

DECEMBER 2025



**10 REASONS
TO SUPPORT SHOW
CHOIRS**

**WHEN
UPGRADING
PERFORMANCE
SPACE
DON'T LEAVE YOUR
LIGHTING IN THE DARK**

**FINDING AN
ARRANGER
WHO'S THE RIGHT FIT**

**WHAT DOES
SHOW CHOIR
MEAN TO
YOU?**

A DECEMBER REFLECTION



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NEWSLETTER

With over 220 members, the National Association for Show Choir (NASC) has set an audacious goal: to unite the show choir community in identifying common objectives, finding solutions to shared challenges, and championing the art of show choir. We recently celebrated our first anniversary on Facebook.

The NASC held its inaugural, virtual meeting last September with approximately 30 members in attendance. While the number of attendees has dropped at subsequent meetings, they are filled with intriguing conversations and connected members from coast to coast.

Why does it matter? Since 2015, show choir programs in the United States have significantly declined by over 800. Music educators are quick to blame the pandemic for the decline, but blaming ourselves for becoming insular would be more appropriate. In July, I had the opportunity to collaborate with some of the best directors, choreographers, arrangers, and costume designers in the show choir world at Showchoir Camps of America. The week's experiences were incredible, but everyone left camp and returned to their respective cubicles once it was over.

Show choir pockets have become more common throughout the U.S., which makes it difficult for show choir programs to attend and host competitions. Show choir will flourish when we start advocating, educating, and inspiring current and future music educators outside our program through consistent collaboration. In most cases, show choir directors are the only choral music educators at their school, limiting opportunities to collaborate with someone who understands what we do. NASC provides a safe platform for monthly collaboration among music educators throughout the United States.

The short-term goal for NASC is to identify a common meeting time for monthly meetings and bring in compelling guest speakers who will appeal to a large audience. A longer-term goal is to have NASC representatives from each state advocate for show choir at state and regional music educator conferences.

This is essential to reinvigorating the show choir community in schools. Too often, show choir is considered taboo. NASC wants to shatter the stigma surrounding show choirs by continuing to educate vocal associations, music educators, and administrations how these dynamic programs not only foster students' creativity, teamwork, and self-confidence but also ignite a sense of community spirit, drawing audiences together to celebrate the arts and support young talent.

The National Association for Show Choirs' mission is to advocate, educate, and inspire current and future music educators to progress show choir throughout the United States.



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A December reflection on a year of sparkle, sweat, and the unmistakable sound of someone yelling “FIVE, SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT!” in their sleep.

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editor's letter

There's something about December that makes show choir people just a little more sentimental than usual—maybe it's the lights, maybe it's the music, or maybe it's the fact that we've all been running at full speed since August and are now running purely on peppermint bark and adrenaline. Whatever the reason, this time of year always nudges me to look back at the season so far and take stock of the joy this community brings.

Show choir is special every month of the year, but in December it truly shines. Rehearsals feel a little warmer, performances feel a little brighter, and even the early call times feel slightly less brutal. (I said slightly—let's not pretend 6 a.m. bus departures ever feel festive.)

And in the spirit of the season, I have to share a little holiday mishap that surely proves show choir folks can handle anything. A few weeks ago, while attempting to decorate the office Christmas tree, I managed to drop an entire box of ornaments—glass ones, naturally—right as “Carol of the Bells” blasted from my phone. If you've ever wondered what 27 ornaments hitting hardwood in perfect percussive rhythm sounds like, imagine the snare line of a state-championship percussion ensemble... if the ensemble had absolutely no control over their sticks. It was beautiful chaos, and I thought, “Yep. This is exactly the energy of show choir season.” We polish, we plan, we prepare—and then something unexpected hits the floor and we adapt with style.

That's what I see in directors, choreographers, students, boosters, parents, costumers, prop crews, and the entire show choir village every day. You take the unpredictable and turn it into something memorable. You build communities, help students find their confidence, and bring audiences to their feet. You spread joy in ways you may not always see, but we feel it—and we do our best to reflect it in every single issue, every single story, and every single performance we're honored to feature.

As we wrap up 2025 and look toward the promise of a brand-new year, I want to sincerely thank each of you for the joy you bring to this art form and to all of us at *Productions*.

Wishing you a holiday season filled with warmth, laughter, music, and boundless joy. Thank you for the joy you've given us.

