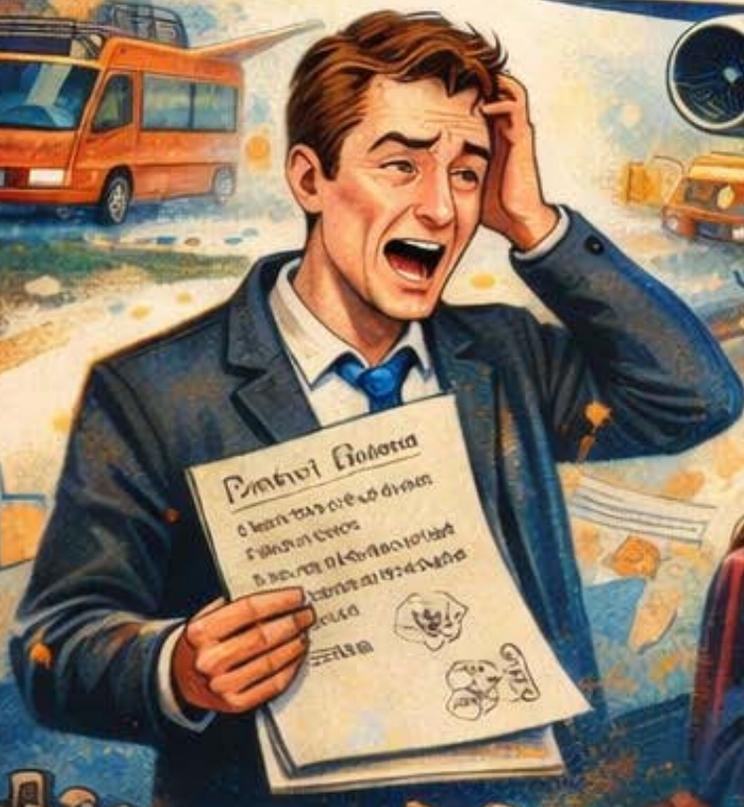


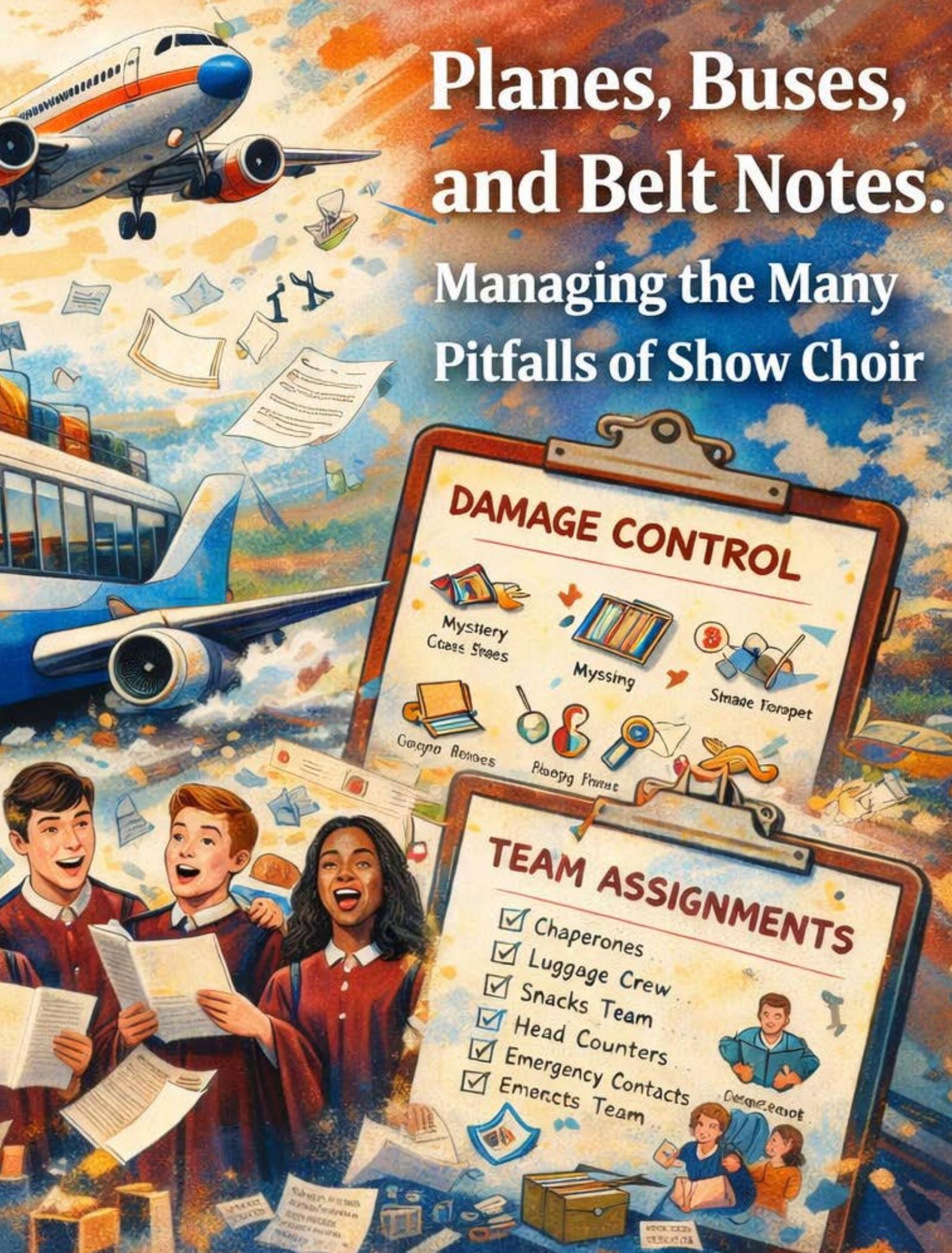
CHOIR ROAD TRIP CHECKLIST!

