanded feeling (suspension), without taking in any more air, for 4 counts. Finally, they exhale on a hiss for 16 counts. Try it again, this time hissing for 20 counts!

The goal is for singers to continue to feel that suspended feeling as they exhale. As they hiss, they can use their hands to “press the beach ball down further into the water”--there’s flexibility, but also resistance!

CHAPTER 2

TONE & VOCAL PRODUCTION WARM-UPS

Objectives:

- Sing with a free, relaxed, warm, supported tone
- Lifted back space balanced with forward resonance: “chiaroscuro”
- Model what you want!



1-TEE-EEE, TEE-AY, TEE-AH

THIS WARM-UP ADDRESSES BREATH AND articulation, but I like to use it to emphasize a relaxed, full tone.

THIS EXERCISE UTILIZES THESE VOWELS TO allow singers to think about where their sound is resonating, while maintaining height to their sound. I ask my singers to bring the last two vowels forward (similar to EE), while maintaining height on the first two vowels (similar to AH).



2-VI-VE-VA-VO-VU

THIS WARM-UP USES A “V” TO HELP BRING THE vocal sound forward. The goal is to keep the sense of space and forward resonance consistent as the singers switch from vowel to vowel, and as they ascend and descend in their vocal range.



3-I SIGH TO SING

. . .

ONE OF THE THINGS I EMPHASIZE WITH MY singers is singing with a relaxed, open tone. We talk about how this should feel like a sigh, or the beginning of a yawn.

This exercise is almost a sigh on pitch—the goal is a relaxed, open tone. I sometimes have to ask my singers to exaggerate the space in order to get them to really open up.

As singers jump up to the high note, you can add a slight knee bend to keep your singers stay relaxed.



4-TRILL TO VOWEL

THIS WARM-UP STARTS WITH AN ASCENDING LIP trill (Do-Re-Mi-Fa) and then descends on a vowel (So-Fa-Mi-Re-Do). I start with a brighter vowel, like [i], and then move to more open [e] and [a].

The objective is for the singers to keep their focus to their sound consistent. The lip trill engages

the breath, but also can help them bring their sound forward. They should strive to keep their resonance consistent when they switch to the vowel.

Part

(trill - -) EE- (trill - -) EE-

5

Pt. (trill - -) AY-

5-BEL CANTO MELODIA

THIS IS ANOTHER WARM-UP WHERE YOU CAN use a beginning “v” to help singers bring their sound forward. The different vowels allow the singers to explore the balance of *chiaroscuro* as they switch from vowel to vowel. This exercise can also be done while humming, which takes the changing vowels out of the equation and allows singers to focus on a consistent focus point to their sound.

Voice 

Pt. ¹¹ 

6-NEE VOO NEE

THE ‘N’ AND THE ‘V’ HELP THE SINGERS TO KEEP their sound forward as they sing through the warm-up. It starts with quarter notes, so they can establish that sense of resonance. It then switches to eighth notes, where keeping resonance consistent will be more of a challenge!



7-Ming Oh

THIS IS AN AWESOME WARM-UP FOR BUILDING A forward resonance, or “ring”, in the sound. It’s great for all ages of choirs, but I have found it especially helpful for my 9th/10th grade boys ensemble.

The exercise is a simple descending scale, So-Fa-Mi-Re-Do. Have the singers sing “Ming” on a pitch, emphasizing the “ng” and the resonance that comes with it. The singers then shift to [o] on the same pitch, with the goal being to keep that forward resonance consistent.

Singers then go down a pitch (to Fa), repeating the “Ming-Oh” on each pitch.



8-MESSA DI VOCE

THIS EXERCISE CAN BE DONE UNISON, OR, YOU can give sections of the choir different parts of a chord.

Singing on an [a] or [o], singers crescendo from “p” to “f” over 8 counts, and then decrescendo back to “p” over 8 counts.

The goal is for singers to increase the volume in a relaxed, healthy way, keeping a pure vowel and a warm vocal tone. When singers increase their volume, they often will either allow their tone

to become strident, or they will alter the vowel (or both).

9-FRONT TO BACK

THIS WARM-UP IS GREAT FOR EXPLORING THE concept of *chiaroscuro*, balancing forward resonance with a sense of “back space”.

Singers will sing a note in a chord (for example: Do-basses, Mi-tenors, So-altos and sopranos, etc.). They will do three repetitions, first singing “Vi”, then “Ve”, then “Va”.

