# GOOD SINGING

*All of the following contribute to good singing:*

- Health
- Attitude
- Good posture/alignment
- An expanded rib cage
- A poised, alert body
- Free shoulder and neck muscles
- A loose jaw
- Good vocal energy
- Breathing that fills to the bottom of the lungs
- Good coordination between release of air and approximation of vocal folds
- An alert ear
- Good intonation/Focus and beauty of tone
- Understandable diction

# SECRETS OF TUNING

- **Correct, ringing keys**
- **Correct notes (especially pickups, fast passage, notes at key changes, after breaths and at page turns)**
- **Correctly spaced and placed intervals**
- **Pythagorean tuning of vocal lines**
- **Vertical alignment of chords- synchronization**
- **Correct chord balance and tuning**
- **Matched vowel resonation**
- **Consistent, dependable breath support**

# Moxie Ladies—Yes, Sir, That's My Baby

**MINE**—Terrific onset of chord; faded a bit as it ended

They settled into do very soon after intro

**I'LL SAY**—Fine swipe support

**OF ALL**—Modulation and bell chords later in tune and in do

**NOW**—Vowel resonated well throughout song

Support of echo swipes solid

Impressive synchronization and chord clarity in transition area

Patter handling excellent

Great vowel sounds

Bass-driven sound with Melody clear and Harmony wrapped

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## "It's You"

Resonation of *ooh* vowels throughout

Tuning and balancing well "X" and widely-voiced chords like *words*

Some swipes not supported to their conclusion, especially near end of song

First on of tag—chord out

**On and On**—worth the price of admission to hear the ring and the cascade swipe
Simple message, eloquently and elegantly delivered

# Pythagorean tuning on the part lines of the intro of *Side by Side:*

Lead: 12333, 12333, 234444, 632

Tenor: 555, 666, 666655, 4+454+4

Bass: 113, 654+, 22236, 6-, 556+5

Bari: 117, 111, 26711+1+

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Lead line--measures 4-12:

332211217

44342765

17 7- 6112 2+ 3

3 2+ 34323 2+ 2

scoresheet, where tones should be placed or where sensations should be felt. She should, rather, describe the quality of sound that is desired to fulfill category requirements and leave it to the performers to determine how to achieve that quality.

Articulation

Articulation is the process by which sounds are shaped. In singing, vowels are sustained and consonants provide only split-second interruption. To form consonants, we must use the tongue, lips or soft palate, which involves tensing one or more muscles of the swallowing group. The tensing required for proper articulation, however, must be only momentary; when the singer fails to release this tension to sing vowel sounds, the result is an inconsistency of tone quality.

ACCURACY

The ultimate in a locked, ringing sound cannot be achieved without total accuracy. Accuracy problems can be divided into several general areas: notes, intervals, chords, tuning and intonation.

Notes

Inaccurate singing can be simply defined as the singing of wrong notes by one or more voice parts and/or by one or more voices within a voice section. The singing of wrong notes may simply be due to a momentary lapse of memory brought on by an overwhelming case of stage fright, or it may be that the right notes were never learned or even that the wrong notes appeared on the music. The singing of wrong notes often results in chords that are noticeably incomplete or in combinations of notes other than those recognized as valid barbershop chords.

Intervals

The distance from one note to the next in any one part is defined as an interval. A primary cause of inaccurate singing is careless interval singing. Developing a good sense of interval singing is the foundation of barbershop tuning.

Chords

Inaccurate chords occur when the performer sings a pitch that is relatively correct but does not adjust that pitch so the chord locks in total accuracy. To insure lock and ring, certain scale tones must be tuned (i.e., either raised or lowered, sharped or flatted) to make chords lock. (Refer to Section III-E, page 2, for a table of frequencies using Pythagorean tuning.)

Chord accuracy is primary. Each of the four tones must be sung with such accuracy of pitch that each chord is "locked in" and is clearly identifiable. The most complete accuracy is obtained by four well-resonated tones of like timbre and color utilizing the overtones produced by each voice, blended together in such a way that chords possess the full-bodied richness that adds up to total accuracy, not mere tone accuracy.