- Pack extra music
- Travel pillows and snacks
- Uniforms & folders
- First aid kit, sheet
sheet Music Mass &
& rehearsal plan.
- Emergency contacts



Planes, Buses, and Belt Notes.

Managing the Many Pitfalls of Show Choir



And then you arrive.

Expert Tip: Create a Master Travel Manifest.

Not a casual checklist. A master document that includes:

- Costumes (primary and backup pieces)
- Shoes (labeled and in garment bags)
- Accessories (jewelry, gloves, hairpieces)
- Tech equipment (mics, cables, power strips, backup batteries)
- Props and set pieces
- Printed music and performance order
- Emergency kit (safety pins, duct tape, super glue, stain remover, lint rollers, Tylenol—with school approval, of course)

Assign responsibility for each category to a specific adult. Put it in writing. Share it. Review it at your final pre-trip meeting. If it's not written down, it doesn't exist.

Pitfall #2: The Bus Ride From... Somewhere

Bus rides are magical in theory. Bonding! Singing! Team spirit!

In reality? It's 50 percent bonding and 50 percent "Why is there a trombone in the bathroom?"

Long travel days can derail energy levels before you ever set foot on stage.

Expert Tip: Build a Travel Timeline That Protects Performance Energy.

Work backward from your performance time.

- What time do students need to eat?
- When do they need to warm up?
- When do hair and makeup begin?
- How long is unloading and setup?

If you're performing at 3:00 p.m., arriving at 2:15 is not bold. It's reckless.

Plan buffer time for traffic, bathroom stops, and the inevitable "We left someone at the gas station" panic (even if they're actually asleep in the back row).

Room assignments can make or break your weekend. One poor grouping decision, and you'll be mediating a glitter-related argument at midnight.

And for the love of vocal cords, remind students that screaming through TikTok videos on the bus is not "warming up."

Pitfall #3: Hotel Room Roulette

Hotels are where the real stories happen.

Room assignments can make or break your weekend. One poor grouping decision, and you'll be mediating a glitter-related argument at midnight.

Expert Tip: Structure Room Assignments Strategically.

- Mix leaders with younger members.
- Avoid putting all the "big personalities" together.
- Pair responsible students with those who need guidance.
- Keep a clear adult-to-room ratio.



Also: establish expectations clearly before arrival.

Curfew. Noise level. Hallway behavior. Social media posting rules. Respect for other schools.

If expectations aren't discussed ahead of time, you'll be enforcing them reactively—and that's never fun.

And here's a booster pro-tip: assign a designated "floor walker." One adult who quietly checks hallways before curfew and after. Not to police—but to prevent.

Pitfall #4: Costume Catastrophes

Costumes are fragile. Sequins fall off. Zippers snap. Shoes go missing. And someone will forget black socks.

Someone always forgets black socks.

