

CHORAL LITERACY and STANDARDS LEVEL-BASED DEVELOPMENTAL MARKERS

Geoffrey Boers

Assessment for Ensembles and Students

Text Version

Sorted by LEVEL of Literacy

Definition of Scoring for Each LEVEL

X.0-X.3	EMERGING: Choir has been <i>Introduced</i> to <i>Rarely</i> demonstrates
X.4-X.6	AT GRADE LEVEL: Choir <i>Sometimes</i> demonstrates to <i>Often</i> demonstrates
X. 7-X.9	MASTERY: <i>Understands and Applies</i> when coached to <i>Always</i> demonstrates

Definition of Descriptors

- Each descriptor is a developmental marker of the LEVEL
- Necessary markers for the level are written in positive language
- Markers that are above the LEVEL, or may only be introduced at a particular LEVEL, are written with an is/not, are/not option. These are information only for the director.
- Teachers (or students) are to score each literacy for the relative amount of demonstration of the multiple descriptors in each literacy, using the above scoring method.

LEVEL 1

Entry level choirs of all ages

Resonance and Vowels

- Works to shape vowels with space, understand basic vowel uniformity
- Resonance produced as “tall” vowels, opening up resonating spaces.
- Resonance is most often successful with [u, o, a, i].
- Light and heavy mechanism is introduced.
- Sings mostly in “head” voice, or thin folds.
- Resonance inconsistent due to vowel space and heavy mechanism or “chest,” voice.

Blend and Balance

- Works to blend through vowel uniformity and “matching.”
- Blend most successful with [u,o,a,i].
- Blend occurs most easily when all singers sing in light mechanism.
- Blend inconsistent due to heavy mechanism singing or difficult vowels [ɛ, æ, etc.]

Vocal Facility and Independence:

Range, Agility, Clarity and Divisi

- Singing range determined by age, gender, vocal quality, and speaking voice, often a 6th to a 10th in all voice parts.
- Stepwise melodies and simple intervals sung clearly at a moderate tempo. Passages which are slower, faster, or containing more challenging intervals can be coached.

-Unison voicing is preferred, but simple counterpoint, such as partner songs or canons, can be sung. Close parallel harmonies and minor dissonance can be a challenge.

Intonation

- Works to sing well in unison, as pitch will be most clear in unison passages.
- Learns to listen by understanding how vowel uniformity affects pitch.
- Singing “in tune” with pentatonic and simple melodies is introduced.
- Common pitch issues due to light or heavy mechanism use, or scooping, can be coached.

Breath Management

- Works to develop good posture and low and expanded breath.
- Learns to breathe together at the onset of a song.
- Low breath is consistently reinforced, as clavicular breathing most often occurs.
- Singers demonstrate consistent breath energy most easily in short, loud passages, soft singing remains breathy.

Dynamics

- Works to understand and demonstrate contrasting dynamics.
- Works to unify dynamic within ensemble. Dynamic unification grows with singer’s understanding of vowel uniformity, heavy/light mechanism, and varies due to age, physical development and confidence.
- Demonstrates *forte* and *piano*, and can sing with contrasting dynamic between songs or between major sections within a song.
- Crescendo and Decrescendo are introduced.

Diction

- Works to enunciate together.
- Vowel clarity reflects singers’ understanding of LEVEL I vowels and resonance.
- Consonant clarity varies by age, body awareness, or primary language.
- Demonstrates strong consonants at onset and offset when coached, most internal consonants lack clarity.

Articulation

- Works toward understanding contrasting articulation through text.
- Clarity of articulation varies as result of text and volume.
- Short and long, heavy and light enunciation are introduced.

Rhythm and Tempo

Precision, clarity, and expressive qualities such as weight-momentum-rubato

- Works to sing rhythmically together.
- Demonstrates physical sense of pulse when coached. Rhythmic inconsistencies are common, and precision is affected by age, body awareness, dynamic, diction, and articulation.
- Simple rhythms can be sung accurately, syncopation and simple multi-cultural rhythms can be taught by rote.
- Basic count singing is possible.

Expression and Artistry

Style, Form, Expression

- Emphasizes singing with energy, body involvement, and facial expression to convey mood.
- Expression varies by age, body awareness, energy, and confidence.
- Demonstrates mood of the song with general changes of dynamic and articulation as determined by text.
- Form is demonstrated by contrasting formal elements, such as verses and refrains and major sections, with dynamics and articulation.
- Body movements help singers connect physicality to the mood and sound they want to convey.