JUDGING CATEGORY
DESCRIPTION BOOK

JCDB – Sec. II–A
Page 6
(02/03)

Tuning / Intonation

The Pythagorean scale is a tuning system that produces a sharper, brighter sound and is particularly good for barbershop harmony. Through prolonged exposure, most individuals have developed a mental concept of tuning based on the tempered scale used for tuning keyboard instruments. (A comparison of the Pythagorean scale and the tempered scale can be found in Section III-E, page 2.) Utilizing the Pythagorean scale as a tool in singing will result in a more accurate performance.

In its broadest sense, the term "intonation" covers the problems described in the preceding section on accuracy. In general, intonation deals with the manner in which pitch is produced, including coordination between the listening apparatus and the vocal mechanism.

In the sound category, intonation problems often refer to those errors associated with the physical production of tone or vocal quality. One common intonation problem occurs when vowel production is not uniform and the resulting chord appears to be out of tune. For example, if three voices are singing "luv" while a fourth sings "lahv," the chord may not lock and might sound out of tune. Agreeing on the appropriate vowel sound will usually correct this problem.

Intonation problems can also result from tones that lack focus and clarity. Another definition of intonation refers to the tonal center of the individual tone. When this tonal center is not established by focus and clarity in the voice, intonation problems can occur.

Other problems may result from tension in the jaw or throat, from a closed soft palate or from failure to make maximum use of the resonating cavities. A tone improperly resonated can sound flat. Four improperly resonated tones can seem out of tune, although any one (and perhaps all) may be individually in tune with a piano.

Section / Part Accuracy

Out-of-tune singing occurs in a chorus when voices within a section are not in complete accord on the precise tuning of chord components. For totally in-tune singing to exist, all voices within a section must sing the same frequency and the selected frequency must be in tune with the remaining tones of the chord. (Refer to Section III-E.)

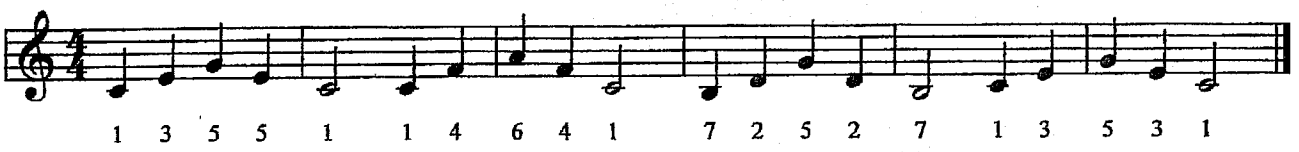
Synchronization

In the sound category synchronization is a necessary element of harmony accuracy, since the sound judge is listening for instant accuracy and total lock-and-ring. The sound judge rewards a performance in which total unit sound exists, i.e., chords are locked from the instant they are sounded. Lack of synchronization affects unit sound because it can mar a blended musical unit, prevent instantly matched vowels and distort a solid barbershop sound.

