

Class Title: Directing Skills for Novice Directors Hand-out

Time Frame: 4213, Friday, Period 2, 10:05 – 11:05 AM

Script writer: Harriette Walters

Objectives:

- **To give novice directors the basic directing moves and an understanding of gesture and response.**
- **To allow novice directors the opportunity for practicing their own directing in front of the group.**
- **To use seminar songs as a vehicle for practice and interpretation.**

Outline:

- 1. Determine elements of arm waving**
- 2. Application of beat patterns for directing the barbershop ensemble**
- 3. Determine common concerns for novice directors**
- 4. Conclusion**

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Introduce instructor and class attendees**
- B. Set expectations and goals**

II. ELEMENTS OF DIRECTING/ARM WAVING

- A. View excerpts of videotape from new DEC-developed directors' DVD / DCP module -- Directing Skills.**
 - 1. Posture-stance, which emanates readiness to lead and imparts confidence in the director's leadership. Stand tall and straight with arms extended. Attitude, stance, facial expression, and position of hands should set mood for the song.**
 - 2. Define ictus-fixed plane (approximately level with elbow), which allows the singer to focus on the direction being given. Consistency in location of ictus will result in good communication and appropriate synchronization. The ictus range should be between the sternum and the beltline.**
 - 3. Preparatory beat -- defined as the beat before the entrance. If the entrance is on the downbeat, the upbeat is preparatory. If the entrance is on the upbeat, the preceding beat serves as preparatory. Preparatory beat may also establish tempo. Therefore, the preparatory beat should always be given at the same pace as desired in the subsequent measures.**
 - 4. Entrance -- begin to sing.**

5. **Beat patterns (meter)**
 - a. **One beat (1 / 1, 1 / 2, 1 / 4)**
 - b. **Two beat (2 / 1, 2 / 2, 2 / 4)**
 - c. **Three beat (3 / 2, 3 / 4,)**
 - d. **Four beat (4 / 4)**

Use right hand to direct beat and meter; use left hand to support and signal, for all directors (right- and left-handed). The left hand is used primarily to direct dynamics, cues, special emphasis, balance, and vowel signals.

6. **Cutoff or release -- usually an upward motion**

III. Application for directing a barbershop ensemble

1. **Ballad delivery -- generally performed ad lib (at liberty) or rubato. Implied meter remains; however, acceleration and ritard of rhythm and tempo is evident. Indication of downbeat is often valuable, though emphasis is on directing a smooth vocal line.**
2. **Uptune delivery -- directing patterns may be used successfully. Directing the meter and pulse (downbeat, backbeat) may be helpful when training the singers.**
3. **Other considerations -- communication (verbal vs. non-verbal)**
 - a. **Eye contact -- presence of eye contact conveys authority, sincerity, knowledge, and purpose. Absence reflects uncertainty, weakness, and tension. Eye contact is the most effective and immediate means of commanding attention.**
 - b. **Effective and meaningful use of hands -- second to the eyes, hands are what is used to convey non-verbal communication. As a director, we must become comfortable with our own individual style and use of hands. Then, our singers will be comfortable.**
 - c. **Facial expressions -- mood and the meaning of music should be ever present on the director's face. Singers usually reflect directly what they see on the director's face. This is probably the most important thing to remember! If we are receiving what we want from our singers, bravo! If we are not, let's look at ourselves to determine why not.**
 - d. **Communicate what you want to your singers. Expect them to sing the way you are communicating. Take responsibility for group and individual issues. Copy other directors while you develop your own style.**

In barbershop music, we strive for continuous vocal lines and for a fluid flow of music or wall of sound. This constant flow of music and sound gives forward motion and flow to the music and the performance of each song. As directors, we must command this musical delivery from our singers -- with our direction.

In order to reach a comfort level with the group (chorus, section, etc.), we must master the techniques covered thus far. With experience, these techniques become comfortable, and our own individual styles will emerge and develop. Then, we can approach and experiment with interpretive directing, or directing with artistry and finesse.