Rhythm and Musical Markings Reading

(Each level assumes start year level one, either for review or for beginning readers in a more advanced choir. Assumption is the more advanced choir can move further.)

Meter: 2/4, 3/4, 4/4. **Note Values:** Whole, half, quarter **Tempo:** Andante-Moderato (72-120)

Musical Markings: Adagio, Allegro, p, mp, mf, f

Melody, Interval Reading and Audiation

(Levels of Melody and Interval Reading correspond to elements in the same level of Rhythm and Score Marking)

Melodic Reading: Step-wise and Pentatonic melodies, unison **Intervals:** Whole step, Minor Third, Perfect Fourth and Fifth, Major Scale introduced. **Key Signatures:** None to two sharps or 2 flats.
Chord Tones: Two part “chords” built on pentatonic scale degrees.



LEVEL 2

Many Elementary, MS, and JH choirs, emerging HS, church, and community choirs, beginning non-auditioned collegiate choirs

Resonance and Vowels

- Develops basic vowel uniformity and space in [i,e,a,o,u] .
- Resonance develops by creating space in mouth. Inner space is introduced as “Tall, dome, or lofted” space, encouraging lifting soft palate *et al.*
- Resonance is consistent in vowels [i,e,a,o,u] in middle register, expands with age and experience.
- Treble voices sing mostly in “head voice,” or thin folds, mixing into “chest voice,” or thick-folds introduced; changing male voices handled individually, emphasizing “head voice” as low notes appear.
- Resonance affected by text and extremes of dynamic and range.

Blend and Balance

- Blend develops through basic vowel uniformity and matching vowel shape.
- Blend most successful in slow moving passages, cadences and with vowels [u, o, a, i].
- Blend affected in rhythmic or fast-moving sections due to text or individual singer’s volume.
- Balance affected by personnel, repertoire voicing and tessituras.
- Balance achieved by adjusting numbers of singers on each part or standing arrangements.

Vocal Facility and Independence

Range, Agility, Clarity and Divisi

- Singing range determined by age, gender, vocal quality, and speaking voice. Range often a 6th to a 12th, expands with age and experience.
- Stepwise melodies, slow to moderately fast tempi, and intervals of 3rds, 4ths, 5ths sung clearly.
- Unison, partner songs, and simple counterpoint sung with clarity. Part independence in passages with close parallel harmonies, or minor dissonance can be coached.
- Some compositions in three or four parts possible, determined by personnel, range, or composition style.
- Singing in non-western classical styles introduced.

Intonation

- Develops basic understanding of intonation both listening to selves and others.
- Intonation consistent in middle voice with basic vowels. Inconsistencies occur with challenges of text, diphthongs, range, and dynamics.
- Tuning during unison passages and within sections develops. Tuning homophonic passages or close harmonies can be inconsistent.
- Partner songs, simple counterpoint can be sung with clarity of pitch. Individual tuning issues due scooping, over singing *et al* [not italicized] can be coached.

Breath Management

- Develops good posture and consistent low, expansive breath.

- Low, expansive onset at the beginning of a song, or a major section of a song develops.
- Onset breath for individual phrases is introduced.
- Breath energy sustained at louder dynamics; inconsistent breath energy may result in breathiness, poor intonation, decreased legato, *et al.*
- “Stagger breathing” for a sustained tones, fermatas, is introduced.

Dynamics

- Works to demonstrate varied dynamics.
- Demonstrates varied dynamics, *p, mp, mf, f*, from song to song.
- Works to vary dynamics from phrase to phrase. “Rise and fall,” or crescendo and decrescendo are introduced.
- Dynamic extremes may affect resonance and pitch, with fortes pressed and softs breathy.

Diction

- Works to sing with clarity of text and projection.
- Vowel clarity reflects LEVEL II techniques of vowels and resonance.
- Consonant clarity is heard, especially at onsets of phrases and louder dynamics.
- Consonants before the beat and internal consonants introduced.
- Non-English language texts introduced.