# Major Interval Exercises

**Sharon Babb,**
**Master International Faculty**
**Sweet Adelines International**

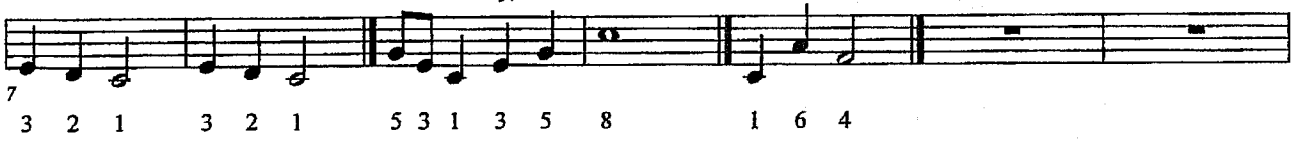
A. General Drill



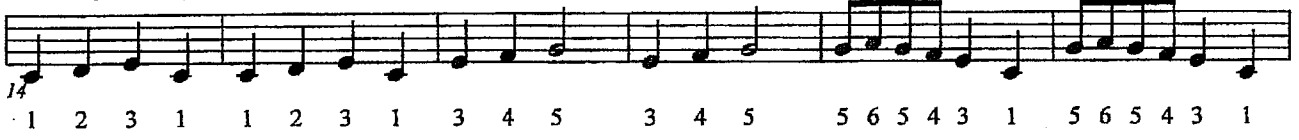

B. Three Blind Mice

C. Oh Say, Can You See?

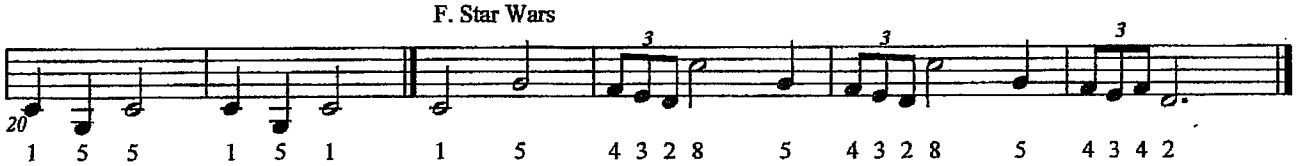
D. NBC Chime



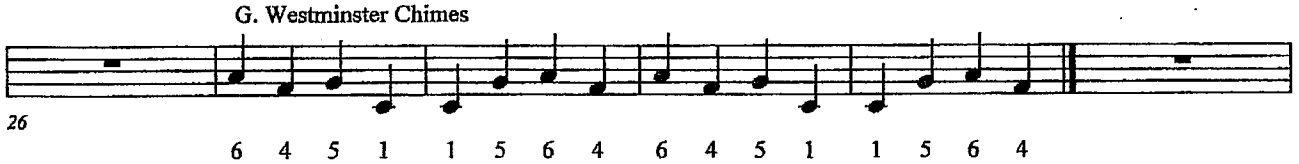

E. Are you Sleeping?



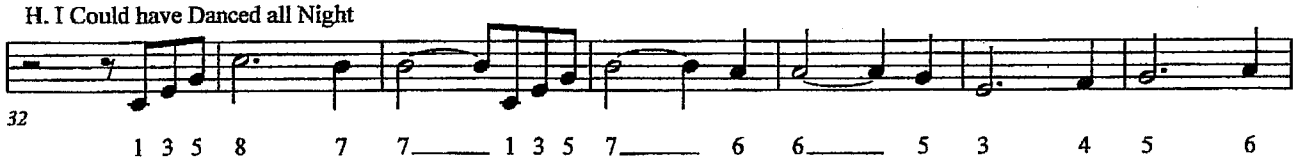

F. Star Wars



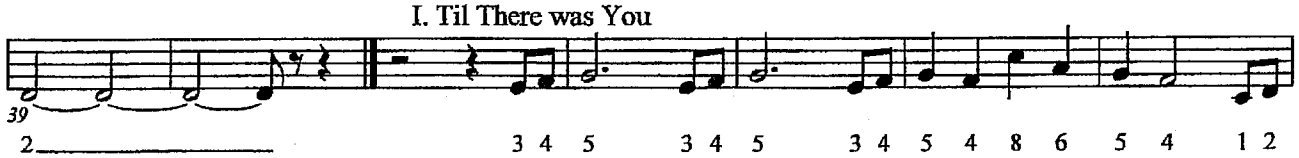

G. Westminster Chimes

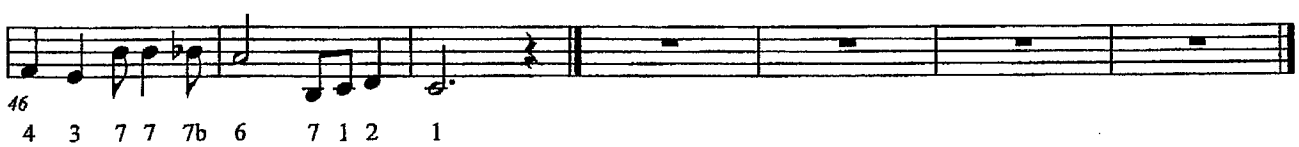



H. I Could have Danced all Night




I. Til There was You



# TRIAD:

ROOT: STRONG VOLUME; MIDDLE OF PITCH OR SLIGHTLY SHARP

FIFTH: FIRM VOLUME; HIGHER THAN PITCH OF NOTE

THIRD: LIGHTER VOLUME; VERY HIGH PITCH

# SEVENTH:

ROOT: STRONG VOLUME, MIDDLE OF PITCH OR SLIGHTLY SHARP

FIFTH: FIRM VOLUME; HIGHER THAN PITCH OF NOTE

THIRD: LIGHTER VOLUME; VERY HIGH PITCH

FLATTED SEVENTH; ALMOST AS STRONG A VOLUME AS ROOT; SLIGHTLY UNDER PITCH

*Side by Side* notes: Great song for beginning chorus or quartet; tuning challenges in bridge. Talk possibly shortened bridge.

Measure 2—*It*—Eb7—5, 3, R, 7

Measure 4—*say*—Eb7 to Am7 to Eb7
Am7 voicing—R, 7 5, 3

Measure 4—*We*—Eb7—R, 3, 7, 5

Measure 8—contrary motion; closely-voiced to widely voiced

Most important chords Ab triad and Eb 7

Vowels to emphasize: *say, day*

Singable word sounds: *laugh, live, learn, love*

Note octave locks in 49

53—*long*—closely voiced 7th
Accidentals going north in 54

Contrary motion—55-56
Different motion—57

*I'm All Alone* notes

Pythagorean tuning on the lead line of the intro:

Lead: 12333, 12333, 234444, 632

Tenor: 555, 666, 666655, 4+454+4

