

Intermediate Tips for Quartet Rehearsing

Everything from the Basic Basics still applies: Practice Makes Permanent, Know Your Words And Notes, Know Your Breath Plan, Know Your Song's Heart, Write Your Mistakes In Your Book.

Careful Of Too Much Impulse. Even the most rhythmic song benefits from legato, connected, relaxed singing. Don't let your focus on singing the right words and notes lead you to singing staccato.

Know The Relationship Of The Parts Other Than Your Own.

- **Leads Sing The Melody.** Leads provide the inspiration, the message. They have responsibility for the song, they are the Director. The other parts give them the platform, they repay their efforts by bringing the audience to their feet.
- **Basses Support Everyone.** Basses own the tonal center of the chord, the rhythm and often the volume. Forward placement is what lets the chords ring. They walk the fine line between too little bass, and overpowering the lead.
- **Baritones Make The Chord.** High and light above the lead, rich and resonant below the lead. Baritones never get the credit they deserve, but they are the musical diplomat which makes everything worthwhile.
- **Tenors Make The Difference.** Nothing sounds as good as a tenor dancing at the top of our range, adding all the life. They know when to come forward, and then they own the show. The better they tune to the lead, the more this becomes about them.

Know When The Melody Shifts. It is always 3 parts harmony to 1 part melody. Accept the melody graciously, surrender it willingly. The other 3 parts must work to balance and respect the sound. If you just gave up the melody, be sure you sound like harmony.

Listen, Listen, Listen. Match your lead's tone and style, match each other's volume and attack, turn diphthongs together. The more you listen, the better you sing, and also - the more you can enjoy the sounds you make.

Softer Needs Intensity. Intensity doesn't come from volume, it comes from perfectly aligned and emphasized diction.

The Lead Is The Lead Until He Isn't. When a lead is posting, or when it's 3 harmony parts singing together against the lead, listen to the bass for the signals you normally get from your lead.

- **Avoiding Going Flat.** Basses tend to sing the note closest to the root, and they own the tonal center.
- **Non-Basses.** You tune to the bass.
- **Basses.** Be careful, go down-scale with care, use good breathing, and don't change your instrument to "make a bigger boom on the low notes".

You Can Duet. We call them quartets, but sometimes the best things happen when two parts duet (and fix their musical relationship) while the other two parts LISTEN and hear their parts in their heads. Singers - experiment a little while you sing.

Duets Are Not Break Time. The parts listening are now coaches.

Find Something Good. Everyone likes to hear positive feedback.

Find Something To Improve. One or two things can be fixed at a time.

Let The Two Parts Work It Out. Before you jump in, let the two singers share thoughts.

If You Aren't In The Quartet, Be A Good Coach. Let the quartet sing, take notes. Share observations only if the singers seem willing to listen.

- **Listening Means Not Singing.** Right? Right.
- **Don't Interfere.** No making faces, shaking heads, no "baritone shoulder".
- **Be Helpful.** Like our ethical rules say, paraphrased "We shall refrain forcing our advice upon unsympathetic ears".
- **Be Supportive.** There is ALWAYS something nice to say, and you should say it.

If You Are Marking Someone's Book: Talk Just To Them. It's nicer and more face saving to speak in private to a person, and to explain any notations you made in their book while they sang. Praise in public, correct in private.