Exercise I: Work with and practice with the entire class regarding all the issues discussed at the beginning of the class: posture, ictus, preparatory beat, entrance, beat patterns.

Exercise II: Divide class into small groups. Using the seminar songs, have them take turns at directing an uptune and a ballad, while the remainder of the group sings. The goal is to help each other within the small groups by offering feedback and suggestions for success and comfort. Instructor goes around to each group to help and support feedback and make additional suggestions.

After these two exercises, the class should feel a greater comfort level. They should feel as though they can accomplish these tasks, and that they can identify concerns and issues in others, and help with solutions as well.

IV. (Identification of) Concerns with Novice Directors.

- 1. Over direction.**
- 2. Director is directing every syllable, or every word, rather than meter; therefore singing is choppy, lacks flow. Tempo also will be inconsistent.**
- 3. Chorus cannot ascertain point of ictus; therefore attacks and releases are inconsistent as well as synchronization.**
- 4. Director is directing with floppy wrists and flowery gestures. This will not encourage commitment to delivery or to vocal energy.**
- 5. Director's posture is not consistent. Therefore, singing will be apologetic and lack commitment and energy. The singers will mirror the director.**

Exercise III: Ask for volunteers to direct the class, using seminar songs. Supervise support, feedback, and suggestions for improvement.

Things to Strive For

Interpretive Directing

- 1. Allow the freedom of the music. Convey the interpretation to the singer.**
- 2. Dynamic gestures:**
 - a. To increase dynamic levels, palm up usually indicates crescendo, palm down usually indicates decrescendo.**
 - b. “Soft” is usually indicated by small movements. Large movements indicate louder dynamic levels.**
- 3. Body language is instinctively used by directors as they continue to develop their style. This can play a large part in obtaining appropriate syncopation, as well as enhancing the phrasing plan desired by the director. As long as the individual director’s body language does not detract or interfere with the visual delivery of the presentation, this can be one of the most effective means of obtaining a truly artistic performance.**
- 4. Demonstration is another extremely effective means of teaching your chorus/ensemble to sing exactly the way you want them to. Evaluate first what they are singing. Then explain verbally and sing to them the pitch, rhythm, articulation, and phrasing as though you were the “lead” in their “quartet”. As long as they have the vocal skill to “mimic” your demonstration, this can be very effective.**

Director as performer

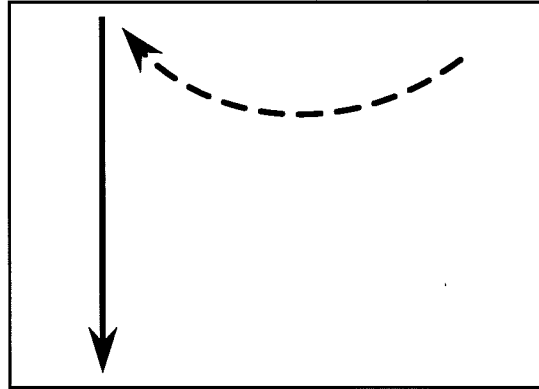
- 1. Guidance and communication with the eyes is as vital and important as the gestures of the hands and the arms.**
- 2. Through radiance and strength of style and personality, continuously transfer the energies of the chorus.**
- 3. Allow the music to flow through the director to the audience. Be a part of the performing group at all times.**
- 4. Be in control of your chorus. Be ready for anything! Be ready to and do not fear retaking a pitch, regaining synchronization, continue despite any distractions to you or the performing group. These can all be accomplished easily, and without interrupting the ambiance or professionalism of the performance and the ensemble.**

V. III. CONCLUSION

- 1. Have expectations been met?**
- 2. Do we have our own agenda to follow for improvement and instruction?**
- 3. Can WE do this? YOU BET!**