Bass: 113, 654+, 22236, 6-, 556+5

Baritone: 117, 111, 26711+1+

**Lead line 4-12:**

332211217
44342765
177-61122+3
32+343232+2

# The P Theory

| Key Signature | 1st Scale Step | 3rd Scale Step | 6th Scale Step | 7th Scale Step |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| — | C | E | A | B |
| 1b | F | A | D | E |
| 2b | Bb | D | G | A |
| 3b | Eb | G | C | D |
| 4b | Ab | C | F | G |
| 5b | Db | F | Bb | C |
| 6b | Gb | Bb | Eb | F |
| 1# | G | B | E | F# |
| 2# | D | F# | B | C# |
| 3# | A | C# | F# | G# |
| 4# | E | G# | C# | D# |
| 5# | B | D# | G# | A# |
| 6# | C# | E# | A# | B# |

ANY ACCIDENTAL GOING NORTH IS ALSO SUNG HIGH... ANY SHARP OR NATURAL RAISING THE NOTE.

# SYNCHRONIZATION ERRORS AFFECT TUNING IN ALL FOUR CATEGORIES

COMPLEXITY OF VEHICLE
---jumpy part lines
---too high/low for one or more parts to control or balance well
---phrase length demands
---dynamic demands sometimes leading to vocal overdrive
---fast tempos with many words per measure

TEMPO/METER AGREEMENT

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| VOWELS: | "Chewed" | Slow to open | Too short |
| | Too long | Unclear | Different |
| | Incorrect | Diphthong omission | |

BREATHING:
Different times
Different style
Tension causing gasping

DIFFERENCE IN INTERNAL PHRASE EMPHASIS

"MUSHY" OR POOR ARTICULATION

VARYING EMPHASIS ON CONSONANTS (including omission)

"CHOPPY" SINGING (lack of tone flow)

TENSION IN JAW AND/OR TONGUE

"BOUNCY" CHOREOGRAPHY

LACK OF ENERGY / INCONSISTENT BREATH PRESSURE

OVER SINGING (diminishes vocal flexibility)

UNLIKE MENTAL FOCUS

INCONSISTENT LISTENING AND TEAMWORK

STAGE FRIGHT
--Diminishes unit sensitivity and vocal control
--Diminishes visual/vocal incongruity