The warm-up starts with singing “Vi” as brightly as they can (I call that 1), and as you count to 5, they move their tone to as dark as they can. Essentially, “moving” their tone from “front to back”! When you get to 5, you count back down to 1, and the singers move their sound back to bright.

They do this again on “Ve” and “Va”, except with the third time around, I have them move their sound to a “3”, which should be a balance of forward resonance and back space. For a visual reference, it looks like this:

♩ = 60

1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1 1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1 1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1-3

Vi - Ve - Va -



10-PEASE PORRIDGE HOT

THIS IS ANOTHER WARM-UP FOR EXPLORING THE concept of chiaroscuro; I will usually do this one

after the choir has done “Front to Back” multiple times.

In this warm-up, the singers will sing different parts of the phrase with different elements of chiaroscuro: the first measure is sung brightly, the second is sung very dark, and then the rest of the warm-up is sung with a balance between forward resonance and back space. The trick is that the tempo of the warm-up is fairly quick, so they must change between these different elements quickly!

(Sung brightly) (Sung darkly) (Sung balanced)

Pease Porr - idge Hot Pease Porr - idge Cold Pease Porr - idge in the Pot Nine Days Old!

CHAPTER 3

LISTENING AND INTONATION WARM-UPS

Objectives:

- Working not just their voices, but their ears (and their brains!)
- Opportunity to practice singing different intervals, which will transfer over into the music learning process



1-INTERVAL FUN

THIS WARM-UP USES A SIMPLE SERIES OF vowels: [u-a-u-a-u]. It consists of a series of intervals, using the same note as the bottom note throughout the exercise.

With each repetition, the top note moves up by a half step. For example, the first phrase would be Do-Me-Do-Me-Do, followed by Do-Mi-Do-Mi-Do, and so forth.

Purity of vowel is a must, and the singers must really be accurate with the intervals involved.



2-MI-ME-MA-MO-MU

THIS EXERCISE IS SIMPLY ON ONE PITCH, SO that the singers can focus on vowels and the kinesthetic aspect. Here are the actions:

Mi: hand pulls straight up from the top of the head; **Meh:** hand frames the bottom of the jaw; **Ma:** hand drops down, as the jaw drops;

Moh: index finger does a circle around rounded lips; **Moo:** hand pulls the vowel through an imaginary straw.

If you ever need a more pure vowel in the middle of rehearsal, you can simply go back to one of these gestures, and your singers immediately know what to do!

3-CHORD FUN

. . .

FOR THIS WARM-UP, I GIVE THE ENSEMBLE A chord (Do-Mi-So-Do). Singing on an [a], each singer can pick any note in that chord. On my cue the ensemble sings their chord!

This warm-up emphasizes accuracy with the onset of tone, balance among sections, and intonation.

For an added challenge, allow the singers to choose another note (Re, Ti, etc.)



4-SOLFEGE ROUND

. . .

THIS EXERCISE SIMPLY ADDS AN EXTRA NOTE with each repetition. For example: Do; Do-Re-Do; Do-Re-Mi-Re-Do, etc. Once it gets to the top, it comes back down: Do; Do-Ti-Do; Do-Ti-La-Ti-Do, etc.

TO ADD A KINESTHETIC ASPECT, WE USE THE Curwen hand signs with the syllables.

WE DO THIS EXERCISE IN A ROUND—IF YOU GET three or four parts going at the same time, it really tests the ensemble's listening skills!

FOR AN ADDED CHALLENGE, DO THE WARM-UP IN minor (we use la-based minor): La; La-Ti-La; La-Ti-Do-Ti-La, etc. Or, ask each section to leave out a specific syllable (they can snap on that syllable instead)!

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♩ = 75

Soprano

Do Do Re Do Do Re Mi Re Do Do Re Mi Fa Mi Re Do Do Re Mi Fa

7

S. So Fa Mi Re Do Do Re Mi Fa So La So Fa Mi Re Do Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti La So Fa

14

S. Mi Re Do Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do Ti La So Fa Mi Re Do Do Ti Do Do Ti

21

S. La Ti Do Do Ti La So La Ti Do Do Ti La So Fa So La Ti Do Do Ti La So Fa Mi

28

S. Fa So La Ti Do Do Ti La So Fa Mi Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do Do Ti La So Fa Mi Re Do

35

S. Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do



5-INTERVAL UP AND DOWN

. . .