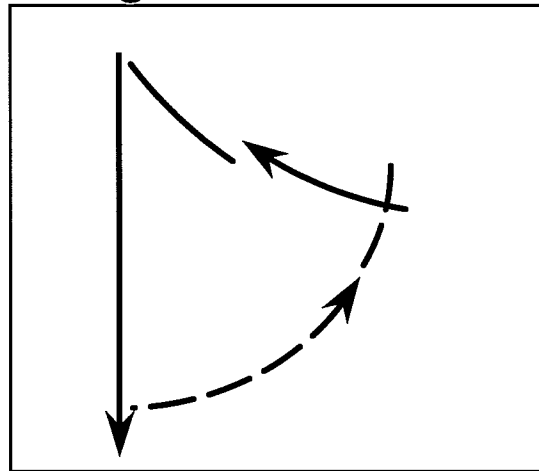
2008 International Education Symposium
Harriette Walters
BEAT PATTERNS
Handout

Basic Beat Patterns



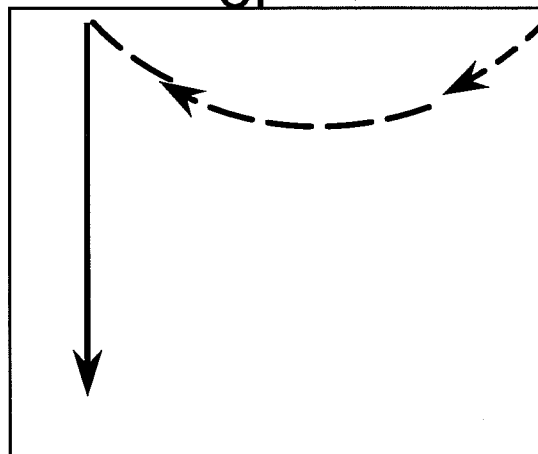
Preparatory Beat

Singers begin on the Downbeat



Singers begin on the upbeat

or



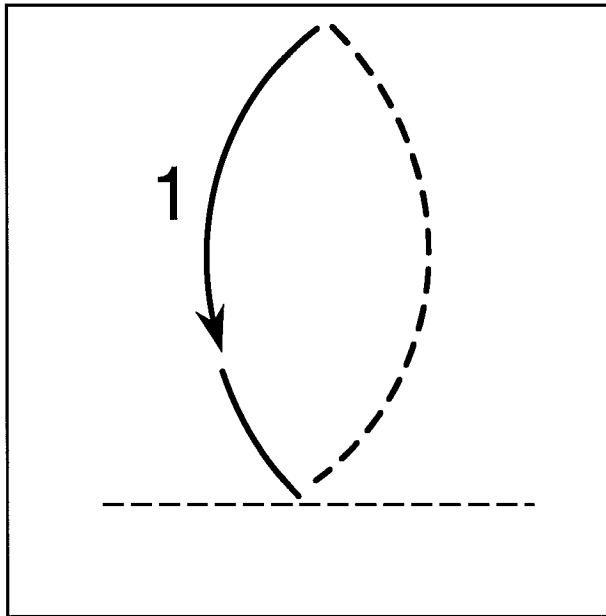
2008 International Education Symposium

Harriette Walters

BEAT PATTERNS

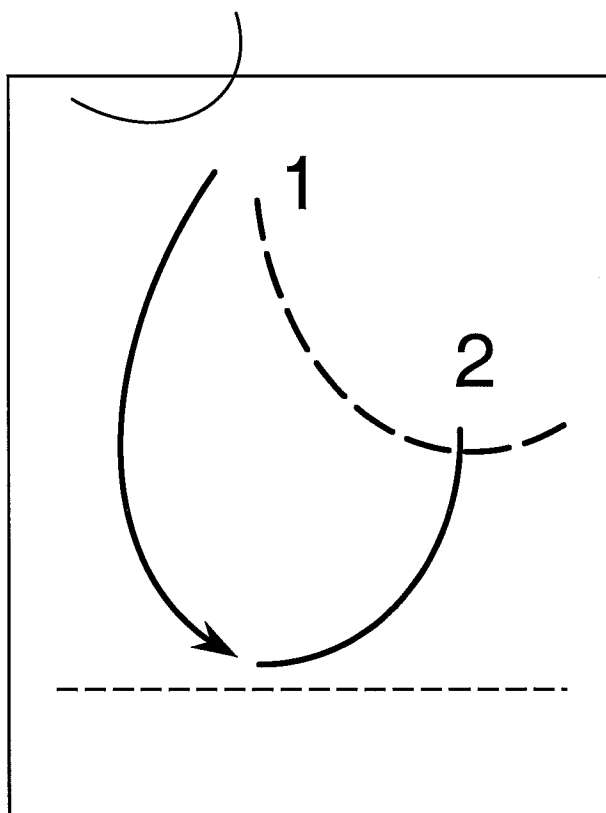
Handout

Basic Meters



One Beat

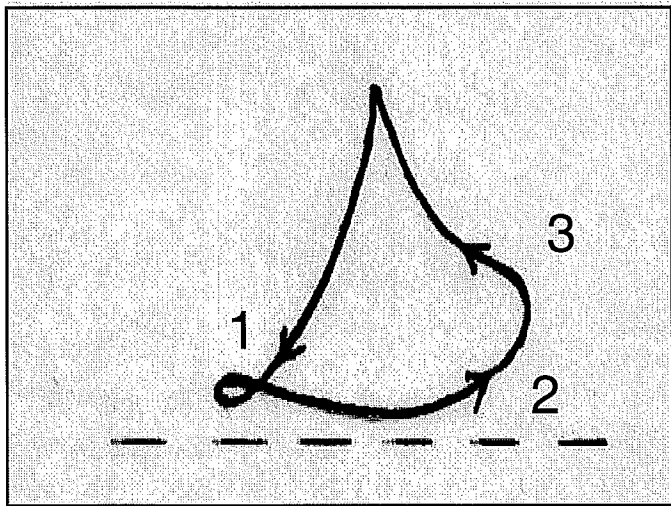