NOTE AND WORD INSECURITY

NEED FOR VISUAL UNITY

# ELEMENTS OF AN IN-TUNE PERFORMANCE

CORRECT NOTES AND WORDS ARE SUNG

PITCH MAINTAINS RELATIONSHIP TO "DO"

PART LINE INTERVALS ARE ACCURATE

INTERVALS AND RESULTING CHORDS ARE "TUNED" CORRECTLY TO ENCOURAGE RING

SUFFICIENT RESONANCE IS USED TO CREATE GOOD "VOCAL ALIGNMENT" ENCOURAGING BLEND AND BALANCE, AND ENHANCING ACCURACY

VOWELS ARE PRODUCED WITHIN GOOD QUALITY SOUND AND IN THE SAME MANNER BY ALL SINGERS TO ENCOURAGE COMPATIBLE VOWEL SOUNDS WITHOUT DISTORTING INDIVIDUAL RESONANCE OR PITCH

SYNCHRONIZED DELIVERY ENHANCES UNIT ACCURACY, ENCOURAGING CHORD LOCK

SUFFICIENT LISTENING SKILLS ARE APPLIED TO CREATE A WELL-RESONATED, BLENDED ENSEMBLE

SUFFICIENT BREATH ENERGY IS APPLIED TO MAINTAIN A CONSISTENT, ACCURATE AND ENERGIZED TONE FLOW

APPROPRIATE REGISTER MIX IS APPLIED BY EACH SINGER TO AVOID DISTINCTIVE QUALITY CHANGES FROM REGISTER TO REGISTER

THE SAME MENTAL MOOD/MENTAL ENERGY IS APPLIED ACROSS EACH PHRASE LINE BY ALL SINGERS

SUFFICIENT AIR PRESSURE IS APPLIED TO SUPPORT "MOVEMENT" WITHIN THE PHRASE LINE, CREATING A SENSE OF FORWARD MOTION AND VITALITY

# PREPARATION FOR COACHING

1. Work on your health: diet, exercise, flexibility, etc.
2. Build your stamina.
3. Know the CORRECT NOTES AND WORDS AND BREATH PATTERNS! (Choreography too, if that is part of the session)
4. Be prepared to accept assistance; often, there is insufficient time to tell you how good you are. Coaching is not designed to be an ego booster but to guide a group toward further progress.
5. Develop high but realistic expectations for the session and communicate them to the coach.
6. Keep in mind that vocal coaching is not an "instant fix" but, rather, a means to long-term growth and improvement
7. Be able to stop and start quickly at various points within the song.
8. If possible, have someone in charge of recording the session. This assignment is great practice for prospective coaches. In choruses, they should communicate it to absentees.
9. Sing standing up for as much of the coaching session as possible.
10. Try to arrive rested, unharried, unhurried, and in enough time to adequately warm up BEFORE the scheduled coaching session.
11. Decide on the image you are striving to communicate in performance and communicate that aspect to your coach before she/he works with the group. A recording and copy of music sent before the session is very helpful as well.
12. Let the coach coach.
13. Save questions and comments; let the coach/director experiment and re-teach if necessary.
14. Let the coach coach.
15. Keep a very positive, flexible, and open attitude. NO EXCUSES, PLEASE. Coaches understand illness, lack of rehearsal, changing voice parts. These challenges happen to everyone.
16. Nurture the learning environment by demonstrating a willingness to try what the coach asks; respect earns respect.
17. Unless asked for her/his opinion, the coach's responsibility does not extend to personnel problems.
18. Please don't try to coach one another or re-interpret what the coach says. Concentrate on YOUR performance.
19. Follow through with changes, new techniques, skills, and concepts at the next rehearsal.
20. Most of all... **HAVE FUN AND ENJOY!!**

Sharon Babb

# 16 Vowel exercise

**Proceed through all 16 vowels in order.**
**Move up or down a half pitch before going to the next vowel.**
**Note what each singer needs to do to produce the correct vowel, focus, resonance and ring to match the other's voices [blend].**
**Keep the target vowel true as you sing through the range.**

**We Sit Late Men, Have Hind Heart Sun, Mute Moon Full Urge, Long Go Now Joy**