

THE 10 THINGS I WISH I HAD KNOWN WHEN I FIRST STARTED DIRECTING by Sandy Marron, Master Director, Lions Gate Chorus, Region 26

I wish I had known...

1.... how much time it takes!

- It takes 20-30 hours a week, on average. This varies depending on the time of year. Knowing this helps to keep my schedule balanced with other life activities.
- Half the time is spent on musical development/planning, the other half on “people” management.
- Long-range planning is critical. Start with the date of the event and work backwards. Layer each event so you can see if you have taken on too much at one time, keeping in mind “life” events, like spring break, or summer holidays.

2..... how to build a Music Team that suits your personal needs.

- How many Assistant Directors do you need or want? Create specific job descriptions for them. They don't all have to be great arm-wavers, but they all have to support the Director in some way.
- Choose people who work well with you.
- Choose people for their ambition & enthusiasm. Avoid prestige-seekers.
- Titles aren't necessary for everyone on the Music Team.
- Avoid “yes” women. Choose some who can play “devils advocate” at times.
- Get a Directors Personal Assistant (DPA). This is someone who helps you at rehearsals with things like making sure your music stand is set up, getting fresh batteries for your microphone or minidisk recorder, delivering your mail and emptying your mailbox, etc.
- Create an Administrative position on the Music Team that liaises with the Management Team/Board, and can take a lot of the paperwork off your plate.
- If you choose “friends” to be on the team, set ground rules to keep the relationships separate.

3....how to keep myself motivated, educated, inspired!

- Get a contract, and keep it updated every year to suit your needs and the needs of your chorus. These needs change every year.
- Know that it will be frustrating and challenging at times, but the good times will far outweigh the bad.
- The honeymoon is eventually over, and the novelty of having a new director wears off for the chorus. They *will* start chatting on the risers again!
- Have someone in the chorus who is a cheerleader, counselor, advocate, supporter, confidante, and filter! This person doesn't necessarily need to be on the team, but she is someone you absolutely trust!
- Go to every workshop/seminar/contest that you can, including events outside of Sweet Adelines.

4. follow my gut instinct.

- This takes practice, but after you learn to pay attention to the signals your body gives you when you *don't* follow your instincts, you'll learn to do this more often. It sure saves a lot of time!

5.... *how to deal with "challenging" chorus members.*

- Know from the outset that you can't please everyone. The day you stop trying is the day you finally please yourself!
- My motto is "chorus is therapeutic, but it's not a therapy group". This keeps everyone focused on why we are primarily there: to sing.
- Some members will challenge everything you do, every decision you make, but this is usually because they need your approval.
- When members quit, let them go with grace.

6.... *How to choose coaches*

- Once you have done your long-range plan and you know *when* you want coaching, then it's time to choose the right coach. Ask other directors for their recommendations, or check the SAI website for faculty lists. Most of the coaches I chose in the beginning were based on recommendations from other directors, or from taking classes at regional and international workshops from faculty members who also coach.
- If you see a chorus that has a similar style to yours, find out who coaches that chorus, or find out if their director coaches.
- Most coaches are booked 6 months to 2 or 3 years in advance. Plan and book coaching early!

7.... *How to choose music*

- The biggest thing that I learned is that just about anything can be arranged! Custom arrangements are not that expensive, and really help to put the personality stamp on the chorus.
- Listen to every barbershop recording you can find to get song ideas.
- Find arrangers that work for your style, level, and personality. It's a big community, and there are a lot of hidden treasures out there.

8.... *Teaching tricks*

- Know your own primary learning strategy (visual, auditory, kinesthetic), then learn how to teach to all 3.
- Keep filling your toolbox. Make lists or files of tricks and tips that work for you, and discard the ones that don't.
- Ensure a good balance of education, humour, self-discoveries & success at each rehearsal. The following 3 things should be part of every rehearsal: 1. AH 2. AHA 3. HA HA
- People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

9.... *The Four Agreements*

1. Don't take anything personally
2. Don't make assumptions
3. Be impeccable with your word
4. Always do your best

10.... *Rule # 6, from The Art Of Possibility*

- DON'T TAKE YOURSELF SO #\$\$% SERIOUSLY!