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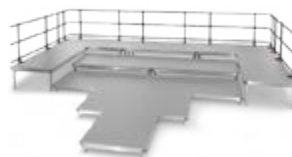


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A stage scene with purple and blue spotlights. A sign on the left says "DREAMMAKER".

WHAT DOES SHOW CHOIR MEAN TO YOU?

A DECEMBER REFLECTION ON A YEAR OF SPARKLE,
SWEAT, AND THE UNMISTAKABLE SOUND OF
SOMEONE YELLING “*FIVE, SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT!*” IN
THEIR SLEEP

by Ed Bauer

If December is a time for reflection, then show choir folks—directors, students, boosters, choreographers, parents who “accidentally” became costume coordinators, and communities who have memorized a competition set without meaning to—should probably sit down, take a deep breath, and congratulate ourselves for surviving another glorious, glitter-filled year.



But let's go deeper than "surviving."
Let's talk about meaning.

Real meaning.

That big, philosophical, end-of-the-year,
hot-cocoa-by-the-tree, let's-get-senti-
mental-and-maybe-cry-a-little stuff.

So let me ask you a question—the same
question that titles this article:

What does show choir mean to you?

And before you answer, let's take a
moment to appreciate that this question
will get very different responses
depending on whom you ask... and
what time of year you ask them.
Because emotions are seasonal in show
choir. Just like pumpkins in October
and peppermint mochas in December,
certain feelings peak at specific points
in the show choir calendar.
Let's take a look.

To the Directors:

*Show choir means... The noble fusion
of art, chaos, and the unpredictable
nature of human teenagers.*

If you ask a director what show choir
means to them in early September,
they'll likely say:

"Possibility! Creativity! A fresh start!"

They will be glowing with optimism,
armed with new charts, new choreog-
raphy videos, and brand-new students
who still believe they can keep their
backpacks organized.

But ask that same director what show
choir means in *November*, and they may
say something closer to:

"Why is no one on the correct foot?"
or
"Who took the prop sword home?"
or

“If we don’t stop losing hats, no one gets to have a hat. Ever.”

And yet—despite all the chaos—directors will inevitably return in December to what they always knew deep down:

Show choir is magic.

It’s the moment the ballad finally locks.

It’s the moment the kids cheer when they nail the key change.

It’s the moment the shy freshman finds their voice.

It’s the moment you see a group of teenagers transform into a family in real time.

And whether they will ever admit it out loud or not, show choir directors are the holders of that magic—guardians of the glitter, keepers of the key changes, herders of the most gloriously loud and passionate cats the world has ever known.

To the Students:

Show choir means... Everything from “my best friends” to “why are we doing this dance break again?”

If you ask a student in January what show choir means to them, they might say:

“This is going to be our year.”

If you ask them in March, they might say:
“I haven’t slept in three weeks and I’m thriving.”

But if you ask a senior in May?

Grab a tissue.

Because they’ll likely whisper something devastatingly heartfelt like:

“This is the place where I grew up.”

Show choir is where they learn teamwork.

Where they learn endurance.

Where they learn how to fix a false eyelash with one hand while adjusting

a mic pack with the other.

Where they learn that confidence isn’t something you’re born with—it’s something you rehearse, refine, and repeat until it becomes muscle memory. Show choir students learn how to hit the final pose even when their lungs are questioning their life choices.

**Show choir is where they learn teamwork.
Where they learn endurance.**

They learn how to be bold, brave, loud, soft, emotional, comedic, powerful—all in the span of an eight-minute set.

And if you ever doubt what show choir means to a student, watch them backstage right before they go on.

Watch their trembling hands interlock as they circle up.

Watch the tears in their eyes when they realize their season is ending.

Watch the way they cling to these moments like they know they won’t get anything like this again.

That is what show choir means.

To the Booster Parents:

Show choir means... A year-long exercise in logistics, fundraising, and staying calm when sequins explode in the dryer.

Boosters deserve sainthood.

Every one of them.

Show choir boosters don’t have seasons—they have cycles:

- **The Fall Fundraiser Phase**
(featuring the annual debate: candles, cookies, or coupon cards?)



- **The Costume Hemming Rush** (in which no one sleeps and everyone prays for bobbin tension)
- **The January Pep-Talk Season** (“Yes, honey, you’ll make it through tech week. I believe in you. And also here is a protein bar.”)
- **The February Fuel-Up Circuit** (where thousands of dollars are spent on bagels)
- **The April Emotion-Firestorm Finale** (“How is this the last show already?!”)

To boosters, show choir is a lifestyle.

