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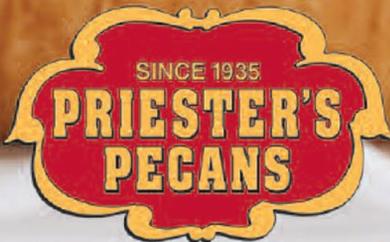
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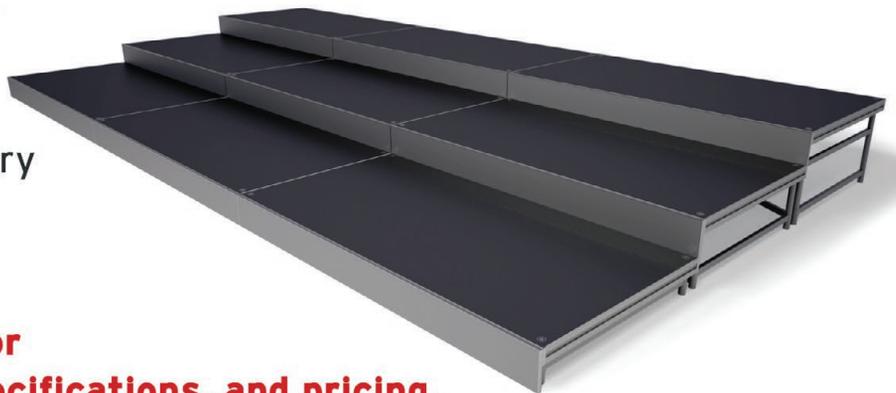


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## 6

### CUSTOM-WRITTEN SHOW CHOIR MUSIC: GET EXACTLY WHAT YOU WANT

by Anita Cracauer

Are you tired of searching for a song that fits your show theme, communicates your particular message, has enough musical interest for the needs of show choir, and is the exact style/sound you need for that moment in your show?

## 14

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A close-up photograph of two hands clasped together in a supportive grip. The hands are positioned diagonally across the frame, with one hand at the top right and the other at the bottom left. The skin is a warm, light brown tone, and the lighting is soft and natural, highlighting the texture of the skin and the veins on the hands. The background is a plain, light color, possibly white or light gray, which makes the hands the central focus of the image.

# *Custom-Written Show Choir Music*

GET EXACTLY WHAT YOU WANT

by Anita Cracauer





Are you tired of searching for a song that fits your show theme, communicates your particular message, has enough musical interest for the needs of show choir, and is the exact style/sound you need for that moment in your show?

Are you sick of the ever-increasing fees associated with licensing a copyrighted song, not to mention the small fortune it takes to license a medley of more than one song? Or maybe you were denied permission to arrange a particular song but still have your heart set on something just like it for your show?

I've got the answer for you—custom-written, original music.

### Save Time and Money by Eliminating Licensing Fees

Stop trying to find the perfect song to fit your needs and have it written for you. This way you will get exactly what you want musically and lyrically—and you get a finished product that has been custom-designed to highlight your group's strengths and downplay any potential weaknesses.

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A group of show choir members in purple dresses performing on stage.

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of a show choir arrangement of a copyrighted song in today's market. You can't beat the fact that there are no licensing fees and no potential hassle about the change of a note in a score which could incur more licensing fees.

### A Simple Process

The process is simple: You contact the songwriter—an arranger who has experience in the show choir format who is also capable of writing original music—and let them know about your show concept, the role/function this song will play, the lyrical message you are trying to communicate, and the style of music you are looking for.

If you have a song that you have in mind you'd like it to sound similar to, that is even more helpful. The right songwriter will brainstorm and send you some lyrical ideas first to make sure they are on the right track with your vision. At this point if you'd like to get involved with writing the lyrics, or even give your students an opportunity to be involved, many songwriters are totally open to that and feel it heightens the educational experience and investment in the show for the kids.



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### Scoring the Vocals

As soon as a final lyric is completed, the songwriter gets to work scoring out the vocals. Again, the right songwriter should send you the piano/vocal score for your feedback and final approval before they complete the rest of the score.

The songwriter should send you samples of the piano/vocal score at least once or twice as it is in process so that you get a feel for the melody and the overall structure of the piece. This is important: if at any point along the way you feel the song is going in the wrong direction, make sure to speak up so that the finished product is exactly what you envisioned, and no one's time or money is wasted. Communication is vital—both the director and songwriter should feel like they are able to be completely honest with each other! Once the completed piano/vocal is submitted, you can give your final feedback and approval before the rest of the score is completed. In addition to all the instrumental scores for your band, you should get a recording with fully sung vocals as well as an instrumental recording that you can use for choreography practice.