Expert Tip: Pack a Costume Triage Kit. Include:

- Travel-size steamer
- Sewing kit (heavy-duty thread)
- Extra tights and fishnets
- Backup jewelry
- Fashion tape
- Lint rollers

- Stain remover pens
- Extra garment bags
- Spare black socks (trust me)

Have a designated "costume captain"—usually a booster who thrives under pressure and owns a glue gun.

And remind students: costumes do not leave assigned rooms. Not to "show a friend." Not for hallway selfies. Not for quick Starbucks runs.

Pitfall #5: Food Fumbles

Teenagers + competition nerves + irregular eating schedules = emotional roller coaster.

Some students won't eat. Others will eat everything in sight.

Expert Tip: Plan Meals with Purpose.

Avoid:

- Heavy, greasy food before performance
- Excessive dairy
- Energy drinks (unless you enjoy chaos)

Encourage:

- Lean protein
- Complex carbs
- Hydration (actual water—not soda)

If possible, pre-arrange group meals or distribute per diem with clear guidelines.

And always carry emergency snacks: granola bars, fruit snacks, crackers. A well-timed snack can prevent a full emotional meltdown.

Pitfall #6: Tech Troubles

Few things spike a director's blood pressure like a missing aux cable or corrupted music file.

Technology is wonderful until it isn't.

Expert Tip: Back Up Everything. Twice.

- Music on flash drive
- Music in cloud storage
- Music on a backup laptop
- Printed running order

Test all files before departure.

Bring extra extension cords and power strips. Never assume the host venue has what you need.

And designate one tech point person. Not five. Five leads to confusion. One leads to accountability.

Pitfall #7: The Emotional Swings
Competition day is a pressure cooker.

Students will experience:

- Pre-performance nerves
- Post-performance euphoria
- Awards ceremony heartbreak

Sometimes all within three hours.

Expert Tip: Prepare Students Emotionally Before You Travel.

Have the conversation in rehearsal:

- We perform to represent our school.
- We celebrate our effort.

- We respect other groups.
- Awards do not define our season.

Build resilience before you board the bus.

And boosters—this one’s for you—model composure during awards. Students read adult reactions faster than you think.

Pitfall #8: Booster Burnout

Boosters are heroes. They plan fundraisers, manage logistics, pack trucks, coordinate meals, and somehow still cheer the loudest.

But travel weekends are exhausting.

Expert Tip: Delegate in Layers.

Instead of:

- One costume person
- One meal person
- One bus person

- Create teams.
- Costume Team.
- Hospitality Team.
- Transportation Team.
- Finance Lead.

When responsibility is shared, stress decreases—and your program becomes sustainable long-term.

And directors: say thank you. Publicly. Often.

Pitfall #9: The Unexpected (because it will happen)

Weather delays. Illness. Lost luggage. Venue schedule changes.

You cannot prevent every problem. But you can control your response.

Expert Tip: Build Flexibility Into the Plan.

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PITFALL #10: Forgetting Why You're There

In the middle of logistics, it's easy to forget the magic.

- The bus laughter.
- The hallway harmonies.
- The nervous hand squeezes before walking on stage.

Travel isn't just transportation. It's culture building.



- Arrive earlier than necessary.
- Carry emergency contact sheets.
- Have medical forms accessible.
- Know the nearest urgent care location.
- Carry a small emergency fund.

When something goes wrong, the students will follow your energy.

If you panic, they panic.

If you smile and say, "Alright team, plot twist!" they'll rally.

Pitfall #10: Forgetting Why You're There

In the middle of logistics, it's easy to forget the magic.

The bus laughter. The hallway harmonies. The nervous hand squeezes before walking on stage.

Travel isn't just transportation. It's culture building.

Some of the strongest bonds in a show

choir are built not under stage lights, but in hotel lobbies at 11:58 p.m. eating pizza and whispering about the future.

Final Thoughts from the Road

Managing show choir travel is part producer, part tour manager, part counselor, part magician.

You are coordinating costumes like a Broadway dresser.

Scheduling like an airline dispatcher.

Negotiating like a diplomat.

And cheering like the biggest fan in the building.

Will everything go perfectly?
Absolutely not.

Will something go wrong at the worst possible moment? Probably.

But when the lights come up, the first chord rings out, and your students deliver the performance they've worked

months to perfect—that's when the early mornings, checklists, and emergency sewing kits all feel worth it.

So plan carefully. Over-communicate. Pack extra socks. Bring duct tape.

And remember: every travel mishap eventually becomes a story you'll laugh about at the end-of-season banquet.

Even the glitter explosion.

Especially the glitter explosion.

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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