A commitment.

A second job with no paycheck but plenty of hugs, thank-yous, and memories worth

more than any paycheck could ever be. Show choir means watching their child transform—

from nervous to confident, from timid to fearless, from “I can’t do that” to “watch me.”

And yes, show choir also means hauling garment bags through parking lots, surviving bus chaperoning assignments, and pretending to understand when their child says, “We’re changing the closer again.”

To boosters, show choir means belonging. Being part of something bigger.

Being part of a family they help fuel, feed,

and cheer for.

To the Community:

Show choir means... Pride, Tradition, and the Joy of Supporting Their Own

Communities love their show choirs in a deep, hometown-loyalty, this-is-our-team kind of way.

They show up.

They clap loudly.

They buy tickets whether or not they understand what “transitional formation” means.

They talk about last year’s competition season like sports fans relive championship plays.

They remember the solos.

They remember the tears.

They remember the victory bus coming home with police escorts and kids pressed against the windows, waving triumphant glowsticks.

To the community, show choir means that something joyful is happening at their schools.

Something musical.

Something inspirational.

Something that shapes kids into confident young adults.

It’s pride.

Pure and simple.

But What Does Show Choir Mean to All of Us Together?

Let’s zoom out.

Let’s look at the year as a whole—the full calendar of triumphs, mishaps, rehearsals, road trips, costume fittings, emotional peaks, and late-night taco runs.

When you step back, you start to see the bigger picture.

Show choir means tradition.

From the first summer choreography camp to the final awards ceremony, show

choir is a ritual.
A cycle we look forward to every year.

Show choir means hope.

Every new season is a fresh start.
A blank canvas.
A chance to create something unforgettable.

Show choir means discipline.

It's sweat.
It's repetition.
It's the art of giving your all—physically, vocally, emotionally—while smiling.

Show choir means creativity.

Directors arrange.
Choreographers choreograph.
Costume designers conjure imagination into fabric.
Musicians weave sound into architecture.
Students pour heart into movement.

Show choir means opportunity.

For friendships.
For leadership.
For growth.
For confidence.
For those “I did it” moments that define adolescence.

Show choir means family.

This word gets used often in show choir, but not casually.
It's real.
You see it backstage.
You hear it in pep talks.
You feel it every time a student falls apart and five others gather around to pull them back together.

And for all of us...
no matter our role...
show choir means purpose.

Purpose in the work.

Purpose in the music.
Purpose in the connection.
Purpose in the joy.

And yes—purpose in the glitter.

A Year in Review: What We Laughed About, Cried About, and Will Definitely Do All Over Again

December is a time to reflect on the year—and the year did not disappoint. We laughed when:

- A prop malfunctioned in a spectacularly theatrical way.
- Someone's mic pack did that “pop-pop-static-BOOM” thing during rehearsal.
- A director tried to demonstrate choreo and immediately regretted it.
- A costume revealed it needed approximately 400 more safety pins than previously estimated.

We cried when:

- A freshman got their first solo.
- The seniors hugged after their last performance.
- The group had that perfect run-through—the one that reminded everyone why they do this.

We celebrated when:

- The show finally clicked.
- Scores went up.
- Students found their confidence.
- Schools reopened their auditoriums to roaring crowds.
- Communities rallied around the arts as a point of pride.

And yes—
we stressed more than any reasonable group of people should,
but we did it together,
and we'll do it again next year.
Happily.



The Question Comes Back to You: What Does Show Choir Mean to You?

Before you close the magazine, I want you to think about it—really think about it.

Is it the music?
The movement?
The people?
The thrill of the spotlight?
The teamwork?
The discipline?
The memories?
A combination of all of the above?

Is it something you can explain?
Or is it something you can only feel?

Maybe it's this:
Show choir is where passion meets performance.
Where hard work meets applause.
Where young people discover who they are and adults remember why the arts matter.

Or maybe it's even simpler:
Show choir means joy.
Joy in community.
Joy in creation.
Joy in cheering for one another.

Joy in doing something that makes the world a little brighter.

As we wrap up this December issue, I want to invite you—yes, you—to share your answer with us.

Send us a story.

Post a memory.

Tag us in your favorite photo.

Tell us what show choir means to you, your students, your boosters, your directors, your town.

Because at the end of the day, show choir isn't just something we watch.

It's something we feel.

Something we share.

Something we carry.

And that meaning—the personal, emotional meaning—is exactly what keeps the lights bright, the microphones on, the costumes sparkling, and the music alive year after year.

