

2 Basic Presentation

The Basic Presentation class introduces the performance regimen developed for and used by the Masters of Harmony. The instruction provides an explanation of choreographic terminology and covers the visual performance standards that must be understood and demonstrated by members of the performing chorus. Believable expression, reflection of mood, natural movement, proper stance, coordination and timing, and entire body involvement are among the criteria discussed in the following six areas of instruction:

- Energy and Attitude
- Regular Chorus Position
- Focal Points
- Resets
- Mood of Song
- Movement

Energy and Attitude

Besides singing well, it's important to give the best visual presentation possible. This starts with an energy that should be seen from the back row of the auditorium. It's this energy that shows that you are in the performance completely. It's total involvement with your face and entire body. When you can sell the song with the energy and emotion that tell the story about what the lyric means, this will result in an "A" performance.

Consistency in presentation is also important. Remember that you are performing continuously while the curtain is open, including when you are not singing. Never let the energy down, even for a moment, because you will stand out from the rest of the chorus. Not only will the audience see a sag in your performance, but your musicality will suffer too.

Constantly check and re-energize yourself. By doing this, you will maintain the proper energy level and attitude needed to finish the performance. If at any moment you feel tired during the performance, don't let the audience see it. Keep recharging yourself!

Regular Chorus Position

The Regular Chorus Position (RCP) is to stand facing the director with your outside foot forward a few inches to give yourself balance. If you were to have your feet parallel, you wouldn't be able to have as much movement in your entire body and that will result in a retarded energy level.

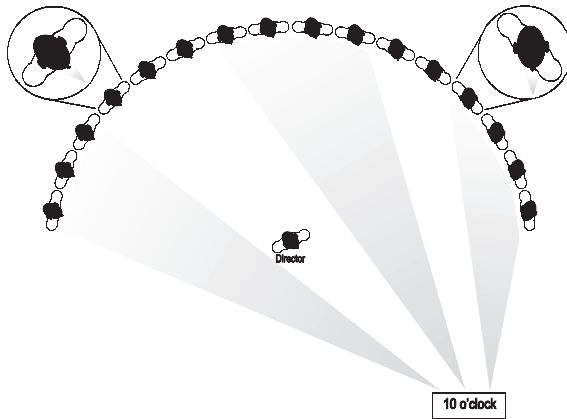
The proper distance of your feet is about shoulder width apart. Any variation from that will look awkward, hence your energy and attitude will be visibly missing from the song.

Just behind the area where your toes connect with your feet is what we call the "balls of your feet". Focus standing on that area of your feet any time you perform a song, unless there is a choreographed move that varies you from that position. This position gives you

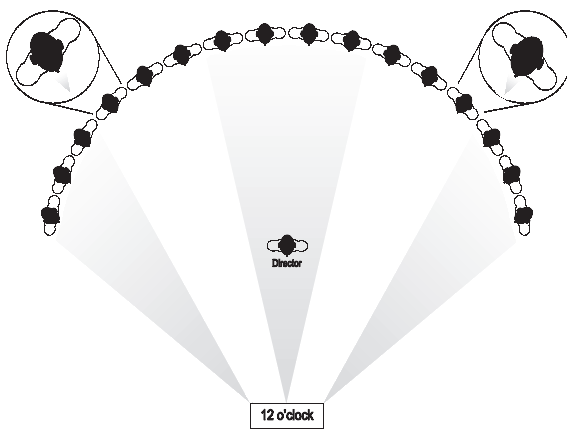
and the audience the energy and attitude that song needs. By standing on your heels, the meaning of the song is lost.

Stand tall. By hunching over, not only is the energy and attitude lost, but also the singing mechanism is affected.

Focal Points

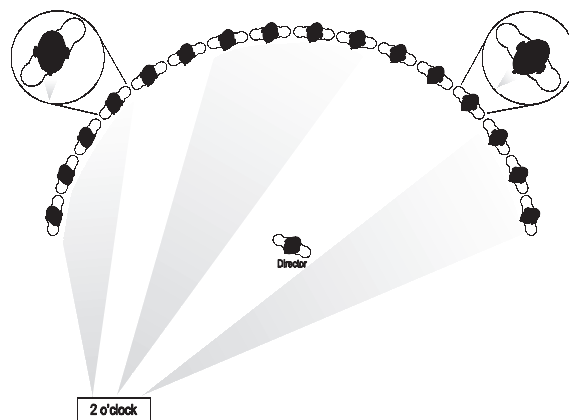


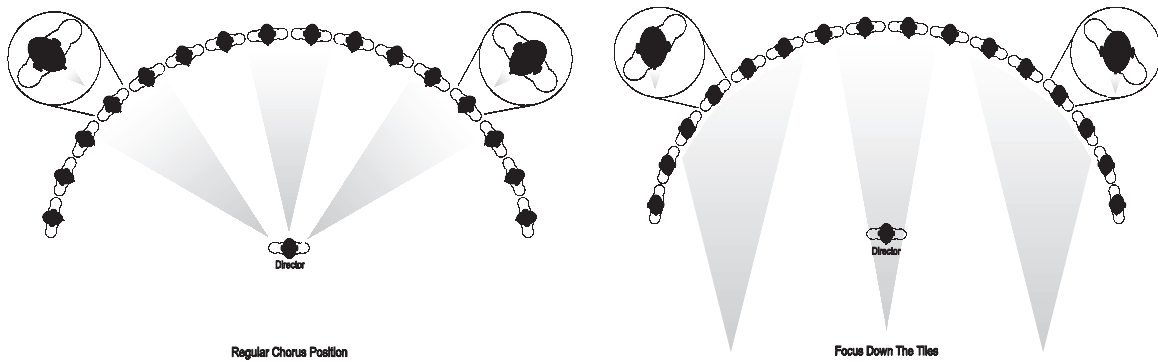
Think of the chorus as the bottom portion of a clock with stage left being 9 o'clock and stage right being 3 o'clock. With that in mind, there are three focal points on the clock. The first focal point is 10 o'clock. This position is towards stage left but out toward the audience. Chorus members on the stage left side of the chorus must cheat in to be able to see the director.



