

CHOOSING CONTEST MUSIC

When choosing contest songs, it is advisable to match the song to the skill level of the chorus or quartet singers.

Know your chorus or quartet:

You need to know these facts about each singer/section:

- Full range

- Comfortable notes (tessitura)

- Bad notes (passaggio/register changes)

- Breathing capabilities

- Tempo/rhythm capabilities – can they sing backbeat? Can they sing a driving tempo?

- Ability to match and ring vowels; know the strong/weak vowel choices

- What is the image/attitude/personality?

Analyze the Music:

Things to note in arrangements that could affect performance

- Notes outside of their performers comfort zone

- Notes that cross over the register breaks and the frequency of these notes

- Jumpy part lines

- Rangy, open chord structure (two-octave spread)

- Melody contains difficult intervals

- Melody shifts to another part

- Odd intervals in all parts

- Many accidentals

- Chromatic passages

- Key changes - how sing-able and how many

- Tonal center not present for more than several measures

- Fast rhythm

- Backbeat/syncopation

- No place to breathe

- Lots of short vowels

- Lots of hard, percussive consonants

- Wordy sections

- Baritone high/lead low for extended passages

- Parallel motion

- Close interval relationships that require advanced tuning skills

- No natural dynamic (emotion) plan

- Topic not appealing