So, What Does Show Choir Mean to You?

Think about it.

Feel it.

Celebrate it.

Live it.

And get ready—because next season, we begin again.

Happy December.

Happy reflecting.

And happy show choir.

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.



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REASONS TO SUPPORT SHOW CHOIRS

Based on "10 Reasons to Support the Arts in 2022" by Randy Cohen:
<https://blog.americansforthearts.org/2022/03/21/10-reasons-to-support-the-arts-in-2022>
Adapted by Lisa E. Gibbs

Practitioners and educators of show choir intrinsically know the benefits of participating in this dynamic art form.. Something just feels good about learning new music and choreography, about working with a group to create something special and magical while at the same time making the most of every personal contribution. The physical, mental, social, and personal benefits of being in a show choir are at times unquantifiable. What we know innately is often difficult to express to administrators, school boards, and other key players in funding and support for show choirs.



Enter Americans for the Arts, a national non-profit organization with the mission “to build recognition and support for the extraordinary and dynamic value of the arts and to lead, serve, and advance the diverse networks of organizations and individuals who cultivate the arts in America.” With a focus on advocacy, research, building connections, and leadership, Americans for the Arts is a comprehensive resource for the arts in America.

In March of 2022, Randy Cohen, vice president of Research at Americans for the Arts, published a blog titled “10 Reasons to Support the Arts in 2022.” Using formerly published research as the base for his list, Mr. Cohen provided 10 quantifiable reasons for supporting

the arts in general. The results illustrate tangible benefits of participating in show choir.

1. Arts unify communities.

The study states, Seventy three percent agree “that the arts ‘helps me understand other cultures better’—a perspective observed across all demographic and economic categories.” Other research supports the concept that singing fosters social closeness. *Productions* magazine has published many articles with anecdotes about how show choir becomes like family to both students and educators. Additionally, show choirs often volunteer within their communities and perform at service clubs like Rotary and Kiwanis.

2. Arts improve individual well-being.

Many research studies support the idea that both singing and dancing improve posture, balance, breathing, and help sustain a healthy immune system. These activities have also been shown to boost mood and improve self-esteem. For those involved, show choir can be an experience that will “lift [people] up beyond everyday experiences,” as the study found 69% of the population believes the arts can do.

3. Arts strengthen the economy.

According to the study, “the nation’s arts and culture sector—nonprofit, commercial, education—is an \$876.7 billion industry that supports 4.6 million jobs. That is 4.2% of the nation’s economy—a larger share of GDP than powerhouse sectors such as agriculture, transportation, and utilities.” Consider all the pieces that go into a show: lighting, sound, risers, costumes, sheet music, rentals, and so on—plus the people who do the work to provide such items and services—and the economic impact of a show choir becomes very apparent.

4. Arts drive tourism and revenue to local businesses.

Show choirs go on tour, participate in competition, and attend summer camps. Similarly, many schools host competitions and camps, as well. These activities increase local businesses revenue as people attending the event spend money on meals, lodging, and other recreational activities while visiting the city.

5. Arts improve academic performance.

Cohen’s study found that “students engaged in arts learning have higher GPAs, standardized test scores, and college-going rates as well as lower drop-out rates.” These results are consistent among all socio-economic levels. Many choir directors notice that their students excel in other academic classes as well as in show choir; these students often choose to continue their education after high school.



“Research on creativity shows that Nobel laureates in the sciences are seventeen times more likely to be actively engaged as an arts maker than other scientists.” This data from the study suggests that innovation in the sciences is enhanced by engagement in the arts. Both the sciences and the arts require creativity, and creativity leads to discovery.



6. Arts spark creativity and innovation.

Cohen reports that “research on creativity shows that Nobel laureates in the sciences are seventeen times more likely to be actively engaged as an arts maker than other scientists.” This data from the study suggests that innovation in the sciences is enhanced by engagement in the arts. Both the sciences and the arts require creativity, and creativity leads to discovery. Consider the innovations that many educators developed or discovered during the pandemic that kept students engaged. Show choir is also a live performance art, which can mean adaptations mid-flow. No matter how many rehearsals were run, something unpredictable can happen that the performers need to quickly and creatively work through.

7. Arts have a social impact.

The study demonstrates that a “high concentration of the arts in a city leads to higher civic engagement, more social cohesion, higher child welfare, and lower poverty rates.” Bringing arts activities and arts based businesses to a

town positively impacts the community. Schools that offer show choir contribute to this benefit the arts bring to the area. Additionally, the content of the show can have a social impact by using music and choreography to explore current social issues.

