



COURTESY DORNINK COSTUMES



# UNLOCKING POTENTIAL

**The Power of  
Show Choir  
Clinics for  
Students and  
Directors**

by Ed Bauer



There's a special kind of energy that pulses through the air when show choir students step into a clinic. Whether it's the buzz of tight harmonies warming up, the shuffle of dance shoes across a gymnasium floor, or the quiet concentration during a vocal workshop, clinics are where refinement meets inspiration. They are the secret weapon for groups looking to take their performance to the next level—and not just for the students. Directors, choreographers, and even booster club members walk away with fresh insights and renewed motivation.

In competitive show choir, talent and dedication are essential. But to truly grow—both individually and as an ensemble—students need guidance beyond the classroom. That's where clinics come in.

### Why Clinics Matter

Show choir clinics serve as an incubator for

skill-building. They provide concentrated time with industry professionals—vocal coaches, choreographers, clinicians, and judges—whose expertise can sharpen technique, instill confidence, and offer objective, constructive feedback.

For students, this is a chance to break out of their comfort zones. Instead of hearing the same feedback from their home director (valuable though it is), they experience new perspectives and coaching styles. This can lead to breakthroughs in vocal phrasing, emotional connection, and dance precision that may not surface in regular rehearsals.

For directors, clinics offer benchmarking. Watching another educator connect with your students can illuminate new teaching strategies or reveal technical gaps that might have gone unnoticed. They're also a fantastic professional development opportunity—a way to stay current with trends in music

selection, choreography, costuming, and performance technique.

In short, clinics are not just tune-ups—they're transformation zones.

### Choosing the Right Clinic

Not all clinics are created equal, and choosing the right one can make all the difference. Here are a few things to consider:

1. **Clinician credentials:** Look into who will be leading the clinic. Do they have professional show choir experience? Are they active in the competition circuit? Many top clinics bring in judges, award-winning choreographers, or educators with extensive backgrounds in both music and movement. You want someone who will challenge your students, not just compliment them.

2. **Format and focus:** Clinics can vary widely in structure. Some are geared toward choreography clean-up, others focus on vocal blend, showmanship, or even competition preparation. Decide what your group needs most. A fall clinic might be about learning and refining, while a mid-season clinic could help with tightening a competitive set.
3. **Group or individual participation:** Some clinics involve multiple schools, offering a chance to learn in a group setting and meet other show choir students. Others are more focused, offering private clinics for a single ensemble. Group settings foster camaraderie and inspiration, while private clinics can deliver more personalized feedback.
4. **Schedule and location:** Make sure the timing fits your school's calendar and that you have the resources to get your group there. Some clinics happen on weekends, others during school days—coordinate with administration early.
5. **Reputation and reviews:** Ask fellow directors which clinics they recommend and why. A word-of-mouth endorsement can be the most telling sign of a clinic's value.

**Choreography critique:** This often includes movement cleaning, tips on energy levels, spacing, and transitions. Clinicians may tweak choreography slightly or offer suggestions to better tell the story of your set.

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**Performance coaching:** Show choir is theater as much as it is music. Clinics should emphasize storytelling, facial expression, and emotional delivery. Don't be surprised if your group gets a quick acting workshop as part of the session.

**Feedback and Q&A:** Many clinics offer time for questions or roundtable discussions with students and directors. Use this time to dive deeper—ask about career paths, college programs, or how to improve in specific areas.

**Enthusiasm and encouragement:** A good clinician knows that positivity builds confidence. The tone of a great clinic is uplifting, motivating students to push harder without feeling discouraged.

## What to Expect

Once you've selected a clinic, what can you expect? While each one is unique, here's a general breakdown of what a productive clinic will offer:

**Vocal coaching:** Expect intensive work on breath support, diction, pitch accuracy, and blend. Clinicians might listen to a portion of your set and offer targeted advice on dynamics or tone. Some may even work one-on-one with soloists.



## Beyond the Music

Clinics are more than just technical tune-ups. They inspire passion. They build confidence. They remind students why they fell in love with show choir in the first place. For some, a clinic might be the first time they believe they have a future in music. For others, it might be the moment they realize just how much work it takes to succeed.

And for directors—especially those in smaller programs or with limited resources—a clinic can be a lifeline, offering validation, connection, and new tools to inspire their groups.

Whether you attend a national event, bring a clinician into your school, or participate in a regional gathering, remember this: Clinics are about growth. And growth—just like show choir itself—is most powerful when shared.

So bring your best. Bring your questions. Bring your joy. And let the magic of the clinic do the rest.

## How to Maximize the Experience

A clinic is only as good as the energy you bring to it. Here are a few ways to make sure you and your students get the most out of every minute:

- 1. Come prepared:** Make sure your group knows their material. Clinicians can't help clean what hasn't been learned. The better your group's base level, the deeper the clinic can go.
- 2. Be open to feedback:** Students and directors alike should come with open minds. Feedback can be tough, especially if you've worked hard on a particular piece. Remind your team that improvement often requires discomfort.
- 3. Engage and ask questions:** Students should feel free to ask for help on a particularly tricky harmony or dance step. Directors should seek insight into curriculum ideas or contest-preparation strategies.
- 4. Record the session:** With permission, record parts of the clinic. Reviewing these later can help reinforce lessons learned and allow for self-reflection.
- 5. Reflect afterwards:** Build in a short debrief session after the clinic. What did your students learn? What surprised them? What can they apply in rehearsal tomorrow? Reflection cements the experience.

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Ed Bauer has been in publishing for over twenty years. He was introduced to Show Choir by his daughter and he is forever grateful to her for this wonderful gift.

# SHOW CHOIR CLINIC CHECKLIST

## CLINIC PREP: WHAT TO DO BEFORE YOU GO

Help your group walk into a clinic with confidence and clarity.

- ✓ **Rehearse Thoroughly**  
Master choreography and music ahead of time to focus on refinement, not review.
- ✓ **Warm Up Wisely**  
Prepare voices and bodies with a full warm-up session before the clinic begins.
- ✓ **Dress for Movement**  
Wear comfortable rehearsal gear—dance shoes, breathable layers, and no restrictive clothing.
- ✓ **Hydrate and Fuel**  
Bring water bottles and light snacks to stay energized during long sessions.
- ✓ **Pack the Basics**  
Notebooks, pencils, water, and anything else your clinician recommends.
- ✓ **Ask to Record**  
With permission, record the session for post-clinic review and director analysis.
- ✓ **Set Expectations**  
Remind students to be open to feedback, listen actively, and stay respectful.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE BOOKING A CLINIC

- ✓ Use these to ensure the clinic fits your group's goals and needs.
- ✓ Who will be leading the clinic, and what is their background?
- ✓ What is the focus—vocal technique, choreography, showmanship, or competition prep?
- ✓ Is this clinic private or shared with other schools?
- ✓ How long is the session, and how is it structured?
- ✓ Will students receive group and individual feedback?
- ✓ Are there take-home materials or video follow-ups included?
- ✓ What are the location and date details—can we make it work logistically?
- ✓ Do other directors recommend this clinic? Why?
- ✓ Can the clinician tailor the session to our specific repertoire or challenges?
- ✓ What do we need to bring or prepare in advance?

**When attending a clinic, you want your students to be ready, be sharp, and be their best. Checking all the boxes ahead of time will go a long way toward making the most of these opportunities.**