SINGING ON [NU], SINGERS SING A PATTERN that involves Do and the note above and below Do. For example: Do-Re-Do-Ti-Do. For the second repetition, the singers will go up/down to the next note of the major scale—Do-Mi-Do-La-Do.

I LIKE TO GO ALL THE WAY TO DO-SO-DO-FA-DO. You can then go back down towards the initial pattern. For an added challenge, have two sections start the warm-up as listed, but have the other two sections go DOWN first, and then up—Do-Ti-Do-Re-Do; Do-La-Do-Mi-Do, etc.

Voice

do re do ti do do mi do la do do fa do so do do so do fa do

9

Pt.

do fa do so do do mi do la do do re do ti do

6-INTERVAL INSANITY

SIMILAR TO “INTERVAL UP AND DOWN”, EXCEPT this time they move by HALF STEPS. For example: Do-Di-Do-Ti-Do; Do-Re-Do-Te-Do, etc.

. . .

SIMILAR TO THE PREVIOUS WARM-UP, WE GO ALL the way to Do-So-Do-Fa-Do. For the added challenge, have two sections start the warm-up as listed, but have the other two sections go DOWN first, and then up—Do-Ti-Do-Di-Do; Do-Te-Do-Re-Do, etc.

ONCE THE ENSEMBLE CAN SING THE EXERCISE accurately, you can switch to a neutral syllable, such as [nu].

Voice

do di do ti do do re do te do do me do la do do mi do le do

9

Pt.

do fa do so do do fi do se do do so do fa do

7- I Know

IN THE BEGINNING, I HAVE THE ENSEMBLE DO this exercise in unison: I KNOW; I know, I know, I KNOW. Solfege is So-DO; Do-So, So-Mi, Mi-Do.

. . .

ONCE THEY HAVE THAT DOWN, I HAVE THE different sections hold different notes. For example, sopranos hold the high “Do”; altos hold “So” on the way down, tenors “Mi”, and basses come all the way back down. Great for tuning chords!

$\text{♩} = 75$

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know

8-SLOW AND STEADY

SINGING ON [NU], THE ENSEMBLE HOLDS A pitch and over the course of 8 counts, moves up a $1/2$ step. The idea is that the movement is steady and consistent over the 8 counts.

For instance, singers start on an A-Natural, and over the course of 8 counts, they slowly move to an A-Sharp, and then back to A-Natural over 8 more counts.

Once they have that, have the sopranos and tenors move UP a 1/2 step, and at the same time have the altos/basses move DOWN a 1/2 step.

9-INTERVAL HOPPING

FOR THIS WARM-UP THE ENSEMBLE SINGS A pattern of intervals that keeps “Do” consistent, but adds a note on the top end. For example: Do-Re-Do-Mi-Do-Fa-Do-So-Do-La-Do-Ti-Do-Do-Do. It then starts at the top and goes back down.

For an extra challenge, establish the tonic (Do-Mi-So-Mi-Do) and then start the warm-up on a note OTHER than “Do”. For instance, start on “Re”: Re-Mi-Re-Fa-Re-So, etc. For a kinesthetic element, add the Curwen hand signs!

Part $\text{♩} = 75$

Do Re Do Mi Do Fa Do So Do La Do Ti Do Do Do Do Ti Do La Do So Do Fa Do Mi Do Re

8

Pt. Do Do Do Re Mi Re Fa Re So Re La Re Ti Re Do Re Re Re Re Do Re Ti Re La Re So

15

Pt. Re Fa Re Mi Re Re Re

10-CHROMATIC CONUNDRUM

HAVE THE ENSEMBLE SING A CHROMATIC SCALE, up and down, in unison: Do-Di-Re-Ri-Mi-Fa-Fi, etc.

Once the ensemble is able to sing it in unison, do the warm-up with Tenors and Sopranos starting on high “Do” and do a descending scale, and at the same time have Basses and Altos start on low “Do” and do an ascending scale.