8. Arts improve healthcare.

Cohen states that “nearly one-half of the nation’s healthcare institutions provide arts programming for patients, families, and even staff.” This data point from the study gives strong support for the arts in healthcare. Quantifiable healing benefits for those in a healthcare setting include shorter hospital stays, better pain management, reduction of stress, and improved mental health. In addition to those benefits, a show choir performance at an assisted living facility, local hospital, or outpatient facility can provide entertainment and enjoyment to patients and staff. Arts in medicine programs in healthcare settings are increasing in availability and popularity as are degree programs in higher education institutions, a career field students may consider.

9. Arts for the health and well-being of our military.

Undoubtedly, military service members and veterans deal with mental, physical, and moral injuries as a result of choosing to defend our country. The study explains that veterans of our armed forces “rank the creative arts therapies in the top four (out of 40) interventions and treatments.” As part of community outreach, show choirs can perform at Veterans Hospitals and other events for our military such as parades and awareness days.

10. Arts strengthen mental health.

Participating in an arts activity has been shown to reduce depression and anxiety and increase satisfaction. Several articles in *Productions* magazine cite anecdotes from students who were once reluctant to admit they enjoyed singing and dancing because of the negative response from other students. Once they decided to do what they loved instead of listening to others, they found the show choir community to be very supportive.

Ample research continues to quantify the benefits of involvement in the arts. Practitioners and educators of show choir understand the impact of the arts because they witness their students' transformations as they engage in the work of show choir. While putting the benefits of the arts into practice, every choir director can use resources such as Americans for the Arts data to explain to administrators, school boards, and other key players how impactful this work truly is.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: *Productions* staff writer Lisa Gibbs earned her Ed.D. in Higher Education Administration in 2018. She is an advocate for arts, particularly dance, in education and for increasing the financial well-being of artists through financial education.

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WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN UPGRADING YOUR PERFORMANCE SPACE

DON'T LEAVE YOUR **LIGHTING** IN THE DARK

by Robert Mentele

When it comes to upgrading your school's performance space, there is typically a delicate balance between cost and integrating the latest technology. Usually a lot of thought is given to the visible aspects of the space, and not much consideration is taken for the gear that makes it all work. However, those systems have a direct impact on the quality of the presentation on the stage.



PHOTO COURTESY HAUS OF LANOUE

Sometimes the task seems complicated and overwhelming. Yet providing the best auditorium for your students and classes, and staying on top of the return on your investments, is not that difficult, as long as your system is designed properly. If a system is designed well, you should be able to integrate new technology easily and without any drastic changes. Ultimately, if your system works, and you're not having reliability issues, it can last for 10 to 20 years.

No matter what your system is like now, it's always smart to think about what you'll need in the future, and what technology it may be able to handle in upcoming years, and even decades. In order to make sure your upgrades last as long as possible, always purchase quality gear and "future proof" your space as much as possible. With any upgrade that involves anything as large and as complicated as a performance

space, the biggest concern is safety. Be sure to always have your system inspected by a licensed professional. This doesn't just include your lighting, but rigging, audio and any installed systems should be inspected before making any changes. If everything in your system is safe to use, up to code and in full working order, you can make your first big decisions.

The first question you should ask is, "What can we afford?" Once you have an idea of your working budget, you can begin to parse out upgrading opportunities. Figure out what you can tackle right away, and what steps you'll have to take to get there.

Small budget (Up to \$25,000)

If you don't have a budget for upgrading your school's performance space(s), be sure to add saving to the top of your goals list. That way, when you have enough, you'll be able to spend

it wisely. One of the biggest mistakes you can make is moving forward with an upgrade to your lighting system without having a sufficient budget to do it properly. If your space is under-designed, it won't last very long, and will likely have to be fixed shortly after installation. This not only deprives your students and staff of the proper tools to learn, but it can also be waste of the funds you have available.

Think about your neighbors—are any spaces around you upgrading their own systems? You may be able to purchase their second-hand equipment, and give it more life in your auditorium. This is easiest with smaller items, such as lighting fixtures and soft goods, but you can repurpose almost anything. Purchasing used gear from reputable resellers can also be a great option while you save up for a bigger overhaul.