As anyone who has worked with me for custom music in the past knows, turnaround time is key. You need a songwriter who can work extremely fast and never considers a piece finished until you are 100%

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**It all begins with a song...**

satisfied. You also need a songwriter who holds no “personal attachment” to the music they write and is happy to change the score to make it better fit the needs of your group at any time.

### The Benefit to Directors

Many show choir directors have already learned firsthand the benefits that come from commissioning their own original songs. Director Brett Carroll of Burbank’s “In Sync” needed a specific “moment” in his show and described thematically what was required. He believed the lyrics created “fit perfectly,” describing the product as a “masterpiece.” Carroll spoke to what a simple process it was for him as a director as well, where he could have something tailored for his group’s vocal style in a fashion that “made use of our singers in such a magical way.”

John Parezo, Director of Sioux Falls Roosevelt’s “Capitol Harmony,” wasn’t able to secure copyright permission for a tune he planned to use for his women’s show choir, so he worked with me to create their own original song. Parezo explains, “I was nervous about it at first, but the process was actually very easy and totally worth it.”

He told me he wanted a “jazzy second number that had a similar feel to the song we originally wanted,” so I came up with some lyrics. Parezo made tweaks and sent them back by email. He states, “Within just



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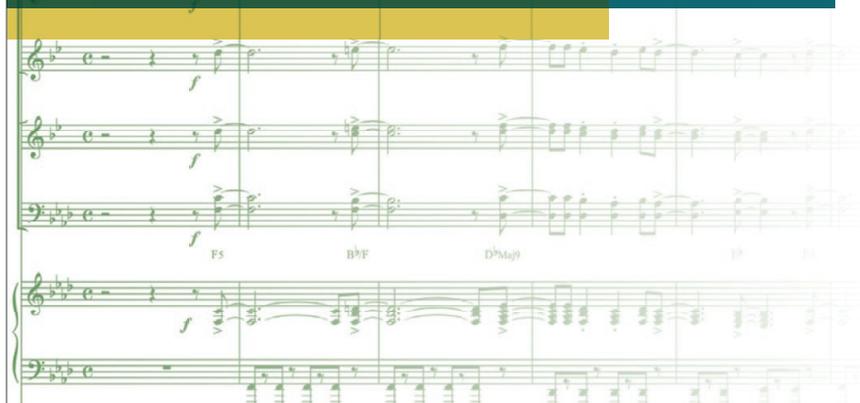




Photo of In Sync by Charles Rodriguez

a few weeks we had a draft of a piano/vocal score to 'Get Away, Joe!' I printed it out and had my girls sing through it that afternoon. They loved it and we knew it would be a hit."

After the first sing-through, Parezo decided to have me lower the key and adjust the range, as he had an alto-heavy group that year. He also wanted to make some cuts to better fit the timing of their show. In addition to being delighted by the piece, he was happy with the price. He states, "I was shocked when I got the invoice—it was way less expensive than having someone arrange a piece from the radio and pay the copyright fees! I will certainly be doing more of these originals in the future to help save on costs!"

### Own Your Performances

Here is perhaps the best benefit to all of this: You and your students will be able to freely post or distribute videos of your performance to your heart's content with no worries whatsoever about harassment or threats of legal action. The song belongs to your school's library forever.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Anita Cracauer is the founder of Show ChoirStock.com, an online catalog of show choir arrangements. She has worked as a freelance arranger, songwriter, and publisher in the show choir industry since 2001. In addition to writing and publishing, she judges competitions across the country and educates others on the topics of arranging, songwriting, and copyright licensing/publishing.