For an added challenge, start on “La” and do the warm-up in minor. :)

♩ = 72

Soprano
do ti te la le so se fa mi me re ra do do di re ri mi fa fi so si la li ti

Alto
do di re ri mi fa fi so si la li ti do do ti te la le so se fa mi me re ra

Tenor
do ti te la le so se fa mi me re ra do do di re ri mi fa fi so si la li ti

Bass
do di re ri mi fa fi so si la li ti do do ti te la le so se fa mi me re ra

8

S.
do

A.
do

T.
do

B.
do



CHAPTER 4

RANGE EXTENSION & VOCAL AGILITY WARM-UPS

Objectives:

- Develop agility in the voice, including accuracy and facility in singing melismas
- Practice extending the voice in both directions



1-OCTAVE SLIDES

THIS IS A LOT LIKE A SIREN, EXCEPT I AM GIVING it specific pitches by sliding up and down the octave. Done on an [u], this is great as a range extension exercise, and also makes your singers “shift through the gears”.

GOT SOME ALTOS THAT SING TOO HIGH IN THEIR chest voice? Make them start on the bottom pitch in their head voice, or have them bring their head voice down as far as they can as they descend back down the octave.

. . .

2-VI-VA

THIS WARM-UP WORKS ON AGILITY; IT USES THE “v” to help bring the sound forward, and spans only a fifth, making it a good early-morning warm-up. It’s also good for keeping a good balanced, resonant sound and for focusing on tall vowels.

AS YOU GET FURTHER THROUGH THE WARM-UP, you can also make it longer, adding a third and fourth repetition of eighth notes from Do to So; and you can also have singers go up an octave and a second before coming back down.

♩ = 90

Part
Vi Va Vi Va Vi- Va- Vi- Va- ah Vi Va Vi Va

6
Pt.
Vi- Va- Vi- Va- ah Vi Va Vi Va Vi- Va-

11
Pt.
Vi- Va- Vi- Va- Ah- Ah- ah

3-LEAKY BOAT

HERE'S ANOTHER GREAT WARM-UP FOR VOCAL agility that uses the text: "I Rowed my Little Leaky Boat".

THIS ONE IS GREAT IF YOUR REPERTOIRE HAS some 16th note melismas, or if you just want to work on agility in general. And since it's over an octave, it's also good for range extension!

ALSO HAS A BIT OF HUMOR TO IT—WITH EACH repetition, you start to go faster—because the boat is sinking and you are rowing faster :)

♩ = 90

1 Rowed - My- Lit - tle - Lea - ky - Boat - I - Rowed -

5 My Lea - ky Boat

4-SINGING IS GRAND!

NOTHING IS MORE GRAND THAN SINGING!

. . .

THIS WARM-UP IS GREAT FOR BOTH AGILITY AND range extension; also, it gives you the opportunity to teach some phrasing concepts as well. And it's fun!

FOR AN ADDED TWIST, SING ABOUT SOME OTHER things that are grand: "Pizza is grand", "Football is grand", "Coffee is grand", etc. :)



5-YA HA HA HA

THERE ARE TWO VERSIONS OF THIS WARM-UP. The short version is great for articulation, connection to the breath, and a short burst of agility. The longer version adds range extension and more of an agility challenge into the mix.

USING AN "H" CAN HELP ARTICULATION WITH melismas, but singers must be careful that it's not

too breathy, otherwise it becomes a hindrance. Strive to keep the “h” as short as possible!

SHORT VERSION:

Musical notation for the short version, featuring a treble clef, 4/4 time signature, and a tempo marking of ♩ = 90. The melody consists of quarter notes and eighth notes. The lyrics are: Ya ha ha ha Yah— Ya ha ha ha ha.

LONG VERSION:

Musical notation for the long version, featuring a treble clef, 4/4 time signature, and a tempo marking of ♩ = 90. The piece is divided into three parts, each with its own lyrics. Part 1: Part Ya Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha- Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha. Part 2: Pt. 3 Ha- Ya Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha-. Part 3: Pt. 6 Ha-



6-ALLES WAS ODEM HAT

A FEW YEARS AGO MY CHOIR WAS SINGING “Alles, was Odem hat”, from Bach’s “Singet dem Herrn”. The choir was having difficulty with some of the melismatic passages, so we started practicing a bit of it as a warm-up. Within a couple of days, they had it.

It’s great for practicing vocal agility!

START AT A SLOW TEMPO, AND THEN SLOWLY increase the tempo with each repetition. You can use the German text, or just sing it on an “ah”.

♩ = 90

Al-les, was O-dem hat,

8

lo-be-den Herrn

7-WHIPPIY DIP

THE “WHIPPY DIP” IS AN ICE CREAM SHOP IN Decorah, Iowa (home of Luther College). On the way back down, tenors and sopranos can pop up a third and sing harmony.