Medium budget (\$25,000-100,000)

If you have a failing infrastructure—or antiquated gear you can't get parts for—your money would be best spent upgrading those pieces. The first major option is to simply upgrade your power control system to something functional. It's not the cheapest, but can last for many years. Many spaces look into converting to LED when changes need to be made. Upgrading your entire system to handle this newer technology can often save you more money in the long run, versus only partially upgrading the system. Installing a “hybrid” system, one that can handle LED and incandescent fixtures, is typically more expensive than changing the entire system to LED. So, if it's a matter of waiting a few years to do a proper overhaul, it's probably worth doing so.

If your infrastructure is decent, but aging, you can usually integrate new technology. That may include upgrading your incandescent lighting fixtures to a more current and efficient

model. Getting rid of 6x9s and 360Qs, and going with a more modern leko, can have a dramatic effect on the product you're able to provide on stage.

If your power infrastructure is fine, was updated within last 10 years or so, and you have a lot of new gear, think about offering your students the

Think about your neighbors—are any spaces around you upgrading their own systems? You may be able to purchase their second-hand equipment, and give it more life in your auditorium. This is easiest with smaller items, such as lighting fixtures and soft goods, but you can repurpose almost anything.

opportunity to use the newest types of equipment. LEDs can be integrated easily if you have a dimming system that can provide undimmed powered through relay or constant current modules. LED fixtures offer more flexibility in designs, and the opportunity for students to use the newest gear they'll be seeing out in the field. Smaller school districts or smaller colleges often aren't able to provide the newest devices, so upgrading to include them is always beneficial for your students' future job prospects.

When thinking about switching to LEDs, part of the cost difference is the energy savings. It's well known that LEDs consume less power, but they also don't release as much heat



You can get a good number of LED par fixtures for the cost of one decent moving light. If you already have LED fixtures, the next step would be to look into moving lights.

as incandescent, so they save money on your cooling bills. This is often harder to quantify in actual savings, but it should be taken into account. If you don't have a system that can provide proper power for LEDs, you can always run dedicated circuits from power outlets to those devices. Starting with a handful of LED par fixtures is generally an affordable way to start to integrate new items into your system, without too much investment. You can get a good number of LED par fixtures for the cost of one decent moving light. If you already have LED fixtures, the next step would be to look into moving lights.

These have seen a lot of advances recently, and have even started to include LED engines. If you can afford to, this is a great place to spend extra money. An important thing to remember is that moving lights take a lot more maintenance time than any other fixture types, including LEDs. They will add substantially to any programming time, because someone will have to program every parameter of every light. While they are more time consuming to integrate into your space, the effect can also be pretty impressive. Any time you're looking into upgrading a system to begin using multi-parameter



devices, like LEDs and moving lights, you need to make sure your control system will be able to handle it. Make sure you have data distribution, CAT 5 or DMX from your lighting console to the fixtures' locations. If it's an existing system, and you don't have the money to install wires, there are wireless DMX transmission tools available that have become very reliable, and can create a large system with multiple universes of output. When thinking about upgrading, making sure your console can handle multi-parameter devices may have to be on the list before deciding on actual fixtures, as they will be unusable without it.

Large budget (\$100,000+)

If now is the time to upgrade multiple parts of your performance space and you have an appropriate amount of funding to allocate to the lighting system, you now have more foundational and overarching options. Take into account the feedback

of the space's staff and major users, desired technological integration and budget. Do you want to go all LED, or do you want to look into a hybrid system? Do you need to make any other major foundational upgrades to the system, or do you just need to fix the power control devices and upgrade the lighting fixtures?

No matter how much you have to spend on upgrades, it is extremely important to bring in an outside consultant or advisor to help you through the entire process. Sometimes internal employees don't (and can't) know the best technology available at the time, simply because they don't see it every day. Some retailers will offer this service for free, and there are also dedicated consultants that charge a fee. The cost is generally worth it because you're going to be sure to have a better working and cohesive system in the end. Just don't try to do it alone.

Whether your auditoriums primarily house show choir or theater productions, concerts or a little bit of everything, you always want to make sure to present the best product possible. Often, that starts with a good foundation and power system, and extends all the way to individual stage and house lights. Upgrading your space is an important part of making sure you stay up-to-date with the latest technology, and by taking these considerations into account, you'll set yourself up to have successful performance seasons for years to come.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: *Robert Mentele is a professional technical director and designer, and has designed lighting for Theatre, Dance, Corporate Events and Concerts. As Lighting Product Specialist for Full Compass, he helps to bring the newest and most innovative products to fellow lighting designers.*





FINDING AN ARRANGER

WHO'S THE RIGHT FIT

by Jon Burr

Finding a suitable arranger can be a challenge. If you've got a good one and things are going well, then you've got a valuable asset. Maybe you do not have one yet, or your arranger has become unavailable; arrangers can get busy, backed up, or ensconced in large projects with looming deadlines.