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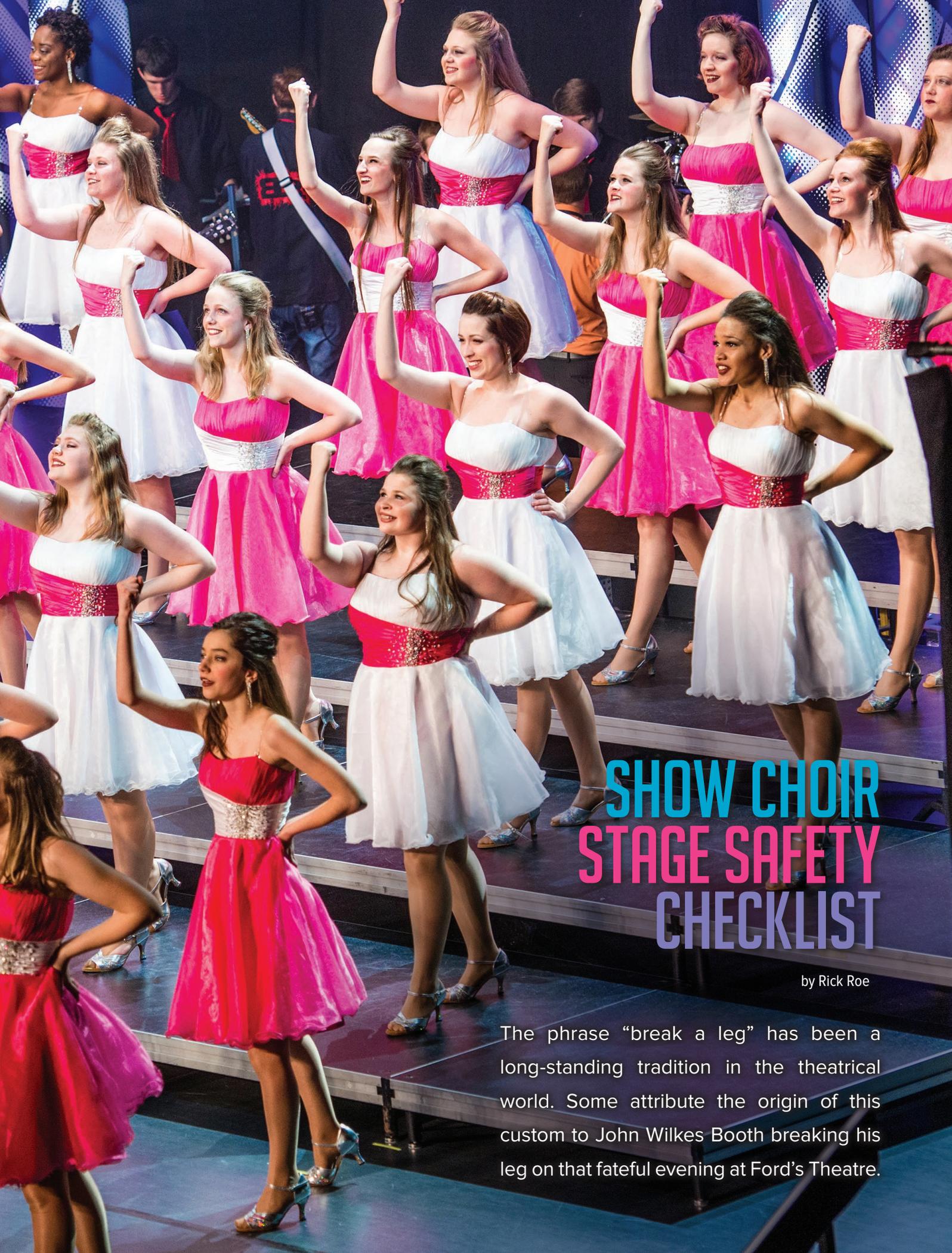
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# SHOW CHOIR STAGE SAFETY CHECKLIST

by Rick Roe

The phrase “break a leg” has been a long-standing tradition in the theatrical world. Some attribute the origin of this custom to John Wilkes Booth breaking his leg on that fateful evening at Ford’s Theatre.

Others say it was said by understudies to the actors as they went on stage in hopes they would get their big chance at the lead parts.

Even others attribute it to the bending of the leg to bow or curtsy in curtain calls thereby wishing them a performance that prompts numerous curtain calls.

Whatever the origin, the reality is that a broken leg or any other performance mishap for that matter is not a good thing.

In another article on our blog, we talked about safety for your staging and risers. Today, we're going to talk about setting up trussing, wiring, lighting, costumes, props, and special effects in a way that keeps your performers safe.

### Trussing

Trusses erected for lighting, microphones, or scenery must be properly secured with recommended anchoring devices like guide wires.