For fun, change the destination with each repetition: Dairy Queen, Pizza Ranch, grocery store, library, etc.

♩ = 90

I will go with you, will you go with me to the Whipp - y Dip I will go with you, will you go

4

with me to the Whipp - y Dip

8-O IS VERY USEFUL

IF YOU LIKE TONGUE TWISTERS, THEN YOU'LL love this warm-up! It's great for working on diction, and you can also work phrasing and dynamics into it.

HERE'S THE TEXT (I BELIEVE IT'S FROM DR. Seuss):

O IS VERY USEFUL, YOU USE IT WHEN YOU SAY-

“Oscar's Only Ostrich Oiled an Orange Owl Today!”

ANOTHER VERY VERSATILE WARM-UP: BREATH, diction, vowel formation, agility, phrasing all included!



9-BACK AND FORTH

MANY AGILITY WARM-UPS START ON “DO” AND go up; I wanted something that had more of a change in direction, so I created this warm-up.

SOLFEGE CAN BE USED AT FIRST TO LEARN THE melody, and then sung on “ah” for more of a focus on agility.

♩ = 90

Part 

Do Ti La Ti Do Re Mi Fa So So Fa Mi Re Do Ti Do Re Mi Fa So La La So Fa

5

Pt. 

Mi Re Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Ti La So Fa Mi Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do Ti La Ti Do

10-SIRENS

DO YOUR BEST SIREN IMITATION! SIRENS ARE A great, non-threatening way to encourage your singers to work on opening up their upper register (as well as keeping the sound high and forward).

I usually do a set of 3: the first goes up to 90% of their range; the second, up to 95%; and the third up to 98% (I avoid saying up to 100% or “all the way to the top”, as this sometimes encourages tension). The goal is to keep the siren open, free and relaxed all the way up.

CHAPTER 5

PHYSICAL/FULL-BODY WARM-UPS

Objectives:

- Goal is for singers to use their whole body for singing—it only makes sense to do activities that engage the whole body!
- Great for early morning rehearsals, or for any time you have sleepy singers :)



1-ZINGA-ZINGA-ZOO

IF YOU'VE GOT A SLEEPY GROUP, THIS WILL WAKE them up! Here's the vocal part:

♩ = 120

Part

Zing - a zing - a zoo zing - a zing - a zoo zing - a zing - a zing - a zing - a zoo Zing - a zing - a zoo

6

Pt.

zing - a zing - a zoo zing - a zing - a zing - a zing - a zoo

Now, FOR THE PHYSICAL: HAVE THE SINGERS lock arms with the person next to them.

On the first “zinga-zinga”, they lean left; on the second “zinga-zinga”, they lean right; and on the last “zinga-zinga”, they do the twist!

WITH EACH REPETITION, YOU CAN GO UP A HALF step vocally, and slowly increase the tempo :)

2-MY BONNIE LIES OVER THE OCEAN

MOST PEOPLE KNOW “MY BONNIE LIES OVER the Ocean”. However, this warm-up adds some physical movement to get the body going!

Singers start standing; every time they sing a word that starts with a “b”, they then sit/stand. When you finish, repeat up a half step, and with an increase in tempo :)

To add another level, have them leave out every word that starts with “b”!

3-THE “SUPERMAN”

. . .

THIS IS A FUN, PHYSICAL EXERCISE THAT GETS singers to think about pure vowels. With the articulation, it also helps them connect to their breath.

Singers strike their best “Superman” pose (tall posture, hands on hips). The exercise consists of five vowels: [i-e-a-o-u]. The singers will chant each vowel 8 times, leaning a different direction with each vowel: “i” is forward, “e” is to their right, “a” is lean back, “o” is to their left, and then “u” is in the center.

After they do each vowel 8 times, they repeat the cycle doing each vowel 4 times, then 2, and then one, getting faster as they go.

4-HEAD, SHOULDERS, KNEES AND TOES

THIS ONE IS PRETTY SELF-EXPLANATORY...MAKE sure they continue to sing with solid technique as they do it!

With this one I do 4 repetitions, with the first one starting in C major. The second one is a little faster; the third one, we do BACKWARDS(!), and then the fourth one is backwards and a little faster as well. Super fun!



5-STRETCH AND PAT DOWN

WE WOULD STRETCH BEFORE PRETTY MUCH every other athletic activity that we do. So why not singing???