In any case, for your project's immediate need or for a new ongoing creative partnership, you need to find an arranger who's the right fit for your group.

Getting Started

In the realm of show choir competition, good arrangers are particularly valuable, given the importance of their work to the success of your competitive show. Some directors like to preserve their access and priority with their arrangers, consequently being reluctant to recommend them. Although word of mouth and reputation are traditional means of discovery, if you can't get a name or referral, that pathway won't get you anywhere.

Music faculty or staff at your institution are another possible resource, or source of recommendation. Composition students and faculty might be able to step up to demands of the project, but it should be noted that experience, particularly professional experience (and trips

around the sun!) are likely to generate stronger instincts, musical knowledge, and the "show sense" that comes only with time.

Talent is essential. As Igor Stravinsky said, "Music is work to be done." Knowing not only what the work is, but also having taste and fluency in making musical choices, comes from talent. Additionally, passion for the subject is very powerful; look for indications that the arranger loves what he or she does.

Using the Internet to Find an Arranger

Google is a powerful tool, but it gets you only part of the way. You can come up with pages of results for search terms like "find a music arranger," "show choir arrangers," or other terms, but then it's up to you to evaluate your results. It takes some research.

Given that anybody can put anything

up on the internet, and that there is a really wide range of competence, experience, and price range represented, finding the mix that's right for you takes evaluation of several criteria.

Things to Look for in an Arranger

Reviews and recommendations:

Given the bespoke nature of arranging work, one of the most important things to look for is reviews and customer feedback. How do the arranger's customers feel about her work? Is he accommodating, timely, conscientious, talented and skilled? Given that arranging is not a regulated or licensed profession, the perception of risk might be greater than, say, for a doctor or lawyer, who need to show evidence of professional credentials in order to work. Arrangers do have professional credentials, hopefully documented on their websites, but they are not regulated by any authority, and they are not rated by any criteria except your own judgment.

Résumé: What about work experience? Has your prospect worked in shows, played in pits, done Broadway? Worked as a performer at high professional levels? Been arranging for any length of time? What about stylistic variety? Is your arranger a diehard rock-n-roller, or is there also orchestral work in his or her background?

Although it may seem desirable to find a winning competitive show in an arranger's résumé, that item alone will not necessarily speak to the breadth or stylistic flexibility required to write a diverse, exciting, stylistically broad show. Look for range of stylistic familiarity to avoid hooking up with a musician of limited scope, unless your show is of a specific genre. If you're planning to perform to track, find an arranger experienced as a producer. Methods and costs vary widely, depending on whether there are real

players hired in the making of the track. Be clear in your mind what the form of your finished product will be, in order to evaluate your discoveries against your specific needs.

Familiarity with Copyright Issues:

Has your arranger ever obtained a license in the form of Permission to Arrange for any work? Does he or she understand the potential liability that can be incurred from a failure to properly license a work for a competitive show?

