

Nuts and Bolts of Successful Rehearsals

Susan Eernisse, Clinician

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Even if you have only 30 minutes each week, it is important to address good singing technique, music reading skills, listening, and working together as a choral unit—musically and extra-musically. In the church setting, you address related spiritual themes and concepts, especially those found in the anthem lyrics. You may include hymn memory and even scripture memory. The key to fitting it all in? Good planning and excellent time management.

TIPS For TIME MANGEMENT

- Focus on quality rather than quantity in anthem selection, hymn and scripture memory, and scheduling of “performances”.
- Teach from entrance to exit—I often have my kids sing their way out the door and down the hallway.
- Give every adult in the room a job ahead of time—distribute/collect items, discreetly manage behavior, lead an activity, sing with a section.
- Organize materials before choir—under chairs, or behind chairs, etc.
- Pace your teaching with as little “teacher talk” as is needed.
- Combine some elements to make use of time: do fun rhythm activity that includes patterns from an anthem; use melody patterns from an anthem in your vocal warm-up; incorporate movement into an anthem teaching step, etc.
- Have a simple, easy to track whole-group reward system as needed.

SOME NUTS AND BOLTS TO INCLUDE:

Warm-ups—engaging and purposeful

Energizers—boredom busters (OR Calm-downs/Cool-downs)

A balance of positions—sit, stand, move, etc. “We’re just children!”

Introducing new material

Continuing/rehearsing familiar material

Music literacy component

Building traditions

Spiritual emphasis/thematic connections

Worship connection

A satisfactory conclusion

WHAT TO TEACH

1. Do it yourself—choose your own anthems, develop your own list of learning goals, and create or seek accompanying resources. (Start with Choristers Guild—Try *Of Primary Importance*.)
2. Purchase a prepackaged curriculum with a built in scope and sequence for each choir. (*Growing in Grace Children's Music Curriculum*—preschool, younger children, older children)
3. HELP! I have mixed ages of children—what do I do?
(Purchase curriculum for the age of the majority, and make adaptations for the others. Consider the Rote to Note series from Choristers Guild. GiG also has a new product for combined choirs. Shawnee has the *Sing and Celebrate* series for younger children that includes teaching extras—could be adapted somewhat for your older children.)
4. Some type of hymn memory program. (*Hymn Discoveries* for individual hymns from GiG.) Select hymns related to your theme, or develop a list of hymns that every child in your church should know. (Ask me about HYMN FLASHMOBS!)

Always select songs and materials that are developmentally appropriate for your singers—musically, spiritually, physically, emotionally.

Sources and Resources:

As We Go—Jeremy Johnson, Baptist Hymnal 2008, #667.

Bim Bum Bidy—Traditional singing game; GiG *All Creation Sings* OC, Fall 2017.

Breakfast with the King—S. Eernisse; GiG *Fruit of the Spirit* OC, Spring 2019.

Insomnia—S. Eernisse, warm-up/energizer; GiG *Fruit of the Spirit* OC, Spring 2019.

Jambo call and response (attributed to Ella Jenkins) Warm-up by Dora Ann Purdy.

Let All the Children Sing—*Songs of Faith for Elementary-age Voices*; GiG, 2018.

Of Primary Importance, III; Choristers Guild, 2016.

Praise Takes Flight, Volumes I and II; Choristers Guild, 2014 & 2019.

Sing and Celebrate 8! Sacred Songs for Young Voices; Shawnee Press, 2019.

The Chorister—every issue has great resources and ideas.

There's a Cat Lickin' Your Birthday Cake—Song by Parry Gripp—YouTube.

Walk Like a Camel—StoryBots—YouTube.

Susan Eernisse, Editor of *The Chorister*

Carrollton, Georgia

seernisse@choristersguild.org