Articulation

- Develops basic types of articulation: accent and legato, heavy and light, long and short.
- Articulation determined by text and volume.
- Various types of accents (*staccato, marcato*) introduced.
- Legato singing is introduced, is often inconsistent as affected by text, musical setting, and developing breath management.

Rhythm and Tempo

Precision, clarity, and expressive qualities such as weight-momentum-rubato

- Works toward rhythmic clarity through unified diction.
- Inner pulse introduced.
- Choir sings together but rushing or dragging is common.
- Ritardando* and *Accelerando* are introduced.
- Rhythms more complex than eighth note patterns can be coached.
- Count singing is possible with eighth notes.

Expression and Artistry

Style, Form, Expression

- Works to create a unique style for each piece with dynamic, tempo, articulation, and text.
- Word stress/un-stress is introduced.
- General *mood* of poetry is understood, demonstrated by varied dynamics from phrase to phrase.
- Form demonstrated by contrasting dynamics of verses or phrases, finding a “high point” in each piece is introduced.
- Most of the choir demonstrates facial expression and/or appropriate movement during singing, especially when coached.

Rhythm and Musical Markings Reading

(Each level assumes start year level one, either for review or for beginning readers in a more advanced choir. Assumption is the more advanced choir can move further.)

Meter: 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, Cut time (symbol and 2/2), 6/8 **Note Values:** Whole, half, quarter, eighth, simple dotted notes and syncopation **Tempo:** Andante-Allegro (72-132) **Musical Markings:** Adagio, Andante, Moderato, Allegro, Rit.(ardando), Accel.(erando), pp-ff., Cresc. (endo) and Decresc.(endo), Accent mark >

Melody, Interval Reading and Audiation

Melodic Reading: Step-wise and Pentatonic melodies, introduction of 3rds, 4^{ths}, and 5^{ths} in melody, unison and 2-part canon or simple counterpoint, dotted notes later in year. **Intervals:** Whole step, Half step, Minor Third, Major Third, Perfect Fourth, Perfect Fifth, all intervals of Major Scale sung with Kodaly hand signals. **Key Signatures:** None to three sharps or three flats, Minor Key introduced. **Chord Tones:** Two to three part chords, major and minor root position, 6^{ths} and 7^{ths} introduced.



LEVEL 3

Advanced MS, JH choirs, some average HS, church, community and non-auditioned collegiate choirs

Resonance and Vowels

- Consistent vowel uniformity, space, and color with basic vowels [i, e, ε, a, o, u].
- Resonating spaces such as “Tall, dome, or lofted” develop.
- Resonance adjustment through vowel modification introduced.
- Resonance consistent throughout middle voice, upper voice varied due to age and experience, Soprano to G5, Alto to D5, Tenor to F4, Bass to D4.
- Resonance affected by text, range extremes, diphthongs, and foreign languages.
- Treble voices develop “mix.” T and B develop floating upper voice and focused lower voice.

Blend and Balance

- Blend develops as understanding of Level III Resonance occurs.
- Blend develops within sections throughout middle voice, regardless of musical demands.
- Individuals may be heard as ranges expand or voices develop.
- Balance affected by personnel and repertoire,
- Balance achieved by adjusting numbers of singers on each part or standing arrangements.
- Repertoire-based balance variation is sometimes desired and introduced.

Vocal Facility and Independence

Range, Agility, Clarity and Divisi

- Works to extend range and address age-related vocal changes.
- Singers can demonstrate greater range and agility in vocalization than in sustained tessituras.
- Melodies containing intervals of 3rds, 4ths, and 5ths sung clearly at most tempi.
- Most intervals can be sung clearly at a moderate tempo with coaching.
- Compositions in two to four parts preferred, greater *divisi* possible, determined by balance of personnel.
- Singing in non-western classical styles is developed.

Intonation

- Emphasizes listening, developing both listening to selves, others, and audiation.
- Tuning demonstrated in all ranges with coaching. Inconsistencies occur with challenges of text, diphthongs, tessitura and dynamics.
- Tuning within sections is consistent. Sections work to tune with other sections, particularly at cadences.
- Tuning develops in homophonic sonorities, fast moving passages or counterpoint develops.
- A cappella* singing is evident.