Add equipment to the rigging from the outside in while factoring in proper weight distribution. All equipment mounted on the trusses must have safety wire retention in the event of loosening. Know your equipment weight, truss, and anchor capacities before you hang anything.

### Wiring

Lighting, monitors, microphones and other electrical equipment should have cables secured to the floor with gaff tape eliminating potential trip hazards. Duct tape leaves a sticky residue and is not recommended. This helps prevent trip hazards on the stage.

### Lighting

Strobes and other dynamic lighting effects can dramatically add to the performance; however, it can distract and visually impair a performer which creates a hazard for missteps or falls. Consider these possibilities while setting & adjusting lighting equipment.

Also, make sure that your stage wings have sufficient lighting for performers when they're entering and exiting the stage.

### Costumes

Costumes are sometimes of a style that performers aren't normally comfortable in, particularly long flowing gowns and high heeled shoes. Multiple dress rehearsals help the performers feel at ease wearing expensive and often fragile costumes.

When designing or choosing costumes, examine for possible trip hazards. Costumes should be inspected prior to every performance for loose hems, seams, or trim.

Big brimmed floppy hats cause possible vision obstruction. When a dancer is worried about a head piece falling, concentration about where their feet are supposed to be can be distracted.

### Props

As with costumes, the choirs need rehearsals with props until they're comfortable using them. Canes, parasols, and other props can trip up performers, whether they're amateurs or professionals. You should use the regular prop in rehearsals that you are using in the performance until they feel familiar. You should never introduce any new elements without previous practice.

### Special Effects

Fog, bubble machines, confetti, and other special effects are often used with Show Choir performances. As with lighting, special effects can be very dramatic but also pose a safety hazard.

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Photo of In Sync by Charles Rodriguez

Excessive moisture on the stage introduces slip hazards. Condensate collection pans under special effects generators will greatly reduce stage moisture and slippery surfaces.

If you are considering using pyrotechnics, make sure you understand your Fire Code regulations. Always have a professional install and manage that element to ensure that no incidents occur.

### Conclusion

When setting up for your next event, make sure you take the time to pay careful attention to every aspect of your performance, not just the stages and risers. Lighting, costumes, props, and special effects can make your production even better; just make sure you use them properly.

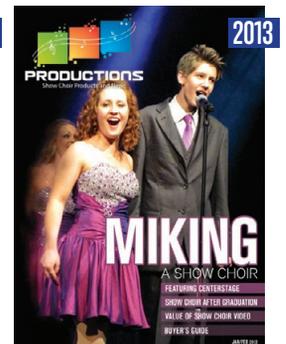
Now, applying the preceding recommendations, proceed with peace of mind and continue the old traditions when saying, "Break a leg!"

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Rick Roe has 23 years of StageRight sales experience, serving all divisions through the years with the last 13 years as the StageRight School and Church Market Manager. Rick is based out of the home office in Clare, MI. See additional articles at <https://performance.stageright.com/blog/>

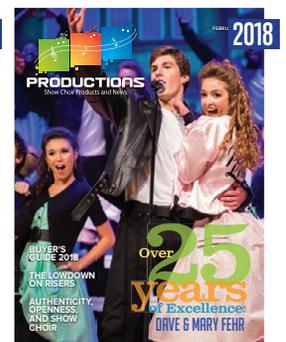
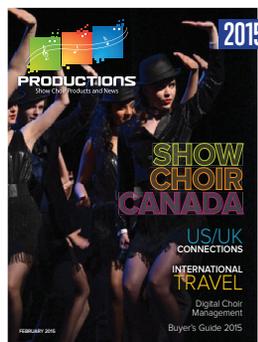