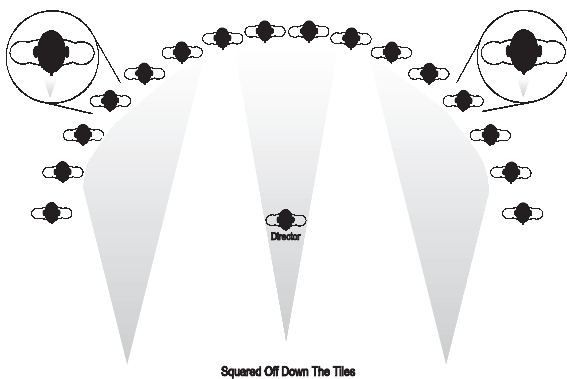
The second position is 12 o'clock. This position is towards the center of the auditorium. Chorus members in the center of the chorus must look past the director to look at the 12 o'clock position.

The third position is 2 o'clock. This position is towards stage right but out toward the audience. Chorus members on the stage right side of the chorus must cheat in to be able to see the director.





Another focal point is called Down the Tiles (DTT). In this case, your line of sight or focal point is straight back toward the back wall of the theater. Remember if you are on the end of the risers and you can't see the director, cheat in slightly so you don't miss the next direction. In this position, you face down the tiles with your head and your shoulders slightly turned in a natural position. The feet don't move from Regular Chorus Position (RCP).



Another use of the Down the Tiles focal point is Squaring Off Down the Tiles. With this focal point, the entire body is parallel to the back wall. This focal point usually is used at the beginning or ending of songs. Remember in this position if you are on the end of the risers and you can't see the director, cheat in so you don't miss the next direction.

At the beginning of each show and after the intermission, the director may stand in the center of the chorus just in front of the front row. He will then walk out as the curtain opens. As he passes the members of the chorus starting with the members just behind him, the members will press forward about three or four inches. This sets the energy and attitude of the chorus from the very start. The best way to make this happen is to stand tall but not completely on the balls of your feet. As the director passes by you, press forward to the balls of your feet so that you are ready to sing the next song.

When the director turns to acknowledge the audience after the cut off of a song, the proper focal point is the 12 o'clock position.

Resets

When getting back into RCP, a reset is necessary. It looks too awkward and distracting if each member moves whenever he feels like it, so it is necessary to have a reset plan.

The best thing to remember is that when getting into RCP, move in a way that gets you back to the position and grow upward as you finish the reset. This is called "Back and Up". Since reset is different, you will be instructed as to what reset to use at what time. The main thing to remember is never to settle down at the end of a reset. Always complete each reset with an upward movement to show energy and attitude.

Some resets don't involve moving back into RCP. In fact the newest reset, called the power reset, entails full body involvement standing in place. The outside foot is raised as both arms are crossed over in front of the chest. The hands are closed at the top of the move and as the foot comes down, the arms come down and hands open up as if you were throwing something from them.

Mood of Song

Each song varies in mood with appropriate emphasis on the meaning of the song. You will not always sing with a smiling face on every song; each song has different meaning. Understand what the meaning of the song is and perform accordingly.

Have continuous facial expressions to reflect the storyline of the song. Sell the song as if the audience has no idea what it is about and that you are telling a story. The audience needs the visual as well as the vocal to really grasp the meaning of the lyric. Don't ever let your facial involvement down. There is nothing worse than an audience member watching you sing your heart out with full facial involvement and suddenly you get tired so you stop for a minute.

You must have an "active" or "singer's face" at *all* times, ESPECIALLY while rehearsing. The eyebrows and cheeks should be lifted. This also helps keep the "tone up" and "on top of the pitch." Imagine that you are trying to keep the attention of a two-year-old and say "Hiiiiii!" with all the excitement you can muster. The face you just created should always be your active "barbershop face." Anything less simply will not be noticed at a distance and will *negatively* affect the voice.

Experimentation is a great way to find out if you are performing the mood of the song. One of the best ways to do this is by experimenting in front of a mirror. Sing the song that you wish to do with your back against the mirror, then turn around and sing it again in front of the mirror the same way. Attempt to entertain yourself. If you don't like what you see, then chances are neither does the audience. Continue this process until you are happy with the outcome.

Movement

Choreographed moves need to always have fluidity. If the move is abrupt, then the move doesn't look natural and the musicality is affected. This also affects the continuity of the move. Don't think of it as many choreographed moves with the start and stop of many different moves; think of it as one complete move throughout the entire choreographed section. This fluidity sells the song and entertains the audience more.

Energize your choreographed moves through resistance. Think of being in a swimming pool. As you move your hand through the water, you feel a resistance. Use this

resistance throughout all of your moves. It is entertaining and more natural than just throwing in a move.

Although you need energy and attitude, even when there is no choreographed move, the entire song still needs to be sold to the audience. This takes mostly facial and upper torso movement. The best thing to remember is that when you are in a chorus, anything out of the norm that you do will stick out and look awkward, drawing the attention to you. Keep your hands down toward your side basically with the thumb on the seam of your pants. There is no reason to bring attention to yourself by bringing up your hand when other chorus members are keeping their hands down. If you move your hands no more than an inch in either direction when you feel the inclination, this is fine, but no more than that.

The key to properly executed choreography is coordination and timing. Don't arrive late with the move and don't get there too early.