

STRETCHING THE SKILLS OF CHURCH CHOIRS

Lecture Outline

- What is different about working with church choirs?
 - The director's obligation to build the commitment and enthusiasm of volunteer singers and motivate them to want to improve their skills.
 - Rehearsals must include explanations and reinforcement of fundamental vocal skills:
 - Posture
 - Breath support
 - Tone placement
 - Open throats
 - Directors must listen more carefully and then adjust artistically.

- Accessible procedures for solving the most common vocal problems of volunteer singers during rehearsals:
 - Flatness of pitch
 - Shallow tone color
 - Inability to sing longer phrases
 - Inability to project, out of control vibrato

- Aging singers, a significant and growing dilemma for church choirs.
 - Old solution: remove them from the choir ("Christmas Without Snow").
 - New solution: revive the singing skills of aging singers.

- Score study procedures which lead to more effective volunteer choir rehearsals.

- Innovative warm-up concepts and exercises for volunteer church choirs.
 - Should warm-ups have a real purpose?
 - How to choose appropriate warm-ups for specific music about to be rehearsed.
 - Characteristics of effective warm-ups.
 - Effective procedures for warming up volunteer choirs.
 - How warm-ups can be used to develop vocal skills.
 - Sample warm-ups from "Innovative Warm-ups for the Volunteer Choir".
 - Two part Simple Starters:
 - #3 Targeting Significance within Phrases
 - Four part warm-ups:
 - #17 Vertical Tuning of Chords in Minor
 - Rev Up and Cool Down Canons:
 - #24 Kyrie Eleison
 - Skill Teaching Procedures:
 - #29 Proportional Sensitivity

2 Part Simple Starter #3

Targeting Significance Within Phrases

Michael Kemp



Oh no no no why duh dye dye, oh no no no why, oh why duh dye dye doh doh, no no no.

Oh no no no why why, oh no no no why why, why duh dye dye doh doh, no no no.

4 Part Warm-up #17

Vertical Tuning of Chords in Minor

♩ = 80

Michael Kemp

The musical score is for a four-part vocal warm-up in a minor key. It consists of four staves: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The tempo is marked as ♩ = 80. The music is divided into two measures. The first measure is in common time, and the second measure is in 6/4 time. The lyrics are: "Oh mee oh mee oh no naw no naw." The Soprano part starts on a G4, the Alto on an E4, the Tenor on a C4, and the Bass on a G3. The melody is a simple eighth-note scale in the first measure, followed by a half-note scale in the second measure.

Soprano
Oh mee oh mee oh no naw no naw.

Alto
Oh mee oh mee oh no naw no naw.

Tenor
Oh mee oh mee oh no naw no naw.

Bass
Oh mee oh mee oh no naw no naw.

Rev Up & Cool Down Canon #24

Kyrie Eleison

$\text{♩} = 54$

Traditional, arr. Michael Kemp

The musical score consists of four staves, each with a treble clef and a 3/2 time signature. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 54. The lyrics are: Ky - ri - e, ky - ri - e e - le - i - son. The melody is a simple, repetitive pattern of quarter and eighth notes.

Ky - ri - e, ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.

Ky - ri - e, ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.

Ky - ri - e, ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.

Ky - ri - e, ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.

Skill Teaching Procedure #29

Proportional Sensitivity

Michael Kemp

$\text{♩} = 60$

1. Mee may maw moh moo doo, 2. mee may maw moh moo doo,

3. mee may maw moh moo doo, 4. mee may maw moh moo.

**INNOVATIVE WARM-UPS FOR THE VOLUNTEER CHOIR:
CREATIVE CONCEPTS TO IMPROVE CHORAL SOUND**

Michael Kemp

(available from GIA order #G8696L)

In the Foreword of my new book, *Innovative Warm-ups for the Volunteer Choir: Creative Concepts to Improve Choral Sound*, my mother Helen Kemp describes her recollections of Dr. Williamson, the founder of Westminster Choir College, as he began to build the unique Westminster choral sound through warm-ups that had specific goals. Had he been working today with professionals or high level auditioned singers, he might not have needed such careful warm-ups. More experienced, academically trained choral singers should come to rehearsals already warmed up. But that is not what Dr. Williamson faced as he began his choral experience in Dayton, Ohio with what was essentially a volunteer church choir. He quickly realized he had to help them improve their sound by teaching them to sing better. Though he eventually toured the world with the prestigious Westminster Choir, but our model should be those earlier years of his working with volunteers. Dr. Williamson believed that an ordinary choir could become extraordinary, and that excellence is an achievable goal for volunteer choirs who are taught efficiently.

My mother was singing in Dr. Williamson's Westminster Choir in 1937 when she accepted a weekend church choir directing job to earn extra money. She vividly remembers her first rehearsal with volunteer choirs as a "bubble bursting moment." It took only a few minutes for her to realize that she had in her new choir few note readers, no balanced sections, and no trained voices. When I was at Westminster, I had a similar student church choir job, and I'll never forget my first rehearsal with them, the evening before my first conducting class at Westminster. After growing up in the Kemp family, it had never occurred to me that there were singers who made note mistakes and had to be taught everything. I was befuddled. Like my mother three decades earlier, I had no idea where or how to begin.

Innovative Warm-ups for the Volunteer Choir eliminates that mystery with fresh, useful exercises and teaching concepts that I developed over my 44 of years conducting volunteers. Starting after the first rehearsal mentioned above and continuing after every rehearsal to this day, I developed a post-rehearsal habit of writing down what went well and what didn't go well, and then thought of ways to make rehearsals more accessible and effective. Needless to say, the problems I faced in my student church job were far different from those being dealt with in our Westminster Choir rehearsals...which is the whole point of this book. My many years of leading church and school choirs have made me acutely aware that working with volunteer choirs is all about creative problem solving. *Innovative Warm-ups for the Volunteer Choir* is the direct result of my lifetime of searching for ways to enhance the choral sound of volunteers, to explain to them in accessible language the fine points of vocal technique, and to lift the quality and confidence of volunteer singers.

DIRECTOR'S EDITION



INNOVATIVE WARM-UPS FOR THE VOLUNTEER CHOIR

CREATIVE CONCEPTS TO IMPROVE CHORAL SOUND

MICHAEL KEMP

Foreword by Helen Kemp

DIRECTOR'S EDITION

INNOVATIVE WARM-UPS FOR THE VOLUNTEER CHOIR

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Here are 34 engaging choral warm-ups designed to refine your choir's sound and increase the singers' musicianship skills. Internationally respected conductor, clinician, and vocal consultant Michael Kemp brings his many years of experience and success in building choral programs to create this resource for choirs of all ages. *Innovative Warm-Ups for the Volunteer Choir – Director's Edition* offers purposeful, creative exercises that are simple to learn and fun to sing. The unique two- to four-part vocalises also develop refinement in intonation and choral balance. Choir members will continually acquire techniques to improve their vocal ability and become more confident musicians. The *Singer's Edition* (G-8696) is the essential complement for use in rehearsals.

Michael Kemp founded and conducts the Philadelphia-area Academy Chorale and Academy Chamber Society. During his long career, Kemp built numerous prestigious church, community, and school choral programs, recently retiring from Germantown Academy (Fort Washington, PA). He has taught more than 400 workshops throughout the United States and Canada, focusing on enhancing the skills of volunteer choirs. His book *The Choral Challenge: Practical Paths to Solving Problems* (GIA Publications) has become a staple for choral directors.



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