REHEARSAL PLANNING

SAMPLE REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

This is a sample schedule sent to the chorus in advance

- 7:00-7:10 Physical Warmups (Kelly)
- 7:10-7:30 Vocal Warmups (Corinna)
- 7:30-7:35 Introduce Guests & Welcome New Members (Joy & Helen)
- 7:35-7:45 Sing through 2 performance package songs for qualification (twice each)
- 7:45-8:15 Work choreo for finals uptune (Judy)
- 8:15-8:45 Section rehearsals for semifinals contest songs (Sofia, Michelle, Cammi, Emma)
- 8:45-9:10 Work semis songs as a whole chorus (Sandy & Corinna)
- 9:10-9:20 Run semifinals set from curtain to curtain
- 9:20-9:30 Business (Shannon)
- 9:30-9:35 Quartet performance – Stir It Up, as they prepare for Rising Star Contest!
- 9:35-10:00 Work finals contest songs (Sandy & Judy)
- 10:00 GOOD NIGHT!!
- 10:00 New Member Auditions, if needed

This is your own more detailed schedule

- 7:00-7:10 Physical Warmups (Kelly)
- 7:10-7:30 Vocal Warmups (Corinna) – Coach balance of ring & resonance
- 7:30-7:35 Introduce Guests & Welcome New Members (Joy & Helen) – Sing in new members Tarryn (tenor) and Nikki (lead)
- 7:35-7:45 Sing through 2 performance package songs for qualification (twice each) – get Maya to record Cdn Man for members-only-website
- 7:45-8:15 Work choreo for finals uptune (Judy) – Use Dr.Beat
- 8:15-8:45 Section rehearsals for semifinals contest songs (Sofia, Michelle, Cammi, Emma) – ask section leaders to focus on artistic sound and sculpted phrase shaping in ballad, and constant wall of sound in uptune through all dynamic levels
- 8:45-9:10 Work semis songs as a whole chorus – have Corinna work with me up front
- 9:10-9:20 Run semifinals set from curtain to curtain – record for MOW
- 9:20-9:30 Business (Shannon) – Remind chorus of July 11th qualification deadline
- 9:30-9:35 Quartet performance – Stir It Up, as they prepare for Rising Star Contest (have section leaders do scoresheets for them)
- 9:35-10:00 Work finals contest songs – have Judy work with me up front – work on balance on chords where tenors & leads cross in ballad; work emotional sound in verse of ballad; work on smooth phrase delivery in bridge of uptune; Judy to coach showmanship on both songs.
- 10:00 GOOD NIGHT!! & New member auditions (is Rose ready? Lori?)

SAMPLE REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

Sandy Marron

SAI Region 25 Summer Music Camp

June 26-27, 2009

Day	Date	Special Event	Rehearsal Notes	Leaders who are away	Physical Warmups	Vocal Warmups
Tue	3-Apr-2007	Regular Rehearsal	Sectionals for EYES & Cdn Man		Kelly	Elvera
Tue	10-Apr-2007	Regular Rehearsal	Sectionals for EYES	Sandy	Diane	Shannon
Tue	17-Apr-2007	Regular Rehearsal	EYES completely off paper	Judy	Sofia	Sandy
Fri	20-Apr-2007	RETREAT - Jim Arns Coaching	COACHING		Nicole	Corinna
Sat	21-Apr-2007	RETREAT - Jim Arns Coaching	COACHING		Kelly	Judy
Sun	22-Apr-2007	RETREAT - Jim Arns Coaching	COACHING		Elaine	Elaine
Tue	24-Apr-2007	Regular Rehearsal	Review retreat notes; run SOC pkg	Judy	Diane	Jennifer
Tue	1-May-2007	Regular Rehearsal	Run SOC pkg; rah rah quartets		Sofia	Sandy
Thu	3-May-2007	Region 26 Convention in Regina				
Fri	4-May-2007	Region 26 Convention in Regina				
Sat	5-May-2007	Region 26 Convention in Regina	PERFORMANCE on SOC		Kelly	Corinna
Tue	8-May-2007	Regular Rehearsal	get script for Welshmen show	Judy, Cammi	Nicole	Elvera
Tue	15-May-2007	Regular Rehearsal	Run Welshmen show packages	Sandy	Kelly	Shannon
Tue	22-May-2007	Regular Rehearsal	Run Welshmen show packages		Diane	Lisa
Sat	26-May-2007	SHOW with Welshmen Choir	PERFORMANCE @ Chan Centre		Corinna	Corinna
Tue	29-May-2007	INSTALLATION BANQUET				
Tue	5-Jun-2007	Regular Rehearsal	EYES Choreo week 1; PPS Calgary	Cammi, Shannon	Kelly	Sandy
Tue	12-Jun-2007	Regular Rehearsal	EYES Choreo week 2		Diane	Elaine
Tue	19-Jun-2007	Regular Rehearsal	EYES Choreo week 3		Sofia	Judy
Tue	26-Jun-2007	Regular Rehearsal	New finals pkg song week 1	Judy	Nicole	Lisa
Tue	3-Jul-2007	Regular Rehearsal (BHS Int'l)	New finals pkg song week 2	Sandy, Judy	Kelly	Cammi
Tue	10-Jul-2007	Regular Rehearsal (IES)	Qualification Deadline for Calgary	Sandy, Judy, Cammi	Diane	Elvera
Tue	17-Jul-2007	Ase Hagerman coaching	COACHING on contest songs		Sofia	Corinna
Wed	18-Jul-2007	Ase Hagerman coaching	COACHING on contest songs		Nicole	Ase
Tue	24-Jul-2007	Regular Rehearsal	review coaching notes	Judy	Kelly	Jennifer
Tue	31-Jul-2007	Regular Rehearsal	New finals package song CHOREO		Diane	Shannon
Tue	7-Aug-2007	Regular Rehearsal	New finals package song CHOREO	Corinna	Sofia	Sandy
Tue	14-Aug-2007	Regular Rehearsal	New finals package song CHOREO		Nicole	Elaine
Tue	21-Aug-2007	Regular Rehearsal	final week for any changes!	Judy	Kelly	Lisa
Tue	28-Aug-2007	Regular Rehearsal	PPIs - all 4 contest songs!		Diane	Judy
Tue	4-Sep-2007	Regular Rehearsal	Intro Finals Pkg Script	Judy	Sofia	Cammi
Tue	11-Sep-2007	Regular Rehearsal	Audition for MCs		Nicole	Elvera
Tue	18-Sep-2007	Regular Rehearsal	Run script for timing; PPIs	Judy, Cammi	Kelly	Corinna
Fri	21-Sep-2007	Coaching with Jim Arns	COACHING on contest packages		Diane	Jennifer
Sat	22-Sep-2007	Coaching with Jim Arns	COACHING on contest packages		Sofia	Shannon
Sat	22-Sep-2007	SNEAK PREVIEW in evening	PERFORMANCE!!			
Tue	25-Sep-2007	Regular Rehearsal	Final polish!		Nicole	Sandy
Tue	2-Oct-2007	Regular Rehearsal	Final polish!		Kelly	Elaine
M-S	Oct 8-13, '07	International Competition in Calgary	multiple rehearsals all week			