Breath Management

- Singers use good posture both sitting and standing when coached.
- Develops consistent low, expansive breath at beginning of songs, is successful at breathing low throughout a piece when coached.
- Onsets initiate phrase or crescendo with breath energy, or encouraging air flow.
- Breath energy sustained at louder dynamics; softer dynamics develops.
- Breathing low during quick, or “catch breaths,” is introduced.
- Shaping the vocal tract during breath, such as breathing in the vowel, is introduced.

Dynamics

- Develops musicality with dynamic contrast.
- Demonstrates varied dynamics between phrases and within each phrase, “rise and fall.”
- Dynamics from *mp-mf* consistent with Level III breath management and resonance.
- Works to develop consistency of resonance in extreme dynamics, or with dynamic changes, with *f* dynamics sometimes pressed, and *p* dynamics breathy.

-Dynamics often affected by tessitura: higher passages may be sung louder, lower tones softer, individuals may be heard.

Diction

- Emphasizes singing clear, initial onset, and final offset consonants.
- Vowel clarity present in basic vowels, diphthongs and other languages may be challenging.
- Clarity of diction affected by range and dynamic extremes.
- Clarity of internal consonants develops.
- Consonants before the beat are developed.
- Choir can sing in Latin and at least one other language.

Articulation

- Develops singing more varied and challenging articulations, (*crescendo on dotted or tied notes, fp, sfz, fermata, and clarity of faster moving passages*).
- Articulation as a related to LEVEL III breath management is introduced.
- Various types of other articulations introduced.
- Legato is often present when coached. Forward motion and sustained energy during legato is most successful at louder dynamics and when low breath occurs.

Rhythm and Tempo

Precision, clarity, and expressive qualities such as weight-momentum-rubato

- Develops counting together and inner pulse, and is successful when coached.
- Rhythmic inconsistencies occur, with clarity, rushing, or dragging affected by dynamic, tempo, and choir energy.
- Accelerando* and *ritardando* performed with accuracy, tempo changes can affect tone or breath management.
- More complex rhythms such as dotted rhythms and triplets, meter signatures, multi-cultural rhythms introduced are introduced, and can be coached.
- Count singing is possible with eighth notes.

Expression and Artistry

Style, Form, Expression

- Emphasizes expression.
- Composer's musical indications followed, resulting in varied approaches from piece to piece.
- Word and syllabic stress/un-stress are explored.
- General *meaning* of poetry is understood, communicated through varied dynamics from phrase to phrase, "rise and fall" within each phrase, and word stress.
- Form explored, choir demonstrates the buildup to a "high point" in each piece.
- Extra-musical means of expression (movement, facial engagement, "choralography," standing arrangements, narration. *et al*) developed.

Rhythm and Musical Markings Reading

Each level assumes start year level one, either for review or for beginning readers in a more advanced choir. Assumption is the more advanced choir can move further.

Meter: 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, Cut time (symbol and 2/2), 6/8, 5/4, 6/4, simple changing meters **Note Values:** Whole, half, quarter, eighth, sixteenth, dotted notes, syncopation, eighth note triplets **Tempo:** Largo-Allegro (56-144), **Musical Markings:** Adagio, Andante, Moderato, Allegro, Presto, Rit.(ardando), Accel.(erando), pp-ff, Cresc(endo) and Decresc(endo), sfz, fp, fermata, subito, Accent >, marcato and staccato. **Non-Traditional Notation:** Introduced in jazz or multi-cultural repertoire.

Melody, Interval Reading and Audiation

Melodic Reading: Step-wise and Pentatonic melodies, 4ths, and 5ths, introduction of 6ths in melody, unison to four part reading depending on difficulty, dotted notes, syncopation, and triplets **Intervals:** All intervals of Major and Minor Scale sung with Kodaly hand signals. Non-diatonic intervals with Kodaly syllables and hand signals introduced. **Key Signatures:** None to four sharps or four flats, both major and minor. **Chord Tones:** Three to four part chords, major and minor root position 7th chords, 9ths and inversions introduced.



LEVEL 4

Advanced HS choirs, very good church and community choirs, average

Resonance and Vowels

- Consistent resonance in all vowels, including diphthongs and many non-English vowels.
- Resonance develops through awareness of head/chest/mix, as well as inner resonating space such as “tall, dome, lofted” or specific resonant vowels.
- Resonance consistency develops and extends throughout vocal ranges.
- Resonance affected by range extremes: modification of resonating spaces introduced.
- S and A develop functional mix of “head” and “chest” voice. T and B develop a vibrant, expansive mid to lower tones and a lyric, clear upper voice.