$$\frac{1}{1} \quad \frac{1}{2} \quad \frac{1}{4}$$



Two - Beat

$$\frac{2}{1} \quad \frac{2}{2} \quad \frac{2}{4}$$

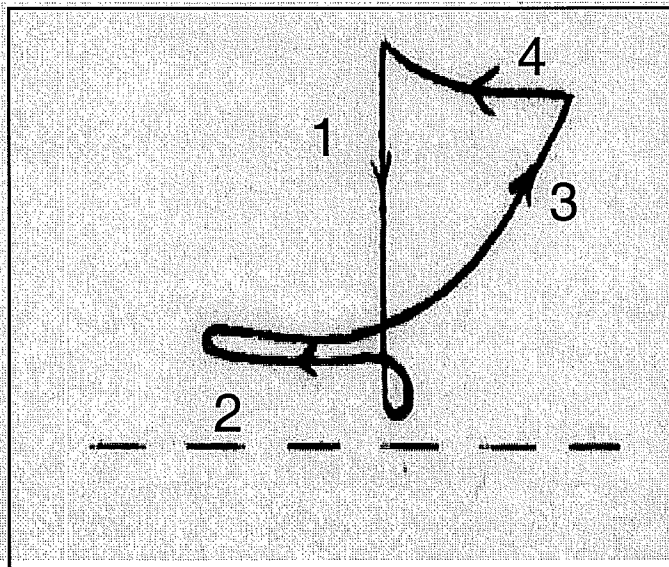
2008 International Education Symposium
Harriette Walters
BEAT PATTERNS
Handout



Three - Beat

$$\frac{3}{2} \quad \frac{3}{4}$$

Second Beat is
always to your right



Four Beat

$$\frac{4}{4}$$

Second Beat is
always to your left

2008 International Education Symposium
Harriette Walters
BEAT PATTERNS
Handout