SAMPLE LONG-RANGE CALENDAR

Sandy Marron

SAI Region 25 Summer Music Camp

June 26-27, 2009

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
January		Diva Program - Initiate			Diva Program Initiation
February	17-19 Retreat with Jim Arns	Feb 10 CONCERT @ Massey 14 Valentine Singing	14 Valentine Singing 19 Sean D coaching leads 22-24 Retreat with Tony	7 LGC SHOW!! 14 Valentine Singing 27-28 Retreat with Jim	Valentine Singing CONCERT
March			21-24 Easter Weekend		RETREAT
April	7-9 Evergreen Preliminary 12 Sneak Preview 14-17 Easter Weekend 20-23 Regional (compete) 25 Installation	20-22 Retreat with Jim Arns 6-8 Easter Weekend 27-28 Evergreen Preliminary	10-13 Regional (compete) 29 Installation 29-20 CBC Choral Comp	10-13 Easter Weekend 19 Sneak Preview 23 - 26 Regional 28 Installation	2-5 Easter Weekend Sing-A-Thon 27 Installation
May	21 May Long Weekend 26-28 Directors Workshop - Diva Program - Initiation	3-6 Regional - Regina (Hosting) 19 May Long Weekend 26 Welshmen Choir Show 29 Installaion	Directors Workshop Mother's Day Singing 8 Phil Alain's "8" Show 19 May Long Weekend	Directors' Workshop Mother's Day Singing Diva Program - Initiation May long weekend	13-16 Regional (compete) Directors' Workshop Mother's Day Singing May Long Weekend
June	24 CD Recording	9-10 Director's Workshop		19-21 Retreat with Jim	
July	3-8 BHS International 11-16 IES 17-19 Darlene Rogers Coaching	3-8 BHS International 10-15 IES 17-18 Ase Hagerman Coaching	BHS International IES 22 Darlene Rogers Coaching 29 Ase Hagerman Coaching	BHS International Director/Judge Seminar	BHS International Performance Seminar
August					
September	15-16 Fall Workshop-Vancouver	21-22 Jim Arns Coaching 22 SNEAK PREVIEW	19-21 Fall Workshop 9 Coaching with Marcia	25-26 Coaching with Jim 26 INT'L Sneak Preview!	
October	10-14 International - Las Vegas	8 Fall Workshop - Calgary 9-13 International - Calgary Oct 16 Chorus Break Oct 23 Chorus Break		Fall Workshop 18-25 Int'l in Nashville!	Fall Workshop 20-24 International - Seattle
November	Sing-A-Thon 18 - CD Release Party	Sing-A-Thon	4-9 International - Honolulu CD Recording		
December	19 Christmas Party 26 No Rehearsal	18 Christmas Party 25 No Rehearsal	16 Christmas Party	15 Christmas Party	14 Christmas Party