Blend and Balance

- Blend develops with consistent resonance and by precise rhythm and dynamic shape.
- Blend develops from a unified vocal approach, yet encourages individual development.
- Blend adjusted as voices mature, using voice matching and standing arrangements.
- Unified Ensemble occurs in varied vocal styles (*vibrato or non, historic styles, world music*).
- Balance addressed by varied standing arrangements and dynamic adjustment.
- Repertoire-based balance variations develop.

Vocal Facility and Independence:

Range, Agility, Clarity and Divisi

- Works to extend range and increase agility.
- Singers demonstrate ease of *tessitura* in upper voice: S through D5-F5, Alto C5-E5, Tenor D4 to F4, Bass C4-Eb4.
- 16th note passages clearly sung at moderately fast tempo, chromatic intervals when coached.
- Divisi* within each section is possible. Complexity of *divisi* determined by personnel.
- Vocalization of non-western classical styles developed.

Intonation

- Sings in tune individually, within section, and between sections.
- Intonation consistent throughout vocal ranges, at faster tempi, more challenging intervals, or text. Students able to make adjustments to fix poor intonation.
- Melodic tuning occurs in addition to harmonic tuning.
- Complex chords often tune accurately. Inconsistencies in tuning occur due to individual development of vocal technique, solutions can be coached.
- When singing *a cappella*, choir tunes well even if the overall pitch may flat or sharp.

Breath Management

- Works to sustain the feeling of breath energy throughout each phrase at all dynamics, “on the breath”.
- Develops consistent low, expansive breath at onsets throughout a work. Offset breaths and “catch breaths” used to re-establish low body energy.
- “Mature efficiency of breath energy, (strong intercostal engagement, less abdominal effort, efficient air flow) is developed.
- Shaping the vocal tract during breath, (breathing in the vowel, other musical elements) develops.
- Non-western classical techniques for jazz, Broadway, and world music introduced.

Dynamics

- Develops consistent Level IV breath energy and resonance from *p-f*.
- Dynamics varied within phrases, phrases also contrast to build an overall shape to the piece.
- Works to develop consistency in extreme dynamic ranges, as *pp* may become breathy and *ff* pressed or over sung, due to developing technique.
- Accuracy of dynamics in extremes of range and *tessitura* develops.
- Subtle or quick shaping of dynamics to reflect text, rhythmic patterns, and style develops.

Diction

- Works to enunciate text clearly and expressively.

- Works to enunciate consistently in range extremes.
- Consonants before the beat and internal consonants are consistent and help create a sense of forward motion.
- A more difficult language to English-speaking singers may be introduced, (e.g. French or Russian).
- Enunciation with appropriate dialect in common languages is introduced.

Articulation

- Choir works toward artistic use of articulations.
- Articulations varied and connected to breath management, consistent throughout the choir. Extreme articulation demands can affect pitch and resonance.
- Varied weights of repeated articulations, or articulation as a result of artistic poetic declamation introduced.
- A mature legato is present, creating a sense of forward motion, energy, and momentum.

Rhythm and Tempo

Precision, clarity, and expressive qualities such as weight-momentum-rubato

- Emphasizes precision and accuracy. Subdivision as a unifying tool is introduced.
- Emphasizes consistent sense of rhythmic energy in all styles.
- Accelerando* and *Ritardando* performed with consistent breath management, resonance and dynamic when coached.
- Rhythm as an expressive element, (*rubato, tempo changes and fermatas*) have a sense of rhythmic and artistic purpose.
- Rhythmic weight, or “feel,” emphasized more than meter.
- Varied styles of rhythm (e.g. jazz, multicultural styles) explored.
- Count singing in various meters and subdivisions may be possible.

Expression and Artistry

Style, Form, Expression

- Emphasizes communication and style.
- Musical decisions are based both on the composer’s markings as well as personal expression. Historical style and performance practice may be introduced.
- Specific meaning* of the text is understood, and demonstrated by rise and fall of phrase, word and syllabic stress, and poetic declamation of text resulting in artistically shaped singing.
- Form demonstrated by intentional shaping of momentum, energy, and musical details toward and away from the “high point” of each piece.
- Extra-musical means of expression are developed.

