



TIP SHEET

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● PRACTICE TIPS

Practice and rehearsal are not the same thing

While practicing the words and notes on your own can make a world of difference, practice cannot substitute for the transformative experience in which an ensemble rehearses and creates music together.

When it comes to chorus singing, it is important to understand the difference between practice and rehearsal. While many singers use these terms interchangeably, they refer to two distinct activities. *Practice* involves individual work at home, where singers focus on learning their music, figuring out complex rhythms, ensuring note accuracy, memorizing their part, and ingraining muscle memory for good vocal production. *Rehearsal*, on the other hand, involves the full ensemble coming together to find part balance, improve intonation, fine-tune the timing of swipes and embellishments, and make the music come alive with emotional connection, musical nuance, and sympathetic resonance.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU PRACTICE BUT DO NOT REHEARSE

As a director by trade, I have countless times heard singers say things like, "I can't be at rehearsal next week, but I'll practice at home."

While I admire their commitment to at-home study, practicing simply does not make up for missed rehearsal. If it did, then we would just say, "Here's the music and the learning tracks; See you at the show!" Ponder that for a moment and you'll agree that home practice just isn't enough. Yes, we absolutely should be practicing at home, but we should not pretend



that it exempts us from attending rehearsals, or somehow makes up for missing them.

It is important to understand that your absence at rehearsal is not just about you. Singers often think that it's really no big deal if they miss rehearsal. Who would even notice? They'll just practice at home and

WITH THE FULL ENSEMBLE, YOU ARE ABLE TO HEAR HOW YOUR PART FITS IN WITH THE OTHER PARTS, AND MAKE ADJUSTMENTS AS NEEDED.

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all is well, right? Unfortunately, the answer is no. This line of thinking does not consider how the singer's absence affects the rest of the chorus. How can a rehearsal be successful if people are missing? How would those present be able to balance the chords properly or lock into the full resonant sound that would otherwise be present?

When singers miss rehearsals, they also miss out on the opportunity to connect with their fellow chorus members, build relationships,

SINGING IN A CHORUS IS NOT JUST ABOUT HITTING THE RIGHT NOTES; IT'S ABOUT CREATING SOMETHING TOGETHER, SOMETHING THAT IS GREATER THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS.

and create a cohesive sound. Singing in a chorus is not just about hitting the right notes; it's about creating something together, something that is greater than the sum of its parts. When you miss rehearsals, you miss out on that experience, and those that do show up miss out on what could have been if you had been there. When everyone is present and engaged, the energy in the room is palpable, and the music comes alive in a way that is impossible to rep-

licate through individual practice alone. Practice is where the grunt work is done, and where the building blocks are established. Rehearsal is where the magic happens, where singers can learn from each other, and where they can create something truly special.

Of course, life happens, and there will be weeks when singers have to miss rehearsal. We all understand that. However, it is important to think twice before pretending that extra practice at home will make up for that missed rehearsal. Be aware that you are a vital part of your choir's sound and success. It's easy to feel unimportant in a chorus setting because you're just "one of many," and it's easy to think that no one will miss you if you're not there. This simply isn't true. Your chorus needs you. In fact, they completely depend on you.

When everyone is present, we can work on things like resonance, musicality, delivery, balance, performance

techniques and intonation among others. When people have to miss, even with good reason, it slows us down, and we have to spend time catching them up when they return. The improvement process is much slower as a result.

CONCLUSION

No one joins a chorus with the intent to miss as many rehearsals as possible. We all lead busy lives and 100% rehearsal attendance is simply not possible for most of us. However, if we truly understand how our presence impacts others and how our absence can be a detriment to progress, then perhaps we'll make an extra effort to prioritize our other responsibilities to what extent we can for the betterment of the whole. Yes, practice at home. But practice does not count as rehearsal. And rehearsal isn't the place for practice either.

Now let's get out there and make the world a better place through music. ■

Why rehearsal attendance is of paramount importance

ACCOUNTABILITY

By attending rehearsals, you are holding yourself accountable to the group and committing to the process of making music together. This helps to ensure that everyone is on the same page and working toward the same goal.

TIMING

One of the most important aspects of chorus singing is timing. When you rehearse with the full ensemble, you are able to fine-tune the timing of the music, ensuring that everyone is singing together and creating a cohesive sound.

FEEDBACK

Rehearsals provide an opportunity for feedback from your director and fellow singers. You can receive guidance on how to improve your singing technique and musical interpretation of the music. By missing rehearsals, you are depriving yourself of this valuable feedback and the ensemble will not improve as quickly as it could otherwise.

INTONATION

This refers to the accuracy of the pitches being sung. By rehearsing with the full ensemble, you are able to hear how your part fits in with the other parts, and make adjustments as needed to ensure that the chords are in tune.

MUSICAL AND PERFORMANCE ELEMENTS

By rehearsing with the full ensemble, you are able to practice changes in musical elements such as dynamics and interpretive choices, and you learn how to work with others to ensure that the music has the appropriate emotional impact as a result.

INSPIRATION

Being part of a chorus can be a source of inspiration and motivation. Hearing the other singers around you and feeling the power of the music can be incredibly uplifting and energizing. By attending rehearsals, you are opening yourself up to these positive experiences and opportunities for growth. In addition, you are providing those opportunities for others around you as well.