I have a series of stretches that I run my singers through—reach for the sky, touch your toes, reach to each side, reach back behind you, etc.

Following stretching, we will sometimes do a “pat down”; they start at the top of their body and pat themselves down, as fast as they can, all the way to their toes. Finish up with face/jaw massage to help release any tension.

6-20 SECONDS TO LOOSE

. . .

THIS IS A GREAT WARM-UP TO RELEASE ANY tension, as well as for teaching proper singing posture.

Singers start in a tall, regal singing stance. As you count slowly from 1 to 20, singers should imagine that a drop of anesthesia has been dropped on their head, and with each count, is making its way down their spine. By the time they get to 20, they should be slumped all the way over, head and arms hanging towards the floor.

Wait a couple moments, and then count to 20 again; this time they slowly roll back up into standing position. When you get to 20, have the singers give a couple more backwards shoulder rolls, just to make sure they are free of tension.


7-SING A MERRY MELODY

JUST BY ITSELF, THE WARM-UP IS GREAT FOR agility and range extension. But somewhere along the line, it got some great choreography to go along with—great for getting the body going! You can find a video of the choreography at choirdirectorcorner.com.


. . .

AN ADDED TWIST: CHANGE “MERRY” TO A TYPE of articulation: staccato, marcato, legato, etc., and have the singers sing the whole exercise with that articulation. :)

♩ = 90

Part 

5

Pt. 

8-“5, 4, 3, 2, 1....CONDUCT!”

HAVING YOUR SINGERS CONDUCT IN REHEARSAL is a great way to get the body moving, and gives them an opportunity to be creative and musical.

For this warm-up, singers simply sing “1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1-2”, etc., looking for a nice round, warm tone:

♩ = 90



As they sing, I conduct a basic 4 pattern and

they have to mirror me. However, I spice it up by changing the size of the gesture, the tempo, etc. They have to follow me, and change their singing to match what I'm showing them.

STRUGGLING WITH YOUR CHOIR WATCHING AND following you? This is a fun way to get your point across!



9-ELASTIC CHOIR

. . .

INSTEAD OF AN “ELASTIC BAND”, THIS IS “elastic choir” :) Pick a legato phrase that is long enough to stretch the singers’ air supply. I like to use this one on solfege:



Have the singers imagine they are holding an elastic band in front of them; they should start hands together at waist level.

AS THEY SING THE PHRASE, THEY “PULL” AND stretch the band, keeping their hands at waist height. When they breathe for the next repetition of the exercise, their hands come back in, and they start again.

THE IDEA IS THAT BY USING THEIR IMAGINARY elastic band, they are mimicking the work that they are doing physically with their breath.



10-STIR THE POT

FOR THIS EXERCISE, SINGERS IMAGINE THAT they have a big pot in front of them—something fairly thick, like spaghetti, stew, chocolate sauce, etc. I use a simple phrase sung on “yo”:



For the first three notes, the singers stir their pot. They should really be stirring—get that spaghetti moving—mimicking an energetic use of air.

ON THE TOP “YO”, THEY RAISE THEIR SPATULA and pretend to toss their spaghetti 20 yards in front of them. As they sing “yo” coming back down, they go back to stirring their pot.

WHILE BEING A LOT OF FUN, THIS WARM-UP also helps singers engage with their bodies and release tension.



THANK YOU!

Thanks so much for reading this book! I hope it becomes a valuable resource for you, that you can refer back to again and again.

For more choir director resources, techniques, strategies, tips and tricks, head on over to ChoirDirectorCorner.com.

In case you missed it at the beginning, the following are FREE resources that are available to you:

PDF Rehearsal Planner: This rehearsal planner has a monthly calendar, but it also includes weekly and daily spaces where you can plan out your choir rehearsals! Link: choirdirectorcorner.com/rehearsalplanner

Rehearsal Tips: I got the idea of asking

some of the most well-respected directors in the choir world this question: "What are one or two rehearsal concepts or techniques that you have found to be invaluable in your teaching?" And in this FREE PDF, I share with you their responses!

Link: choirdirectorcorner.com/rehearsaltips

And if you'd like the opportunity to dive deeper into choral rehearsal strategies and techniques, develop processes and systems that will save you time *and* frustration, *and* gain access to an incredible community of like-minded choir directors, then the

**Choir Director Corner Community
Membership is for you!**

You can find out more details and sign up at:
choirdirectorcorner.com/membership