Rhythm and Musical Markings Reading

Each level assumes start year level one, either for review or for beginning readers in a more advanced choir. Assumption is the more advanced choir can move further.

Meter: 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, Cut time (symbol and 2/2), 6/8, 5/4, 6/4, 3/8, 5/8, 7/8, 9/8, 12/8 and changing meters **Note Values:** Whole, half, quarter, eighth, sixteenth, dotted notes, syncopation, eighth and quarter note triplets **Tempo:** Largo-Presto (56-168) **Musical Markings:** Adagio, Andante, Moderato, Allegro, Presto, Rit.(ardando), Accel.(erando), ppp-fff,, Cresc(endo) and Decresc(endo), sfz, fp, fermata, subito, piu, meno, Accent >, plus marcato, staccato, tenuto. **Non-Traditional Notation:** Developed with opportunities to sing jazz, aleatoric, multi-cultural, or early music.

Melody, Interval Reading and Audiation

Melodic Reading: Melodies with all diatonic intervals, major and minor, unison to four-part reading depending on difficulty, dotted notes, syncopation, triplets, compound meter, basic meter changes **Intervals:** All intervals, Major Scale and Minor sung with Kodaly hand signals. Non-diatonic intervals (*tritone, major seventh, minor ninth etc.*) with Kodaly syllables and hand signals practiced. **Key Signatures:** None to five sharps or five flats, both major and minor. **Chord Tones:** Three to eight part chords, major and minor root position 7th chords and inversions, altered chord tones introduced.



LEVEL 5

High level collegiate, church, community, and semi-professional choirs

Resonance and Vowels

- Develops a vibrant, overtone rich sound, consistent in all registers and voice parts, regardless of dynamic, style, or language.
- Resonance develops through a naturally and artistically shaped text.
- Resonance can be affected in the most demanding of passages and languages, can be coached.
- S and A lower register is a functional mix of “head” and “chest” voice (thin and thick folds), upper voice agile and vibrant. T and B consistently vibrant and expansive in mid to lower voice and upper register is clear, forward.

Blend and Balance

- Blend results from vibrant, overtone rich sound, consistent in all vowels, registers as well as unified musical elements.
- Blend occurs while individuals maintain a relaxed and healthy sound, regardless of style, language, or type of resonance desired.
- Balance is determined by musical and stylistic demands of repertoire, created through various methods such as varied standing arrangements, moving singers from part to part, adjustments of resonance, vowel and dynamic.

Vocal Facility and Independence

Range, Agility, Clarity and Divisi

- Singers can sustain tessitura in all registers in most styles.
- Chromatic intervals and passages, complex rhythms, dissonant intervals and harmonies sung clearly, inconsistencies of resonance and clarity occur and can be coached.
- All *divisi* is possible as determined by personnel.
- Singers demonstrate ability to vocalize in non-western classical styles.

Intonation

- Intonation accurate in all registers.
- Intonation accurate in all styles and tempi.
- Able to tune dissonant or complex harmonies of varied styles. Singing microtones and non-western tuning can be coached. Inconsistencies occur due to developing technique, breath management and vibrato, solutions can be coached.
- Maintain correct pitch center in *a cappella* singing.
- Singers can adjust temperament when singing with piano, (*equal temperament*) or *a cappella* (*just, mean tone* when coached).

Breath Management

- Active intercostal engagement in tandem with low abdominal breath encourages a balanced onset.
- All aspects of *appoggio* are introduced.
- Vocal tract shaping during breaths prepares singers for vowel, pitch, register and articulation.
- “Catch breaths” are planned and artistically, rhythmically shaped.
- Non-western classical breathing styles can be coached.

Dynamics

- Consistent breath energy creates a natural rise and fall of dynamics in all registers.
- Dynamics vary within phrases, phrases contrast to build an overall form to the piece.
- Subtle or quick shaping of dynamics to reflect text, rhythmic patterns, and style is consistently demonstrated.
- Technically demanding dynamics, e.g. *sotto voce*, *mesa di voce*, *fp*, *sfz*, can be coached.
- Dynamic distortions of vocal quality, vowel, vibrato, can be coached.
- Dynamic markings are treated as guides through which an artistically shaped musical line is sung, as opposed to absolutes.