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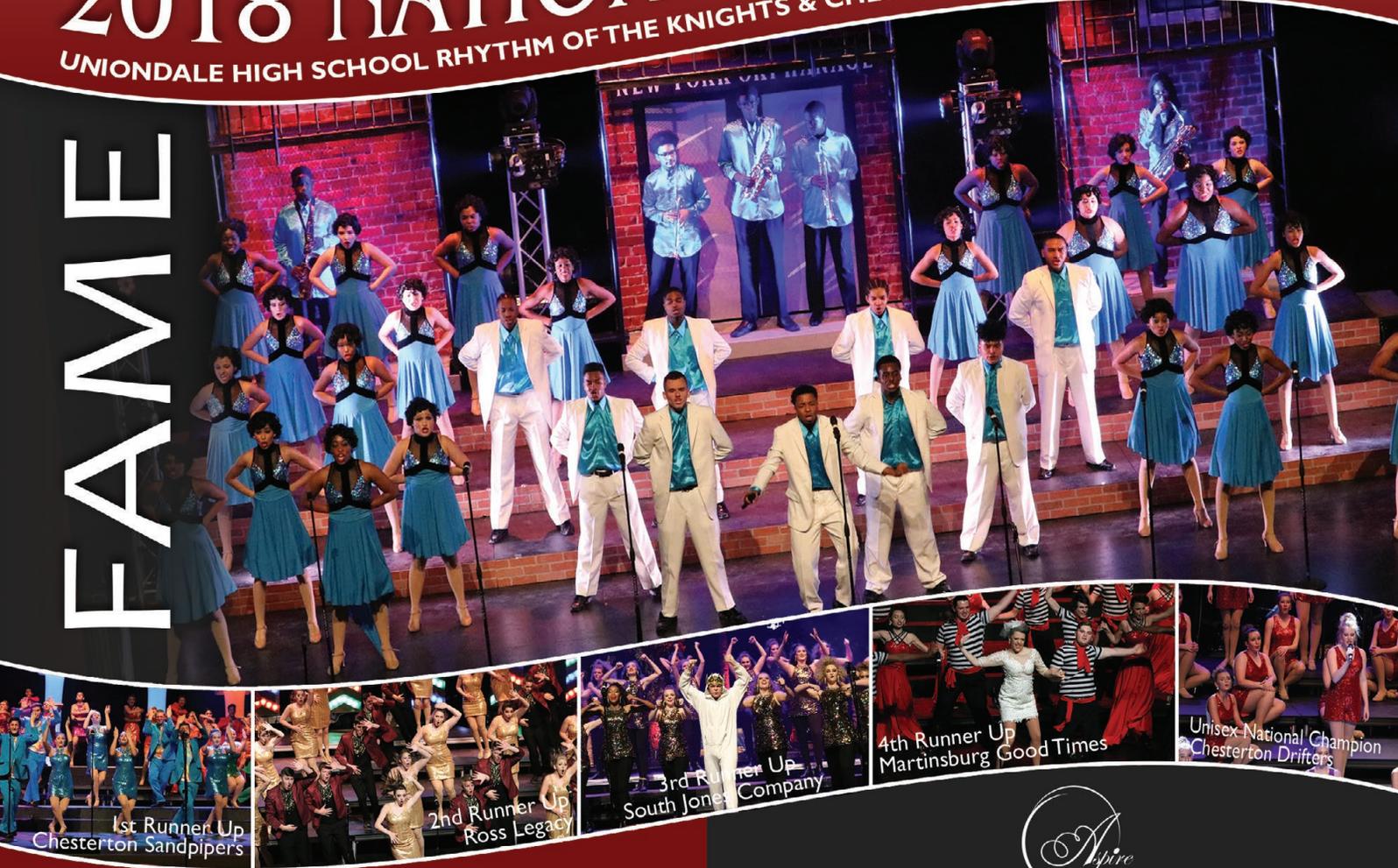


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| Lifetime Achievement Award | Michael & Randie Parks  |
| Vocal Vanguard             | Zach Bjornsen (Millard West HS)   |
| Visual Vanguard            | Kevin Chase   |
| Best New Director          | Thomas Young (Millard West HS)  |
| Best New Choreographer     | Dallas J Pritt  |
| Best Arranger              | Nick Brockamp   |
| Best Costumer              | Gail McInnis Productions  |
| Spirit of Service          | Damon Brown (Thirst Project)  |
| Most Promising New Program | Sheridan Northern Stars (Beth McClain)                                  |
| Best Regional Competition  | Central Wisconsin Spectacular (Colby HS, WI<br>Kevin Spidler, director) |

Be sure and submit your vote for the 2019 Aspire Nominees beginning Feb. 1! Log onto [www.showchoirs.org](http://www.showchoirs.org) and select ASPIRE to vote.

## 2019 DATES & LOCATIONS

- |                              |             |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| FAME New York                | March 7-10  |
| FAME Orlando                 | March 14-17 |
| Show Choir America (Orlando) | March 21-24 |
| FAME Chicago                 | March 28-31 |
| FAME Branson                 | April 4-7   |
| FAME Hollywood               | April 11-14 |
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