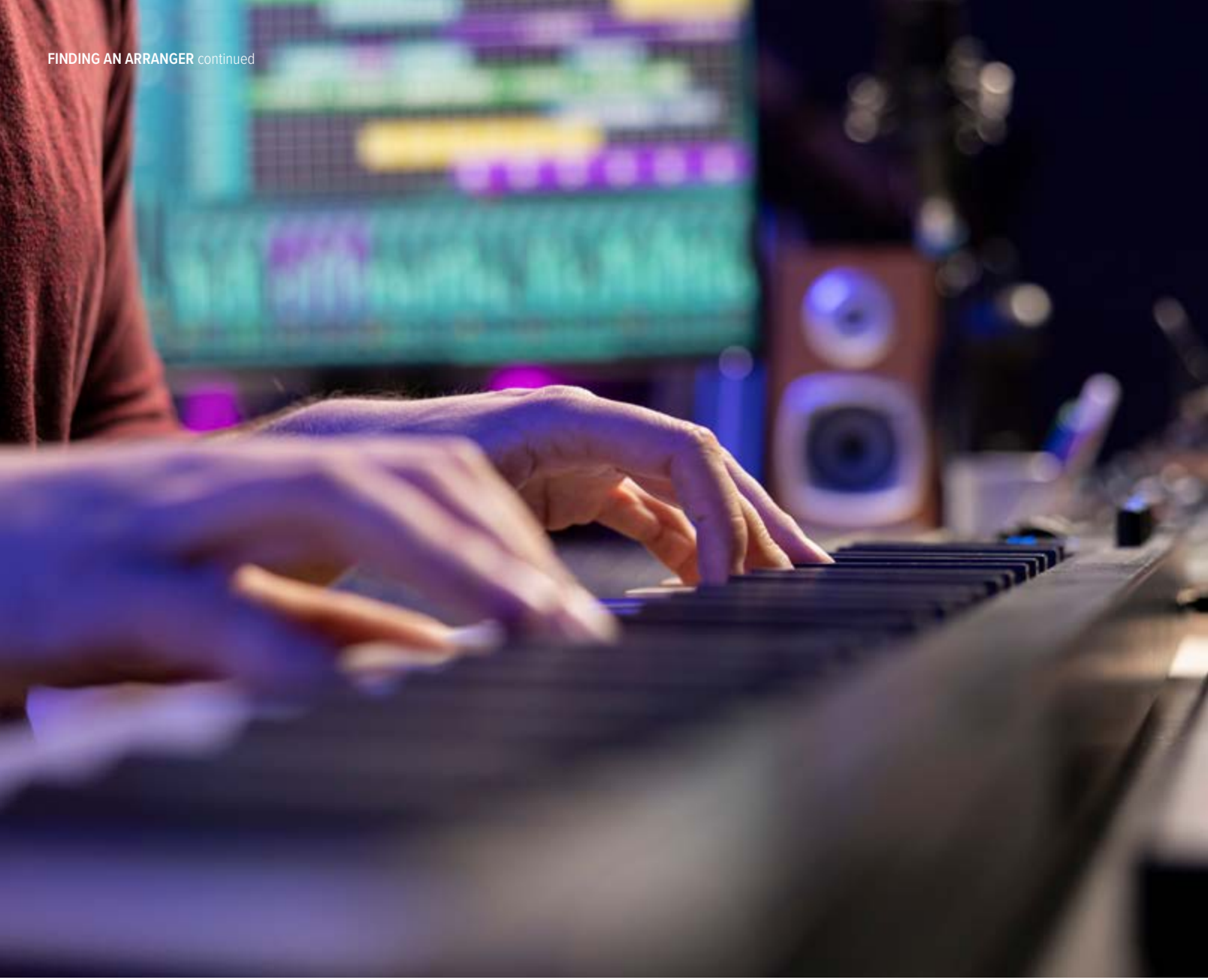
Look for range of stylistic familiarity to avoid hooking up with a musician of limited scope, unless your show is of a specific genre. If you're planning to perform to track, find an arranger experienced as a producer.

Find an ally who understands how to keep your show protected from the ever-growing likelihood of copyright litigation or prosecution.

Example Work: Most arrangers will be able to provide examples of their work, or a reel of some kind. If they're cautious or scrupulous about copyright—or client confidentiality—you might not be able to find any examples on their website. Sending an inquiry will often get you the example you're looking for.

What Makes A Great Arrangement?

Instrumentation and Voicing: Assignment of instruments and voices



is fundamental to arranging: “Who does what, and when?” Giving proper support to staging and dramatic sequence is the driver of these choices. The arranger needs to coordinate closely with a choreographer (if there is one) or work to marked-up lyrics or a storyboard to graph out the unfolding of events.

Compositional Development: Proper introduction of melodic elements, giving new motifs room to breathe, and repeating motifs so they become familiar, together lay the groundwork for development, leading to the combination and stacking of motifs during the progression of the arrangement. Building upon introduced elements is a fundamental compositional technique, and good arranging

depends on it.

Narrative Sense: Well-crafted compositional development has a narrative arc, building excitement, drama, joy, or any emotion you can think of. The fluent arranger controls the arrival of musical climax.

Happy hunting!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: *Jon Burr is proprietor and chief arranger at arrangerforhire.com. Burr is a professional musician with 45 years of experience. He's worked with such luminaries as Tony Bennett, Stan Getz, Chet Baker, Eartha Kitt, and Rita Moreno, played on Broadway in *Me & My Girl*, *Blood Brothers*, *Grand Hotel*, and *Gypsy*, and has produced numerous projects of vocal and instrumental music.*



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