Diction

- Emphasizes fluency.
- Enunciates text clearly in a variety of languages, including more challenging languages, with appropriate dialect determined by language, region, or history.
- Intentional tonal difference resulting from dialect may be desired and coached.
- Modification of consonants and enunciation for musical reasons (rubato, delaying onset, legato, tessitura, balance with instruments) is developed.

Articulation

- Demonstrates a mature approach to articulation of text and music, determined by language and style.
- Maintains vocal health through long articulated passages, extremes of articulation in challenging dynamics and tessitura.
- Composer's articulation markings develop as a reflection of an artistically sung text and musical line, rather than absolutes.

Rhythm and Tempo

(Precision, clarity, and expressive qualities such as weight-momentum-rubato)

- Demonstrates consistent inner pulse. Knowledge of subdivision is demonstrated in challenging rhythms and all styles.
- Maintains vocal technique throughout variations of tempo and challenging passages.
- Rhythm develops as an expressive element, with varied weight, momentum, and rubato, in addition to precision.
- Precision is consistent in all rhythms and styles once coached.

Expression and Artistry

Style, Form, Expression

- Emphasizes mature artistry.
- Demonstrates artistically shaped phrases, poetic declamation, rhythmic musicality (flexibility, varied weight, momentum), consistent reading of the composer's indications.
- Historical or multi-cultural style and performance practice informs choices of language, tone, artistic elements.
- Specific meaning of the text is communicated* and reflected in musical elements.
- Form results from musical elements and composer's intentions creating a musical whole.
- Extra-musical expression (programming, movement, staging) is creative.

Rhythm and Musical Markings Reading

(Each level assumes start year level one, either for review or for beginning readers in a more advanced choir. Assumption is the more advanced choir can move further.)

Meter: Any can be coached **Note Values:** Any **Tempo:** Any can be coached **Musical Markings:** All common markings, descriptive phrases (*e.g. con bocca chiusa*) can be coached and understood easily. **Traditional Notation:** Developing with opportunities to sing modern styles.

Melody, Interval Reading and Audiation

Melodic Reading: Melodies utilizing all intervals, all keys and modes, unison to eight-part reading depending on difficulty, challenging syncopation, triplets, compound meter, challenging meter changes **Intervals:** All intervals, Major Scale and Minor sung with Kodaly hand signals. Non-diatonic intervals with Kodaly syllables and hand signals developed through application to chromatic repertoire. **Key Signatures:** Any key major or minor. **Chord Tones:** All positions and inversions of chords; rootless chords, and "stacked" chords; 6-part and more chord tones.



LEVEL 6

Top professional and semi-professional choirs, a rare collegiate choir

Resonance and Vowels

- Singers produce a vibrant, overtone rich sound, consistent in all registers and all voice parts, regardless of language, dynamic or tessitura.
- Approach to tone is varied and stylistically informed, remaining consistent with healthy resonance and beauty.

Blend and Balance

- Blend results from a uniform approach to resonance, diction, and artistic elements, regardless of tonal approach.
- Balance handled through varied standing arrangements, flexible handling of personnel, (e.g. moving of voices from section to section).
- Balance is determined by musical and stylistic demands of repertoire, created through various methods such as varied standing arrangements, moving singers from part to part, adjustments of resonance, vowel, dynamic.

Vocal Facility and Independence:

Range, Agility, Clarity and Divisi

- Resonance is clear and consistent in all singers, ranges, and dynamics.
- Resonance consistent and in all *Tessituras*.
- Complex rhythms and harmonies can be sung with absolute clarity of resonance and pitch.
- Any *divisi* is possible.
- Singers demonstrate technique to create any non-western classical sound or style when coached.

Intonation

- Flawless intonation.
- Accurate within dissonant passages or works, as well as dissonant accompaniment.
- Adjusts to varied temperaments as needed for historical purposes or instrumental demands, singing non-western styles and with non-western instruments.
- Microtones or non-western tuning can be coached.

Breath Management

- Coordinated breath management creates a balanced and intentional energy and flow throughout all registers and dynamics.
- Varied air flow and pressure allow singers to create a wide palate of sounds.
- Prepared breaths for onsets and “catch breaths” are an important expressive component in a musically sung phrase.
- Non-western classical use of breath and body easily produced.

Dynamics

- The entire range of dynamics is demonstrated with consistent resonance and pitch.
- Dynamics are the result of a natural mix of an artistically sung musical line within the musical texture, informed by stylistic or historical performance practice.

Diction

- Vowels vary in color and resonance as determined by language and stylistic approach, yet maintain uniformity throughout the choir.
- All languages have a consistent and dialectic approach, appropriate for musical style. Singers can easily be coached to express subtleties of enunciation, as well as unusual linguistic demands.

Articulation

- Uniform throughout, consistently a function of utilizing breath
- Articulation is varied with regards to needs for balance, dynamic, tessitura, vocal considerations, with an artistic and poetic declamation.
- Articulation is a natural declamation resulting from superb expressive decisions.

Rhythm and Tempo

Precision, clarity, and expressive qualities such as weight-momentum-rubato

- Inner pulse and subdivision in all singers leads to a vibrant and unified rhythmic approach.
- Rhythms sung with intention as a foundation of all other musical elements.

Expression and Artistry

Style, Form, Expression

- Emphasizes vocal artistry similar to a chamber ensemble.
- Superb individual artistry mixes with other artists to create a powerful expressive performance.
- Historically-informed performance practice combines with insightful artistry.
- Text is sung in a poetic and meaningful way, and is expressed with insightful attention to musical detail.
- Musical elements combine to create a musical, dramatic, and/or personal artistic statement.
- Choir utilizes creative means to effectively communicate with audience.

Rhythm and Musical Markings Reading

Each level assumes start year level one, either for review or for beginning readers in a more advanced choir. Assumption is the more advanced choir can move further.

All elements mastered.

Melody, Interval Reading and Audiation

All elements mastered.

Glossary

Appoggio: *Bel Canto* term for opposing forces of muscle which create a feeling of balance, floating, “on the breath,” or inhaling while singing.

Articulation: Shape, or envelop of individual tones created and influenced by use of breath, articulation markings, text, and style.

Breath Energy: Refers to vibrant or engaged muscles of the lower body to create a clear, and age-appropriately resonant tone and sufficient sub-glottic pressure.

Catch Breath: A short breath taken in middle of a phrase or quickly in between phrases.

“Chest Voice”: Common term used to define singing with thick edges of vocal folds, used interchangeably with “thick folds” and “heavy mechanism,” and steering away from use of the term “register,” which sometimes causes confusion.

Clavicular Breathing: Inhalation in which the chest cavity raises up.

Coached: Refers to reminding and re-visiting techniques taught to singers who are not yet fluent in a technique or problem solving.

Demonstrated: When a concept has been taught to a greater degree than introduced, choir will demonstrate this concept to a greater degree, with inconsistencies. *Consistently demonstrated*, refers to a fluency of that technique.

Enunciation: How words are formed with regard to language, dialect, and style.

Evident: When a concept is introduced, teacher or adjudicator may observe that concept rarely or inconsistently as evidence that the concept was taught.

“Head Voice”: Common term used to define singing with thin edges of vocal folds, used interchangeably with “thin folds” and “light mechanism,” and steering away from use of the term “register,” which sometimes causes confusion.

Low Breath: Short hand for abdominal breathing

Onset Breath: Also known as preparatory breath, refers to a breath in tempo which prepares the singer for an upcoming phrase.

Pronunciation: The act of enunciation

“Quotation Marks:” used whenever popular vocal jargon is used. These terms often create confusion, but a level of prior knowledge as to the specific meaning of these terms is assumed.

S,A,T,B: Short hand for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass

Tessitura(e): Distinct from range, tessitura refers to a predominance of part writing in a particular part of the voice. One would say the tessitura is higher for a Tenor 1 in TTBB writing than it is in SATB writing, given the fact that in TTBB the T1 generally remains above the other voice parts, and has less movement through the range of the voice.

Thin and Thick Folds: Term used to define singing with thick or thin edges of vocal folds, used interchangeably with “head voice” and “chest voice,” and steering away from use of the term “register,” which sometimes causes confusion.

Vowel Distortion: Refers to varied symptoms of vowels that are not resonating efficiently. “Distortion” may be heard as variance of pitch, breathiness, pressing, dynamic, change in vibrato, or intelligibility and naturalness of the vowel.